

# DSNs: Employment trends, vacancies and workforce planning



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Studies carried out by the Association of British Clinical Diabetologists and Diabetes UK have identified how the roles and responsibilities of DSNs have expanded considerably in the past decade with opportunities for career development into nurse consultant roles (Winocour et al, 2002; James et al, 2009). This has been in response to the increasing prevalence of diabetes and Government directives, such as moving the focus of care from specialist into primary care settings, including the commissioning of local services and setting national targets and standards for diabetes care. However, the survey conducted by James et al (2009) also identified that these developments are under threat due to a lack of protected time and funding for continuing professional development.

In 2008, the *Directory of Diabetes Care* (CMA Medical Data, 2008) identified 1278 DSNs working across the UK. However, more information is needed to track gaps in provision, assist with workforce planning, inform commissioning and provide essential information around the qualifications of NHS-employed DSNs.

A survey of DSNs and nurse consultants based in the UK is due to be jointly undertaken by Diabetes UK and NHS Diabetes later this year, and will help identify these gaps in service provision and the roles played by DSNs.

## Aims and outline of the study

The aim of this study is to establish a register of DSNs working in the UK to help predict manpower, service needs over time and assist with workforce planning. This comprehensive survey of all DSNs and nurse consultants will help to address the following questions:

- How many DSNs and nurse consultants are working in the UK?
- What is the work setting of DSNs and nurse consultants?
- What roles are DSNs and nurse consultants carrying out?
- What qualifications have DSNs and nurse consultants gained?

- What band level have DSNs and nurse consultants been awarded?

From this data we also aim to identify DSN vacancies, “frozen” posts and staff shortages, in order to monitor gaps in DSN service provision and assess against population levels.

We will be sending all DSNs and nurse consultants in the UK a postal questionnaire on 7 September 2009. We would like each individual DSN or nurse consultant to complete the questionnaire, identify their team leader and help us make sure we have reached as many DSNs as possible. The findings from this study will be presented at the Diabetes UK Annual Professional Conference in March 2010. We hope to repeat this study annually, and to build on the data collected to help make sure that Diabetes UK and NHS Diabetes can support the role and the development of DSNs and nurse consultants.

On behalf of Diabetes UK and NHS Diabetes we are very grateful for your support and your participation in this valuable study.

The study has been funded by NHS Diabetes, and the project team consists of: June James, Consultant Nurse in Diabetes, Diabetes Nurses Forum Representative and Joint Project Lead; Charlotte Gosden, Information Analyst and Joint Project Lead; Nick Morrish, Consultant Diabetologists and Clinical Lead; and Ursula Anderson, South Central Regional Programme Manager, NHS Diabetes. ■

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