



Synopsis

The impact of redeployment during COVID-19 on nurse well-being, performance and retention: a mixed-methods study (REDEPLOY)

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Disclaimer: This report contains transcripts of interviews conducted in the course of the research and contains language that may offend some readers.

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Plain language summary

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Plain language summary

Our question

In response to COVID-19, nurses were moved around different wards in hospitals to areas where the need was greatest. This is called 'redeployment'. Redeployment was done with very little knowledge of how best to do it or what the challenges might be. In this study we asked:

1. How did nurse managers make decisions about how to redeploy nurses before and during the COVID-19 crisis?
2. How did nurses make sense of this redeployment and what effect did it have on their well-being, performance, and whether or not they wanted to carry on in their job?

What we did

We spoke to 100 nurse managers and nurses in three National Health Service trusts in England. We used interviews (nurses and nurse managers) and surveys (nurses only) to collect information. We tried to understand the experiences of nurses over a period of 6–9 months, from February 2021 to February 2022. Staff and patients volunteered to help us to design and deliver this research. We shared our findings with organisations such as the Royal College of Nursing and NHS England. They helped us to develop recommendations that would change how redeployment happens in England. These ideas could be used in other countries too.

What we found

We found that nurse managers were uncertain about how to manage redeployment and this caused them stress. They had to make decisions quickly about who to move where, and there was very little information to help guide how they did this. They were unsure how to support nurses during redeployment and how to rebuild their teams after redeployment. A few nurses enjoyed their redeployment experience. Most nurses experienced a lot of distress with just over half thinking about leaving their jobs. We have used what we found to develop 11 recommendations for how to manage redeployment and help nurses to recover.

What this means

Our recommendations will help people who manage nurses to think about what they need to do to make redeployment a positive experience. It will also help them think about how best to support staff after they have been redeployed. By working with our national stakeholder group and by sharing our findings widely, we hope to make an important difference to how redeployment is managed in a crisis and in the everyday work of the National Health Service.

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