

# Nurse vacancies in England remain high at more than 43,000

03 MARCH, 2023 | BY [ELLA DEVEREUX](#)



Source: Shutterstock

Registered nurse vacancies across the NHS in England are up 10% in a year, new data has revealed.

The figures published yesterday by NHS Digital showed that there were 43,619 nurse vacancies in the health service during the quarter ending December 2022.

**"This is a startling reminder of the depth of the crisis in the nursing workforce"**

Patricia Marquis

While the number has decreased since the last dataset was published, the number is still higher than the same time the year before, when there were 39,721 vacancies.

The data showed that most regions in England had seen a rise in vacancies compared to the previous year.

Once again London had the most nurse shortages with 10,627 vacancies – an 11% increase compared to last year.

Meanwhile, the Midlands had the highest increase in vacancies compared to the year before. There were 9,252 unfilled nursing posts – a 19% jump from December 2021.

The only region which had seen an improvement in filling nursing posts was the North West, which had 4,347 vacancies compared to 4,776 the year before.

Of the vacancies, more than 26,900 nurses were needed in the acute sector and more than 12,900 needed in mental health.

Meanwhile, the data revealed that there were 2,345 community nurse vacancies in the NHS and 1,140 specialist nurse vacancies.

---

## Related articles

- [Nurse vacancies reach record high of almost 47,000 in England](#)
- [Nurse vacancies across England remain 'stubbornly high'](#)
- [Every region of England sees rise in nurse vacancies over last year](#)
- ['A bleak picture': Nurse vacancies increase across English NHS](#)

Responding to the latest statistics, the Royal College of Nursing director for England, Patricia Marquis, said: “This is a startling reminder of the depth of the crisis in the nursing workforce.

“With vacant nursing posts hitting a record high over the last five years, the ability to give safe patient care remains at risk.”

Ms Marquis said that this data, coupled with millions of people on NHS waiting lists and thousands of people stuck in hospital beds despite being well enough to leave, “is not a picture of a well-functioning health and care system”.

“We urgently need to see a government workforce plan with the necessary funding or the numbers will continue to head in the wrong direction and the recovery of the NHS will remain an impossible task,” she added.

---

## Related article

- [Hunt: NHS will get 'independently verified' workforce plan](#)

Director of policy and strategy at NHS Providers, Miriam Deakin, echoed these feelings, and said a fully-funded national workforce plan for the NHS “can’t come soon enough”.

Ms Deakin said: “While the recent downward trend is a move in the right direction, the NHS is nowhere near out of the woods yet. Severe staff shortages persist.

“We still have thousands more vacancies across the NHS than at this time last year, which means extra pressure on staff battling with ever-growing demand and increasing workloads as they pull out all the stops to cut waiting lists and see patients as quickly as possible.”

Meanwhile, Rory Deighton, director of the NHS Confederation's acute network, warned that health and care leaders were concerned that chronic workforce shortages “risk seriously undermining the NHS’ efforts to recover from the pandemic”.

Mr Deighton said: “Many staff feel exhausted and burnt out and are choosing to leave the NHS at a time when every staff member is so important to the service’s recovery.

“With 124,000 vacant posts, including over 40,000 vacancies in nursing, especially now with the added pressure of intense waves of industrial action, NHS leaders are urgently calling for the government to set out the overdue, promised workforce plan to fill these gaps and make sure the health service can continue to care for and meet the needs of its patients as safely and quickly as possible.”

The Department of Health and Social Care was contacted for comment.