

Nursing in England

Formal nursing education began in the UK in 1860, when the first institution for training nurses was established.¹ Since then, the profession has evolved significantly to become the respected and vital role it is today. Nurses in England commonly express their motivation to pursue this career out of desire to **do good**, **help others** and **make a positive difference**.² They are a vital part of healthcare in all settings and provide crucial patient care, advocate for patient needs and ensure patient well-being.

Impact of nurse-led care

A systematic literature review (SLR)³ published in 2022 evaluated the **impact of nurse-led care** in a primary setting. Studies varied in terms of the comparator, from usual care with limited nurse involvement to measuring patients before and after nurse-led care. The most investigated interventions were related to chronic disease prevention and management. The authors found a **clear benefit** of nurse-led care in respect to **patient satisfaction, enablement, quality of life, self-efficacy and improvements in health behaviours**.



The SLR concluded that nurse-led interventions in primary care resulted in **high levels of patient satisfaction** and **improvement** across multiple domains:

Weight loss

Pelvic floor muscle strength

Blood pressure

Glycaemic control

Exercise self-efficacy

Improved diet and exercise

Reduced tobacco use

Issues faced by nurses

The number of nurses in the UK registered to the Nurse and Midwifery Council has **increased by 22%** since 2017.⁴ However, despite some improvement, a **national shortage** persists. As of December 2024, there were 27,000 nursing vacancies, representing 6.4% of the workforce, down from 8.3% the previous year.⁵ This can lead to stressful and heavy workloads and, eventually, low job satisfaction, especially as demands on healthcare are increasing.

Author's comments

Nursing can be a rewarding but sometimes difficult profession, and on **International Nurses Day**, we would like to **acknowledge and celebrate nurses across the World** and thank them all for their dedication and hard work. It is evident from the research and personal experience that nurses are essential for patient care and well-being. However, with staff shortages, issues with pay, the scrapping of student bursaries and low job satisfaction, we need to ensure nurses have a **supportive and sustainable work environment** to protect their own wellbeing and ensure staff retention and recruitment.

References

1 Thomas, G. A Brief History of Nursing in the UK [Internet]. Memories of Nursing; 2016 [Cited 2025 Apr 29]. Available from: <https://memoriesofnursing.uk/articles/a-brief-history-of-nursing-in-the-uk>

2 Nursing and Midwifery Council. Spotlight on Nursing and Midwifery Report 2023 [Internet] Nursing and Midwifery council, 2023 [Cited 2025 Apr 29]. Available from: <https://www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/data-reports/insight-spotlight/2023/spotlight-on-nursing-and-midwifery-report-2023.pdf>

3 Lukewich, J., Martin-Misner, R., Norful, A.A et al. Effectiveness of registered nurses on patient outcomes in primary care: a systematic review. BMC Health Serv Res. 2022; 22:740.

4 Nursing and Midwifery Council. The NMC register UK mid-year update [Internet] Nursing and Midwifery Council 2024 [Cited 2025 Apr 29]. Available from: <https://www.nmc.org.uk/about-us/reports-and-accounts/registration-statistics/>

5 NHS. VHS Vacant Statistic, England, April 2015-December 2024, Experimental Statistic [Internet]. NHS Digital, 2025 [Cited 2025 Apr 29]. Available from: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-vacancies-survey/april-2015---december-2024-experimental-statistics>