

NHS Scotland workforce statistics newsletter - 22 May 2026

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Welcome

This quarterly newsletter aims to keep users up to date with news from the Data Group. It will mainly focus on developments related to Official Statistics publications. We will also share updates on other TDI reports, along with helpful links to make navigating the website easier.

This is our second edition, and we would love to hear your feedback. Please let us know what you would like to see included in future newsletters.

You can get in touch by contacting the [Data Group](#).

Our next newsletter will be released in July.

Public Services Delivery Scotland

From 1st April 2026, NHS Education for Scotland (NES) and NHS National Services Scotland (NSS) have been joined together to create a new organisation called [Public Services Delivery Scotland](#) (PSD Scotland).

PSD Scotland will lead on [workforce planning and development](#), service infrastructure and innovation, with a particular focus on digital transformation. It will accelerate national programmes, alongside continued delivery of all existing NES and NSS services. It will operate in law through an expansion of the existing legal framework of the Common Services Agency (CSA), which is the legal entity formerly branded as NSS.

PSD Scotland will continue to produce the official statistics on the NHS Scotland workforce

There will be no interruption to the [publication timetable](#) announced by NES, and publications will be produced by the same teams, using the same data and processes described on NES's [Turas Data Intelligence website](#). PSD Scotland will be a producer of Official Statistics under Scottish legislation, ensuring that our statistical publications will continue to abide by the Code of Practice for Statistics and be regulated by the UK Office for Statistics Regulation.

Users can read more about the change to time series data for NES and NSS in the [news section of our website](#).

NHS Scotland workforce

Latest publication news

The latest Official Statistics publication was released on 3 March on [Turas Data Intelligence](#). There are three changes detailed below that affect this publication.

New disaggregation of medical grades

Two new sub-categories within Medical Grade have been introduced to provide a clearer breakdown of the previously reported "Other" Medical Grade category. These are "GP" and "Clinical Fellow". Further information on these subgroups is available in the [NHS Scotland Technical Document](#). You can select these groups in the [NHS Scotland dashboard](#) by using the Band/Grade filter, expanding "Medical grade" and then choosing "Other".

As these categories are newly reported, they reflect the data currently recorded in the HR system. However, there may be some data quality issues, particularly in relation to the recording of Clinical Fellows. Work is ongoing with NHS Boards to improve understanding of this staff group and to ensure accurate reporting of doctors who are not in specialty training posts leading to a Certificate of Completion of Training.

Transition from SWISS to eESS

Until now, [NHS Scotland employment figures](#) have been reported using data from SWISS, which receives information from ePayroll and eESS. During 2025, we developed a new way to send

data directly from eESS into the data platform used for reporting. The NHS Scotland workforce Official Statistics publication released on 3 March 2026 is the first to use data taken directly from eESS.

There are many benefits to this change. It will reduce the time to extract and process these data, and lower the risk of errors. It will also give us access to more information, as SWISS only includes some of the data held in eESS.

During the changeover, the data and new processes went through several stages of testing. This included comparing data from SWISS with data taken directly from eESS. An [exception report](#) was also checked with colleagues in NHS Boards to confirm the data at 30 November 2025.

The figures reported from SWISS are comparable with eESS, and the overall difference (total whole time equivalent and headcount) between the two systems is very small. There are some larger differences within some NHS boards, and there are some variables that have a higher level of missing data (for example, specialty). There is further information detailed in the [NHS Scotland Workforce data quality report](#).

General Practitioner trainees and vocational dental practitioners

Previously, General Practitioner (GP) trainees and Vocational Dental Practitioners (VDPs) undertaking placements in GP or dental practices were recorded under their board of employment, NHS Education for Scotland. This differed from the [approach taken for Resident Doctors training in other specialties](#), where individuals are reported under the NHS Board of placement. The process has now been updated so that GP trainees and VDPs are reported under the NHS Board of the practice where they are undertaking their training. At 31 December 2025, this change affects approximately 850 GP trainees and 160 VDPs.

Users will see these changes reflected in the NHS Scotland workforce section of the [dashboard](#), where data are sourced from eESS. The Primary Care section, which uses different data sources, is unaffected. This update should improve comparability between the two sections of the publication.

What to expect in the next NHS Scotland workforce Official Statistics publication

The next NHS Scotland workforce Official Statistics publication will be released on 2 June 2026 (based on the 31 March 2026 census). There will be updates to NHS Scotland employment, vacancies, turnover, sickness absence, and bank and agency. We will update the National Treatment Centre workforce statistics and the outcome of the review of these statistics will also be released on 2 June.

Primary care workforce data for general practitioners and dentists will be updated. For the first time, we will include the number of general practitioners per capita, both nationally and at a health board level. This will be for general practitioners excluding trainees. This will match what we already produce for Dentists, and aid in cross UK comparison, a requirement made in the recent OSR assessment.

Reporting of vacancy data in the NHS Scotland workforce publication

Vacancy data are provided by NHS Boards to PSD Scotland four times a year (31 March, 30 June, 30 September, 31 December). These data cover vacant posts within the medical and dental consultant, nursing and midwifery, and allied health professions job families and are reported in the [NHS Scotland workforce Official Statistics publication](#).

As NHS Boards have adopted the [JobTrain](#) system to manage recruitment activity, most Boards now use JobTrain data to complete the vacancy surveys. On 7 March 2023, we [announced](#) our intention to review the vacancy data. Since then, we have been exploring the potential use of JobTrain data to support current vacancy reporting, applying the same definitions as before:

“a post which has been cleared for advert after being through the redeployment process (internal or external advert) and remains a vacancy until an individual starts in the post”

Following feedback from NHS Boards, our investigation has focussed on assessing the quality of information on dates and whole time equivalent (WTE) for all Agenda for Change job adverts. This has been supported by the National Recruitment Reporting Short Life Working Group.

At present, the quality of this information is not good enough to use for national reporting. This is due to variation in how JobTrain is used between NHS Boards, and the lack of validation applied to data inputted into the system. In particular, the length of time a vacancy has been open for is one of the hardest metrics to replicate from JobTrain data.

We continue to work with NHS Boards to understand their processes and how these can be adapted to allow consistent reporting of vacancies at both a local and a national level.

This summer, we will begin producing separate recruitment activity reports. This will include a rolling 2-week average of the number of posts advertised for each job family and sub job family (including those that are not available in the vacancy reporting). The data will undergo a quality assurance process with NHS Boards before determining whether these statistics can be published as [Official Statistics in Development](#) later in the year. During the development we will be in touch with end users to understand what is important to them.

We acknowledge our data providers support for the vacancy data collection which underpins our publications. Any questions or comments are encouraged and can be sent to datagroup@nes.scot.nhs.uk.

Psychology and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) workforce

The latest [NHS Scotland Psychology Services Workforce publication](#) and [NHS Scotland CAMHS workforce publication](#) were released on 3 March.

As part of work to develop a report on the national mental health workforce, we worked with NHS boards over the summer to improve the accuracy of the data we collect about the CAMHS and Psychology Services workforces. The improvements made have enabled us to combine the role-specific information we hold on these staff employments with the more general employment information we access from administrative data.

The next publication will be released on 2 June 2026 (based on the 31 March 2026 census). This publication will include updates to the employment, vacancy, turnover and training data.

Medical specialty training and transition to the GP workforce

On 9 December 2025 NES published new statistics on [Medical specialty training and transition to the GP workforce](#) as Official Statistics in Development (OSID).

In line with the Office for Statistics Regulation's (OSR) requirements for OSID, we produced a [development plan](#) which outlines the content of the statistics and the rationale for producing them, the timing of releases, and the expected users of the statistics.

We are making changes to this plan. The 30 June 2026 publication will contain GP training only. In line with our original plan, the publication will add Training Region and Health Board breakdowns of the GP training and employment data. We have also made several presentational improvements to the dashboard in response to feedback. However, we will not be including all other medical specialties in this publication. A full update is available on [TDI](#).

Mental Health Workforce

On 30 June 2026, we will publish new statistics about the mental health workforce in NHS Scotland. The publication will include statistics about staff in post on 31 March 2026 using a new method that helps us count, for the first time, NHS Scotland staff working in mental health services across all age groups, specialisms and settings.

These statistics will be released as Official Statistics in Development. We have published a [development plan](#) which outlines the content of the statistics and the rationale for producing them, the timing of releases, and the expected users. We also provide details of how to get in touch with us to provide feedback on this plan and on the statistics once they are available.

We will publish the new mental health workforce statistics in addition to the quarterly statistics we release on the national NHS Scotland workforce, the CAMHS workforce and the psychology workforce, which will be published on 2 June 2026 for the 31 March 2026 census date.

Clinical Nurse Specialist workforce

In June 2026 we will publish a new report on the Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) workforce in NHS Scotland. This will be the first publication since 2018 which provides a point-in-time analysis of the CNS workforce employed by NHS Scotland on 31 March 2026.

Publication on the CNS workforce across NHS Scotland was paused in 2018 due to significant data quality concerns. A national review, through a Short Life Working Group, was commissioned to review the CNS role. The findings of the review were published on the 5th of August 2021: [Review into Clinical Nurse Specialist Roles](#). Multiple recommendations were presented which included improvement of the CNS workforce data capture.

Through an established working group, PSD Scotland (Data Group and Nursing, Midwifery and AHP directorate) has worked with other NHS Health Boards to conduct census surveys in 2023 and 2024 to review and improve identification and data capture of the CNS workforce and their specialties and subspecialties.

The next census is planned for the 31st of March 2026 where all boards will be requested to update CNS workforce information in eESS for staff in post on this date. The June 2026 publication will be based on the workforce data extracted from eESS and will report on the findings of the census.

The publication will be released as Official Statistics in Development.

New publication on Community Pharmacy Workforce

On 24 February 2026, NHS Education for Scotland (NES) published the [Community Pharmacy Workforce report](#), which includes findings from the recent Community Pharmacy Survey. The survey provides information on staff and vacancies for the week ending 13th September 2025. It was undertaken by NES in conjunction with [Community Pharmacy Scotland](#) (CPS). Data on staff and vacancies were provided by independent community pharmacies and pharmacies within the [Company Chemists' Association](#) (CCA).

The report presents workforce data and statistics for all years the survey has been conducted, and includes response rates, headcount and whole time equivalent for all role groups and types, and vacancy rates. In addition to the written report, an [interactive dashboard](#) has been produced for the first time.

This data is published as non-official statistics.

Assessment of statistics about the NHS workforce in Scotland

The Office for Statistical Regulation (OSR) has completed an assessment of three Official Statistics publications: NHS Scotland workforce, CAMHS workforce and Psychology workforce.

In our [January newsletter](#), we shared what we had been working on as part of the [six requirements](#) that the OSR identified we need to be met for these statistics to become Accredited Official Statistics.

Over the last few months we have made further progress.

We have developed a corrections and revisions policy, statistical disclosure control protocol and assessment procedure and a user engagement strategy. These policies and strategies are available on [Turas Data Intelligence](#).

We have started our review into the Pre-Release Access (PRA) list. Our first phase, which was introduced for the publications released on 3 March, has involved limiting access to PRA to Chief Executive and Communication Team officials. The second phase will be assessing those who receive PRA at the Scottish Government.

We will keep our users updated on our progress.

User engagement opportunities

As part of our developing user engagement plan, the Data Group are committed to running stakeholder engagement workshops on topics important to us and our users. When resources allow, these sessions will take place several times a year and focus on a specific topic. This will allow us better understand the views of our users and prioritise developments.

In conjunction with our user experience expert and web developer, our first engagement activity will focus on discovering and accessing content relating to the NHS Scotland workforce statistics on Turas Data Intelligence (TDI). Feedback from users and the OSR audit highlighted that some users have difficulties finding what they need. We will also assess the usability of the [NHS Scotland workforce official statistics dashboard](#).

We have developed a short survey to understand how users currently use TDI and our Official Statistics dashboard, including what works well and what challenges they face. The feedback will inform one or more user engagement sessions, where we will explore ways to address these issues.

The output of the sessions will be a list of recommended improvements. We will assess the potential value and resources required, prioritise actions accordingly, and communicate these decisions to all our users.

If you would like to take part, please complete the [survey](#) by 12 June 2026.

Links to content on Turas Data Intelligence

Below are some links to content on TDI which our users might find helpful.

- The latest Official Statistics can be found here: [Official Statistics on the workforce of NHS Scotland](#).
- Detail of each [data source](#) used within the publications are provided.
- A [publication timetable](#) provides the release date for each publication up to a year in advance.
- A list of events that have [impacted data or reporting](#) is available.
- Future [development plans](#) explains what we are working on.
- There is [guidance available](#) on how to navigate our reports and dashboards, including how to use the filters or export data.