NHS Vacancy Statistics England
February 2015 – March 2018, Provisional Experimental Statistics
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This is the latest provisional experimental publication of the NHS vacancy statistics created from administrative data related to job advertisements published on NHS Jobs, the main recruitment website for the NHS. This information is a proxy data source for NHS vacancies and, therefore, should be treated with caution.

Key findings

- In March 2018 there were 28,998 advertised vacancy full-time equivalents in England published, this compares to 30,613 in 2017, 26,424 in 2016 and 26,406 in 2015.
- In quarter 1 2018 (1 January 2018 – 31 March 2018) there were 87,478 advertised vacancy full-time equivalents in England. Of these 82 per cent (71,421) were permanent and 18 per cent (16,057) were fixed-term.
- The number of advertised vacancy full time equivalents varied between the National Workforce Data Set (NWD) Staff Groups. In March 2018 the highest percentage was seen in the ‘Nursing and Midwifery Registered’ Staff Group which accounted for 40 per cent (11,483 out of 28,998) of vacancy full-time equivalents followed by 21 per cent (6,092 out of 28,998) in the ‘Administrative and Clerical’ Staff Group.

![Figure 1: Number of advertised vacancy full-time equivalents in England published between October and March from 2015 to 2018](chart)

Note: Advertised vacancy full-time equivalent numbers for those in the Student Staff Group are not included to improve presentation due to small numbers.

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## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results and Interpretation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Developments</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This is an Experimental Statistics publication

This document is published by NHS Digital, part of the Government Statistical Service

Experimental statistics are official statistics which are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage. It is important that users understand that limitations may apply to the interpretation of this data. More details are given in the report.

All official statistics should comply with the UK Statistics Authority’s Code of Practice for Official Statistics which promotes the production and dissemination of official statistics that inform decision making.


This report may be of interest to members of the public, policy officials and other stakeholders. This report provides a proxy for vacancy information within the NHS based upon job advert data extracted from NHS Jobs and a high-level summary of related data extracted from the Electronic Staff Record (ESR).
Introduction

This is the latest biannual provisional experimental publication of the NHS vacancy statistics created from administrative data related to job advertisements published on NHS Jobs, the main recruitment website for the NHS. This information is a proxy data source for NHS vacancies and, therefore, should be treated with caution. The report also provides a high-level summary of the vacant posts recorded in The Electronic Staff Record (ESR).

The statistics referred to in this document and the accompanying tables are exploratory and provide information on the administrative data available from NHS Jobs relating to published vacancy adverts as much as on the recruitment of staff. More information regarding data quality, consistency and comparability are provided in the separate Data Quality Report. The Power BI visualisation tool shows monthly data for the number of advertised vacancy full time equivalents in England by National Workforce Dataset (NWD) Staff Group and Health Education England Region. The csv formatted dataset file can be used to recreate the majority of the tables which form this publication. To access the full set of data tables, Power BI visualisation tool, csv file and Data Quality Report please click here.

These experimental provisional statistics are not directly comparable to previously published information on NHS Vacancies. The time series included here (1 February 2015 to 31 March 2018 inclusive) covers the whole period for which comparable base data exists, allowing users to consider relative changes over time. Furthermore, these statistics are not directly comparable to other current NHS Digital publications relating to the NHS workforce. For example it is not currently possible to calculate vacancy rates using published staff in post data, although one of the aims is to make vacancy data more comparable with standard workforce information in future.

Results and Interpretation

The tables and Power BI visualisation tool, showing the statistics from NHS Jobs data are available from this link. The data is provided for NHS Trusts, CCGs, Support Organisations and Central Bodies in England. The data is related to adverts published on NHS Jobs between 1 February 2015 and 31 March 2018 inclusive, this covers the whole period for which comparable base data exists, allowing users to consider relative changes over time.

As one vacancy advert can be used to fill multiple vacancies it is still not possible to accurately state the number of vacancies in a period. Therefore, the only accurate statement remains that the number of advertised vacancy full-time equivalents (FTE) shows the minimum number of vacancies advertised.

The figures are provided as an illustration of the kind of information which is available, but which may need further development to finalise processes and assumptions. Continued improvements within the completion of the source data and the processing carried out by NHS Digital increases confidence in the accuracy of the data.

Tables 1 – 2b, 8 – 12 and 14 show data on advertised vacancy full time equivalents by the following variables: Number of advertised vacancy full-time equivalents, NWD Staff Group; HEE region code; HEE region name; Job Type; Secondary Area of Work;
Tertiary Area of Work; Cluster Group; Occupation Code; Pay scheme; Pay band; Published month; Organisation code and Organisation name.

The Power BI visualisation tool draws on the same data as tables 1 and 2b (for NWD Staff Group and HEE Region) but provides a more interactive means of viewing the data.

In March 2018 there were 28,998 advertised vacancy full-time equivalents in England published per month, this compares to 30,613 in 2017, 26,424 in 2016 and 26,406 in 2015. For a complete timeseries showing seasonal variations, see Figure 2:

![Figure 2: Number of advertised vacancy full-time equivalents in England published per month](image)

Table 14 provides a summary of the vacancies advertised by Organisation and NWD Staff Group. This table relates to a years’ worth of data for the first time (1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018).

Additional care needs to be taken when interpreting the data provided in this organisation level analysis because any issues with completeness and data quality will be more acute when considered at this level. Please refer to the ‘points to note’ section of the separate Data Quality Statement to understand how variation in use of the system may impact upon the apparent size of the advertised vacancy FTE for an individual organisation.

Tables 3 - 6 show data related to applicant behaviour in response to the advertisements placed on NHS Jobs, and include data on web hits, applications submitted through NHS Jobs, number of shortlisted applicants recorded in NHS Jobs and appointed posts recorded in NHS Jobs.

Data presented in tables 4-6 does not represent the total number of applicants, people shortlisted or appointed to vacant posts and should not be interpreted as such. The data is provided as an indication of the information potentially available within NHS Jobs, though variation in behaviour mean this data is incomplete. More information regards the previous misinterpretation of this data is available on the NHS Digital website [here](#).
Table 13a (previously Table 13) provides a high-level summary of the vacancies advertised in NHS Jobs and the vacant posts recorded in ESR with the aim of increasing our understanding of how the two data sources relate to each other.

Full-time equivalent information for vacant posts opened between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2018 has been included in the analysis to allow consideration to be given to how the information extracted from ESR relates to the information extracted from NHS Jobs for advertisements published over the same period.

Between 1 October 2017 and 31 March 2018, there were 173,151 full-time equivalent vacant posts advertised on NHS Jobs and 81,625 full-time equivalent vacant posts recorded in ESR.

Table 13b has been introduced to provide a summary of the vacant posts recorded in ESR by National Workforce Data Set (NWD) Staff Group and Health Education England region for the first time. More analysis of ESR data by different dimensions will be added to future publications to expand the understanding and use of this data resource.

For more detail on the nature of the two different data sources used in this publication, please refer to the ‘data sources’ and ‘points to note’ sections of the separate Data Quality Statement which accompanies this publication.

Table 15 has been introduced following user feedback and builds upon Table 9d to show data by NWD Staff Group, Tertiary Area of Work, pay scheme and pay band for the first time. This table is intended to allow users to gain insight into the advertised vacancy data for more detailed roles, as NHS Jobs does not contain Job Role information.

Future Developments

This publication incorporates some changes in response to the feedback generated by previous publications in the series. Updates to the processing continue to be made to help improve the utility of the data, and such developments will continue along with attempts to influence the data quality of the source data.

Along with other members of the Workforce Information Review Group (WIRG), NHS Digital has set up a national sub-group to look at vacancy related information, including developing a consistent definition for a vacancy, which should help to influence and improve vacancy related data. One of the main aims of the group is to encourage ESR use and provide advice on better data quality within ESR surrounding vacancy related information. The group has also been used to gain more feedback surrounding this publication series and improve vacancy related data in the future. As progress is made it will be reported back as part of future publications.

NHS Digital will continue to evaluate what can be achieved and where possible will expand the coverage of the analysis in the next publication although it will not be possible to incorporate all the information requested, and some things may never be possible from an administrative data source.

This publication includes organisational level data for a year’s period for the first time, though the timeseries is limited to begin at 1 April 2017 due to the level of reprocessing which would be required to recreate the existing timeseries back to 1 February 2015. The organisation level timeseries will continue to grow with the publication and NHS
Digital will continue to investigate publishing more information at organisation level in future.

The Power BI visualisation tool provides a means by which users can interact with the data. It is based upon the Excel graphing tool included in previous publications which it now replaces. It is the intention to add further visualisations and data items to this tool in future publications. One possible development could be to consider applicant behaviour data (currently tables 3-6) at an organisation level for an interactive display, though many other possible combinations exist, and users are particularly welcomed to provide feedback on this new aspect of the publication.

Linked to ensuring consistency of definition, NHS Digital will continue to investigate the ESR vacancy data and other sources of data available (or potentially available) to enhance the information extracted from NHS Jobs. For example, the vacancy aspect of the workforce Minimum Data Set, information for which is beginning to flow from some Independent Sector Healthcare Providers and also the two NHS Foundation Trusts which do not use ESR. This information could be supplemented by information which has been directly collected or tapping into the work of the various Recruitment Streamlining groups.

Whilst this summary of the developments in response to the feedback received has not gone into detail regarding all the individual elements of feedback received, consideration will be given to it all as part of the development of future publications and further updates will be provided as part of those publications.

Feedback

We continue to seek the input of users to understand the potential of this data, its limitations and how it can be used to provide the information that users require.

Feedback is particularly welcome on, but not limited to, the following topics:

- How the report can be improved, including covering what people would really like to know.

- Feedback on and suggestions of developments for the Power BI Visualisation Tool – what visualisation would you like to see? What data items would be of interest for inclusion?

- Information from users about the reality of recruitment in the NHS and how NHS Jobs and ESR are used during recruitment.

- Feedback related to any of the suggested developments to ensure we are making the right changes.

We want user requirements to drive the development of these statistics and we rely on the experience of experts to understand the potential of data to fulfil user requirements. Please send all feedback to:

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or nm.data@nhs.net
We always welcome feedback on our statistics, so there is no formal closing date for feedback, but to enable us to make full use of your responses in the next publication it would be appreciated if feedback could be sent by the end of October 2018. The responses will be collated and used as part of our development of the next publication in the series, due for publication in January 2019.