

# **What do student nurses learn about the health needs of people experiencing homelessness?**

**Pre-registration nursing courses in England, Wales and  
Northern Ireland**

**2017 Survey**



## Purpose

In summer 2017, The Queen's Nursing Institute scoped universities across England, Wales and Northern Ireland to find out the access that nursing students have to learning about homelessness and its impact on health outcomes.

Providing nursing care for patients who are homeless, vulnerable migrants, Travellers or sex working requires a different level of knowledge, experience, social context and public health than giving nursing care to patients who do not have additional vulnerabilities around housing, immigration, discrimination or exploitation.

With homelessness on the rise, the QNI wanted to find out about current approaches to educating nurses at the pre-registration level about these wider issues.

The aim of this scoping was to identify and shine a light on good practice and support universities that may want to develop their curricula, and to support the NMC's review of pre-registration education.

The QNI believes that it is important that every nurse has the right skills, including the ability to give appropriate nursing care for people who are homeless.

The scoping work follows a successful QNI report published by the Department of Health '*Inclusion Health: Education and Training for Health Professionals*' which assessed the quality and quantity of homeless and inclusion health training.

## Use of this report

This information will be useful to nurse educators, nurse mentors, nursing students and members of the healthcare media.

## Methodology

The QNI contacted the 68 university institutions offering NMC approved pre-registration BSc Adult Nursing Programmes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (as at May 2017).

The QNI asked course or programme leads for pre-registration nursing at each University to complete an online questionnaire using Survey Monkey software.

The survey was open from 16 May 2017 to 31 July 2017. Four questions were chosen for the focus of the scoping:

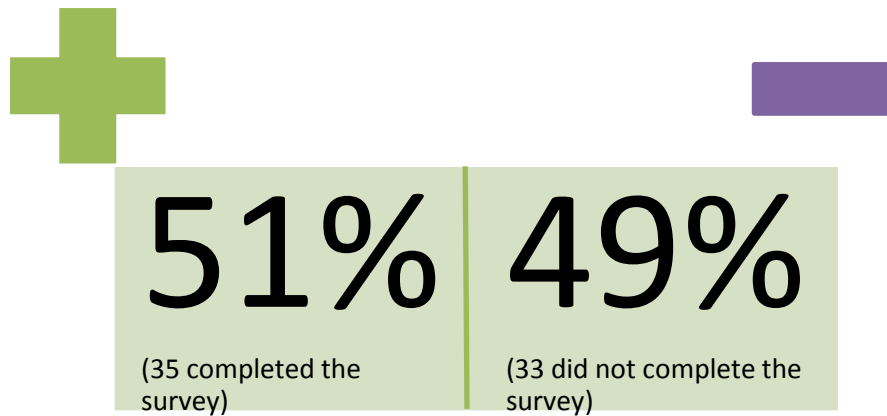
1. Did the course include learning content about homeless and inclusion health?
2. Did the course have specific modules about homeless and inclusion health?
3. How many hours of direct learning content about homeless and inclusion health were there?
4. Did the course include homeless and inclusion health nursing placements?

Comment fields were available to give course leaders the opportunity to elaborate and share further details about the structures of their programmes.



## Results

Of the 68 universities invited to complete the survey, 35 completed the survey before it was closed. The QNI would like to thank the 35 universities that gave their time to respond to this national scoping.

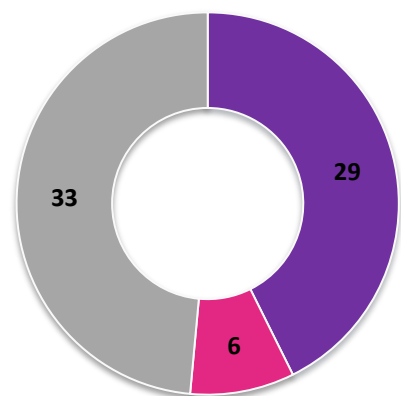


## Learning content on curriculum

The QNI asked BSc Nursing course leaders whether they currently included learning content about homeless and inclusion health on their courses.

**Table 1:**

Number of universities currently including learning content about homeless and inclusion health within NMC approved BSc Adult Nursing programmes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland



■ YES ■ NO ■ Did not complete

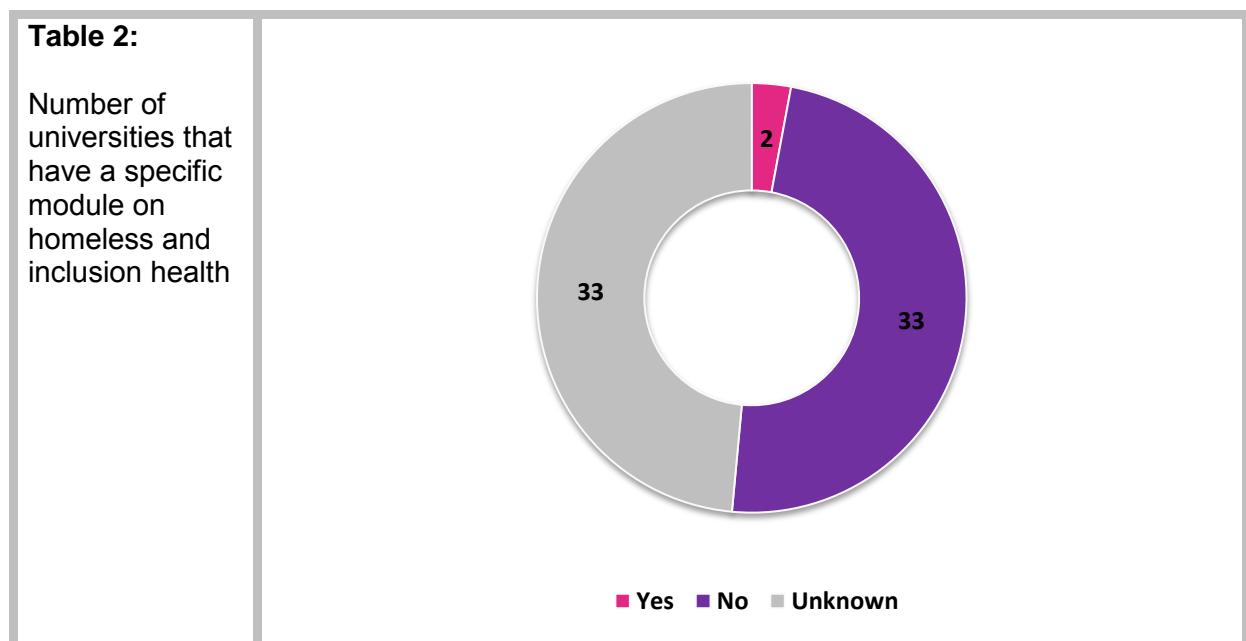
- 83% of universities that completed the survey included learning content about homeless and inclusion health
- Of the six that do not have specific learning content:
  - One offers the opportunity to work in a homeless health team in the community on placement.



- One discusses the issues in relation to a health surveillance and promotion module where appropriate.
- One includes communities of practice in which a broad range of health content was reflected on in relation to practice.
- One incorporate a module on vulnerability and safeguarding in which homelessness may come up in explorations, and say that students often choose homelessness as a topic to explore.
- Two offer no further comment.

## A specific module on homeless and inclusion health

The QNI asked course leaders whether they had a specific module on homeless and inclusion health.



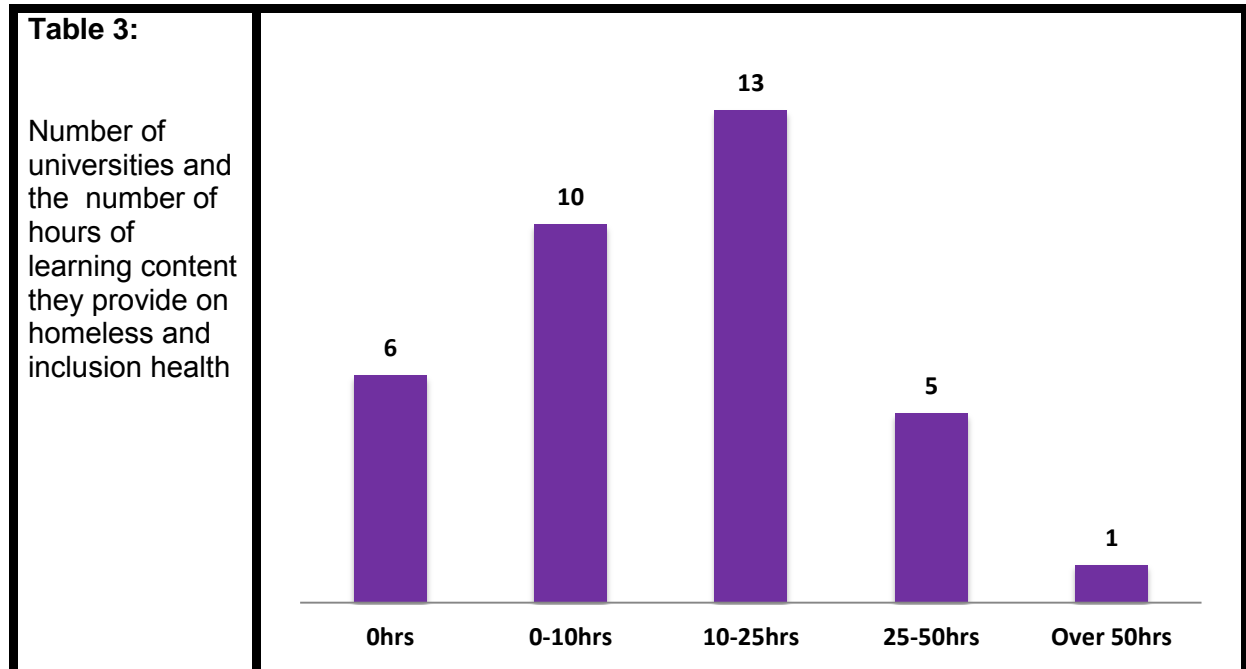
6% of the universities that completed the survey said that they had a specific module in Homeless and Inclusion Health.

- Of the two that had a specific module:
  - One admitted their module examines marginalised sections of communities and the impact this has on health, but that this does not explicitly include homeless people.
  - One uses a humanising framework (Todres and Galvin) to structure the curriculum. In Year 2, they run a unit called Humanising Nursing Care and this includes workshops where students meet with service users to hear their experience of health care. The theoretical aspects of the unit look at power, oppression, inclusion, and elegant challenging. One of the unit team has written extensively on Gypsies and Travellers and her expertise is used within the unit.



## Number of hours of learning content

The QNI asked approximately how many hours of learning content on homeless and inclusion health do course leaders offer nursing students.



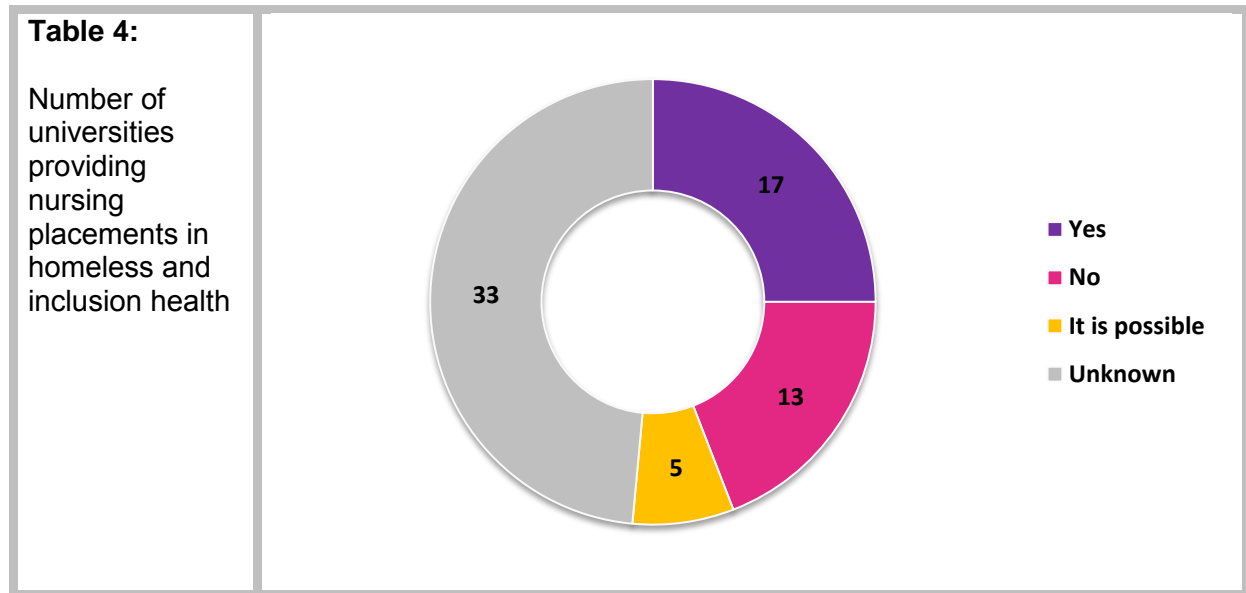
- Of the universities that responded to the survey, 17% offered more than 25 hours of learning content.
  - Of these 6 universities:
    - One incorporates a health inequalities module focused on marginalised sections of communities and the impact that this has on health but this is not explicit and they do not necessarily include homeless people as a specific group.
    - One covers Homelessness, Traveller health, Prison health (including placements in offender institutions), Refugee health Drug and alcohol and Sexual Health.
    - One covers these areas through the curriculum and in the first year of the programme in the Community health module students have a full day meeting homeless service users and asylum seekers.
    - One offers a biopsychosocial approach to the curriculum, meaning that all aspects of life within our society are considered. In particular in terms of public health, prevention and treatment access. Homelessness is thread through the programme.
    - One offers a year 2 module on partnership, anti-oppressive practice, conflict management and empowerment using an enquiry-based learning (EBL) approach. They explore these competencies through the experience of John, who is homeless, and recovering from an episode in hospital and needing to be discharged. This informs workshops, case studies, scenarios and reflection. They also assess in relation to homelessness.



- One includes Homeless and Inclusion Health throughout the curriculum.

## Nurse placements in homeless and inclusion health

The QNI asked course leaders whether they offered placements in homeless and inclusion health.



- Of the universities that responded 49% offered direct placements in homeless and inclusion health, and a further 14% made it possible to get some experience in homeless healthcare through other means e.g. spoke visits.
  - The placements varied from a 6 week placement with homelessness charity St Mungo's, placements with local homeless health teams to working alongside GP specialists.
  - For the 37% offering no homeless and inclusion health placement, barriers to placement given included:
    - the current NMC requirement that student nurses have to be supervised by a registered nurse
    - having a qualified mentor who can sign off their competencies in these settings
    - not having access at the moment to the required local homeless charities who could facilitate this



## Interesting, unique or focused approaches to teaching homeless and inclusion health to nurses, developed by Universities offering the BSc in Adult Nursing

The QNI finally asked the course leaders to identify any internal good practice they felt it would be worthwhile sharing with others in relation to homeless and inclusion health education.

*"Following a session on the homeless and inequality between men and women our March 17 new intake set up a campaign supporting Helping Handbags via social media which was very well received and supported local charities and our women's refuge."*

*"Exploratory – based learning (EBL) approaches"*

*"Development of a virtual online community which includes a Traveller community and a squat."*

*"Inclusion of service users as part of teaching strategy."*

*"Yes our approach to providing workshops with service users which allows small groups of students to engage with the service user to hear their experiences has been used in the Humanising Nursing Care unit for some time now. It is very well evaluated by students and fully supported by our Service user / carer group."*

*"We think the 'world cafe' approach is a good way to share experiences and knowledge and enables the students the opportunity to ask questions and develop their knowledge. Many students have arranged bespoke placement experiences with the facilitators of the world cafe sessions to further enhance their learning."*

*"We have a day where students meet service users where issues of homelessness and inclusion are discussed."*

*"Using guest speakers and service users to emphasise the key issues."*

*"Our students at level 5 develop an innovative public health resource and frequently develop resources related to homelessness."*

*"At level 6 they develop a commissioning project for service evaluation and again frequently cover inclusion health ideas."*

*"Homeless and inclusion health are integrated within the curriculum. We are fortunate to have a variety of placements for students to attend whether they follow an adult, mental health, child or learning disability field of nursing. We address issues on health inequalities, culture and diversity, through innovation projects, through dissertations and through elective placements. "*

*"There are examples of nursing students engaging in homeless services through practice-related experiences."*



## Summary and discussion

In a small scale scoping of pre-registration nursing programmes, there are noticeable differences in the amount of homeless and inclusion health content, the type of that content and the structure of different nursing programmes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Some programmes have committed to involving service users in the education of their nurses and are offering a diverse range of placements, or including focused exploratory learning based on people who are homeless. Others are offering far less.

This could depend on a variety of factors including:

- location of institutions
- relationship between institution and local homelessness organisations
- local trained nurse mentors working in homeless/inclusion healthcare with capacity to take on placements
- expertise of course tutors and mentors

It is important that the trained nurse has a good overview of homeless and inclusion health, given the added vulnerabilities of this patient group.

The QNI hope this scoping will encourage institutions to share more knowledge, commit more to this area and aim for more consistency in approach in educating nursing students around homeless health.

## Further resources

For more learning material, see the eight chapter QNI's Transition to Homeless Health Nursing Online Learning Resource - <https://www.qni.org.uk/nursing-in-the-community/transition-community-nursing/homeless-health/>

See the QNI commissioned Inclusion Health: Education for Health Professionals Report commissioned for the Department of Health's National Inclusion Health Board <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/educating-health-professionals-to-support-vulnerable-groups>

