



28/04/2025

**RE: NHSE (WTE HEE) National Funded Blended Learning Critical Care Programmes.**

To whom it may concern:

The UKCCNA represents the Royal College of Nursing, British Association of Critical Care Nursing, Critical Care National Network Leads Forum, Intensive Care Society, National Outreach Forum and the Paediatric Intensive Care Society. The UKCCNA also work collaboratively with the Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine (FICM). It is in this capacity that, collectively, we would like to raise serious concerns regarding the discontinuation of the NHSE (WTE HEE) National Funded Blended Learning Critical Care Programmes in September 2025.

There are now real concerns that Adult Critical Care services have become reliant on the Blended Learning Framework, which following its introduction, significantly changed the provision and landscape of post registration critical care nurse education across England. For clarity, only 14 providers across England were awarded the contract, this number was significantly less than those providing the course pre contract. Many of the courses that did not apply to be part of the Blended Learning contract, in the main because of financial loss, no-longer deliver critical care courses and have subsequently lost the specialist staff able to deliver the programmes. The HEIs who were contracted to deliver via the framework, once the contract ends, will be able to increase their course fees, which will result in fewer courses across the UK costing the NHS more money.

There is a real concern the loss of the BL funding contract will destabilise the registered critical care nursing workforce and therefore impact on patient safety. Following the covid pandemic Adult Critical Care saw a high turnover of experienced RNs. This has resulted in a very junior workforce, many staff recruited from overseas, who are now being prepared to undertake their post registration ACC post registration course. It is now unclear how this will be possible.

The dynamic nature of the ACC RN workforce has the potential to impact on the delivery of ACC services and patient outcomes. To enable effective workforce planning, ongoing, predictable, year on year funding is essential. Continuation of this funding supports the NHSE Workforce Plan; train, retain and reform.

Post graduate critical care nurse education is embedded with the Guidelines for Provision of Intensive Care services (GPICS2) (2019) and Paediatric Critical Care Standards (PICCS 2021) which inform commissioning of critical care services nationally.

Standard 8 states that *“A minimum of 50% of registered nursing staff must be in possession of a post-registration academic programme in Critical Care Nursing”*.

In addition, recommendation 3 states that *“Post-registration adult intensive care nursing courses should be awarded a minimum of 60 credits at Level 6”*.

The Adult Critical Care Service Specification (2022) section 2.4 states that *“There must be a training strategy in place to achieve a minimum of 50% of nursing staff with a post-registration award in critical care nursing”*

Paediatric Critical Care Quality Standards CCS (L3-206) state that *“a minimum of 70% of registered nursing staff should be in possession of PCC Competencies underpinned by post-graduate education programme”*.

This is reinforced in the UKCCNA Critical Care Nursing Workforce Optimisation Plan and Staffing Standards (2024-2027). Standard 6 reiterates the need for *“A minimum of 50% of registered critical care nurses must be in position on a post-registration critical care award”* stating that *“Adult Critical Care post-registration courses should follow the National Standards for Critical Care Nurse Education (2016) and include both academic and clinical competence assessment (CC3N Step 2 & 3 competencies) (2022)”*.

Without funding, both NHS Trusts and Universities will be unable to deliver both adult and paediatric critical care nurse education. This withdrawal of funding will cause a lack of compliance with the standards detailed above leading to a decline in quality, safety and standards of care with a negative impact on patient outcomes.

In addition, there is a significant risk to maintaining a registered nurse workforce who can deliver high quality and safe patients care. Continuing professional development is essential in the strive to retain registered nursing staff and enable them to thrive at work.

We would strongly advise urgent reconsideration regarding funding withdrawal and are eager to discuss this and identify solutions.

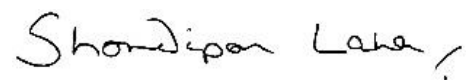
We look forward to your reply

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UKCCNA Chair - Nicki Credland

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daniele Bryden'.

FICM Dean - Dr Daniele Bryden

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shondipon Laha'.

ICS President - Dr Shondipon Laha

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carli Whittaker'.

PCCS President - Carli Whittaker

## References

Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine and Intensive Care Society, Guidelines for the Provision of Intensive Care Services Version 2. 2019, FICM-ICS: London

Critical Care Network National Nursing Leads (CC3N) (2023) National Standards for Critical Care Nurse Education.

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