

Introduction

A robust and sustainable workforce is the foundation of a thriving National Health Service. To achieve this, a multifaceted approach is required, encompassing both immediate and long-term strategies. Continuous investment in student education and staff training across all professional groups remains paramount, ensuring the NHS can adapt to evolving patient needs and technological advancements.

However, the NHS faces significant financial pressures related to workforce costs. High vacancy and sickness rates contribute to increased reliance on agency staff, though recent efforts have yielded a reduction in agency spending. To truly address these challenges, long-term workforce planning is essential, integrated seamlessly with service and digital redesign. A 10–15-year approach is needed to reshape care delivery and education.

From surgical teams at Ysbyty Gwynedd performing over 140 robotically assisted surgeries, to a nurse in Powys being the first ever RCN Wales Learning Disability Nurse of the Year, this briefing highlights examples of the strength and adaptability of multi-disciplinary teams in the NHS.

Whilst there are further improvements needed for the future sustainability of the NHS workforce, it is essential that best practice is shared and implemented to navigate the complex and growing demands placed on health and care services. NHS leaders have long called for the Welsh Government to invest in a fully costed long-term plan to deliver a sustainable NHS and social care workforce if we are to meet the needs of the people of Wales now and in the future.