

## **Measures of NHS staff resource – Headcount and Whole-Time Equivalent**

Staff numbers are recorded in two ways. For the number or headcount of staff, each person counts once irrespective of the number of hours worked. In order to compare staff resources across organisations taking into account different patterns of part-time and full-time working, the whole-time equivalent (WTE) for each person can be used instead.

The WTE for each person is based on their hours worked as a proportion of the contracted hours normally worked by a full-time employee in the post. For example, a person working standard hours each day, but only 3 days out of 5, would count as 0.6 WTE.

### **Changes to the recording of headcount numbers**

From 2006 onwards, the numbers of NHS staff are counts of individual people, whereas in previous years each job was counted and people could be counted twice if they held more than one post.

From 2008 onwards, all records with a WTE of zero have been excluded from the headcount of staff and consequently all 'bank' staff are excluded. 'Bank' staff may be existing employees taking up additional and flexible working or people who want to work on a temporary/casual basis. Bank employees typically include nurses and midwives, administrative, clerical and ancillary staff such as porters and cleaners.

### **Effect on comparisons of staff resource**

The changes in the recording of headcount reduce numbers compared to previous years. Headcount numbers should thus only be used for comparisons within the same year where the pattern of full-time and part-time working is of interest, for example to investigate the ratio of numbers to WTE across different organisations or staff groups.

For most purposes, including comparing staffing levels with other resource measures such as expenditure, and certainly for comparing staff resources across time, the WTE figures should be used.

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