Written evidence from the University of Brighton

Feedback by the University of Brighton, Prof Paula Kersten Head of School of Health Sciences & James Bluring Policy Manager, Evaluation and Policy

1. The challenges of expanding training places, including the cost of healthcare courses and the provision of clinical placements

Requests to increase placement capacity and student numbers has been too late in the cycle for our university to be as responsive as we would have liked. For example:

- NHSi invitation to organisations to bid for funding to develop extra places was not sent to HEIs directly. Trusts should have been asked to develop the EOIs in partnership with HEIs.
- Many HEIs are not able to increase student places unless this is planned a year ahead due to constraints in resources (space, staff) and lack of suitable applicants very late in the cycle.
- Challenges include the reliance on a relatively local population for recruitment given coastal location, loss of NHS nursing bursary, and increased number of providers.
- We were asked end of July 2019 to increase adult nurse numbers by 84 for September 2019. There are insufficient applicants and resources.
- Large Trusts are not working in partnership. For example, a community Trust has asked us to increase by 8 child nurses, but the acute Trust has already refused to increase child nurse placements. There seems to be a lack of understanding that students require the breadth of placements during their course.
- We have responded to this challenge by continuing dialogue, increase numbers where we can, and changes in our programmes, which will help us increase numbers from September 2020.

Small programmes are at risk. Locally we continue with podiatry but recruitment remains a challenge. This is a very expensive course to run and if it becomes unviable, the HEI will have to reconsider its continuation. We could expand from current numbers because we have our own clinic. We have responded to this challenge by diversifying routes into the professions (e.g. BSc, MSc Pre-Registration, and degree apprenticeships).

Nursing associates are successful but they also require placements, which impacts on nursing placements. Locally this is managed (as much as possible) by NA employers offering reciprocal placements for NAs.

We have revalidated our paramedic programme so we can increase by a much needed 10 additional students. However, there are no placements available for these students and the Trust has not requested funding from NHSi. The local HEE are working with the Trust to create more placements but this has not yet delivered results. There are also issues with the ambulance Trust, where students have raised concerns about mentors in some stations – this is being investigated by the regional HEE office.

2. The impact of the student finance reforms for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals

- We have seen a greater impact on mature students than 18 year olds. As such, this is inconsistent with Augar’s recommendations around lifelong learning and that the system
‘should support a workforce able to respond to change and develop further skills throughout their lives’.
- Across the board we have seen a significant drop in applications, which is much greater in the South East than the wider country (e.g. 28%)
- The impact on recruitment has been most significant for nursing and small programmes such as podiatry

3. Attrition during training
- We don’t have a big problem in this area

4. Trends in the provision of continued professional development, such as any changes in courses HEIs provide for CPD, including demand or uptake of these courses etc
- In order to have effective, safe good quality healthcare, and a healthy / resilient workforce we need to invest in the development of the present workforce.
- We are therefore concerned that CPD funding has been reduced across the board.
- Confirmation of CPD funding directly to Trusts has been extremely late this year. This has led to the university having to extend programme application deadlines (closing now), impacting on our timetabling and resourcing.
- We have concerns that the contract with the HIE for the university has ended. Whilst this year it appears Trusts will utilise our courses we have less certainty, which impacts on our ability to assess sustainability of courses and maintain staff resource.
- The university has responded by launching a new PGT/CPE portfolio (retaining what we know will remain popular, close unviable modules/courses, and develop new courses for advanced practice).

5. Apprenticeship levy
- The diversification of entry into the profession has led to some confusion for applicants
- There remains a reluctance from big organisations to share the unspent levy with others
- Protected time is a challenge for NA apprentices
- Degree apprenticeships are expensive for employers as they don’t receive funding for backfill and they can be challenging to manage in relation to required time release. Apprenticeships are not, therefore, an automatic solution to healthcare workforce challenges – this is a key policy issue.

6. Brexit:
- The proposed new post-Brexit immigration system presents significant challenges for the healthcare workforce – immigrants need to be earning a significant amount of money to comply with requirements. This threshold is too high for (health)care assistants and newly qualified health professionals such as nurses, midwives and AHPs. UUK is campaigning directly to No 10 for the reduction of this threshold to £21k to accommodate these roles – this is something we’re supporting. We have also provided evidence to the Government Office for Science.
- We have seen some HEI staff leave the country due to Brexit
- Health research funding is already significantly affected, before Brexit has been implemented, and will this continue to have an adverse effect.
- We have concerns about the impact of Brexit on Erasmus. Research shows that students who have an international placement benefit greatly, for example in achieving higher grades, being able to get a good job and earning potential. Likewise, international experience of academic staff helps HEIs to enhance their educational provision in terms of quality and internationalisation of the curriculum.

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