



Cymru  
g Nyrsio Bren ol  
yal College of s\_\_\_\_\_





All nurses practicing at or above advanced level work across the first four pillars. The fifth pillar, strategy, is unique to those practicing at consultant level.<sup>5</sup> How much of a consultant nurse's time goes toward each of the five pillars will vary according to their role and the needs of the health board or trust. However, clinical practice remains a very important part of their role.

As shown in Figure 1, not only do consultant nurses lead up-to-date research, they also apply it to their clinical practice, ensuring that patients see a real benefit in their lives as a result. Consultant nurses frequently have national—or even international—profiles, contributing to national projects, workstreams and forums. This allows them to advise employers, health boards and trusts, and help with strategic aims to develop services and pathways for patients. They teach and educate others, ensuring future workforce knowledge and skills, and many either work in collaboration with higher education providers or have a joint employment contract. In considering its commissioned programme of research into health and social care, the Welsh Government should ensure that it considers the impact of the consultant nurse role.

## **Research and practice working together to improve patient outcomes**

In each health board area in Wales, around 200 children and young people are likely to need support through a feeding tube. However, commercially

Parents also reported an improvement in the child's mood and behaviour, weight gain, and a better toleration of medication—which led to a reduction in hospital admissions.

Sian then went on to use the knowledge that she had learnt from her research and applied it to help her own patients. In her role as a consultant nurse, Sian was therefore able to make a tangible, positive impact on the lives of her own patients. Her study also resulted in wider benefits, as it led to a nation-wide change in practice as well as a change in British Dietetic Association policy. The changes have received support from the Welsh Government as well as all health boards in Wales.

Sian said, **“It has been really beneficial to develop the evidence base in this area and this has influenced innovation in clinical practice, locally and nationally. The findings from the study have enabled the development of local guidance and have informed the revision of national policy and practice as well as potentially opening the door for further research in this area. Most importantly, however, the work has empowered patients and their families and improved their quality of life. They are able to eat the same food, socialise and have support from professionals to make a choice. “We wanted to create a culture where families could openly discuss the feeding options that they wish to follow with their health professional, as well as**

Use of (ing) 24 (ins) 0 250-5376 aa 59 reW nq 59 reW nP K ICIDO T BC EMC P K ICIDO 9

RCN Wales spoke to many other consultant nurses, including Nia Boughton, a Consultant Nurse for Primary Care at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board:

### **Improving patient care, improving lives**

Nia Boughton, a Consultant Nurse for Primary Care at Betsi Cadwaladr UHB, helped a patient who had unfortunately had a breakdown in her relationship

As can be seen in this briefing, NHS Wales can benefit from the expertise of consultant nurses from all specialisms and fields of nursing, including consultant nurses specialising in psychosis:

### **Saving lives through early intervention in psychosis**

Norman Young is a Consultant Nurse and Clinical Service Lead for Early Intervention in Psychosis in Cardiff and Vale UHB. He is also a Senior Associate Lecturer for Cardiff University.

Psychosis most commonly occurs in

RCN Wales spoke to Marianne Jenkins, who spoke about her role as a consultant nurse in developing a workforce model for advanced nurse practitioners:

## Development of advanced nurse practitioner teams

Marianne Jenkins works as a Consultant Nurse Practitioner for Emergency Care at Cardiff and Vale University Health Board. A key aspect of her role has been to develop the advanced nurse practitioner role within Emergency and Acute Medicine at the health board.

Marianne Jenkins said:

**“There were 2.5 ANPs in post who had been working within the nursing rota to support staffing levels through the pandemic and with a return to the ANP role planned in January 2022. Alongside this there was transformation work within the department to improve service delivery.”**

7.7(t ti)17.7(t t)TJT23 1 Tf7.2833540 TDO





Since 2017 there has been a consistent, albeit slow, increase in the number of consultant nurses, but progress varies significantly from health board to health board, and from specialty to specialty.

A required amount of 55 consultant nurses was set out by the now-defunct Health Professions Wales. Although this requirement is now out of date, it shows that there is precedent for the introduction of national indicators to determine the numbers of consultant nurses working in Wales.

## By health board and trust

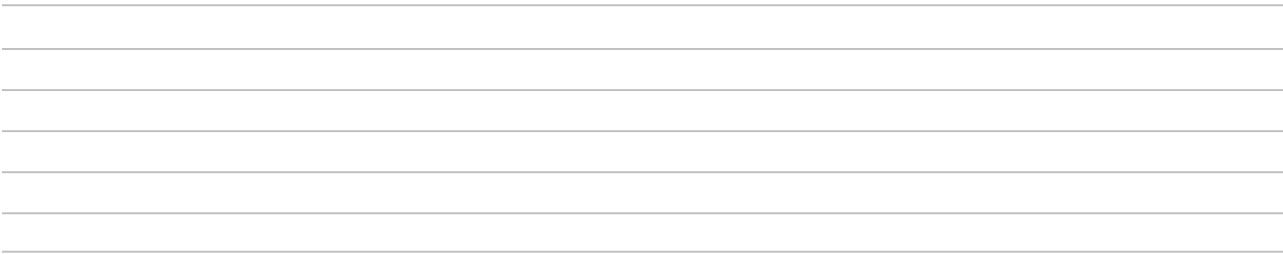
The number of consultant nurses varies across Wales and small year-by-year fluctuations can be seen in most health boards and trusts. Health boards and trusts do not all share the same enthusiasm for the consultant nurse role.

Betsi Cadwaladr has invested in consultant nurses in recent years, and small increases can also be seen in some health boards such as Swansea Bay. However, the overall picture is a very disappointing one. As of March 2024, Powys and Cwm Taf Morgannwg health boards respectively employ just 1.6 and 2.0 consultant nurses (full time equivalent). Given the important role that consultant nurses play in ensuring safe and effective care for patients, it is disappointing that so few of them are employed by health boards and trusts. As previously shown in this briefing, consultant nurses specialise in various fields of nursing, from learning disabilities to child health, with each consultant nurse bringing a unique set of skills and experience to the table. All health boards and trusts should therefore increase their respective FTE numbers of consultant nurses to reflect the diversity of specialisms that exists within consultant nursing.

Furthermore, StatsWales claims on its website that “this data item is not applicable” for the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust (WAST), for all years, suggesting that the trust has never employed any consultant nurses.<sup>9</sup> Serious doubts have been raised regarding the accuracy of this, however, as RCN Wales understands that WAST employs a consultant nurse in mental health. It is imperative that NHS Wales, StatsWales, and WAST all ensure that publicly available data on the consultant nursing workforce is both correct and up to date. This is crucial to ensure accurate workforce planning.

---

Figure 3 **Number of consultant nurses (FTE)**



## Figure 4 Number of consultant nurses in Wales by area of nursing



Source: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/NHS-Staff/Non-Medical-Staff/nursingmidwiferyandhealthvisitingstaff-by-grade-areaofwork-year>

*\*2024 figure as of 31 March 2024*

The Welsh Government correctly notes in its Healthy Child Wales Programme that “the emerging evidence shows investment in the early years of life has significant positive impact on a child’s health”.<sup>11</sup> Paediatric nurses, neonatal nurses and school nurses play a crucial part in providing safe and effective care for infants and children, and by extension, in helping to ensure that each child can have the best possible start in life. It is therefore very disappointing that Wales has no consultant nurses working in neonatal nursing, none in school nursing and such low levels in paediatric nursing working at full-time equivalent. This becomes even clearer when contrasted with the number of consultant nurses working in adult and general (18.5 FTE). Sian Thomas’s experience points to the positive difference that consultant nurses can make in improving patient

In the last 14 years, the number of learning disabilities consultant nurses in NHS Wales has never risen above on

# What should the Welsh Government do?

The Welsh Government should invest in consultant nurses of all types and in all parts of Wales. They should focus this investment into their priority areas such as Urgent & Emergency Care, Planned Care, Cancer, MH & LD and CAMHS. This investment needs to

---

### **ACTION 1:**

The Welsh Government should ensure that, across NHS Wales, there is an optimal number of consultant nurses posts in each specialty to meet patient need.

### **ACTION 2:**

The Welsh Government should instruct HEIW to undertake a **gap analysis of the current consultant nursing workforce**. This should be in line with HEIW's Professional Framework for Enhanced, Advanced and Consultant Clinical Practice in Wales.<sup>13</sup>

### **ACTION 3:**

The Welsh Government should instruct HEIW to develop **evidence-based guidance to enable health boards and trusts to regularly scope population need and determine the number of consultant nurses that each health board and trust needs**.

HEIW should ensure that its workforce planning and education commissioning reflects this.

#### **ACTION 4:**

**The Welsh Government should direct HEIW to work with health boards and trusts to develop a career pathway from nursing student to consultant nurse.**

This must be promoted within every health board and trust to ensure consultant nursing positions are developed and filled when vacant. This would ensure continuity of patient care.

HEIW should develop an evidence-based workforce planning methodology based on population need. HEIW should also