

Can non-monetary benefits improve nurse retention rates?

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The House of Commons Committee on Health and Social Care recently described the NHS as being in the grip of the "greatest workforce crisis in its history," which is likely to have serious consequences for patient

care. In this context, researchers from Surrey looked into whether improvements to non-wage aspects of the job—such as improving training, autonomy and bringing clarity to a hospital's mission—impacted a hospital's retention figures, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Studying employee-level administrative data from English NHS hospitals, Surrey academics found that the 2017 Retention Direct Support Programme (RDSP) introduced by the NHS did improve nursing retention and decreased exits from the public [hospital](#) sector.

The RDSP was a targeted and clinically-led program providing direct guidance and support to decrease turnover rates across NHS hospital Trusts, especially those whose leaver rates were higher than the mean.

Dr. Giuseppe Moscelli, lead investigator of the study and Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Surrey, said:

"These findings are crucial in sectors affected by labor supply shortages, and they are especially policy-relevant in the health care context, where such shortages could be a matter of life or death for patients in NHS hospitals."

"Compared to training new nurses, which takes three to four years, improving [retention](#) is a time and cost-efficient solution to staff shortages, with the additional benefit of retaining specific human capital within the employing organization."

In the UK, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a 50,000-nurse staffing gap, and vacancy rates for registered nurses increased from 6% to 11% between 2013 and 2016.

Professor Jo Blanden, co-author of the study and a researcher at the

University of Surrey, added that "limiting excessive workforce turnover is important for the efficient functioning of healthcare organizations. Healthcare is a labor-intensive sector, and nurses are a vital part of its workforce, constituting about one-third of the healthcare workers in the United Kingdom."

Provided by University of Surrey

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