

3 September 2025

Children's Chemotherapy Sessions

As reported by the BBC. "Specialist Nurse Shortages" Please provide:

- 1. A breakdown of the nurse shortages within that unit? Annual leave, sickness, or unfilled posts.**

Unfortunately we are unable to provide a breakdown of figures based on the low numbers and the potential that this has to make people identifiable.

N.B. Use of less than five (<5) - We are not able to provide the information requested. The low numbers involved would reduce numbers to discoverable limits and, as a result, we consider that individuals could be identified and disclosure of this information would breach the first data protection principle, which relates to the fair and lawful processing of personal data. Therefore, we have concluded that this information is exempt from disclosure under Section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act - Personal Information relating to a third party.

- 2. A full list of the measures the Trust has taken to fill this shortages?**

The safety and delivery of timely treatment for the children in our care remains our top priority. Action was taken and robust risk assessments have been carried out to ensure service delivery was maintained. All children who require treatment are currently receiving treatment and there are currently no children awaiting commencement of treatment.

A full risk assessment was completed and the required mitigations were implemented to stabilise the service, including daily monitoring to ensure adequate and safe staffing levels. All the nursing roles within the wider haematology and oncology departments were reviewed in order to assess capacity for support across the wider team. The service utilised staff from other ward areas and bank staff to safely and adequately cover the service and protect the most time critical treatments. Clinical Nurse Specialists are also providing additional support to assist with care delivery on the ward.

Nurses working on the Haematology Ward require specialist training to a very high standard so they can safely provide chemotherapy. The service has, and continues to support a rolling programme for specialist chemotherapy training and currently has two staff members completing the programme at the end of August 2025, and a further two staff members beginning the programme with an expected finish date by the end of the year.

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3. Was an early alert sent to the Department of Health, informing them of the shortages? If so on what date?

Yes, an Early Alert was submitted to the Department of Health on 01 July 2025.

4. Which Director is responsible for this directorate?

Paula Cahalan, Director of Child Health, NISTAR, Maternity, Dental, Gynae and Sexual Health.