The Queen's Nursing Institute

Transition to the School Nursing Service

Contents

Section A - Thinking about working in the school nursing setting

Chapter 2: Using reflection, identifying learning needs and getting support

Introduction

Whilst working through this resource it is advised that you identify a mentor who can support you whilst going through this online resource. Your mentor must be a qualified nurse and mentor who has had experience of working in school nursing. The main role of your mentor will be to assist with your development both in terms of making the transition to the community setting, working with the school health team (SHT) and identifying any additional support you may need. Ideally you should try and meet with your mentor weekly to reflect upon your weeks learning and to get an experienced school nurse's perspective on the challenges you may face. If you are doing a reflective e-journal it is also good to invite your mentor into your journal so that she can see how you are getting along. The NMC revalidation process (NMC 2015) will require nurses to provide evidence of their learning and we recommend that you use reflection as a tool to assist you.

This chapter will:

- Explore the use of a reflective journal
- Consider the use of reflection tools
- Help you consider your individual learning style
- Use examples from practice

Writing a Reflective Journal

To reflect means to evaluate, consider carefully, weigh up, ponder, contemplate or think purposefully about something. The effect of doing this is to heighten your awareness of what it is you are thinking about. This will also help you recognise the ways in which you learn. If you decide to hand write your journal then we suggest that you record your thoughts and feelings about the way you are using the learning gained from the resource in your daily professional practice. Consider using a hard backed notebook that you can take with you on a daily basis to record your experiences.

We would also like you to consider using an e-journal by clicking on the link below to create a more permanent professional journal that can be used beyond this resource as a way of recording your learning and development journey. https://exchange.bcuc.ac.uk/exchweb/bin/redir. asp?URL=https://sites.google.com/site/appstepbystepuserguide2011/ creating-your-portfolio-using-google-sites

In both instances it will be crucial that you share your journal with your mentor so that the experience does not become a 'solitary' exercise and you gain from the reflective conversation and receive feedback form your colleagues and mentor.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality and data protection are important aspects of professional practice. It is very important that any written work concerning practice

'It is crucial that you share your journal with your mentor so that the experience does not become a 'solitary' exercise.'

is anonymous. Real names of individuals and organisations must not be used. Please also access your own Trust's policy on Confidentiality and be aware of the Department of Health and Professional bodies' policies.

Department of Health (2003) NHS Code of Practice: Confidentiality. www.gov.uk/government/publications/confidentiality-nhs-code-of-practice

Nursing and Midwifery Council, (2015) The Code: Professional Standards of practice and behaviour for nurses and midwives. www.nmc.org.uk/standards/code

Reflection (guided dialogue)

In all professional roles it is important to reflect upon a situation whether it is deemed to be positive or negative. Reflection is seen as a theory of critical thinking and is a process of reviewing an experience of practice in order to describe, analyse, evaluate and so inform learning about practice (Boud et al 1985). Invariably it is human nature to reflect upon an occurrence when 'something has gone wrong' (Taylor, 2006). Reflective practice advocates that we should also reflect upon good practice as a way of enhancing and reinforcing this practice and also as a quality control mechanism.

As a novice in this role, being afforded the time to reflect on action with a mentor is crucial, embracing the recommendation by Thompson and Thompson (2008) that we maximise our ability for noticing. Moon's (1999) proposal that reflection on action is more appropriate when values and beliefs are challenged reinforces the need for time to be taken. Reflective practice, when values are challenged, can be transformative and Mezirow (2003) argues that for learning to be transformative it must be accompanied by action.

Some reflective practice is deliberate; a planned activity following an action where it is important to review the activity, for example delivering training facilitating group work. Other reflections rise from a feeling generated before, during or after an event.

There are many models of reflection that can be used to assist in reflecting upon practice. Models may be viewed as academic exercises that at times are poorly implemented and poorly understood by practitioners (Quinn, 2008). The model that is used is not as important as long as a process occurs. Johns (1992) model of reflection is commonly applied, the

basics of which are:

The process of reflection:
• Experience
• Perception
• Making Sense
• Principles
• Application

Reflection then becomes more than just a thoughtful practice; it becomes a process of turning thoughtful practice into a potential learning situation (Johns, 1996).

The learning that occurs must be in some way be utilised, and if it is viewed that practices or behaviours must be changed then how these changes occur need to be considered: "Reflection without action is wishful thinking" Freire (1972) cited in Ghaye (2011)

Here are some examples of reflective models that may assist you to reflect:
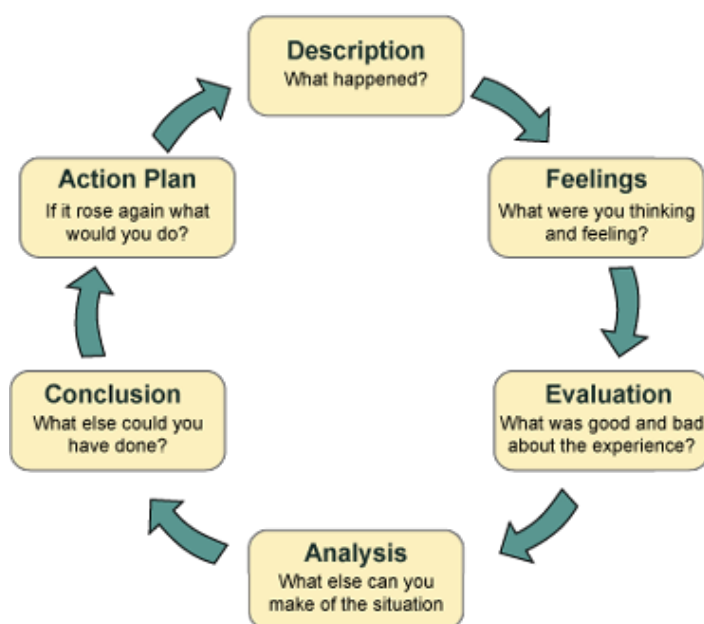
In the 'reflective cycle' (Graham Gibbs, 1992), there are six steps to aid reflective practice:

• Description: First you describe what happened in an event or situation

• Feelings: Then you identify your responses to the experience, for example, "What did I think and feel?"

- Evaluation: You can also identify what was good and bad about the event or situation.

- Analysis: The 'Feelings' and 'Evaluation' steps help you to make sense of the experience.

- Conclusions: With all this information you are now in a position to ask, "What have I learned from the experience?"

- Action plan: Finally, you can plan for the future, modifying your actions, on the basis of your reflections.

Here is a practice example of reflection using Gibbs:

- Description: First you describe what happened in an event or situation: 'I was doing an immunisation session in a local secondary school. A young girl was 'needle phobic' and appeared to be having a panic attack at the thought of the vaccination. She began to hyperventilate and looked like she was about to faint.'

- Feelings: Then you identify your responses to the experience, for example "What did I think and feel?" 'Initially I was really worried that she might faint or become hysterical in front of everyone. I was unsure at first what I should do to support her and calm her nerves.'

- Evaluation: You can also identify what was good and bad about the event or situation: 'The good aspect was that I identified the problem very early and was able to take her outside, away from the 'audience'. The worrying aspect was that I did not know the school well and was unsure where to take her as there appeared to be no room nearby. However, there were some seats out in the Hallway where we could sit and chat about her worries.'

- Analysis: The 'Feelings' and 'Evaluation' steps help you to make sense of the experience: 'I felt happy that I had the ability to rely on my early assessment and clinical nursing skills to see that the girl was nervous and her breathing was becoming rapid, suggesting anxiety. I needed to draw on my knowledge of phobias to needles and also my empathetic skills to be able to reassure her. Good communication skills are important in these situations.'

- Conclusions: With all this information you are now in a position to ask "What have I learned from the experience?" 'I have learnt to trust my clinical judgements and to realise that I can rely on my own ability in this type of situation. I have also learned to be prepared for unexpected or expected situations to occur in what may initially seem as a routine exercise.'

- Action plan: Finally, you can plan for the future, modifying your actions, on the basis of your reflections. 'In the future I would ensure that I know where to take pupils in the school if there is a problem like this again. I would also like to know if there is any history of anxiety or needle phobia in any of the young people attending immunisation sessions.'

'It can be useful to get feedback on performance and increase self-awareness of your own practice.'

Johari Window

1 Known self Things we know about ourselves and others know about us	2 Hidden self Things we know about ourselves that others do not know
3 Blind self Things that others know about us that we do not know	4 Unknown self Things that neither we nor others know about us

The Johari window model explores in depth parts of ourselves that we may not as yet have recognised. The challenge is to explore and understand a little bit more about ourselves through a window framework:

1. **Known self** - these are things that you know about yourself and that you may consciously present to others

2. **Hidden self** - these are things that you know about yourself but you choose to hide from others

3. **Blind self** - these are things about you that others can see but are unknown to you

4. **Unknown self** - these are feelings and abilities that you are not aware of and which others have not seen

By considering the four domains it should assist you to identify what is known by you, what is known by others and what is yet to be discovered. It can be useful to get feedback on performance and increase self- awareness of your own practice.

Here is the same practice example of reflection using the Johari Window:

'I was doing an immunisation session in a local secondary school. A young girl was 'needle phobic' and appeared to be having a panic attack at the thought of the vaccination. She began to hyperventilate and looked like she was about to faint.'

1. **Known self** - these are things that you know about yourself and that you may consciously present to others: 'I felt happy that I had the ability to rely on my knowledge of young people's potential anxiety in receiving a vaccination. I was also comfortable in my understanding of 'needle phobia'.

2. **Hidden self** - these are things that you know about yourself but you choose to hide from others: 'I felt worried that I was unsure whether to remove her from the situation or remain in the hall. If she had fainted on the way out, she may have hurt herself. I was unsure if I was doing the right thing taking her out. '

3. **Blind self** - these are things about you that others can see but are unknown to you: 'When reporting back to my team leader about the anxieties I had about this situation and how I acted, I was somewhat surprised at the amount of faith she had in my ability to cope. She stated that she could see how I had developed over previous months and knew that this type of situation 'would not faze me'.

4. **Unknown self** - these are feelings and abilities that you are not aware of and which others have not seen: 'Growing in experience and confidence is often unseen until compared to earlier situations.'

How to write reflectively

"It is often difficult for professionals to say or write about what they know and how they use their knowledge." Fook J and Gardner F (2007) Practicing Critical Reflection McGraw Hill – Open University Press Berkshire.

Questions to use when writing reflectively:

- Where the event took place?
- Who was involved?
- What actually happened?
- How you were involved?
- What your feelings were at the time?
- What contribution did you make?
- What happened after the situation?
- What did you learn from this experience?
- New knowledge?
- New skills
- Professional development?
- Personal development?

Tips on how to maximise learning time:
- Think of every experience as a learning one - 'talk as you go', externalise all your thoughts sharing tacit knowledge.

- Capture all learning opportunities, however minor.

- Try to promote professional conversations with the mentor.

- Develop 'case studies' that maybe used to promote understanding.

- Try to have a short 'review' and evaluation session at the end of each day.

Example of a reflective account

'A thirteen year old boy (Sammi) was referred by the school because of suspected self-harm - cuts on his arms and wrists had been noted by his class teacher. I ran a drop-in in the school each week and saw pupils either by appointment or they were allowed to 'drop in' to see me. I first of all realised the importance of building a good relationship with Sammi and that he was initially reluctant to talk to me. His body language suggested that he was very unhappy and he did not want to make eye contact. I also noted the cuts on his wrists that he tried to conceal by pulling his sleeves over them. I talked firstly about the confidentiality issues: that I was not part of the school therefore, he could talk to me without fear but that if I was worried about him for any reason, I would need to share that information with appropriate people but we would not put him at further risk. I felt that really, that was all I could say in the first instance and that sometimes it is better to be quiet and not try to fill silences. So I sat quietly and allowed him to think about what I had said. Gradually, he began to relax and look up at me. I suggested that he tell me what he enjoyed doing at school and what he didn't. He said he liked maths and English but hated sport. He said that sometimes the other pupils picked on him because he felt so useless in games sessions. He also said that his father had left the family home and he was feeling very sad. We talked about his coping strategies when he felt stressed or sad. We agreed to meet again the following week and I talked to my team leader about possible referral routes to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMH).
When discussing this with my team lead she confirmed to me I had done the right thing and that there was not much more we could have done at this stage.

I have learned more about issues around consent and confidentiality when talking to young people and that child protection must be foremost.

I am learning more about self-harming behaviour and what makes young people hurt themselves as a way of dealing with stress. The experience has made me think about bullying and that I need to talk to the school about their bullying policy.

It has also made me consider the importance of building up a relationship with young people and developing further understanding of adolescent development and that sometimes we don't have all the answers but that young people can benefit from a therapeutic, trusting relationship with an adult.

I feel more confident in myself as a result of this experience, that I made the right decisions and I am progressing in my decision-making skills. I am in no doubt that I will come across this type of situation again as self-harming behaviour is becoming more common.'

'I am learning more about self-harming behaviour and what makes young people hurt themselves as a way of dealing with stress.'

'I had to learn to listen to young people and respect 'silences' sometimes.'

'I need to understand when to refer to other agencies in case of the risk of significant harm.'

'Recognise your own limitations and never be afraid to ask or seek advice if you are unsure.'

'It can be lonely at first but you are not on your own, there is always a senior member of staff to help. This will be an exciting challenge in your professional life.'

Learning styles

It might be useful to discuss with your mentor your particular learning style. There are a number of tools that you could use. Here are two that you could share with your mentor. The first is the VARK questionnaire. This identifies whether you learn best using visual, audio, reading or kinaesthetic approaches. The second is the Honey and Mumford Learning styles questionnaire. This identifies whether you are an activist, a pragmatist, a theorist or a reflector. It can be useful to discover how you learn best to help you focus on the most productive way you can progress.

For more information, see below:
http://vark-learn.com/the-vark-questionnaire/

The Honey and Mumford: Learning Styles Questionnaire

There is no time limit to this questionnaire. It will probably take you 10-15 minutes. The accuracy of the results depends on how honest you can be. There are no right or wrong answers. If you agree more than you disagree with a statement put a tick. If you disagree more than you agree put a cross by it. Be sure to mark each item with either a tick or cross. When you have completed the questionnaire, continue this task by responding to the points that follow.

☐ 1. I have strong beliefs about what is right and wrong, good and bad.

☐ 2. I often act without considering the possible consequences.

☐ 3. I tend to solve problems using a step-by-step approach.

☐ 4. I believe that formal procedures and policies restrict people.

☐ 5. I have a reputation for saying what I think, simply and directly.

☐ 6. I often find that actions based on feelings are as sound as those based on careful thought and analysis.

☐ 7. I like the sort of work where I have time for thorough preparation and implementation.

☐ 8. I regularly question people about their basic assumptions.

☐ 9. What matters most is whether something works in practice.

☐ 10. I actively seek out new experiences.

☐ 11. When I hear about a new idea or approach I immediately start working out how to apply it in practice.

☐ 12. I am keen on self-discipline such as watching my diet, taking regular exercise, sticking to a fixed routine etc.

☐ 13. I take pride in doing a thorough job.

☐ 14. I get on best with logical, analytical people and less well with spontaneous, "irrational" people.

☐ 15. I take care over the interpretation of data available to me and avoid jumping to conclusions.

☐ 16. I like to reach a decision carefully after weighing up many alternatives.

☐ 17. I'm attracted more to novel, unusual ideas than to practical ones.

☐ 18. I don't like disorganised things and prefer to fit things into a coherent pattern.

☐ 19. I accept and stick to laid down procedures and policies so long as I regard them as an efficient way of getting the job done.

☐ 20. I like to relate my actions to a general principle.

☐ 21. In discussions I like to get straight to the point.

☐ 22. I tend to have distant, rather formal relationships with people at work.

☐ 23. I thrive on the challenge of tackling something new and different.

☐ 24. I enjoy fun-loving, spontaneous people.

☐ 25. I pay meticulous attention to detail before coming to a conclusion.

☐ 26. I find it difficult to produce ideas on impulse.

☐ 27. I believe in coming to the point immediately.

☐ 28. I am careful not to jump to conclusions too quickly.

☐ 29. I prefer to have as many sources of information as possible -the more data to mull over the better.

☐ 30. Flippant people who don't take things seriously enough usually irritate me.

☐ 31. I listen to other people's point of view before putting my own forward.

☐ 32. I tend to be open about how I'm feeling.

☐ 33. In discussions I enjoy watching the manoeuvrings of the other participants.
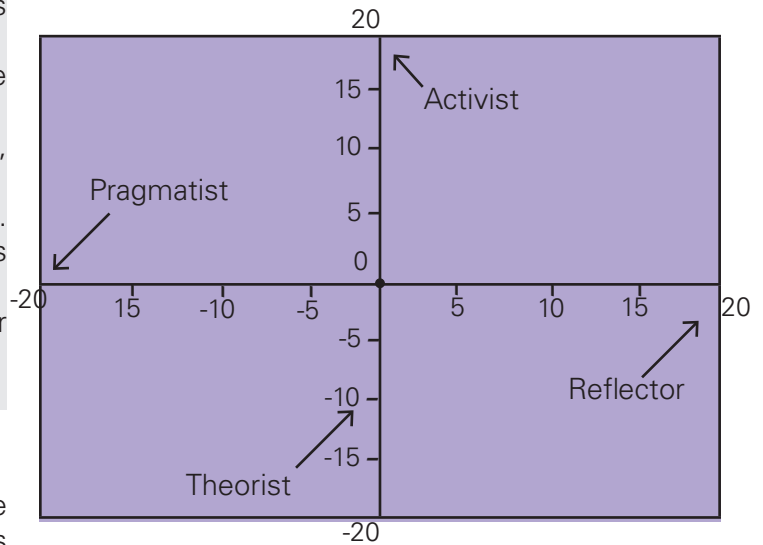
☐ 34. I prefer to respond to events on a spontaneous,

flexible basis rather than plan things out in advance.

35. I tend to be attracted to techniques such as network analysis, flow charts, branching programmes, contingency planning, etc.

36. It worries me if I have to rush out a piece of work to meet a tight deadline.

37. I tend to judge people's ideas on their practical merits.

38. Quiet, thoughtful people tend to make me feel uneasy.

39. I often get irritated by people who want to rush things.

40. It is more important to enjoy the present moment than to think about the past or future.

41. I think that decisions based on a thorough analysis of all the information are sounder than those based on intuition.

42. I tend to be a perfectionist.

43. In discussions I usually produce lots of spontaneous ideas.

44. In meetings I put forward practical realistic ideas.

45. More often than not, rules are there to be broken.

46. I prefer to stand back from a situation and consider all the perspectives.

47. I can often see inconsistencies and weaknesses in other people's arguments.

48. On balance I talk more than I listen.

49. I can often see better, more practical ways to get things done.

50. I think written reports should be short and to the point.

51. I believe that rational, logical thinking should win the day.

52. I tend to discuss specific things with people rather than engaging in social discussion.

53. I like people who approach things realistically rather than theoretically.

54. In discussions I get impatient with irrelevancies and digressions.

55. If I have a report to write I tend to produce lots of drafts before settling on the final version.

56. I am keen to try things out to see if they work in practice.

57. I am keen to reach answers via a logical approach.

58. I enjoy being the one that talks a lot.

59. In discussions I often find I am the realist, keeping people to the point and avoiding wild speculations.

60. I like to ponder many alternatives before making up my mind.

61. In discussions with people I often find I am the most dispassionate and objective.

62. In discussions I'm more likely to adopt a "low profile" than to take the lead and do most of the talking.

63. I like to be able to relate current actions to a longer-term bigger picture.

64. When things go wrong I am happy to shrug it off and "put it down to experience".

65. I tend to reject wild, spontaneous ideas as being impractical.

66. It's best to think carefully before taking action.

67. On balance I do the listening rather than the talking.

68. I tend to be tough on people who find it difficult to adopt a logical approach.

69. Most times I believe the end justifies the means.

70. I don't mind hurting people's feelings so long as the job gets done.

71. I find the formality of having specific objectives and plans stifling.

72. I'm usually one of the people who puts life into a party.

73. I do whatever is expedient to get the job done.

74. I quickly get bored with methodical, detailed work.

75. I am keen on exploring the basic assumptions, principles and theories underpinning things and events.
76. I'm always interested to find out what people think.
77. I like meetings to be run on methodical lines, sticking to laid down agenda, etc.
78. I steer clear of subjective or ambiguous topics.
79. I enjoy the drama and excitement of a crisis situation
80. People often find me insensitive to their feelings.

Scoring

You score one point for each item you ticked. There are no points for crossed items. Circle the questions you ticked on the list below:

2	7	1	5
4	13	3	9
6	15	8	11
10	16	12	19
17	25	14	21
23	28	18	27
24	29	20	35
32	31	22	37
34	33	26	44
38	36	30	49
40	39	42	50
43	41	47	53
45	46	51	54
48	52	57	56
58	55	61	59
64	60	63	65
71	62	68	69
72	66	75	70
74	67	77	73
79	76	78	80

Totals:

Activist	Reflector	Theorist	Pragmatist

Plot the scores on the arms of the cross below:

Your result may show that you have a particular learning style. It may be useful to bear this in mind as you approach tasks. Was the approach you adopted the best one in the circumstances? Would adopting another learning style have improved your performance?

At this point you may also find it helpful to read through Characteristics of the Four Learning Styles, which follows. This provides more detail and should help you clarify your sense of your own preferred style(s).
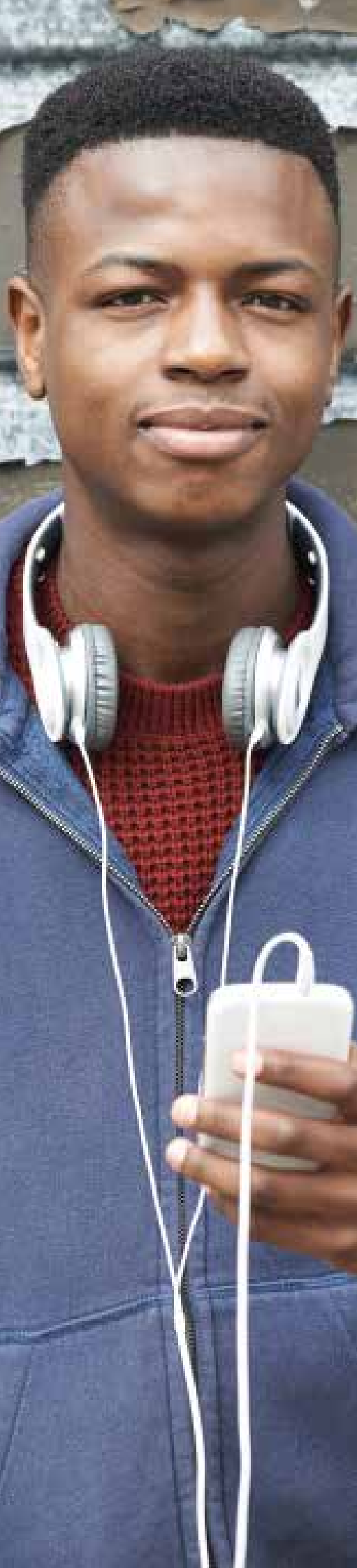
Characteristics of the four learning styles
(Sources: Learning Styles. FEDA, 1995; Honey & Mumford, The Manual of Learning Styles. 1992)

	ACTIVISTS	REFLECTORS	PRAGMATISTS	THEORISTS
STRENGTHS	- Doing things - Putting ideas into action - Enjoy change and variety - Flexibility - Acting quickly	- Collection of data from variety of sources - Looking at situations from various perspectives and grasping the big picture	- Practical application of ideas - Integrating theory and practice - Decision-making in organisations - Getting things done	- Creating theoretical models - Thoroughness - Industriousness - Verbal skills - Developing and working with systems
PREFERENCES	- New experiences - Taking risks - Getting involved in activities with people - Getting things done	- More interested in people (how they behave and how they feel) than in structures - To get involved directly and then reflect on the experience - More concerned with processes than outcomes	- More interested in structural aspects of situations than people - 'Hands On' experience	- Dealing with ideas - Solving problems - To know the experts' view - To work alone
CONCERNED ABOUT	- Personal relevance - Doing what interests them	- Personal meaning - The feelings of others - Maintaining wide ranging interests - Harmony	- Testing things out to get correct solution - Practical application of what they learn	- Details - Quality of information - Accuracy of facts - Personal effectiveness - Intellectual ability
PREFERRED WAY OF LEARNING AND WORKING	-Self-discovery, trial and error learning - Learning by doing - Flexible approaches to learning - Not worried about getting it wrong - Can work well with others - Likes attention, chairing meetings, leading discussions etc - More concerned with doing than thinking and feeling - Likes to get stuck in without wasting time	- Learning by listening and sharing ideas with others - Group work and discussions - Looking for meaning -Researching and reviewing -Thinking before doing - Bringing unity to diversity - Standing back from events and observing what happens	- Strong need to work on practical - To use skills and tinker with things - Test theories and apply common sense - Looking at information in a logical way, and then act on it immediately - Workshop and laboratory teaching methods - To solve problems - To reason deductively when focusing on specific problems - Making instinctive judgements based on practicality - Clear goals and adequate rewards	- Enjoy being taught in a didactic way - Prefer to work individually rather than in groups - Like to have access to a lot of information/resources - Collecting data - Enjoy reading - To specialise - Planning organising work - Thinking things through - Reworking notes/essays to achieve best results - Make links b/w ideas - Examining info carefully - Critically evaluation information -Thinking sequentially - Deductive reasoning

'Identify your sources of support early on so that the feeling of isolation can be minimised.'

	ACTIVISTS	REFLECTORS	PRAGMATISTS	THEORISTS
DISAD-VAN-TAGES	- Doing too many things at once - Lack of planning - Poor time management, leaving things to last minute - Lack of attention to detail - Not checking/ testing things out - Jumping in too quickly and not thinking things through - Being too pushy at times - Giving insufficient consideration to alternative ways of doing things - Inability to stand back and allow others to take action	- Easily distracted - Waste too much time before getting started - Frustrated by action plans - Can be too easy going - Sometimes indecisive - Can forget important details - Tend to work in bursts of energy - Inability to act spontaneously	- Lack of patience with people's suggestions - Wanting to do everything their way - Lack of imagination - Poor presentation - Details can get in the way - Inability to consider alternatives - Intolerance to woolly ideas - Only doing what is perceived as directly relevant to a given task - Need to be in control and to do it alone - Not interested in concepts or theories	- Need a lot of information before starting work - Reluctant to try anything new - Like to do things in a set way - Get bogged down in theory - Don't trust feelings but rely on logic - Overcautious: don't take risks - Heavily reliant on expert opinion without considering other views - Uncomfortable in group work - May have difficulty understanding emotions and feelings

This is a crucial area of support as the first year in practice is often a stressful time. The learning that has occurred at university in order to develop a level of knowledge and proficient skills in nursing produces highly motivated and professional individuals. It is acknowledged that the realistic nature of practice with all its resource issues and other frustrations can lead to a demoralised nurse very quickly. A good preceptor will be someone who will support the consolidation of knowledge and skills, be a listening ear and be positive in their approach to ensure that there is a low attrition rate.

Clinical Supervision
You should have regular clinical supervision sessions. Clinical supervision in the workplace was introduced as a way of using reflective practice and shared experiences as a part of continuing professional development (CPD). It has the support of the NMC and fits well in the clinical governance framework, whilst helping to ensure better and improving nursing practice. You should also have specialist child protection supervision when you are involved in those cases.

The RCN have developed guidance on clinical supervision: www.rcn.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/78523/001549.pdf

www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/20130625_800734_v1_00_supporting_information-effective_clinical_supervision_for_publication.pdf

Getting support while you learn
Many nurses new to the community highlight the isolation they can experience as a lone worker, perhaps having come from a ward environment where there is always someone to talk to and to access for advice. It will be important that you identify your sources of support very early on so that the feeling of isolation can be minimised. Good practice would be to be able to identify a support contact person whilst working; this may be your mentor or another member of the school nurse team.

Preceptorship
If you are a newly qualified nurse the NMC strongly recommends that all 'new registrants' have a period of preceptorship on commencing employment NMC (2008).
The role of the 'preceptor' is to:
- Facilitate and support the transition of a new registrant.
- Facilitate the application of new knowledge and skills.
- Raise awareness of the standards and competencies set that the new registrant is required to achieve and support to achieve these.
- To providing constructive feedback on performance.

Chapter summary
This chapter has encouraged you to identify a mentor to support you in practice. We have suggested that you use a reflective journal and ideally, a professional one that you can use throughout your career. It has also identified ways in which you can think about your individual learning style to help you learn more effectively. Lastly, this chapter has given some advice about seeking help through preceptorship and clinical supervision.

References/website
NMC Revalidation www.nmc.org.uk/standards/revalidation/what-revalidation-is/