

Transition to Care Home Nursing

Section C – Future Personal and Professional Development

Chapter 10 - Developing a Career in Home Nursing

A resource in the QNI's 'Transition' series, designed for registered nurses with an interest in working in a care home with nursing and for those who are already in this area of practice, who would like an update on current practice and approaches.



Section C - Future Personal and Professional Development

Chapter 10- Developing a Career in Home Nursing

Completing this chapter will enable you to:

- consider the importance of continuous professional development to your career
- be aware of the career opportunities in care home nursing
- assess your own competence
- create your own personal development plan

Introduction

It is very important to think about your skills, passions and knowledge and consider how you want to apply these as a nurse throughout your career. This can guide you towards the learning opportunities, roles and where you can make a real difference for people in need. This chapter considers the importance of professional development and the various options available. It also acknowledges that care home nursing requires a highly trained and specialised nurse that can adapt to the complexity of care needs in this unique setting. Finally, it looks at developing a career plan and applying for the roles where you can use your professional skills to make a real difference.

CPD opportunities for care home nurses must be considered as essential, it is acknowledged that there are many reasons why access to additional training and education can be difficult:

- There is not a clear enough career pathway for nurses in care homes although there are some plans in place to address this by national bodies such as RCN and NHS England
- Career Framework / Pathway plans by RCN – pending
- Lack of understanding by commissioners of the education and training needs of care home nurses
- Lack of understanding regarding assessment and assessment processes in the care home setting
- Lack of funding for courses
- Lack of access to NHS courses for care home nurses

There is a growing argument for the development of a post-registration specialist qualification for care of older people (which includes care home nursing) should be considered by the appropriate authorities to ensure that the nursing care home workforce is 'fit for purpose' and to meet the increasingly complex care needs of residents.

Why continuous professional development?

The overall aim of continuous professional development (CPD) is to give you the opportunity to update your knowledge and skills. It is also an NMC requirement that at least 35 hours of learning activity relevant to your practice is carried out over a three-year period.

All qualified nurses must keep a portfolio, which is updated on a regular basis, and at least every time a new learning activity has taken place. This learning activity can range from a face-to-face update or study day, an online educational activity, or attending a conference or study day that is particularly relevant to your area of practice.

It is important to reflect upon your portfolio of learning courses and resources, to think about your learning at a deeper level. It is recommended that a reflective account be written following each study day or learning event that you attend. Remember you will be required to include five reflections on practice that you have discussed with a NMC registrant as a requirement of revalidation.

You can develop your professional skills and knowledge and continue your further education in many ways. If you want to work in more specialist areas, attending study days, conferences and learning events can help you to meet like-minded people and motivate you to continue pursuing your goals. These events will give you the opportunity to network and make links with healthcare professionals and others that care for people in care homes. You will have opportunities to learn about best practice, policy and legislative changes and gain peer support and further resource materials. There may be study events that cover areas such as long term conditions including frailty, dementia, medicines management, tissue viability, nutrition, mental capacity and safeguarding.

Spending time volunteering or on placement in a care home with nursing will help you to gain some understanding of the complexities of caring for older people and is recommended, as they can offer more practical hands-on experience and personal insight than a study day.

Teaching Care Homes Project

During 2016-17 the Department of Health, Care Sector Nursing Taskforce funded pilot programme of work to establishing 'Teaching Care Homes', led by Care England (the leading representative body for independent care services in England) in partnership with the Foundation of Nursing Studies. To read the reports from the pilot programme visit: <http://www.careengland.org.uk/teaching-care-home-pilot>

Building on the success of the Pilot Programme, Care England, in partnership with the Foundation of Nursing Studies (FoNS) and the Burdett Trust for Nursing are now working to establish a community of Teaching Care Homes that demonstrate an ongoing commitment to person-centred care and ways of working, which will be experienced by all who live, die, visit and work in the home. They are centres for learning, practice development and research, actively engaging with staff, students, residents and the community. They have strong working relationships with academic and education providers and are a resource for other care homes. For further information, visit: <https://www.fons.org/programmes/care-sector>

Leadership skills

A nurse working in a care home will need to be a strong leader and advocate for high quality patient care for those most vulnerable in our communities. This makes them well suited to formal leadership roles in the future. Though not care home nursing, the NHS leadership academy offers a variety of online and face to face educational programmes that may be suitable. You need the leadership skills of compassion, political awareness and networking to advocate effectively for your residents.

It may be useful to make contact with your local Health Education England office for further information in respect of local courses and funding opportunities for any university base modules. This can be whether you are working for an NHS trust, in primary care or a third sector organisation.

Supporting others

Part of your professional role as a nurse is to share your skills and knowledge to support your colleagues in their development. You may offer opportunities for student nurses to have placements to gain insight and understanding of the role and setting. A placement in a care home should be an essential component of clinical practice experience for all undergraduate pre-registration student nurses.

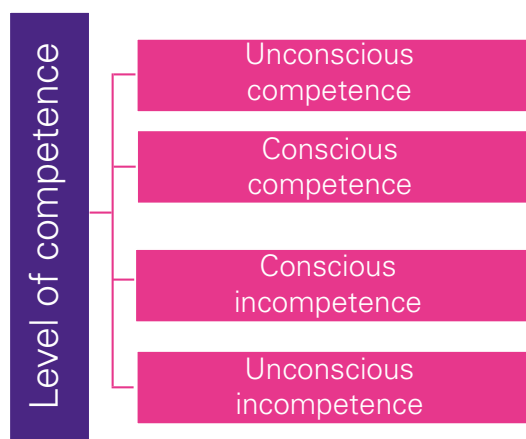
Working within your own Scope of Practice

In all nursing, it is essential for you to know what your level of knowledge is, to ensure you are working within your competence at all times. This ensures that you are protected and that the care you provide is safe and effective.



Activity

Look at the diagram below and read the description below - where would you place yourself on the ladder of competence?



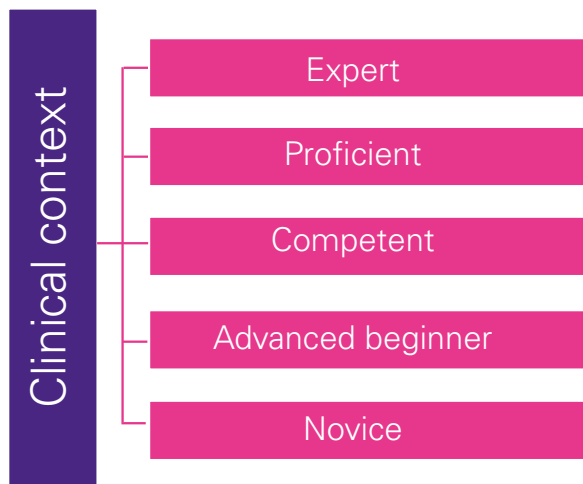
- Unconscious Incompetence – You don't know that you don't know
- Conscious Incompetence – You know that you don't know
- Conscious Competence – You know that you know
- Unconscious Competence – You don't know that you know, it just seems easy!



“ The overall aim of continuous professional development is to give you the opportunity to update your knowledge and skills.

Using this ladder as a tool will assist you in identifying where more learning needs to take place, but it also helps you reflect on your areas of competence.

Figure 10.2 – Benner’s Model – Ranking your competence



Benner’s model describes how nurses pass through five levels of proficiency, as they develop a new skill: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. This model may help you and your mentor to identify those areas of skill and knowledge requiring further development.



Activity

Having identified where you are on the ladder for a particular skill, what action are you going to take to improve your position on the ladder?

Creating your own Personal Development Plan

Creating a personal development plan will help you to reflect on your career, and focus on the actions needed to reach your goals. There are five key stages involved when creating a personal development plan:

1. Identify your current needs - what is required of your current role?
2. Analyse yourself - Carry out a SWOT analysis – look at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that have assisted/prevented you working effectively in your current role and also when considering future roles
3. Develop a plan - Create a SMART action plan to assist you to move forward in the direction of your chosen career
4. Consider alternatives - Have you considered any other roles you might be interested in?
5. Take action - What steps / actions do you need to take to follow your chosen career pathway?

This personal development plan will pave the way for you when you attend interviews, and will assist you when writing your CV.

Also, acknowledge that you may be at different levels of competence depending on what skill or subject matter is being addressed.

You may find the exercise uncomfortable because it displays areas where you possibly thought you were more competent than you actually are. This is not a problem as long as you are aware of this and demonstrate an emotional intelligence that is resilient and will assist you to develop / strengthen in these areas.

Emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive emotions, in yourself, and in others. Having recognised this it then enables you to identify strategies that will help you to reflectively regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

Mind Tools introduces you to a number of leadership and management strategies in areas such as creativity, decision-making, strategy and communication. These tools may help you if you want to take your management skills further. It is important to remember that every nurse is a leader and will have some leadership role to play in the contribution towards excellent patient care.

Figure 10.3 - An example Personal Development Plan

Plan goals	
Specific objective Outcome you are looking for Timescale (Be realistic; need to do in stages?)	
Key Actions (Things you need to do to achieve my objectives)	
Support Required (The help you will need along the way)	
What progress have you made and which goals have you achieved?	

Exploring your Career Options

The health careers website will highlight the various nursing opportunities that are available. Whether it be working as a member of a primary care team, working as part of a social enterprise or working with a specialist team of health workers, you will know what your options are, even if you have been in practice a while.

Laura's story a true account of a career pathway of a nurse working in a care home

Case scenario - Laura's Story

In Laura's second year of pre-registration nurse training, she had a placement in a care home with nursing. She was allocated an experienced mentor who was enthusiastic about the 'fundamentals of nursing care'. Laura observed holistic resident assessment skills and was given many opportunities to practice and participate in the delivery of quality resident care. She began to understand the importance of person centred approaches to care and enjoyed having the time to build a relationship with residents.

This experience remained with Laura throughout the rest of her nurse training! Upon qualifying, Laura chose to take up a post in the same care home and she was given a comprehensive and structured preceptorship programme for the first six months. She had a 'buddy' who supported her through her first year and had clear criteria and outcomes to work towards whilst settling into her new role. This regular support and supervision was invaluable and made Laura feel like she had someone to turn to whenever she was presented with a challenging situation.

Throughout the next two years, Laura was given access to further education and training to support her in her role and attended a national conference on Dementia Care.

A post came up for a senior staff nurse and Laura applied and was successful and got this promotion. The new role assisted Laura to develop her skills in staff management and leadership, which she embraced the opportunity to have more input and say into how the home was run and how residents received care. Laura really felt like she was able to make a difference to the way in which residents were cared for. Laura applied and got funding to start a postgraduate certificate in Advanced Professional Practice. The course was very practice based and Laura found it really helped her to link some of the theoretical aspects of nursing the complexities and diversity of care home nursing.

Laura began to acknowledge more the career pathway that she was now on and the different opportunities of working in the private sector.

Her plans are to become a care home registered manager, regional manager and head of nursing for her organisation in the future!



Discussion Point

- How can care homes enhance the practice placement experience for students in order to promote this setting as a genuine career option?
- Consider the importance of preceptorship programmes for newly qualified staff
- How can care homes develop career pathways that are attractive to newly qualified staff?
- How can care homes support the existing experienced nurses to remain in this sector?



“Applying for jobs can be daunting at times but good research, persistence, knowing and demonstrating your skills to the best can help you succeed.”

Applying for Jobs

Applying for jobs can seem daunting at times but good research, persistence, knowing and demonstrating your skills to the best can help you succeed. The following are some tips to help you through the job application process. They may be particularly useful, if you are at the early stages of your career.

1. Find out background information about organisations you are interested in working for (NHS, commissioning organisations, local authorities, private sector companies, social enterprises or charities) by visiting their website.
2. Find out what their vision and strategy for the future is.
3. What skill set are they looking for – do you have the skills they are looking for? To get an idea, look through the job description, and the essential skills and desirable skills required of the position that you are applying for.
4. Ensure that the CV meets the criteria in the job description.
5. Be as succinct as possible when you answer questions on the application form.
6. If invited for an interview, have a practice interview with someone with an understanding of the role you are applying for.
7. Stay up to date with government policies that may impact on your practice.
8. Be enthusiastic and remember to let the interview panel know what specific skills you will be bringing to the role.
9. If you are asked to present at interview, you may wish to prepare a PowerPoint presentation. Keep the number of slides to a minimum (not more than 10 slides) and only write headers or bullet points.
10. Remember to speak clearly and confidently at interview and when presenting.
11. Remember that sometimes an appropriate illustration may be more suitable to include than simply words. Your portfolio is your opportunity to showcase your personal development and learning to date in your career; make sure it is available for the interview. The information in your portfolio may be the information that helps recruiters make a decision as to which candidate they should choose.

12. If unsuccessful take the feedback to improve for the next time and try to keep it in perspective. There are lots of great opportunities for your skills and passions.



Activity

Now that you have completed this on line resource what do you plan to do to develop your career?



Summary

In this chapter, you have learned about the importance of recognising your own competence in the role you are currently working in, and being honest about what weaknesses or gaps in knowledge you still need to address. Improvement can only happen if you are self-aware and prepared to act to develop your strengths and weaknesses.

Further Resources

- NMC 2015 The Code and revalidation www.nmc.org.uk
- RCN Principles of Practice <https://www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/principles-of-nursing-practice>
- Skills for Care website 'Nursing in social care' <http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/NMDS-SC-intelligence/NMDS-SC/Workforce-data-and-publications/Nurses-in-social-care.aspx>
- Spilsbury et al 2015 Supporting nursing in care homes <http://www.rcnfoundation.org.uk/?a=620718&now=1429088648>
- <https://www.rcn.org.uk/news-and-events/news/a-positive-choice-rcn-publishes-older-peoples-nursing-stories>
- Chambers A, Jack K and Tetley J (2016) The Education and Development of Nursing Staff in Care Homes Manchester Metropolitan University

Endnote

Congratulations on working your way through this resource, and we wish you all the best in your career in nursing homes. If you want to get in touch or offer feedback on the resource please contact mail@qni.org.uk.

This resource would not have been possible without the contributions of the following people.

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