



Children & Young People's Inpatient Wards in Acute Hospitals (2026 version)

Safer Nursing Care Tool (SNCT)

The National Quality Board has set the expectation that to ensure safe, effective, caring, responsive and well led care on a sustainable basis, trusts will employ the right staff with the right skills in the right place and at the right time. NHS provider boards hold individual and collective responsibility for making judgements about staffing and the delivery of safe, effective, compassionate and responsive care within available resources (NQB, 2016).

The Children and Young People's Safer Nursing Care Tool (C&YP SNCT) is an evidence based decision support tool designed for paediatric settings, built on the principles of the original Safer Nursing Care Tool for adult inpatient wards. Originally validated in 2018, it was developed to meet the need for an evidence based tool in Children and Young People's inpatient wards. This is in line with NHS England's National Quality Board expectation for staff to use evidence based tools, alongside professional judgement and patient outcomes to inform decisions regarding staffing establishments. The tool is aligned to a staffing multiplier (whole time equivalent (WTE) nurse staffing) to provide a recommended establishment based on the actual needs of patients.

The 2026 version of the tool was refreshed by using an additional 5,254 staffing interventions, with 13,690 service quality standards. This enabled the production of updated patient care levels descriptors which have been aligned to refreshed resource multipliers.

Ensuring safe, sustainable and productive staffing

The Children & Young People's Safer Nursing Care Tool is:

- An evidence based tool that enables nurses to assess patient acuity and dependency, incorporating a staffing multiplier to ensure that nursing establishments reflect patient needs in acuity / dependency terms.
- Appropriate for use in any children's and/or acute hospital in England (excluding CAMHS).
- Used in conjunction with Nurse Sensitive Indicators (NSI) including patient care process, outcome and experience measures as well as staff outcome measures.
- Able to classify enhanced care with new patient care level descriptors for 1:1 and 2:1 care provision.
- Utilised with professional judgement to capture the local context of the service requirements.

Benefits of the Safer Nursing Care Tool

Embraces all the principles that should be considered when evaluating/implementing decision support tools described in 'Safe, sustainable and productive staffing - An improvement resource for Children and Young People's inpatient wards in acute hospitals (NHSI 2018).

Measurement of acuity and/or dependency.

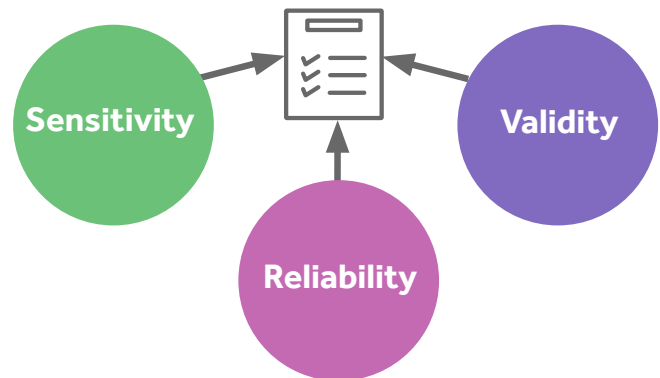
Accurate data collection methodology.

Nurse Sensitive Indicators - organisation and ward level metrics to monitor the impact of staffing levels on the quality of patient care and outcomes, the use of resources and on staff themselves (NHSI 2018) allied to acuity and/or dependency measurement.

Evidence informed nursing multipliers to support professional judgement.

The development process

The tool was developed, validated and reviewed by NHS experts in Children and Young People's services. The decision matrix for assessing acuity and dependency takes account of the levels of care described by the Paediatric Intensive Care Society with additional details to enable consistent identification of these provided by the senior Children's Nursing teams in the participating trusts.



Data collection exercise

The tool was first validated by NHS Experts in C&YP in 2018. This included recalibrating the tool using the UK best practice Nursing Database, which at the time included 101 acute children's wards with 40,602 episodes of care, 163,821 ward staff activities/ interventions and 31,950 quality standards. This was important to ensure the staffing recommendations derived were not perpetuating poor practice standards.

The updated 2026 version incorporates an additional 5,254 patients' dual assessments and 65,875 staffing interventions, with 13,690 service quality standards assessed.

2026 version highlights

The updated 2026 version of the CYP SNCT includes:

- A classification for 1:1 and 2:1 enhanced care with associated multipliers (staffing resource).
- The ability to review bed occupancy to consider within professional judgement as part of annual review of establishments.

The opportunity

To license the Children and Young People's inpatient ward Safer Nursing Care Tool (CYP SNCT) please click here: www.innovahealthtec.com

LICENSING ENQUIRIES

IMPERIAL COLLEGE

LONDON

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The tool was originally approved for use by the Association of Children's Chief Nurses (ACCN) in 2016 and then approved for use by Shelford Chief Nurses and supported by NHS England in 2018.



GENERAL INFORMATION

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