

Safer Staffing Policy

This policy sets out to outline a clear escalation process from frontline staff to board describing the steps that may be required to ensure safe staffing levels to meet every patient's needs on each shift/community team.

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Contents

1.0 Policy on a page	3
2.0 Introduction and Purpose	4
3.0 Policy Requirements and Objectives	6
4.0 Process	6
5.0 Generic Principles of Safe Staffing for Community Services	9
6.0 Annual Establishment Review	10
7.0 Roster Management	11
8.0 Factors to consider when monitoring /reviewing your planned nurse staffing levels. ...	12
9.0 Escalation of Staffing Concerns	13
10.0 Red Flag Events /Tipping points	13
11.0 Safe Staffing Decision Tool and Escalation Framework for Inpatients.....	15
12.0 Roles and Responsibilities	16
13.0 Consent	18
Appendix One: Definitions	19
Appendix Two: Flowchart	20
Appendix Three: Operational Pressure Escalation Levels	21
Appendix Four: Annual Establishment Review Template	24
Appendix Five: Staffing and Safety Assurance Templates	28
Appendix Six: LPT Process mapped to NQB expectations	32
Appendix Seven:.....	33
Version control and summary of changes	33
Responsibilities	33
Governance	33
Compliance Measures	34
Training Requirements.....	34
References	34

1.0 Policy on a page

Summary and aim

What is this policy for?

- The Developing Workforce Safeguards (2018) mandates all trusts to take the required actions to ensure staffing is safe, effective, and sustainable. LPT has ensured this guidance has been embedded into our safe staffing policy.
- The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance on the trust safe staffing standards to maintain safe and sustainable staffing levels in all our clinical services. This includes when and how clinical services review their budgeted establishments to ensure their staffing levels meet the needs of patients and their families/ carer's.
- The policy aims to support staff with ensuring we are consistent in our approach and have a clear framework for escalation and management of staffing models in our services for the best patient care.
- The policy is an overarching set of principles and guidance that guides people. It will then be adapted and locally standardised to operate in practice.

Key requirements

What do I need to follow?

- It is absolutely vital to have clear escalation processes for frontline staff to activate if staffing risks continue, increase or mitigation proves insufficient to ensure patient safety and care quality is maintained. The policy clearly describes key fundamental principles to ensure staffing is safe, effective, and sustainable such as:
 - Daily operational staffing review table
 - Annual establishment reviews
 - Roster management
 - Clear escalation of concerns
 - Red flag events/tipping points
 - Safe staffing decision tool and escalation framework
 - Dynamic Risk Assessment and process.

The Policy also describes the process we have within our trust for:

- Safe staffing escalation
- Safe staffing meetings and escalation routes
- Monthly safe staffing review process
- Reporting, monitoring and governance and
- Levels of accountability from nurse in charge, ward sister/community team leader to the Director of Nursing, AHP and Quality.

Target audience

Clinical and non-clinical staff

Training

Safer Nursing Care Tool,
Community Nursing Safer Staffing Tool II,
E-Rostering, Annual Establishment Review Training.

2.0 Introduction and Purpose

- 2.1 Evidence- based decision making on safe and effective staffing is a requirement for all NHS organisations. The information and resources in this policy will enable and support the trust to make these decisions and ensure safe, sustainable and productive workforce planning and compliance with annual governance reporting on safe staffing.
- 2.2 The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance on the trust safe staffing standards to maintain safe and sustainable staffing levels in all our clinical services. This includes when and how clinical services review their budgeted establishments to ensure their staffing levels meet the needs of patients.
- 2.3 It will also set out steps to be taken in our clinical areas where staffing levels are not adequate and or the planned staffing levels are insufficient to meet patient care needs safely. This will include the escalation required to ensure clear decisions are taken to keep patients and staff safe, including actions to mitigate the risks.
- 2.4 The policy supports and guides the operational management and deployment of nursing staff daily to ensure there is the right number of staff, with the right skills, in the right place to deliver safe and effective patient care. Safe staffing can be complex and takes account of multiple factors; patient acuity and dependency and skill mix as well as numbers.
- 2.5 The Developing Workforce Safeguards (2018) clearly outline the requirements for all trusts with in-patient beds to publish their staff fill rates (actual versus planned) in hours, taking into consideration day and night shifts for both registered and non-registered staff. This information appears on the NHS choices website and the trust website.
- 2.6 Ensure each in-patient ward meets the required standards to publicly display staff numbers on a shift-by-shift basis, with 'welcome to the ward' boards being updated at the start of each shift by the nurse in charge. This should detail the nursing staffing numbers for the day and night shift.
- 2.7 This policy uses the term 'nursing staff' in order to achieve mandated safe staffing levels and patient to registered nurse ratios. The trust also considers Allied Health Professionals (AHP) and /Multi-disciplinary Team (MDT) members who are contributing to care delivery within the rotational shift pattern and as reported nationally in our monthly safe staffing reviews. For the purposes of this policy both will be considered in the context of safe staffing.
- 2.8 This policy should be considered in conjunction with LPTs Electronic Rostering Policy, Preceptorship and Probation policies.
- 2.9 This policy has been developed in reference to the safe and sustainable staffing framework - 'Supporting NHS providers to deliver the right staff, with the right skills, in the right place and the right time: Safe Sustainable and productive staffing, published by the National Quality Board (NQB) in July 2016 and NHS Improvement Developing workforce Safeguards (2018).
- 2.10 Both documents clearly outline the framework, expectations and recommendations

required for safe staffing and workforce decisions and assessment of the trust's compliance utilising a 'triangulated approach' to deciding staffing requirements.

LPT is committed to ensuring our patients receive high quality compassionate care and to ensure this is achievable there must be the right number of staff, with the right skills in the right place at the right time.

- 2.11 Nursing, Allied Health Professionals Psychology, medics, and care staff, working as part of wider multidisciplinary teams, play a critical role in securing high quality compassionate care and excellent outcomes for patients and service users. There are established and evidenced links between outcomes and whether organisations have the right people, with the right skills, in the right place at the right time.
- 2.12 LPT have a number of mechanisms in place to ensure our in-patient wards and community teams are safely staffed to support safe and effective patient care the following principles support this expectation.
- The safety and well-being of patients and the health and wellbeing of staff is paramount, the trust requires staff to work flexibly to meet these needs, within their scope of professional practice.
 - To support safe and efficient staffing, all staff working on inpatient wards should be rostered via the Trust electronic rostering system.
- 2.13 Annual Establishment Reviews must take place with a 6-month review for all inpatient wards and yearly for community teams (where there is a validated evidence-based tool), using a triangulated approach the outcome is reported to the Executive board. Establishments describe the number of whole-time equivalents funded in the area, detailing the number of staff required per role for each shift, including headroom to cover staff unavailability and is individual to each ward/service/community team:
- Staffing levels will be reviewed on a minimum of shift-by-shift basis. A daily safe staffing huddle takes place in directorates, undertaken by Ward Sister/Charge Nurses/Clinical operational managers/community team leaders and/or Matrons, Clinical Service Managers and Heads of Nursing (where staffing concerns are escalated to ensure safety and effectiveness).
 - Where concerns about safe staffing are made, we have a duty to investigate, respond and resolve in a timely way to maintain safety and provide feedback to those raising concerns or through Freedom to Speak Up routes Staff feedback on safe staffing is included in establishment reviews and board reports.
 - Safe staffing measures are aligned to local managerial knowledge and Directorate operational management process across the trust. This is in addition to daily Operational Pressure Escalation Level (OPEL) reporting.
 - Monthly review process to monitor staffing levels are in place to publish in patient fill rates (externally to NHS England and Improvement and on the NHS choices/LPT's website) and reported to trust board bimonthly. Six monthly safe staffing reports including establishment reviews are also reported to trust board.

3.0 Policy Requirements and Objectives

3.1 This policy applies to all Ward and community-based nursing and AHP teams.

3.2 This policy describes:

- Planned nurse and AHP staffing levels e.g., roster management.
- Thresholds and Tipping points
- Process for monthly review of nursing and AHP safe staffing
- Process for bi-annual review of nursing establishments and annual AHP establishments
- Daily operational review, RAG rating and actions to mitigate risks.
- Clear escalation process from Ward to Board.

3.3 Compliance with National Quality Board (NQB) Expectations

This policy meets the National Quality Board (NQB) expectations for safe, sustainable and productive staffing by identifying:

- Board accountability for safe staffing decisions and oversight
- Use of evidence-based tools (e.g., SNCT, MHOST, LDOST, CNSSTII)
- Daily operational oversight and real-time staffing deployment
- Clear escalation processes from ward to board
- Annual establishment reviews using a triangulated approach
- Transparent reporting of fill rates and CHPPD
- Staff engagement and mechanisms to raise concerns
- Workforce planning aligned to patient need, acuity and dependency
- Consideration of new roles and skill-mix
- Strong governance and assurance processes.”

3.4 Compliance with CQC Regulation 18: Staffing

This policy supports compliance with Regulation 18 (Staffing) of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 by ensuring that:

- Sufficient numbers of suitably qualified, competent, skilled and experienced staff are deployed
- Staffing levels are reviewed shift-by-shift and escalated where risks arise
- Staff receive appropriate training, supervision, induction and support
- Workforce planning includes headroom for training, supervision and non-direct care
- Concerns about staffing are escalated, investigated and acted upon.”

4.0 Process

4.1 Daily Operational Staffing Review Table

The Nurse in Charge (NIC)/community team leader (CTL) is responsible for reviewing staffing levels at the start of a shift for both the actual shift and oncoming shift. The shift will be RAG rated using the thresholds and tipping points:

Level of Risk	RAG rating	Thresholds/Tipping Points	Actions to mitigate risk
Low Risk		- Planned staffing levels met. - Ward teams are managing workload and associated patient acuity and dependency. - Minimum of two LPT employed registered nurses (substantive or bank) on shift.	Sudden changes in acuity and dependency are escalated by the NIC to the Ward Sister/Charge Nurse/Matron/CTL or On Call Manager Out of Hours (OOH)
Moderate Risk		- Planned staffing levels not met (less than 80%) - Skill mix is not met (less than 80%) - Increased patient acuity and dependency - Increased number of patients requiring increased levels of therapeutic observation or specialising - Greater than or equal to 50% of registered nurses on shift are employed by LPT. - Increase in harms associated with Nurse Sensitive Indicators - The ward can be managed using the reduced staffing available	- Ward Sister/Charge Nurse to work clinically. - Matron or On Call Manager to review staffing levels and patient acuity and dependency across the service to identify staff who can be deployed to support area. - Dynamic Risk Assessment (DRA) to be completed and discussed with Matron, On-Call Manager and Head/Deputy Head of Nursing for any agency request. - Staffing review with AHPs and other Ward based staff to identify patient care support

Level of Risk	RAG rating	Thresholds/Tipping Points	Actions to mitigate risk
High Risk		- Planned staffing levels not met (less than 50%) - Skill mix is not met (less than 50%) - Only one registered nurse on shift (NICE Red Flag) - More than 50% of nursing staff are temporary workers. - Serious Incident associated with Nurse Sensitive Indicators - Increased patient acuity and dependency	- Ward Sister/Charge Nurse and Matron to work clinically. - Matron, Head/Deputy Head of Nursing or On Call Manager to review staffing levels and patient acuity and dependency across the service to identify staff who can be deployed to support area. - Staffing review with AHPs and other Ward based staff to identify patient care support. - Consider taking staff off shifts following day and bring into work to cover the gap. - Request staff to start a shift early or finish a shift late. - Consider reviewing any planned admissions if patient safety is compromised. - Liaise with Community teams for support. - DRA to be completed and discussed with Matron, On-Call Manager and Head /Deputy Head of Nursing for an off-framework request
Unmitigated High Risk		High risk that has not been mitigated. Deputy Head and Head of Nursing to investigate and review	Such an assessment may require a decision to: - increase staffing numbers to meet patient demand. - partially or fully close a ward or service for a determined period until the issues are resolved. - temporarily reduce service delivery or take another demand- management approach to redeploy the available workforce to areas of critical need to sustain safe and adequate care delivery. - close the service, facility,

		or model of care in the long term. • implement business continuity plans.
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If all actions have been taken and the staffing level is deemed to be at an unacceptable level follow the Dynamic Risk Assessment (DRA) process which can be found on staff net and escalate to Matron/Team manager / Head of Nursing/Directorate Directors in hours and Manager on Call Out of Hours.

These processes support compliance with the NQB expectations for real-time staffing oversight and regulation 18 requirements for safe staffing.

5.0 Generic Principles of Safe Staffing for Community Services - (Based on Operational Pressures Escalation Levels OPEL Rating Risk Scoring)

Green Low risk/ OPEL one	Amber Moderate Risk/OPEL Two	RED High Risk /OPEL Three	BLACK Unmitigated Risk High Risk/OPEL Four
Able to accept new referrals and meet current caseloads and respond provide on-going care. Staffing available to match on going service need and provision of full-service delivery	Unable to meet planned visits on caseload. Unable to respond to unscheduled service response times in one locality. Unable to meet planned visits in one locality or more. Service demand in a single locality outweighs the staff available.	Unable to guarantee non-urgent planned or unscheduled service response times in more than one locality. Service demand in more than one locality outweighs the staff available	Unable to provide urgent and targeted interventions within response time across the service line. Cancelling routine clinic appointments to release staff. All community teams across all service lines and localities experiencing significant issues impacting delivery of safe care and provision of full-service delivery

In the event of staffing below planned staffing levels or unexpected increases in patient acuity and dependency the staffing levels are reviewed, and rag rated (GREEN/AMBER/RED/BLACK) with escalation actions at every level and OPEL risk assessment scoring for community teams. (See appendix 5 for OPEL Rating Risk Scoring for Directorates and Community Teams).

6.0 Annual Establishment Review

- 6.1 Annual establishment reviews fulfil NQB expectations for evidence-based workforce planning and triangulated decision-making.
- 6.0 Each ward/community team has agreed planned staffing levels in line with their budgeted establishments. Planned staffing is the established number and skill mix of staff per shift and reinforced by agreed ratios of registered versus unregistered staff.
- 6.1 The agreed budgeted establishment forms the basis of rosters (and subsequent budget). For inpatient services this involves the 24-hour safe staffing nursing roster and Community teams this may also include the wider MDT.
- 6.2 All in patient wards must undertake a full establishment review every 12 months with a lighter review completed within the following 6 months.
- 6.3 Establishment reviews must include the use of evidence-based workforce planning tools (where best practice guidance exists) For Nursing the Directorate of Mental Health, has the license to use the Mental Health Optimal staffing Tool (MHOST). For Community Health Services In patient wards the trust has the license for the Safer Nursing Care Tool (SNCT) and for learning disability and autism services within Families, Young People and Children's directorate, the trust utilises a non-licensed Learning Disability Optimal Staffing Tool (LDOST) to inform professional judgement and triangulation.
- 6.4 Community Health Services Nursing Teams progress with the implementation of the Community Nursing Safer Staffing Tool (CNSSTII) following national launch, using the same process as inpatient establishment reviews.
- 6.5 All other nursing and AHP clinical services should undertake demand/capacity/activity analysis. They may choose to use additional evidence - based tools e.g. Benchmarking databases, Ratios. Timed tasks, Telford Professional Judgment as appropriate to their service area.
- 6.6 Establishment reviews must include professional judgement of the local contextual factors e.g., general workload and acuity, environmental factors and layout of a ward, skill mix of the team and patient/service user demographic to support decision making.
- 6.7 Professional judgement is a recognised and researched workforce planning method and forms part of the triangulated review of safe staffing establishments. Clinical professional judgement is a crucial element to interpret results from evidence-based tools, take account of local context such as ward, patient and staff factors and are used to inform the skill mix of the staff. Professional judgement also used at all levels to inform real time decisions about staffing taken to reflect changes in case mix, acuity, dependency, and activity.
- 6.8 Staffing establishments should take account of the need to allow clinical staff the time to undertake non-direct care such as mandatory training and continuous professional development, meet revalidation requirements, and fulfil teaching, mentorship, and supervision roles, including the support of preregistration and undergraduate students. Some of which is included in Headroom/uplift but not all is reflected.
- 6.9 Professional judgement is critically important when applying review of nursing and AHP staff factors/activities other than direct patient care including:
 - Communication with relatives and carers, MDT, discharge planning
 - Management of the team and ward, nurse in charge duties, team leader

- Supervising, mentoring and assessing staff.
 - Incident management, staff appraisal, audits, care reviews.
- 6.10 Establishment reviews must include a review of Nurse/AHP sensitive indicators/outcomes (of previous 6 months) where best practice guidance exists e.g. considering quality, patient safety experience and feedback.
- 6.11 Each service will need to identify the relevant outcomes to triangulate with their staffing levels to understand if staffing levels are delivering a high-quality service. This may include quality metrics and clinical outcomes, patient and staff experience data, people productivity data.
- 6.12 Formal establishment reviews must be completed using the Annual Establishment Setting Review template (see Appendix 4 as appropriate).

7.0 Roster Management

- 7.1 Effective roster management is essential in supporting high quality patient care by optimising the skill mix and use of staff time enabling Managers to ensure that services are staffed in a consistent, safe, and cost-effective way.
- 7.2 Efficient rostering provides equity for all staff by enabling impartial allocation of shifts and with advanced planning of rosters allowing for enhanced health and wellbeing and greater work/life balance.
- 7.3 Roster Management and shift allocation must not discriminate against any protected characteristic, such as age, disability, religion or sex as per Equality Act 2010
- 7.4 All clinical services should adhere to the principles of roster management outlined below. In addition, services that use Health Roster must ensure that rosters are created in line with the Electronic Rostering Policy.
- 7.5 The principles of good roster management are:
- Rosters must be built around the budgeted establishment.
 - Rosters must be created, reviewed, and approved by managers within agreed timescales to ensure safe staffing and allow staff adequate notice of shifts.
 - Rosters must comply with contractual, national and local guidelines on safe working hours, and Working Time Regulations. See the Working Time Regulations Policy for further information.
 - Rosters must support fair and equitable allocation of shifts, including nights, weekends, and bank holidays.
 - Staff unavailability (e.g. sickness absence, special leave, study leave, annual leave, management time) must be recorded on the roster and must be managed in line with relevant Trust policies.
 - Rules on the number of staff who can be unavailable at any one time will vary from service to service. This should be reviewed and agreed at least annually. For services using Health Roster, these rules can be built into the system.
 - Flexible working agreements and any other employee working restrictions (e.g. recommendations from Occupational Health) must be kept under regular review and be managed in line with relevant Trust policies. Flexible working policy can be found on Staffnet.
 - Overtime should not be routinely rostered.
 - Shifts not filled by substantive staff should be made available to bank staff

following appropriate approval and authorisation.

- Where available, validated tools must be used to identify the number and skill mix of staff required for the service area. Where these tools are not available, clinical judgement and local data should be used instead.
- To help achieve an appropriate skill-mix, consideration should be given to the key skills of available staff (e.g. Intermediate Life Support trained, Safety Intervention trained, can be 'in charge' of clinical area). In considering appropriate skill mix each professional group's unique contribution should be accounted for.

7.6 Responsibilities for good roster management are:

- Ward Sisters/ Charge Nurses/team leaders are responsible and accountable for the provision of safe staffing levels to meet patient needs and service demands by preparing and managing the team roster in accordance with the principles of good roster management outlines above.
- The Nurse in charge is responsible for ensuring the roster is an accurate record of staff who worked each shift and to ensure care hours per patient day (CHPPD) reporting is accurate.
- Matrons/community team leaders/team and operational managers are responsible and accountable for reviewing, overseeing and approving rosters for their area, ensuring they are in accordance with the principles of good roster management outlines above.
- Directorate Management Teams to have oversight and scrutiny ensuring roster sign off arrangements and business continuity plans are linked prior to and during peak times of annual leave/school holidays e.g., Mid-term school breaks, Easter, Christmas etc.

7.7 Business continuity in relation to rostering should consider the following factors:

- A clear understanding of in-patient ward/community team average % of absences and vacancies, to be considered at peak holiday periods and considered when % or number of staff off on annual leave has been confirmed.
- Any late/last minute annual leave changes to be made and approved by matron/team manager.
- Ward/community team reserve lists (of staff available and offering to work) to be formulated in readiness for 'step up' as needed.
- Ensure rosters and staffing levels are being reviewed daily and any gaps are being escalated through Directorates with plans in place to ensure safe staffing levels during peak holiday periods.

8.0 Factors to consider when monitoring /reviewing your planned nurse staffing levels.

- 8.1 Newly qualified registered nurse (preceptee) in Preceptorship period typically requires a period of supernumerary time e.g., 150 hours (4 to 6 weeks pro rata) when the Preceptee is not in the planned staffing levels/numbers and is extra to staffing to allow the Preceptee to work under the supervision of another registered practitioner. In some services, particularly where there is an expectation of lone working, e.g., Community teams this supernumerary period may be longer.
- 8.2 Dependant on previous experience, newly recruited support staff may need a short period of supernumerary working, typically 1-2 weeks pro rata.
- 8.3 New member of staff currently working within the 6-month Probation period e.g., Return to Practice nurse period.

- 8.4 Registered Nursing Associates (RNA)
- 8.5 Under-graduate Students.

9.0 Escalation of Staffing Concerns

- 9.1 Designating the nurse in charge for each shift is the responsibility of the Ward or Team Manager. The Ward or Team Manager must understand that they are delegating authority for the management of the ward/team for a span of duty in their absence. The Ward Manager/team manager needs to be sure that the person to whom they have delegated this responsibility is sufficiently competent, and that he/she will have sufficient knowledge of the service user needs and routines to manage the shift safely.
- 9.2 The Nurse in Charge of any shift should be a substantive member of LPT staff unless a regular member of temporary staff has received additional training and supervision to undertake the nurse in charge role. This will be identified on the e-rostering system. In the event of a last-minute shortage of staff, a substantive member of staff must be moved from another inpatient ward to cover the nurse in charge role.
- 9.3 The nurse in charge of a ward /community team leader is the designated professional responsible for the daily operational staffing review, identification of the staffing escalation position and the identification of any red flag staffing events.
- 9.4 Escalation processes ensure that risks to safe staffing are identified and mitigated in line with Regulation 18.

10.0 Red Flag Events /Tipping points

- 10.1 Red flags are those circumstances stipulated by NICE (JULY 2014) which are early warning signs that signal risk of harm, and patients are being made vulnerable. The red flags outline 'tipping factors and thresholds that would 'tip' the risk rating to a high/red risk from a moderate/amber risk.
- 10.2 Should any of these occur or is identified as being at risk of occurring, it should prompt immediate escalation by the registered nurse in charge to the ward/community team leader and to the matron who will investigate and complete an e-iRF and progress through directorate processes.
- 10.3 Red flags/tipping points:

Key National Staffing Red Flags

- Less than 2 RN per shift – e.g., only 1 registered nurse where 2 were required (in patients)
- >50% temporary staffing utilisation
- Fill rates below 80%
- Care Hours Per Patient Day (CHPPD) below service average = less care hours
- Ratio limits: National nursing research flags a ratio limit of more than 8 patients per RN as a critical red flag associated with higher risk of mortality and patient harm.
- A shortfall of more than 8 hours, or greater than 25% of the total required

registered nurse time needed for a given shift.

Associated Care and Clinical Flags

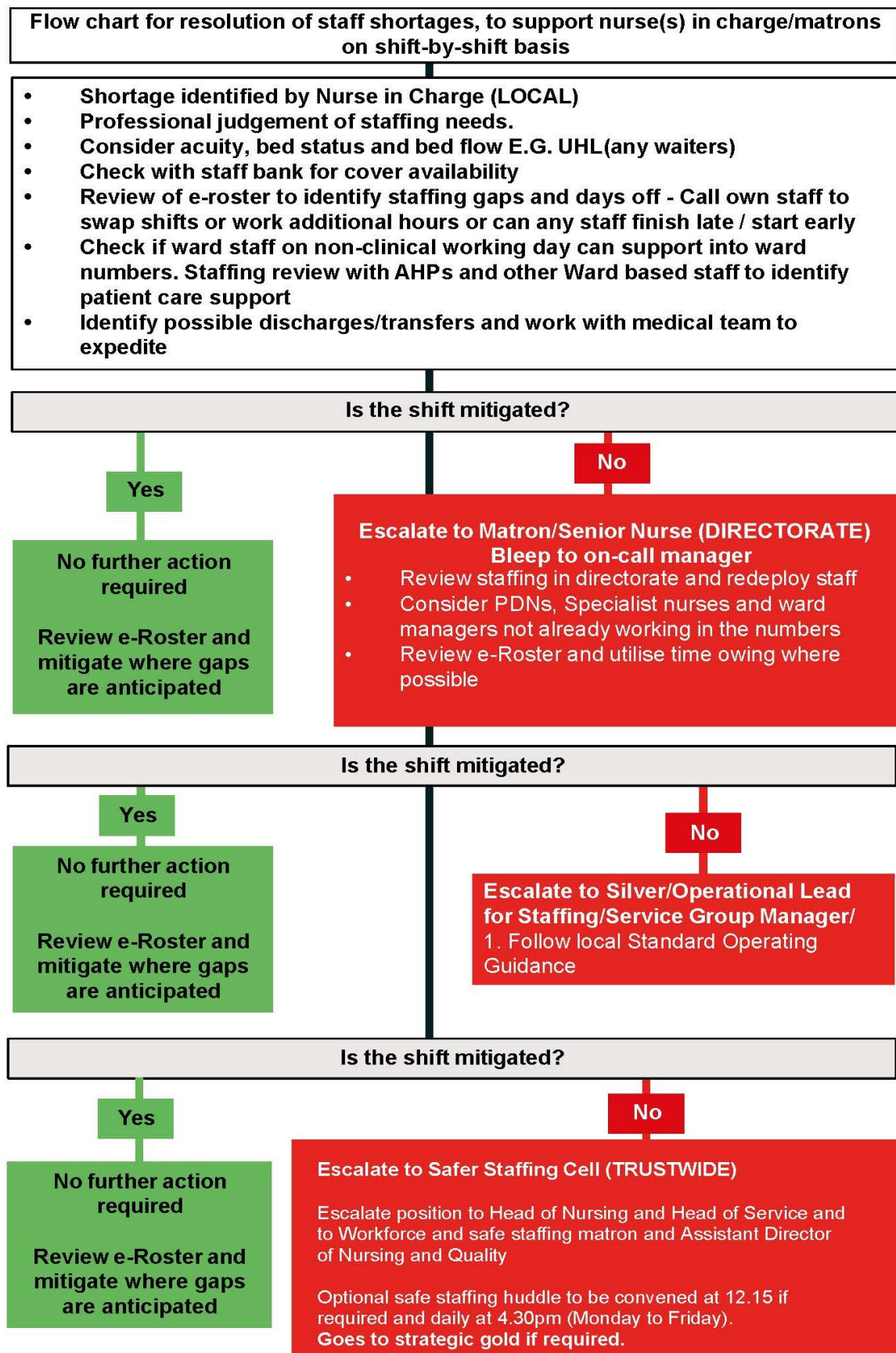
- Increase in nurse sensitive indicator harm.
- Missed care – essential care tasks, therapeutic intervention.
- Unable to facilitate escorted leave.
- Serious incidents – staffing as a contributory factor.
- Increased complaints
- Missed breaks - staff. The duration of un-paid breaks are determined and provided in accordance with the amount of hours worked on that shift.
- Prioritised assessments/clinics/visits are not carried out or cancelled.
- Consistent deferred visits
- Essential visits not covered.

Associated care and red flags are monitored over time and on-going analysis linked to monthly and six-monthly safe staffing reporting, annual establishment reviews and biannual reviews.

- 10.4 In the event of when operational staffing has been reviewed and despite proactive interventions the risk remains high, the safe staffing escalation framework is required to ensure that risks are identified, escalations and actions are taken to mitigate the risks.

11.0 Safe Staffing Decision Tool and Escalation Framework for Inpatients

Draft safe staffing decision tool and escalation framework for In-patients



11.1 In the event whereby Directorate Staffing & Safety review identifies high risk (Red)

staffing depleted or unmitigated high risk (Black) then support, and action is escalated to the trust wide Matron for safe staffing and/or assistant director for nursing and quality. The Staffing and Safety huddle is convened and staffing, and safety assurance templates completed (Appendix 5). Please see Staffnet for The Trust wide bed closure SOP.

- 11.2 The management of safe staffing is dynamic with unplanned workforce challenges. It is essential therefore that each directorate adopts the overarching principles and guidance identified in this policy, including the daily operational staffing review and safe staffing escalation framework to recognise changes in demand and react dynamically to mitigate the risk. It is acknowledged the overarching principles and guidance will be adapted and locally standardised to operate in practice e.g., CHS in-patient Safe Staffing SOP also found on Staffnet.

12.0 Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities including duties of relevant individuals and groups.

Lead Executive Director

Group Chief Nurse/Executive Director of Nursing, Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) and Quality

- Is the accountable officer responsible to the Board for ensuring that the right staff, with the right skills, are in the right place at the right time.
- Will support the development, monitoring and review of this policy, ensuring it reflects national guidance.

Deputy/Assistant Directors of Nursing and Quality and Associate Director of Allied Health Professionals and Quality

Are responsible for:

- Ensuring that there are processes in place to maintain appropriate safety and quality for patients.
- Provide professional and strategic leadership to all nursing and AHP staff.
- Ensuring there is a process in place to support the review of clinical team's establishments and in Trust policy.
- Authoring the 6 monthly board report and ensuring the content is reflective of establishment reviews which have taken place.
- Supporting and deputising for the Group Chief Nurse/Executive Director of Nursing, AHP and Quality.

Heads of Service

Are responsible for:

- Ensuring that all wards/community teams within their directorate are safely staffed and all risks minimised.
- Ensuring that the Group Chief Nurse/Executive Director of Nursing/Deputy Director of Nursing are informed of any actions to mitigate staffing risks.
- Ensuring that staff are deployed flexibly to meet patients' needs as required in support of Ward Managers/ Team Managers
- For ensuring that establishment reviews have sufficient senior managerial and clinical oversight to validate the findings and implement changes as required and to submit to Director of Nursing for review and approval.

Senior Managers/Clinical Leads

Are responsible for:

- Ensuring all wards/teams within their service lines are safely staffed, and that all risks have been minimised and ensure the Directorate Head of Nursing is informed of any staffing risks/mitigations.
- Ensuring that establishment reviews are undertaken and reviewed six monthly together with ward sister/Charge nurse and Matron.
- For coordinating the review process for their clinical area of responsibility and to ensure that anyone who has a delegated role within the review is clear about their responsibilities and is competent to undertake the role.
- Are responsible and accountable for the day-to-day monitoring and deployment of staff within their clinical area to meet patient's needs.
- Decision to escalate staffing and discussion regarding extraordinary escalation meeting.

Matrons and Team Leads

Are responsible for:

- The provision of safe staffing levels to meet patient needs and service demands.
- assessing the factors that determine nursing staff requirements using a systematic approach when setting the establishment reviews in conjunction with the Matron and Deputy Head of Nursing
- Ensuring that establishment reviews are undertaken in keeping with the standards and timelines as described within this policy.
- Coordinating the review process for their clinical area of responsibility and to ensure that anyone who has a delegated role within the review is clear about their responsibilities and is competent to undertake the role.
- The day-to-day monitoring and deployment of staff within their clinical area to meet patients' needs.
- For keeping rosters up to date, publishing them promptly, and finalising them for pay in line with agreed schedules, ensuring the correct operational and clinical checks are in place.
- Chairing of daily huddle to discuss staffing, highlight any patient safety concerns, contingency planning, and identification of escalation.

Nurse in Charge

Are responsible for:

- Reviewing staffing levels at the start of a shift for both the actual shift and oncoming shift.
- Where the planned staffing levels are not in place and/or the planned staffing levels are insufficient to meet patient needs due to increased acuity and dependency the shifts will be RAG rated using the thresholds and tipping points, as per daily operational staffing review in conjunction with Ward sister/charge nurse/ Matron /team managers. Have a responsibility to contribute to the review of establishments.
- Working flexibly to meet patients' needs and for raising any safety issues which may arise from staffing levels.
- Completion of an incident form for staffing, skill mix issues, including missed care.

Responsibility of Clinical Staff

- Meeting patient needs safely and effectively.
- Working within their scope of competence and skill set.
- Carrying out delegated duties to deliver safe patient care.
- Working flexibly to meet patients' needs and for raising concerns around safer staffing at the point of identification.
- Escalating to team manager/ nurse in charge
- Book annual leave in advance as per Trust Policy
- For staff working in services with electronic rostering in place, using Loop to request specific shifts or days off in advance of the roster being published via Loop. These duty requests are personal preferences and cannot be guaranteed.

13.0 Consent

Clinical staff must ensure that consent has been sought and obtained before any care, intervention or treatment described in this policy is delivered. Consent can be given orally and/ or in writing. Someone could also give non-verbal consent if they understand the treatment or care about to take place. Consent must be voluntary and informed, and the person consenting must have the capacity to make the decision.

In the event that the patient's capacity to consent is in doubt, clinical staff must ensure that a mental capacity assessment is completed and recorded. Someone with an impairment of or a disturbance in the functioning of the mind or brain is thought to lack the mental capacity to give informed consent if they cannot do one of the following:

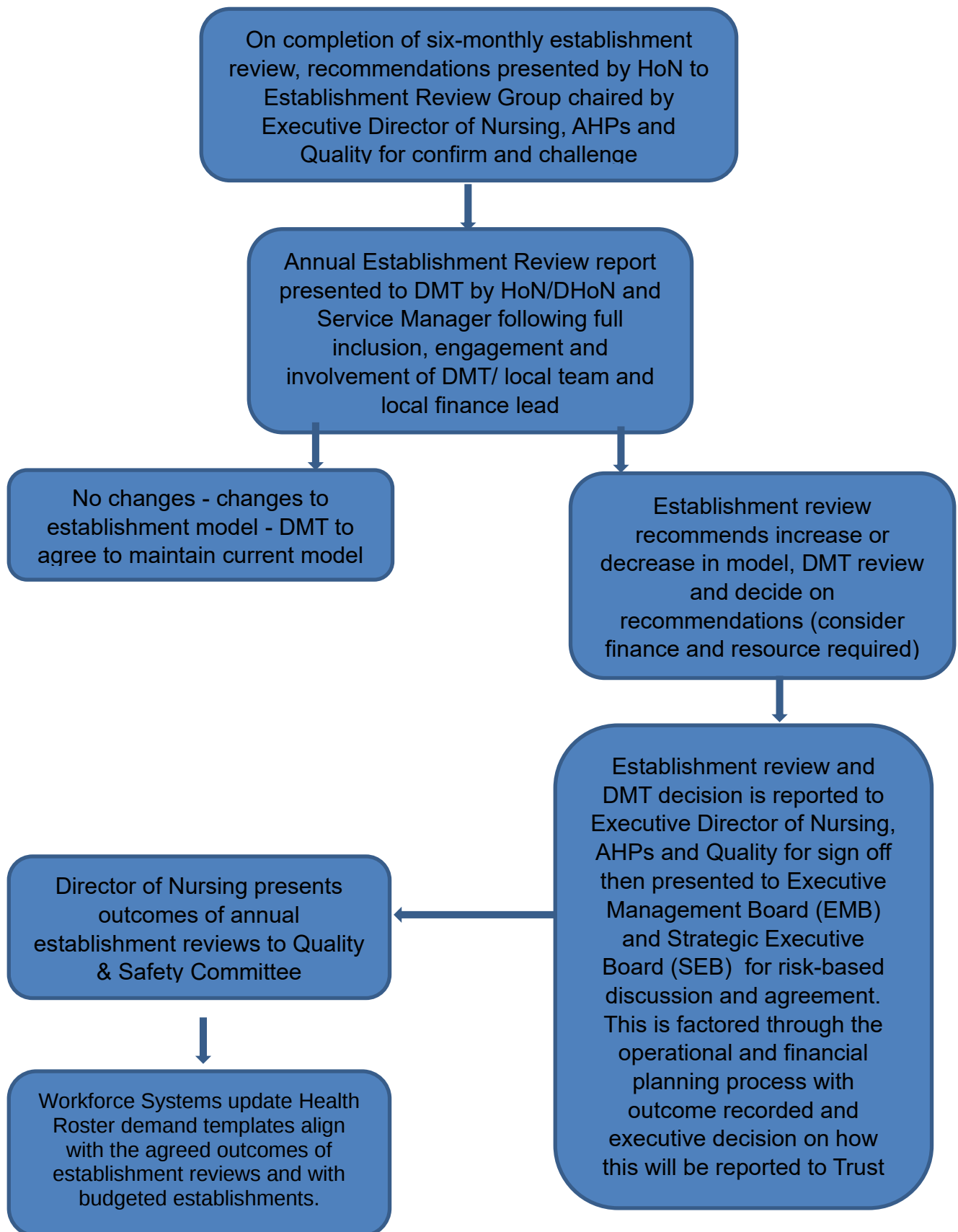
- Understand information about the decision.
- Remember that information.
- Use the information to make the decision.
- Communicate the decision.

Appendix One: Definitions

SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
NIC	Nurse In Charge
Planned	Established number and skill mix of staff per shift
Acuity	The measurement of the intensity of nursing care required by a patient
Dependency	The degree of patient dependency in relation to nursing care
DRA	Dynamic Risk Assessment
CHPPD	Care Hours Per Patient Day
OOH	Out Of Hours
OPEL	Operational Pressure Escalation levels
Establishments	The term used to describe the number of whole-time equivalents funded in the area, detailing the number of staff required per band for each shift. Includes an uplift (headroom) to cover staff unavailability and is individual to each ward/service/ community team.
Professional Judgement	Is a recognised researched workforce planning method and forms part of the triangulated review of safe staffing establishments.
Clinical Professional Judgement	is a crucial element to interpret results from evidence-based tools, take account of local context such as ward, patient and staff factors and used to inform the skill mix of staff.
Evidence Based Tools	National evidence-based licensed decision support tools for use in clinical settings including Safer Nursing Care Tool, Mental Health Optimum Staffing Tool & Community Nursing Safer Staffing Tool providing recommended nursing establishment recommendations based on patient acuity and dependency assessment.
Skill Mix	Staffing levels of both registered and un-registered staff benchmarked against acuity and dependency scoring. Skill-mix is also conceptualized in three ways to mean: (1) the range of competencies possessed by an individual healthcare worker. (2) the ratio of senior to junior staff within a particular discipline; and (3) the mix of different types of staff in a team/healthcare setting.
Competence	A bringing together of general attributes – knowledge, skills and attitudes. Skill without knowledge, understanding and appropriate attitude does not equate to competent practice. Thus, competence is ‘the skills and ability to practice safely’.
Delegation	The transfer to a competent individual, the authority to perform a specific task in a specified situation that can be carried out in the absence of the registered practitioner and without direct supervision.

Appendix Two: Flowchart

Establishment Review Governance and Sign Off Process



Appendix Three

Operational Pressure Escalation Levels (OPEL) Rating Risk scoring for Directorates

Action Levels			
Community Health Services			
Triggers			
Level 1 Normal Working	Level 2 – Moderate Pressure	Level 3 – Severe Pressure	Level 4 – Extreme Pressure
Community Hospital Beds	Community Hospital Beds	Community Hospital Beds	Community Hospital Beds
Bed capacity is 15 beds or more with discharges planned. No operational issues. Staffing meets demand. Availability outweighs demand. Good spread of gender and geography availability	Bed capacity is less than 15 beds available. Discharges are planned for same day Availability outweighs demand and discharges planned within 24 hours. Service area experiencing staffing Issues.	Bed capacity is less than 7 beds available. Availability less then demand with discharges planned in the next 24 hours Service line experiencing staffing issues.	No beds available No discharges planned in the next 24 hours CHS experiencing staffing issues across all service lines.
Community Services	Community Services	Community Services	Community Services
Able to accept referrals and provide on-going care to Home first and community health services patients. No operational issues. Staffing issues not impacting on services Staff able to fully engage in community board rounds and proactively review ongoing caseloads, identify patients for discharge and self-care. Staffing hours available match on going service need Rapid responder allocated per team. Hub leadership teams working within	Unable to guarantee non-urgent (planned) or unscheduled service response times in one locality/ home first. Staff unable to participate in board rounds to proactively identify patients for discharge or ongoing referral in one locality. Staffing issues which result in cancellation of routine activities and mobilisation of staff on non-clinical duties in one locality. Service demand in a single locality outweighs the staff available. Unable to guarantee attendance of MDT/ PCN meeting in one locality. Reduced rapid responder capacity within one locality. Unable to protect nonclinical leadership within one locality. Staffing issues managed within service line.	Unable to guarantee non-urgent planned or unscheduled service response times in more than one locality. Significant staffing issues which result in cancellation of routine activities in more than one locality Staff unable to participate board rounds to proactively identify patients for discharge or ongoing referral in more than one locality. Service demand in more than one locality outweighs the staff available. No rapid responder element in more than one locality Non-clinical leadership mobilized to work clinically in more than one	Unable to guarantee urgent and non-urgent unscheduled and planned service response times across the service line. Cancelling routine clinic appointments to release staff. CHS experiencing staffing issues across all service lines.

previously planned workload.		locality.	
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Directorate Mental Health			
Triggers			
Level 1 Normal Working	Level 2 – Moderate Pressure	Level 3 – Severe Pressure	Level 4 – Extreme Pressure
DMH Hospital Beds	DMH Hospital Beds	DMH Hospital Beds	DMH Hospital Beds
Bed capacity is 15 beds or more with discharges planned. No operational issues. Staffing meets 5 or more beds available. Availability outweighs demand. Staffing meets demand. No operational issues. Central Access Point (CAP) managing all referrals demand. Availability outweighs demand. Good spread of gender and geography availability.	Minimum 2 triggers required: - In-patient bed availability less than 5 beds. Discharges are planned for today. No operational issues but monitored closely. CAP managing all referrals but assessments slots filling for next 24hrs. No pressure from admissions expected in next 24hours. OOA beds available but use not expected. Difficult to manage single sex accommodation compliance.	Minimum 2 triggers required:- In-patient bed availability less than 3 beds. Discharges are not planned for today. Availability less than demand. OOA beds available and may be used. Increased demand for assessments through the CAP, limited assessment slots. Staffing needing review to meet increased demand. Leave beds in use. Considering use of contingency capacity (PSAU). Single sex walk through breaches.	No inpatient bed capacity. Discharges not planned today. Patients on waiting list and or unable to place OOA beds not available. No patient identified for EDP. Hospital beds in use. Ward rounds completed and no additional predicted activity. CAP taking high volumes demand exceeds capacity, impacting on capacity of Crisis to support home treatment. Contingency capacity open (PSAU) open.

Families Young People Children, Learning Disabilities & Autism Service			
Triggers			
Level 1 Normal Working	Level 2 – Moderate Pressure	Level 3 – Severe Pressure	Level 4 – Extreme Pressure
FYPC&LD Hospital Beds and Community services	FYPC&LD Hospital Beds and Community services	FYPC&LD Hospital Beds and Community services	FYPC&LD Hospital Beds and Community services
Wards have all available commissioned beds open to admissions. All acute faced community services are working BAU. Staffing capacity meets demand. Active demand and capacity monitoring are in place. Regular reporting to system partners – CYP subgroup	Patients waiting for community support prior to discharge. Workforce is at lower levels but sufficient to maintain services Capacity issues with specific professional groups e.g., medical cover, psychologists	Community capacity is full, demand exceeds capacity. Unexpected significant reduced staffing levels significant use of emergency bank agency staff. Closed to admissions due to reduced staffing or needing to provide cover to acute provision due to no beds available for transfer. Having to divert resources from other community services to support urgent referrals from acute wards for discharge, support to A&E or prevention of admission.	As OPEL 3 but mitigation is not enough to ensure patient safety and prevention of harm

Appendix Four

Annual Establishment Review Template

NHS Improvement Developing Workforce Safeguards (2019) recommend establishment setting must be done annually with a mid- year review, and should take account of:

- patient acuity and dependency using an evidence-based tool (as designed and where available)
- activity levels
- seasonal variation in demand
- service developments
- contract commissioning
- service changes
- staff supply and experience issues.
- where temporary staff have been required above the set planned establishment patient and staff outcome measures.

Trusts must ensure the three components below are used in their safe staffing processes:

- evidence-based tools (where they exist)
- professional judgement
- outcomes.

The template below will help align and shape the establishment review and subsequent setting.

Ward /Community Team
Current FTE staffing and planned staffing per shift
Primary establishment - Ward based roles Skill mix – Registered versus non-registered Planned staffing per shift
Professional judgement
Consider general workload & acuity. Ward factors – environment & layout, line of sight In your professional judgement what should the staffing levels and skill mix be for each shift Discussion with Ward/community team
Acuity & Dependency
Name of evidence-based tool e.g., MHOST, LDOST, CNSST Demand and capacity tool Outline the results; FTE total number of staff and suggested planned staffing and CHPPD

Service developments or changes
<i>Outline any service developments/changes and impact to staffing</i>
Outcomes
Review of last 6 months Nurse Sensitive Indicators (monthly safe staffing) Quality, Patient Safety & Experience or relevant to clinical service/team. Does the data suggest a need to increase or reduce staffing?
Temporary staff use
<i>Agency usage above 6%</i> <i>Shifts whereby 50% are substantive.</i> <i>Fill rates and temporary worker utilisation</i>

Skill mix and new roles

Registered Nursing Associates (RNA)

Medication Administration Technicians AHP – Therapy liaison roles

Quality Impact Assessment (QIA) is required for any workforce changes including any new role, redesign of role, change to skill mix , reduction or increase in staffing, see Staffnet for Skill Mix Proposal Pack

Proposed staffing

Planned staffing per shift Financial cost

Equality Quality Impact assessment to be completed for any changes to staffing

Appendix Five

Staffing and Safety Assurance Templates

CHS Community ONLY

	Directorate:	Date:	Representative:
Dropdown option (Cells: B9, C9, D9, B21, B22, B23)			
	<i>Drop down box: B9</i>	<i>Drop down box: C9</i>	<i>Drop down box: D9</i>

Information required:			
Safe staffing areas to note under planned levels - shift and staff required			<i>Free text box</i>
Levels of staffing risk			<i>Free text box</i>
Quality and safety concerns			<i>Free text box</i>
<u>For Community ONLY</u> Red flags would include essential visits not covered. Workload reprioritised. Clinics / Visits cancelled.			<i>Free text box</i>
Clinical mobilisation			<i>Free text box</i>

Analysis of incidents / emerging themes and impact on patient safety		<i>Free text box</i>
Actions taken to date and what further action is required		<i>Free text box</i>
Community areas to highlight		<i>Free text box</i>
Grading of current risk		<i>Drop down box: B21 Please refer to Guidance tab for explanations</i>
Opel Level		<i>Drop down box: B22 Please refer to Guidance tab for explanations</i>
Action Level		<i>Drop down box: B23 Please refer to Guidance tab for explanations</i>
Staff feedback regarding their Health and Wellbeing		<i>Free text box</i>

DMH/FYPC.LDA/CHS Inpatients

	Directorate:	Date:	Representative:
Dropdown option (Cells: B9, C9, D9, B21, B22, B23)			
	<i>Drop down box: B9</i>	<i>Drop down box: C9</i>	<i>Drop down box: D9</i>

Information required:			
Safe staffing areas to note under planned levels - shift and staff required			<i>Free text box</i>
Levels of staffing risk			<i>Free text box</i>
Quality and safety concerns			<i>Free text box</i>
<u>For Community ONLY</u> Red flags would include essential visits not covered. Workload reprioritised. Clinics / Visits cancelled.			<i>Free text box</i>
Clinical mobilisation			<i>Free text box</i>
Analysis of incidents / emerging themes and impact on patient safety			<i>Free text box</i>

Actions taken to date and what further action is required		<i>Free text box</i>
Community areas to highlight		<i>Free text box</i>
Grading of current risk		<i>Drop down box: B21 Please refer to Guidance tab for explanations</i>
Opel Level		<i>Drop down box: B22 Please refer to Guidance tab for explanations</i>
Action Level		<i>Drop down box: B23 Please refer to Guidance tab for explanations</i>
Staff feedback regarding their Health and Wellbeing		<i>Free text box</i>

Appendix Six:

LPT Process mapped to NQB expectations.

NQB Expectation	How LPT Meets It
Board accountability	Monthly and six-monthly safe staffing reports; establishment reviews reported to Trust Board
Evidence-based tools	SNCT, MHOST, LDOST, CNSSTII used in establishment reviews
Daily oversight	Daily staffing huddles, RAG/OPEL ratings, dynamic risk assessment
Escalation	Clear escalation from nurse in charge → matron → HoN → Director of Nursing
Transparency	Fill rates published monthly; ward boards updated each shift, staffing reports uploaded and available on LPTs public website

Appendix Seven:

Governance

Version control and summary of changes

Version number	Date	Description of key change
Version 1	05/05/2022	
Version 2	18/07/2022	Updated Summary and scope of the Policy – All staff table added. New DRA process added.
Version 3	March 2024	Update from planned review.
Version 4	May 2026	Updated due to 360 feedback and roster management. Policy title word change from 'Safe' to 'Safer' Compliance with NQB and CQC regulation 18 listed in section 3.2. Re frame of the red flags/tipping points LPT process mapped to NQB expectations table (appendix 6)

Responsibilities

Responsibility	Title
Executive Lead	Group Chief Nurse/Executive Director of Nursing, AHP and Quality
Policy Author	Workforce and Safe Staffing matron Assistant Director of Nursing and Quality Deputy Director of Nursing and Quality
Advisors	Heads of Nursing AHP Leads Head of Workforce Planning and Transformation Head of Workforce Support Staff side
Policy Expert Group	

Governance

Governance Level	Name
Level 1 Assurance Oversight	Joint People and Culture Committee
Level 2 Delivery Group for policy approval and compliance monitoring	Workforce Development Group

Compliance Measures

KPI (only need 1-2 KPI's per policy)	Where will this be reported and how often
Monthly safe staffing report Six Monthly safe staffing report Annual Establishment review report	EMB, Quality & Safety Committee and Trust Board

Training Requirements

No training required to support implementing this policy.

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- Developing workforce safeguards supporting providers to deliver high quality care through safe and effective staffing, NHS Improvement (October 2018)
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- LPT Optimising Electronic Rostering at LPT (March 2026)
- LPT Trust wide Decision-Making process for Bed closures (Nov 2021)
- LPT Preceptorship Policy (Dec 2023)
- LPT Probation Policy (Jan 2024)
- LPT Trust Wide Bed closure Standard Operational Procedure
- LPT CHS Safe Staffing SOP
- Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation trust, In-Patient Safe Staffing – Essential Guidance to Defining and Managing Nurse Staffing Resources (August 2021)
- National Quality Board (2013) how to ensure the right people, with the right skills, are in the right place at the right time – A guide to Nursing, midwifery and care staffing capacity and capability.
- National Institute for Health and Care excellence (2014) Safe Staffing for Nursing in adult inpatient wards in acute hospitals, Safe staffing guideline.

- NHS England safer staffing improvement resources for specific settings, Mental health services, Learning disability services and District nursing services. Available at www.england.nhs.uk
- North Devon Healthcare NHS trust Nursing Safer Staffing Policy (May 2019)
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- Professional judgement framework: a guide to applying professional judgement in nurse staffing reviews Saville, Christina, Griffiths, Peter, Casey, Ann, Chable, Rosemary, Chapman, Hilary, Radford, Mark and Watts, Natasha, Professional judgement framework: a guide to applying professional judgement in nurse staffing (2023)
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- Staffing Levels Advice Guides, Royal College of Nursing (Feb 2026).
- Supporting NHS Providers to deliver the right staff, with the right skills, in the right place at the right time, Safe sustainable and productive staffing, National Quality Board (July 2016)
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