

# Nursing Now campaign yields global results

## Summary of the story of the Nursing Now Campaign

This is the story of nurses and their allies coming together around the world, growing in influence, and building a platform for improving health and health care for the future. There are now more than 800 independent and self-funding Nursing Now groups in 126 countries and more than 31,000 young nurses and midwives have participated in the Nursing Now

### 'Nightingale Challenge'

Many governments and health leaders have responded: 24 countries have invested more in nursing in response to the campaign, more than 800 employers have setup development programmes for young nurses and midwives, and there are now many more nurses onboarded and in positions of influence.

There is global momentum and energy, and change is underway – driven by the passion and skills of nurses and accelerated by social media and digital technology, which connect nurses to each other and offer them a platform to share their messages.

The core message of this report, and the whole Nursing Now campaign, is that nurses are vital agents of change who can improve health and transform health care. Governments that want to see health improvements reaching every part of their populations – and leaving no one behind – need to invest in nursing and enable nurses to work to their full potential.

This report shows that all governments and health leaders must understand and act on this message.

The Covid-19 pandemic has made nurses even more visible at the heart of every health team. Nurses have been with their patients at every step of the way – from the community to intensive care – providing intimate, personal care and looking after mental and physical well-being. They have innovated and adapted – as true agents of change – working alone and with colleagues in multidisciplinary teams to find solutions to the new problems that Covid has presented.

But Covid has also reminded us that nurses are too often under-valued and their work taken for granted, unable to make their best contribution.

The experience of the pandemic should serve as a spur for action. All governments and health leaders now need to respond by investing in nurses, providing good working conditions and environments, strengthening education and support, and enabling nurses to take

on wider roles as service designers and leaders, practitioners and specialists, and agents of change in health care and in public health.

Last year's State of the World's Nursing report<sup>1</sup> and the World Health Organization's (WHO's) newly published Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery<sup>2</sup> set out clearly the challenges that have resonated with nurses, and also what needs to be done to ensure that more nurses are recruited, properly educated and kept in the workforce.

The newly launched Care Compact,<sup>3</sup> marking the WHO Year of Health and Care Workers, recognises the responsibilities that countries have to their health and care workers. As this report shows, many countries are already investing in nursing and others need to follow if they want to make rapid, cost-effective and high-quality improvements in health.

Strengthening nursing will strengthen the whole health team and the whole health and care system. It is one of the most important things that can be done to improve health globally.

### The Nursing Now campaign

The aim of the Nursing Now campaign was to improve health globally by raising the status and profile of nursing; and it is a health campaign as much as it is a nursing one.

The campaign originated with a report from a group of UK parliamentarians in 2016 entitled Triple Impact, which argued that strengthening nursing would make a major contribution to three Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): improved health, greater gender equity and economic development.<sup>4</sup> The campaign was launched in February 2018 and the Burdett Trust for Nursing included the campaign as part of its activities and provided the majority of core financial support throughout. The campaign was run in association with the WHO and the International Council of Nurses (ICN).

The campaign was designed to be inclusive, avoiding duplication of effort and welcoming organisations and individuals from nursing and beyond as allies and partners. The campaign did not represent nurses as the ICN does, and national groups did not seek to set standards as WHO does. Rather, the focus was on the impact nurses have on health and society and to strengthen their role as leaders, service designers and advocates – true agents of change for improvement.

The campaign was vision-led and entrepreneurial, learning by doing, and designed to encourage activity and enterprise at every level – from the most local to

This is Nursing Now Campaign Story is taken from the report: "Agents of Change: the story of the Nursing Now campaign" by the Burdett Trust for Nursing. See <https://archive.nursing-now.org/nursing-now-final-report>



the global. It identified areas for development including advanced practice, research capacity, leadership development, education and, of course, investment, rather than specifying top-down targets. It was keen to avoid imposing specific models of nursing on countries and recognised that everyone has something to teach and something to learn. Its definition of nursing was deliberately inclusive: nurses were defined as people who have had a professional education and are registered in the country where they work.

Nurses and their allies responded magnificently. A Tanzanian group set up the first Facebook page even before the campaign launched and people from 126 countries followed with their own initiatives. The first national group to be founded was Uganda in early 2018, followed soon by Jordan, and the last was Saudi Arabia in January 2021. In between were many remarkable campaign launches: the Koreans attracting 5,000 nurses to a meeting; the Russian Minister of Health speaking to 2,000 nurses in a webinar; and the Pakistan President committing £130 million of investment at the country's Nursing Now campaign launch. And every one of the local, national and regional groups was self-supporting.

The 'Nightingale Challenge' was launched in 2019 as a challenge to all employers of nurses to provide development opportunities for young nurses and midwives. More than 800 employers responded, evenly split between the public and private sectors. More than 31,000 young professionals have been involved, with India leading the way with about 8,500 young nurses signed up.

There have been global achievements, for example:

advocating for 2020 to be the Year of the Nurse and the Midwife; successfully working with the WHO and the ICN to research and publish the first ever State of the World's Nursing report;<sup>5</sup> and, with our partners, raising the profile and contribution of nursing within global policies in areas such as universal health coverage, non-communicable diseases, gender equality and primary care.

However, the most remarkable achievements have been national, where Nursing Now groups have influenced policy and investment in many countries. Sixty-three groups report increased investment in nursing during the campaign, with some evidence that in 24 countries investment was directly influenced by local Nursing Now groups. There has been an increase in nurses in leadership positions, as Chief Nursing Officers and onboards, who are able to exercise greater influence in shaping policy and service delivery. Nurse-led clinics, particularly for non-communicable diseases, nurse based primary and community care, nurse specialists, nurse practitioners and nurses in public health are all playing a vital role in countries where they have been developed and employed.

The campaign went online when the Covid-19 pandemic struck in 2020. This played an important global role in linking nurses together, enabling them to discuss the difficult issues they were dealing with, share ideas and support each other. Partnerships have blossomed and there is a greater sense of global solidarity. While the achievement of the goals of some Nursing Now groups was disrupted by the pandemic, the pandemic has demonstrated the value of nursing and the importance of future development and investment.

The combination of global, national and local action has created a social movement with energy, momentum and enormous reach. It has been immeasurably helped by social media and digital technology, bringing people together, creating digital communities and enabling anyone anywhere to spread ideas and innovation and start their own campaign for local and global improvements in nursing. It has also brought nurses together, sometimes for the first time, built confidence and strengthened links with partners and allies outside of nursing.

### Building the future

Sustainable long-term change in nursing will take a generation or more, as hierarchies are broken down, attitudes towards women change and a new and more holistic understanding of health takes hold in the population. Nurses will be at the forefront of all these changes – demonstrating by their actions and their values how health and society can be improved in the future.

The Nursing Now story is not just one story, but many individual and collective stories, linked together locally, nationally and globally. Developments in different parts of the world will be different and take place on different timescales. But the campaign has created anew global solidarity, allowing greater interchange of partnerships, ideas and mutual support. And many

Nursing Now groups, with their ability to bring together diverse organisations – nursing and non-nursing – for a common purpose, will continue to operate into the future.

The Burdett Trust for Nursing has agreed to support the Nightingale Challenge, renamed as the 'Nursing Now Challenge', for another two years and to plan for its future thereafter. The challenge has developed a remarkable network of young professionals who can work together to influence the future.

Both the WHO and the ICN have played vital roles in the campaign and they have significant roles in

continuing to develop nursing.

The WHO has published the new Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery,<sup>6</sup> which follows on from the publication of the State of the World's Nursing report,<sup>7</sup> and will determine its strategy for the next decade. It has also launched the 'International Year of Health and Care Workers 2021'.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile the ICN is building links with many of the Nursing Now groups, to maintain the momentum, energy and impact of the campaign.

The Covid-19 pandemic has dominated our world for the past year and will influence its shape for the future. It has made the work that nurses do – from work in the community to the most intensive of care – visible to the wider public, and there is some evidence that nurses have become more respected and valued.<sup>9</sup> It has also revealed the dangerous and difficult situations in which so many nurses work and demonstrated beyond doubt how important their role is to us all.

This report describes the Nursing Now campaign. It is not an evaluation. That will have to come later when the true impact of the campaign can be assessed and when some of the young nurses who have participated in the Nightingale Challenge have become local, national and global leaders.

Agents of Change does, however, demonstrate, how nurses and their allies have created an extraordinarily powerful platform from which to improve health and develop nursing. It can offer enormous hope for us all.

### Keeping up the momentum

It is vital to use the raised awareness, created by the Covid-19 pandemic, of what the world owes to health workers in general, and nurses in particular, to make the changes that nurses have long been arguing for: improved employment conditions, better regulation, strengthened education and research, and far greater investment in developing the profession.

This report sets out a specific set of key actions for five groups that have a fundamental role to play in the future in improving global health. No health system can function without a wholly enabled health workforce. As the largest group of health professionals, with the greatest reach in society and the highest level of population trust, nurses and midwives offer a source that can deliver the sustainable development agenda. However, this will only be so if decisive action is taken now to realise this potential and by those sectors whose priority it is to achieve improvements in population health, health equity, social inclusion, planetary health, gender equality and economic growth. For nursing and nurses, it can no longer be 'business as usual' but nursing included in all policies.

Nurses and midwives are urged to:

- Be confident and creative agents of change – equipped with the ability to frame and position health issues in the wider context of politics, national priorities and demographics, to provide data-driven solutions and to engage with leaders, political authorities and allies outside the nursing and midwifery professions.
- Work with each other, breaking down divisions



between the different professional specialties and organisations, to create a common perspective and shared voice for advancing the professions and improving health.

- Use data to lobby politicians and policy makers for the investment that is needed to develop the nursing profession, based on the recommendations of the WHO's Strategic Directions for Nursing, and Midwifery including decent working conditions, a fair salary, lifelong learning opportunities, a career path and adequate staffing ratios.

Employers should:

- Recognize the key role that nurses can play in designing and delivering services for their patients and the public and create the opportunities for them to do so through inclusion in policy formulation and representation.
- Ensure nurses are part of their board and all senior management entities that plan and manage services.
- Provide decent working conditions, education and support as necessary, adhering to the International Labour Organization's conventions on decent work and implementing the WHO's Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery.
- Sign up to the Care Compact, proposed as an action by the International Year of Health and Care Workers 2021. The Care Compact will protect health workers' rights, decent work and practice environments.

Education bodies need to:

- Develop their curricula to recognise the full extent of nurses' roles in health care, disease prevention and health creation.
- Adopt a model which recognises that education is informative (about knowledge and skills), formative (about professional traits and behaviors) and transformative (about leadership and influence) and develop transformative leadership skills in upcoming generations of nurses so they can be agents of change for the improvement of health and health care.<sup>10</sup>
- Promote nursing as a subject embedded in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), recognising that it is a science-based profession that solves complex health issues with individuals, families and communities. St Josef's Hospital Wiesbaden/ Nursing in Focus

Governments and international bodies need to:

- Commit to implementing the recommendations in the WHO's Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery.
- Recognise the key role that nurses can play in both designing and delivering services for their population and create the opportunities for nurse-led services, particularly for non-



communicable diseases and in primary and community care, specialist nurses, nurse practitioners and nurses in public health.

- Ensure that there is a Chief Nursing Officer and that nurse leaders are part of all policy formulation, planning and management boards within the system and that they are enabled to bring their perspective and experience to play in decision making.
- Provide the investment and the environment that will enable nurses to play these roles to the full, ensuring good working environments and conditions, appropriate education and regulation, and adequate funding for education and employment.
- Work towards gender equality at all levels of the health system, ensuring that all nurses have opportunities for promotion, equal pay for equal work and freedom from harassment at work.
- Sign up to and be accountable for implementing the proposed Care Compact with the WHO, which will protect health workers' rights, decent work and practice environments.

The WHO and the ICN are urged to:

- Continue the momentum that has been built through the Nursing Now campaign by supporting the Nursing Now groups that have been established with learning
- activities and opportunities for sharing good practice and disseminating research.
- Support competency-based leadership development through existing and new initiatives, especially for Chief Nursing Officers and young nurses.
- Engage member states and Chief Nursing Officers in formulating a Care Compact to ensure decent work for nurses, including a fair salary and good working conditions.
- Gather and analyse data to prepare State of the World's Nursing reports at regular intervals to monitor global trends and ensure that more nurses are recruited, educated and retained to work in decent jobs.