

Census of the Radiotherapy Radiographic Workforce in the UK, 2016

Summary

This report has been produced by the Society and College of Radiographers (SCoR). It is intended to update the UK national radiotherapy workforce annual surveys from 2010 to 2015. This report provides a summary of the UK radiotherapy radiographic workforce in the National Health Service (NHS) and private/independent healthcare sector. It is deemed to be of interest to the NHS England Radiotherapy Clinical Reference Group and similar groups in the other UK countries, the Radiotherapy Board, NHS Digital, Health Education England, Local Education and Training Boards, the Migration Advisory Committee and commissioners and providers of radiotherapy.

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1. Background

This report has been produced by the Society and College of Radiographers (SCoR). It is intended to update the UK national radiotherapy workforce annual surveys from 2010 to 2015.¹⁻⁶ This report provides a summary of the UK radiotherapy radiographic workforce in the National Health Service (NHS) and private/independent healthcare sector. It is deemed to be of interest to the NHS England Radiotherapy Clinical Reference Group and similar groups in the other UK countries, the Radiotherapy Board, NHS Digital, Health Education England,⁷ Local Education and Training Boards, the Migration Advisory Committee and commissioners and providers of radiotherapy.

2. Data collection

Data collection was performed between November 2016 and March 2017. The SCoR contacted radiotherapy centres asking them to complete the survey to reflect the position in their department as of 1st November 2016 (the census date). Data was collected by means of a SurveyMonkey® online questionnaire distributed to radiotherapy service managers.

Each of the 62 NHS centres that provide radiotherapy services in the UK submitted data to the SCoR census. In addition, all the eight private providers of radiotherapy services responded, giving a 100% response rate from both NHS and non-NHS providers. However, not all respondents answered every question. Where data is not available from a centre for a question, the figures from the previous census date of 1st November 2015 are used where available. The number of respondents to each question is shown by the 'n' figure in each section.

A breakdown of the figures in this report by NHS health board and trust and by private provider can be found in the accompanying spreadsheets.

3. Constraints

This census asked for the total numbers of therapeutic radiographers, assistant practitioners and trainee assistant practitioners (together referred to as the 'radiotherapy radiographic workforce' in this report) within the budgetary control of the radiotherapy service manager. Radiotherapy helpers and administration staff are not included in the figures.

This report assumes that numbers reported in the Agenda for Change (AfC) band 5 and above refer to therapeutic radiographers, and numbers reported in AfC band 4 and below refer to the associated assistant practitioners (APs) and trainee assistant practitioners (TAPs).

This survey is not directly comparable to the UK national radiotherapy workforce survey in 2010¹ as, unlike later surveys, the 2010 survey included radiotherapy helpers and administration staff.

This report excludes the physics and engineering radiotherapy workforce and clinical oncologists. Enquiries about the physics and engineering workforce in radiotherapy should be directed to the Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine. Enquiries about the clinical oncology workforce should be directed to the Royal College of Radiologists.

4. Summary

Workforce

The total whole time equivalent (WTE) radiotherapy radiographic workforce (therapeutic radiographers and APs/TAPs) in the UK is 3353.5.

Looking just at the NHS, the total WTE therapeutic radiographer workforce is 3226.0 consisting of 3096.9 WTE therapeutic radiographers and 129.0 WTE APs/TAPs.

Vacancies

The total vacancy rate for the radiotherapy radiographic workforce in the UK (NHS and non-NHS) is 6.2%.

Within the NHS, the vacancy rate for therapeutic radiographers is 6.0% and the vacancy rate for associated APs/TAPs is 10.8%.

5. NHS radiotherapy radiographic workforce data

NHS workforce by country (n = 62)

The table below shows the total NHS WTE of 3226.0 with a breakdown for each country. The number of posts, vacancies and vacancy rate are also displayed.

Country	Workforce	WTE	Posts	Vacant WTE	Vacancy Rate
England	Therapeutic radiographers	2562.8	2799	153.1	6.0%
	APs/TAPs	123.7	139	13.9	11.2%
England Total		2686.5	2938	166.9	6.2%
Northern Ireland	Therapeutic radiographers	115.3	122	13.1	11.4%
	APs/TAPs	0	0	0	0%
Northern Ireland Total		115.3	122	14.1	12.2%
Scotland	Therapeutic radiographers	257.2	275	5.0	1.9%
	APs/TAPs	4.3	5	0	0%
Scotland Total		261.6	280	5.0	1.9%
Wales	Therapeutic radiographers	161.6	183	15.2	9.4%
	APs/TAPs	1.0	1	0	0%
Wales Total		162.6	184	15.2	9.3%
UK NHS	Therapeutic radiographers	3096.9	3379	186.3	6.0%

	APs/TAPs	129.0	145	13.9	10.8%
UK NHS Total		3226.0	3524	200.2	6.2%

Note: AP/TAPs = Assistant practitioners / Trainee assistant practitioners (Band 4 and Band 3).

Respondents to the census also reported the number of posts which had been vacant for at least three months. The results show a three-month vacancy rate of 2.7% for the radiotherapy radiographic workforce in the NHS.

NHS workforce by Agenda for Change (AfC) band (n = 62)

The table below illustrates that 86% of the NHS radiotherapy radiographic workforce are employed in AfC bands 5 to 7.

Workforce	WTE by AfC band										Total
	3	4	5	6	7	8a	8b	8c	8d	N/A	
NHS radiotherapy radiographic workforce	49.1	79.9	840.6	1122.5	816.0	228.2	65.7	22.0	1.0	1.0	3226.0

NHS reasons for absence (n = 61)

The census also asked about reasons for absence: 22 post holders are on career break (0.6%), 54 on long-term sick leave (1.5%) and 153 on maternity leave (4.3%).

Reason for absence	Posts (headcount)	Percentage of post holders
Career break	22	0.6%
Long-term sick leave	54	1.5%
Maternity leave	153	4.3%

Radiotherapy radiographic workforce in non-NHS radiotherapy providers (n = 70)

There are currently eight non-NHS providers of radiotherapy in the UK, all of whom submitted data to the SCoR census.

Workforce	WTE	Posts	Vacant WTE	Vacancy rate
Non-NHS total	127.5	134	6.0*	4.9%*
Combined NHS &	3353.5	3658	206.2*	6.2%*

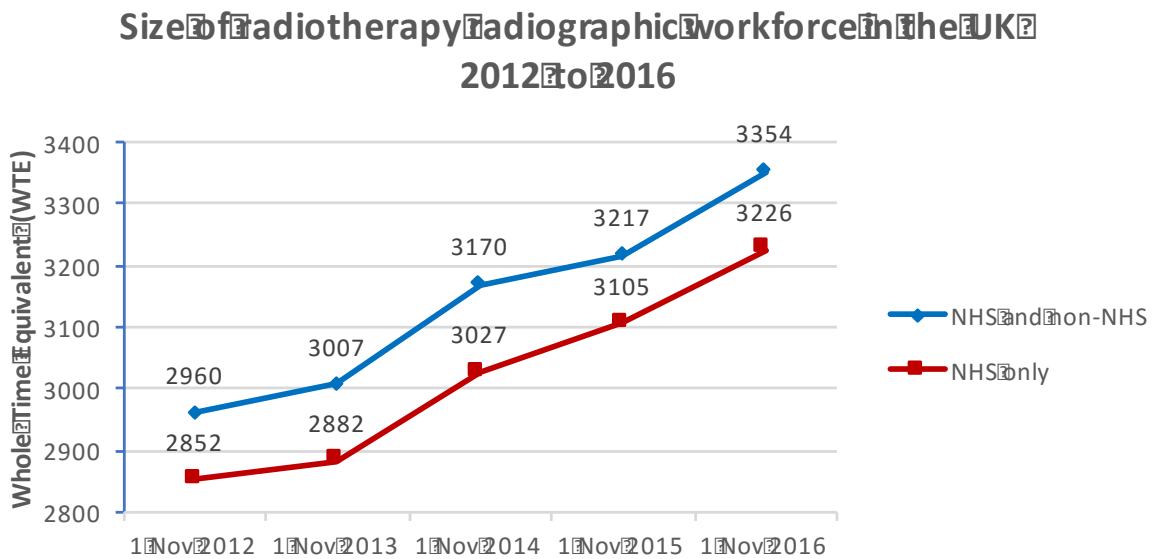
non-NHS total				
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*Vacancy figures were not available for one non-NHS provider, so the vacancy rate calculation does not include one of the non-NHS providers.

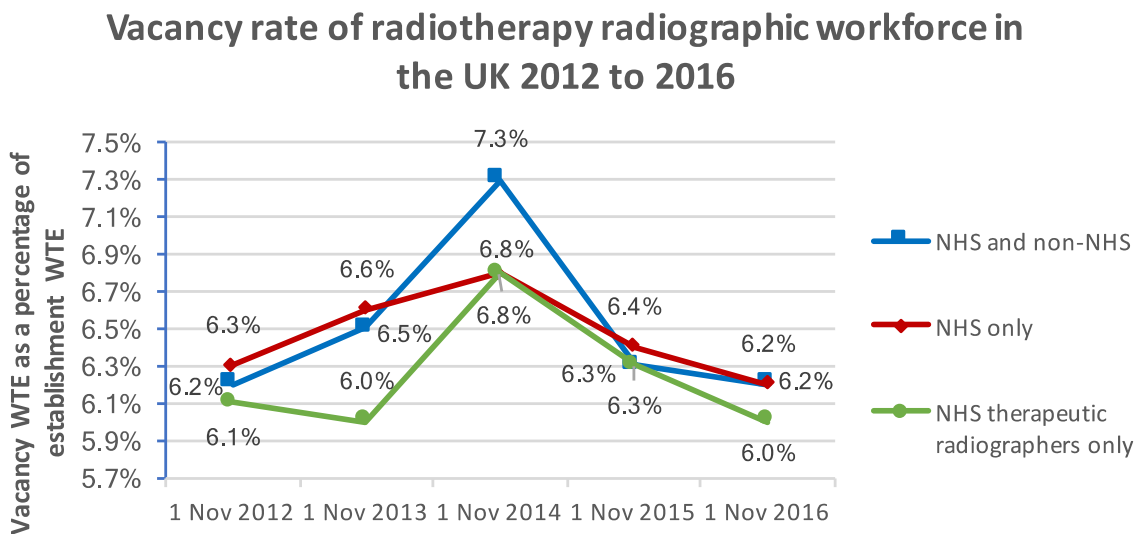
Note the figures for non-NHS providers are not reported by AfC band as providers do not necessarily use an equivalent system.

6. Trends

The graph below shows that the radiotherapy radiographic workforce in the UK grew by 13% between 2012 and 2016.



The graph below shows that the vacancy rate within the NHS radiotherapy radiographic workforce in the UK during 2016 has returned to its 2012 level of 6.2%.

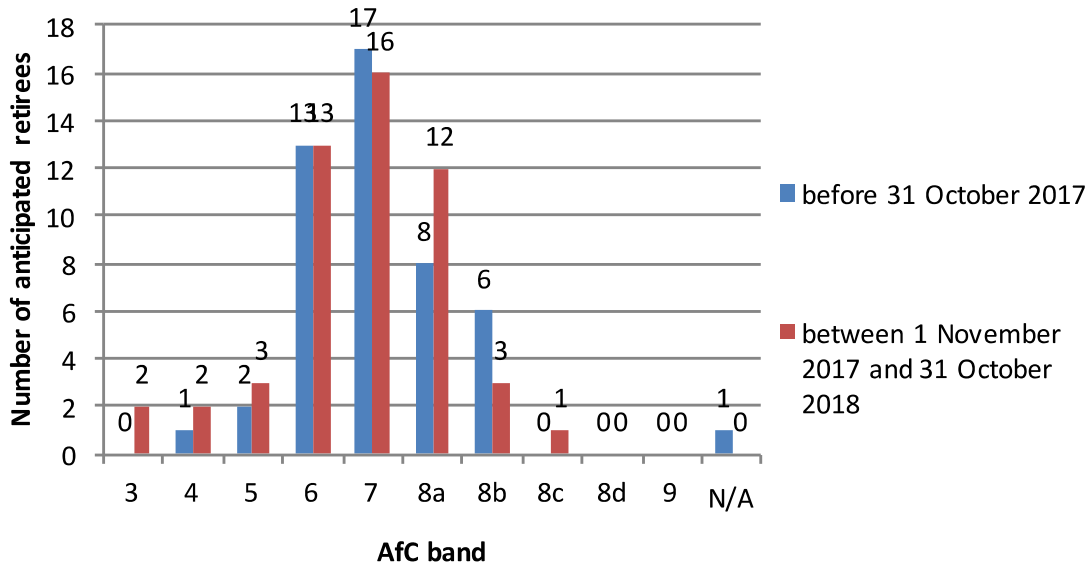


7. Future expectations – retirement (n = 61)

Radiotherapy centres were asked approximately how many radiography staff they anticipated would be retiring between 1 November 2016 and 31 October 2017. Radiotherapy centres were also asked approximately how many radiography staff they anticipated would be retiring between 1 November 2017 and 31 October 2018. The table and graph below present the results from the NHS respondents.

Country	AfC band	Post holder to retire before 31 October 2017 (headcount)		Post holder to retire between 1 November 2017 and 31 October 2018 (headcount)	
		Headcount	Percentage	Headcount	Percentage
UK NHS	3	0	0%	2	4%
	4	1	2%	2	4%
	5	2	4%	3	6%
	6	13	27%	13	25%
	7	17	35%	16	31%
	8a	8	17%	12	23%
	8b	6	13%	3	6%
	8c	0	0%	1	2%
	8d	0	0%	0	0%
	9	0	0%	0	0%
	N/A	1	2%	0	0%
UK NHS Total		48		52	
Percentage of post holders		1.4%		1.5%	

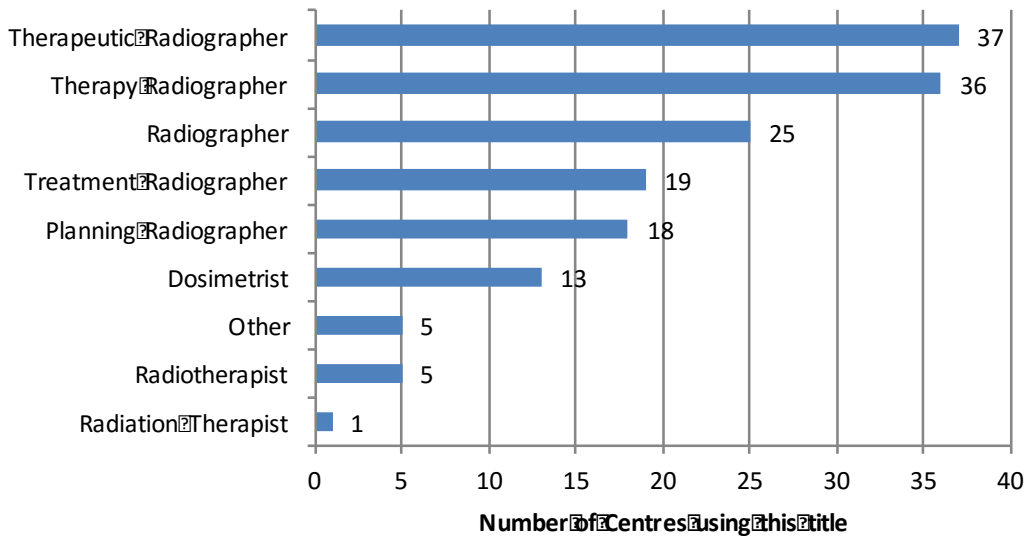
Anticipated retirement by AfC band



8. Protected titles (n = 68)

The two protected titles within the radiotherapy radiographic workforce are “Therapeutic Radiographer” and “Radiographer”. The following chart shows which titles are currently in use in both the NHS and non-NHS respondents.

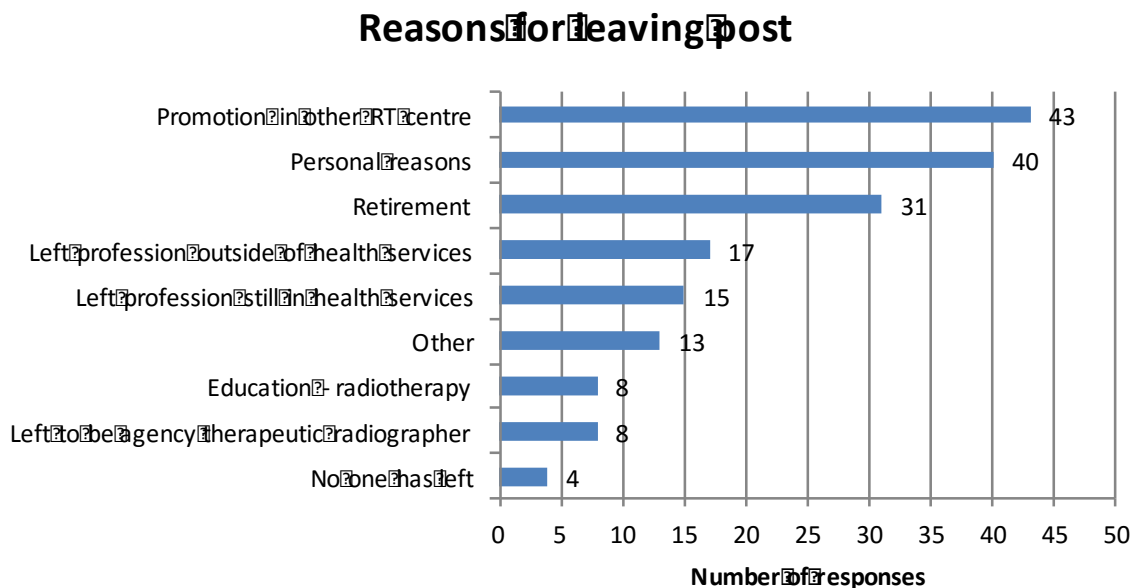
Frequency of titles used



There are other titles in use which include: Advanced Practitioner, Assistant Practitioner, Macmillan Radiographer, Practitioner, Pre-treatment Radiographer, Radiographer Practitioner, Radiotherapist Advanced Practitioner, Senior Practitioner and Specialist Practitioner.

9. Reasons for leaving post (n = 68)

The following chart illustrates the most common reasons given by the NHS and non-NHS respondents for staff members leaving a radiotherapy post.



Other reasons mentioned by two or more respondents in the free text were: leaving to work in the private sector; leaving to work overseas; travelling; and child care reasons.

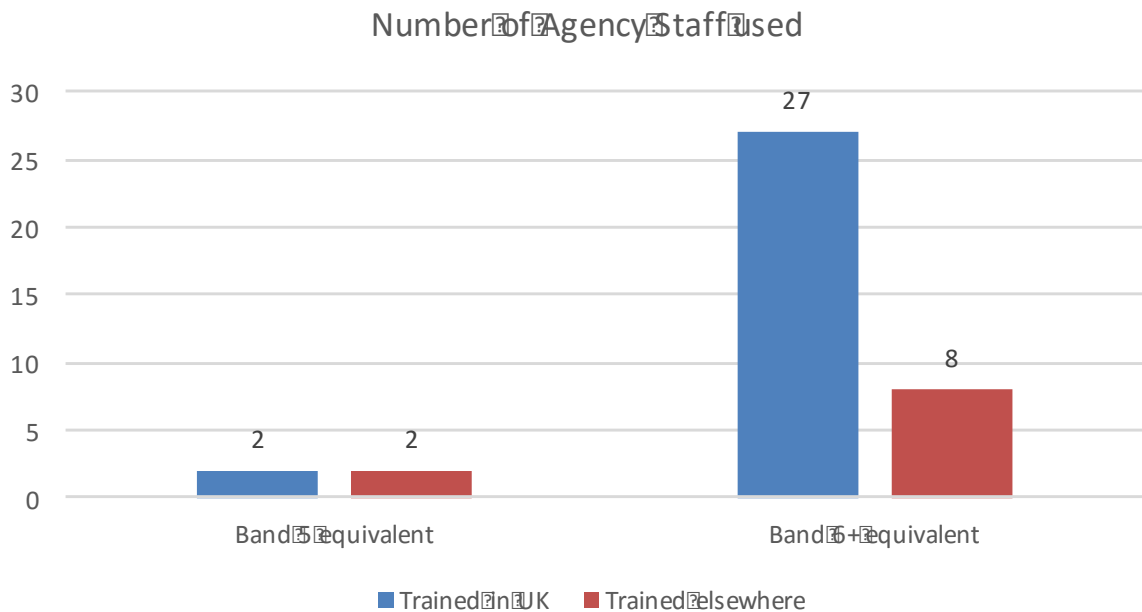
10. Use of agency therapeutic radiographers

This section covers the use of agency therapeutic radiographers in radiotherapy services in the UK.

Use of agency therapeutic radiographers	Number of respondents (n = 68)
Yes	16
No	50
Other (bank radiographers)	2

The reasons for using agency therapeutic radiographers were given as follows:

Reasons for use of agency therapeutic radiographers	Number of respondents (n = 18)
An increase in Therapeutic Radiographer establishment	3
Due to existing vacancies in Therapeutic Radiographer workforce establishment	15



11. Therapeutic radiographers outside budgetary control of the radiotherapy service manager (n = 68)

Ninety-three NHS and one non-NHS therapeutic radiographers were reported by respondents to work in cancer services in the UK outside the budgetary control of the radiotherapy service manager and so are unlikely to be included in the figures given elsewhere in this report. These figures do not include those working in dosimetry which are covered in the next section.

12. Therapeutic radiographers employed in dosimetry (n = 67)

As of the census date, there are 246 therapeutic radiographers working in the NHS and 17 in the non-NHS sector employed in dosimetry. These figures include those working both within and outside the budgetary control of the radiotherapy service manager.

13. General comments (n = 26)

At the end of the census questionnaire, respondents were asked for any general comments relating to their submission. They were also asked if they are “over-established” at any AfC bands. Twenty-six respondents made comments, and themes mentioned by two or more respondents are listed below with an illustrative comment:

- Service is over-established (10 respondents) *“Over-established at band 6 due to internal secondment to cover maternity leave”*
- Struggle to cover maternity leave (3 respondents) *“We struggle to backfill maternity leave as our Trust provides a percentage of the WTE role.”*
- Recruitment is challenging (2 respondents) *“Recruitment to higher level positions remains very challenging, able to recruit at graduate level, but then mostly need 'grow your own' strategy for more advanced roles.”*
- Finding time for CPD is difficult (2 respondents) *“Low overall staffing numbers for size of centre make time for CPD difficult.”*
- Understaffed (2 respondents) *“Currently staffed to 67% of 2005 national guidance. Staffing is very challenging and is on the risk register as a high risk.”*

References

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8. Migration Advisory Committee (2015). *Partial review of the Shortage Occupation Lists for the UK and for Scotland*
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9. Department of Health (2012). *Radiotherapy Services in England 2012*
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(All links accessed 2/04/2017)

Downloads

Census of UK radiotherapy workforce questionnaire (PDF)

Census of NHS radiotherapy workforce (Excel)

