

**Community Services Brent**  
**Briefing Paper to Update Brent Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee on Health**  
**Visiting Recruitment in Brent**  
**November 2012**

## **1. Introduction**

This paper provides an update to the Committee on the recruitment of Health Visitors within the borough. Over the past ten years the number of Health Visitors has been declining both nationally and across London. The current recruitment drive is part of a national strategy, known as a “Call to Action: an implementation plan for health visiting”. This is being co-ordinated within Ealing Hospital NHS Trust by a Health Visiting Group for Brent, Ealing & Harrow. Locally within Brent it is led by the NHS Brent Child Health Steering Group.

## **2. The National Direction**

In February 2011 the “Health Visitor Implementation Plan – A Call to Action” was published by the Department of Health. The policy directed the growth of the Health Visiting workforce nationally by an additional 4,200 Health Visitors by 2015. This translates into an additional 42 Health Visitors allocated to Brent by 2015.

In June 2011 a “Task & Finish Group” was set up locally to progress this work, led by a Consultant in Public Health (Maternal and Child Health) from NHS Brent. As the local provider of the health visiting service, Ealing Hospital has been closely involved in the design of the Brent plan, represented at meetings by the General Manager for Children’s Services in Brent and the Deputy Director of Nursing & Clinical Standards – Brent. The outcomes and progress of the group are monitored by the Director of Nursing and Clinical Practice for the Trust and contribute to the Health Visiting Plans for the three boroughs (Brent, Ealing and Harrow) covered by the Trust.

## **3. The Pan-London Position**

The pan-London recruitment programme, co-ordinated by the London Deanery, had accepted 250 new Health Visiting Students by October 2012 specifically for Trusts across the capital. This new cohort of students will be managed by the introduction of a second entrant to the annual Health Visiting training course in January 2013. These new students will complement the current cohort who commenced the course in September 2012.

The planned number of ‘return to practice students’ (qualified health visitors who have had an absence from the service of 3 years or more and are now on a refresher course) that had been forecast by the London Deanery has fallen short across London. The planned trajectory of return to practice students for Brent was eight. In fact the number of return to practice students interviewed in October 2012 was disappointingly low – just one for the whole of London. This poor uptake has caused NHS London to review the position and consequently they are now refocusing efforts on recruiting more full-time students.



**Table 1: Number of student places pan-London**

Student Type	Number of student applicants interviewed	Appointable to the HV course
Health Visitor	472	249
Return to Practice	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>473</b>	<b>250</b>

Source: London Deanery Oct 2012

The impact on individual Trusts across London is that recruitment plans submitted to NHS London in February 2012 will now have to be re-adjusted if the national target of 4,200 is to be realised by 2015.

#### 4. Current Health Visitor Recruitment Status in Brent on 1 November 2012

The current funded establishment for Health Visitors in Brent is 39.8 WTE. A recruitment drive in March 2012 produced the results outlined in the table 2.

**Table 2: HV applicants in total including Brent supported students**

Applicants	Staff Offered Post	Actual Staff In Post Oct 12
Externally recruited HVs	4	2
Internal Brent HV Students	3	3
Return to Practice HVs	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>

In August 2012 one external candidate declined a post that had been offered. By September 2012 1 additional external applicants had also declined posts both stating personal reasons. The remaining two external applicants took up vacant posts. All three of the internal full-time students trained by a Brent Specialist Community Practitioner Teacher (SCPT), took up vacant posts within the Brent service. Neither of the two “return to practice” students completed the course. Therefore the Health Visiting service in Brent has welcomed an additional five staff in the autumn period.

Consequently the vacancy rate in Brent has reduced from 12 WTE to 7 WTE. For the new academic year 2012-13 Brent has again been allocated its traditional five students with an additional three allocated by NHS London to support the shortfall in return to practice students (a total of 8 students).



## 5. Introduction of a Peripatetic Specialist Community Practice Teacher (SCPT) Role

In September 2012 the Trust approved the introduction of a Peripatetic SCPT within the boroughs of Brent and Ealing, as part of the Trust's recruitment & retention strategy. The primary reason for the approval of this new role is to assist with strengthening the Trust's capacity to train an increased number of Health Visitor students. The long term strategic goal is for students to work for the Trust on completion of the Health Visiting course thereby gradually reducing the number of vacant Health Visiting posts within the organisation.

The Peripatetic SCPT will take overall responsibility for three or more Specialist Community Practitioner students simultaneously that are each placed with a named experienced Health Visitor. This new role will be responsible for the planning of practical experience, teaching, supervision and assessment of students undertaking specialist community practitioner training in partnership with the experienced health visitors and the universities.

## 6. Student Health Visitors

Due to the lack of return to practice students across London, NHS London has requested that the ICO takes on an additional six HV students in 2012-13 making a total of 28 students this year. It can be seen that a successful part of the ICO recruitment strategy is to support students well during their training placements in Brent thereby resulting in a high percentage who choose to take up a permanent post with us once qualified.

## 7. Conclusion

The Health Visiting Service in Brent has maintained an average vacancy rate of 12 WTE (30.1%) over the past three years. The current vacancy level in November 2012 is 7 WTE (17.5%), an improvement of 12.6%. It is anticipated that the current strategy of supporting additional Health Visitor student placements within the service will result in those students also accepting a permanent post within the borough once they have qualified.

The recruitment & retention component of the Health Visitor Implementation Plan provides an opportunity to plan for an incremental increase in qualified staff based on a more equitable and needs-based approach. Overall the introduction of the new peripatetic training post is innovative and encouraging. This will assist the Trust to meet the agreed trajectory for 2012-13 & 2013-2014.

## 8. Recommendation

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the ongoing progress of Health Visiting recruitment in Brent.

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