



## How often will the nurse staffing level be reviewed?

Each health board/trust will look at the nurse staffing level for each ward:

- Every six months;
- if something changes on the ward, for example, if there is a change in the group of patients that are cared for on the ward or the number of beds being used on the ward; or
- If the nursing team thinks that a review needs to take place for any reason.

The nurse staffing level for each ward is presented to the Board every year.

## Who is responsible for deciding what the nurse staffing level for each ward should be?

The decision on what the nurse staffing level is for each ward is ultimately made by the Executive Director of Nursing on behalf of the health board/trust, but the decision is made following discussions with the nursing team responsible for the ward, including the nurses on the ward and the ward manager.

## How do health boards/trust ensure that the nurse staffing level for a ward is maintained?

The ward manager will ensure that the number of staff on duty reflects what the nurse staffing level should be for each day for that ward and they will inform the senior nurse when there are gaps. Information about the number of nurses and care staff who should be working on each shift is displayed on each ward. The nursing team reviews and records the times that the number of nurses actually on duty varied from the nurse staffing level and what actions we took in response to this. The nursing team will also consider if not maintaining the nurse staffing level has had any impact on the care provided to the patients on the ward at the time.

## What happens on the ward when there is a gap in staffing?

There are occasions when the nurse staffing level on a ward may be lower than what we planned because of unexpected staff sickness or other reasons outside of our control. When this happens the nurse in charge will try to cover this shift by asking staff to change their shift, where possible. If there is still a gap, the nurse in charge will escalate this to the senior nurse on duty who will consider offering staff additional hours or overtime to fill the gap and will consider the possibility of moving staff around between wards and departments. There is a senior nurse on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on each hospital site whose role includes managing nurse staffing and ensuring that the nurse staffing levels are maintained. The senior nurse will also consider whether we need to use staff from our hospital nurse bank or from a nursing agency. If the gap in staffing is still unresolved, the senior nurse will escalate this to the senior nurse manager and discuss what further actions need to be considered. In the short term, nurses on the ward may have to work in a different way and focus on essential care to maintain patient safety.

## What does it mean if there are more staff than the nurse staffing level requires on duty on a shift?

The ward manager and senior nurse continuously assess the needs of the patients on the ward and more staff on duty on the ward may be due to an increase in patient care needs, for example, where a patient may need one to one nursing care or where a patient has become more acutely unwell. On these occasions, and where required, staff may be requested to work additional hours or overtime to fill the gap, or alternatively temporary staff may be requested.

**For more information about staffing levels in our hospitals or if you have any concerns or questions about the nurse staffing level or the care that you are receiving on the ward then please speak to the ward manager.**