



Press Release – Monday 6th November 2017 – SAVE OUR HOSPITAL SERVICES

100 Nurses needed in Northern Devon Healthcare Trust

The national picture shows more nurses leaving nursing than entering the profession for the first time since the NHS was founded in 1947.

North Devon health trust is short of around 100 nurses, NHS managers have revealed.

There is no doubt about it, senior managers in the NHS have comprehensively failed the public, and the public health service that they provide by failing to ensure there are an adequate number of nurses and doctors to staff our hospitals and surgeries. In the document 'Your future Care' they admit these failings, *"Staff upon whom we have relied for many years are approaching retirement age and we are experiencing increasing difficulty in recruiting staff to replace them. This increases our reliance on temporary and agency staff which in turn impacts on the quality and continuity of service we can offer."*

The management of the NHS both locally and nationally have known for years of this approaching problem, and know for instance that half of the nursing workforce is within 10 years of retirement. Sarah Zanoni of the RCN in the South West said: "We are facing a bit of a demographic time-bomb as nurses are getting older, many are nearing retirement age. Whilst there has been a string of adverts over the last few weeks to recruit people to join the RAF there has been no major national campaign over the last 5 years to recruit nursing staff. Retired Devon GP Dr James Vann said: "There should have been some warning bells ringing two years ago when there should have been more nurses being trained." The problem is only now being recognised by local health managers, and the solution has not been to put more money into training local people but instead to try to "poach" nurses from other countries, often from countries less well developed than our own. Lorna Collingwood-Burke, Chief Nursing Officer for SD&T CCG and NEW Devon CCG said: "Planning for the future and ensuring that we have enough nurses in primary care in the longer term is a priority for us. Practice nurses' skills and experience are a key component to delivering care and are vital to system working."

John Wardman from the campaign group Save Our Hospital Services (SOHS) said, "As a result of this failure by managers at a local level Holsworthy and Ilfracombe hospital beds have both been close because of a shortage of nurses to adequately staff them similarly maternity units at Honiton, Okehampton, Crediton and Tiverton are also closed or under threat because of a shortage of nurses. Whilst the closure is "temporary", it seems unlikely nurses are going to be conjured up or trained anytime soon. One of the consequences of the failure to staff wards is the loss of hospital beds in over 19 community hospitals across Devon and the reduction of beds in many of the 8 remaining community hospitals, have meant patients who should have received 24/7 care in a community hospital are now cared for under the 'Care closer to home' experimental scheme where they have only limited professional care to address their needs, by a service that is stretched to breaking point."

"The Devon health budget cut of £557M means a planned loss of 600 healthcare professionals, equivalent to 11% of the nursing workforce, making the current staffing crisis even worse."

Ian Crawford, Media Liaison, SOHS ...07917 123 435...email Press-officer@sohs.org.uk