

Preparing for change: implementing the new pre-registration nursing standards

The new standards for education from the Nursing and Midwifery Council provide the framework for pre-registration nurse education programmes and will determine how we train our future nursing workforce. Employers need to take action now to prepare for these changes and take advantage of the opportunities available to ensure newly qualified nurses are fit for purpose and ready to deliver high-quality care for patients.

This *Briefing* outlines the timetable for change and highlights the roles employers and key partners need to undertake. It provides learning from previous changes to education policy, ideas for ensuring success in your organisation and questions to help you assess how ready you are for the change.

Key points

- Changes to the pre-registration nursing standards provide a real opportunity for employers to work with their local education providers, to ensure that the right programmes are developed at the outset.
- Nurses are the largest single profession within the NHS and are critical to providing patient care of the highest standard. They increasingly need to be able to practice autonomously.
- These changes will enable nurses to provide high-quality, patient-centred care and provide more healthcare closer to patients' homes. They will ensure future nurses are equipped to work in a modern healthcare system.
- The experience, skills and knowledge of existing staff are critical for improving quality of care and creating a positive patient experience. They will have a valuable role in setting an example for the future generation of nurses and supporting and mentoring new students.

Introduction

Nurse education is changing. Several developments have taken place since the launch and publication of the Department of Health's Modernising Nursing Careers programme in 2006. The Department of Health and the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) have both run consultations in the last two years asking for views about the type of nurse we need for the future.

As a result, the NMC has published its new standards for education. They provide the framework for pre-registration

nurse education programmes and will help determine how we train nurses for the future, starting from 2011.

They also provide a unique opportunity for you, as employers, to think about your strategic workforce plan and the type of nurse you wish to train and employ in the future. The current economic climate and the proposals outlined in the Government's white paper, *Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS*, in July 2010 sets a challenging scene and one in which radical changes are required if employers are to deliver the quality and productivity agenda.

Education providers have been working with strategic health authorities (SHAs) and employers to determine when they can adopt the new programmes locally. The first programmes using the new standards will start in September 2011 and all providers are expected to be using them by 2013.

It is critical that you are fully aware of the timetable in your local area and are working in partnership locally, to ensure the changes are implemented successfully with positive student and patient experiences and minimal disruption to education and service provision.

This not only affects the student population. Engagement and support of your current workforce will be needed to ensure success.

This *Briefing* has been produced to support employers with the change process. It has been designed to be used alongside the NHS Employers discussion paper *The role of the nurse* and the state of readiness reporting arrangements with your local SHA.

A range of supporting documents and guidance has also been produced, details of which can be found on the back cover of this *Briefing* and on the nursing pages of our website.

Background

The timetable

In September 2008 the NMC announced a package of principles to change pre-registration nurse education for the future. The key change was that new entrants to the nursing profession will need to be qualified to degree level before they can be registered to practise. Other principles included modernised pathways leading to registration in one of the current four fields of adult, mental health, learning disabilities and children's nursing and wider opportunities for learning in the community throughout the programme.

The sheer scale of this change means that a phased implementation is needed. The timetable will see the first courses using the new standards starting in September 2011 with the need for all programmes to have been approved and operational by 2013.

The standards for education

The standards for education set out the mandatory requirements that all pre-registration nursing programmes have to meet, including those relating to the teaching, learning and assessment of nursing students. Because 50 per cent of nurse education is delivered in practice settings, it is crucial that you work with your staff who provide supervision and mentorship to nursing students.

Understanding how the NMC has developed the standards will help your organisation to make the most of the opportunities during implementation.

The NMC has worked with key partners through the development and consultation stages of the process to ensure that new nurses have the skills required to deliver high-quality care, both now and as demands on healthcare services change in the future.

The standards will ensure that nurses meet the fundamental requirement for safe and effective care but are flexible enough to meet the challenges of an ageing population, manage increasing numbers of long-term conditions and realise the desire to move more care delivery outside of traditional hospital settings.

Our work with employers over the last 12 months has told us that you need nurses who are

fit for practise and purpose when they start work. The new standards provide a lever for employers to influence this.

Early discussions between employers and local education providers and commissioners will ensure that the programmes reflect the local context, that the curriculum development is what you need from your future professional workforce and that both you and the education provider share responsibility for the delivery of the curriculum.

The foundation to producing high-quality nurses is the pre-registration element of training. The Department of Health preceptorship framework, the nursing career framework and the recently reviewed NMC fitness to practice guidelines are key support documents that can assist you with the whole systems review.

Getting prepared

Learning from previous changes

Learning from other 'modernising' clinical careers programmes and previous changes to education programmes can help us to recognise the risks involved and address them in advance.

This can be grouped into five key areas:

- 1 Robust project management.
- 2 Understanding the impact on the whole workforce.

- 3 Strong and clear communication and engagement.
- 4 Support for students and current workforce.
- 5 Transparent partnership working.

Employers can apply these in the following ways to help smooth the implementation process and devise clear actions.

- Local project management, local accountability and trust-wide governance arrangements will be needed to track the progress of this large-scale change programme. These should include timings, risks and costs for your organisation.
- Understanding which services need to be delivered by your organisation, and how, is essential. This allows an assessment of the current shape and skill base of your workforce to be mapped against future needs. There is also a need to think about the multi-disciplinary approach to delivering patient care and whether other local issues can be addressed through this particular workforce change programme. These will vary locally, but may include skill shortages in medical specialities, or an ageing workforce.
- Be clear about what the national policy intentions are and what they are trying to achieve. This will help with

local dissemination of information. Clear communication and messaging is critical if managers, mentors, staff, students, your local population and schools are to understand and support the change. Working in partnership with the national, regional and local bodies described below will help to provide a framework for your communication messages. Your current staff engagement and patient and public partnership arrangements also offer important communication channels that can be used throughout the change process.

- Supporting the development of creative and innovative practice learning is a key responsibility for employers. This includes ensuring the right number of placements is available, that they provide quality learning opportunities and that learning is expanded into non-traditional settings to support future care needs.

Practice learning may include following typical patient journeys across different care environments. You will need to ensure that mentors within your organisation are supported and developed so that they have the skills, knowledge and confidence to mentor different types of nursing students who will be learning in different ways.

Understanding the roles of key partners

Each of the partners in the change programme has responsibilities to ensure the successful implementation of the new education programmes. The main responsibilities are below, but each will have their own more detailed plans.

The employer

- Provide high-quality and innovative practice and learning opportunities.
- Work with their education provider(s) to inform the design and delivery of pre-registration nurse education.
- Train, support and develop mentors to ensure they provide a high-quality experience for students.
- Ensure appropriate employer representation throughout the recruitment and selection process to pre-registration programmes.
- Work with existing staff, students, education providers, local community and schools to communicate the changes.
- Offer potential students tasters, work experience and opportunities to understand the variety of career options available within nursing.
- Assess the outcomes of the change programme.

The education provider

- Fulfil the role of 'approved educational institution' to the NMC.
- Work with the SHA and employers to determine the timetable for change and ensure appropriate academic and practice learning opportunities are available.
- Submit to the NMC their intended timescale for approving their new programme.
- Design a curriculum to meet the new standards in collaboration with employers.
- Re-design the recruitment and selection

process in collaboration with employers and others.

- Promote new programmes to prospective students.
- Work with employers to monitor quality of student experience, progression and achievement.

Strategic health authority

- Work with local education providers and employers to assess state of readiness, education commissioning requirements and risks to delivery.

Department of Health

- Oversee the implementation process at a national level through the England Implementation Group (EIG).
- Act as co-ordinator of communication between stakeholders at a national level.
- Take an overarching view of the risks and interdependencies linked to other policy development and ensure this is considered and shared with stakeholders (eg. review of NHS student support arrangements.)
- The white paper *Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS* made clear that there will be a consultation document on education and training. The consultation will set out a proposed model for the new national education and training framework.

Nursing and Midwifery Council

- Approve all new programmes to be delivered by 2013.
- Support the implementation process by hosting workshops in SHA regions in England from October to December 2010.
- Produce additional information to support implementation available through the NMC website.
- Act as co-ordinator of communication between stakeholders at a national level.

Realising benefits

Releasing the potential of skilled professionals

As commissioned training places are reduced and the financial challenges facing employers become more acute, it is even more critical to ensure that skilled, registered professionals are used in the service delivery setting so that nurses can do what they have been uniquely trained to do.

Employers have a unique opportunity to examine what can be delegated to support roles and what skills and training the current support workforce needs to maintain high-quality patient care.

There are examples of employers who have developed an enhanced support worker or assistant practitioner role to release substantial time back to registered professionals. This has had success in a range of professions including radiography, pharmacy, maternity and increasingly within nursing. The model of using suitably competent support staff under the supervision and direction of a registered nurse allows nurses to use their skills to devise the care plan, lead the team and ensure the relevant patient outcomes are reached.

Re-profiling your workforce to fit service needs is an essential part of the planning process. If done methodically and with the multi-disciplinary context to delivering patient care, it will have a dramatic impact on the shape and profile of your teams. This will

allow you to be more flexible to meet the changing demands of the future. Dependent on your current local structures, re-profiling may identify a need to invest further in support functions or advanced practice roles to fulfill your local requirements.

Innovation in the provision of learning opportunities

Most employers offer a variety of practise learning opportunities for student nurses. This is often

the first experience a student has of working in a clinical setting and it can formulate their thoughts and ideas about whether they would like to come and work with a particular team or employer, or even if they wish to continue on a nursing course.

These students are the registered workforce of the future and investing in high-quality education and placement opportunities for them means

Practice learning: activities to reap benefits

Activity	Benefit/outcome
Create a cultural attachment between student and employer.	Improved recruitment and retention rates of both newly qualified and existing professionals.
Work closely with placement and education providers to provide additional learning opportunities in non-traditional settings (for example, GP practices, intermediate care facilities, walk in centres).	Student gains a broader knowledge base of care settings and advances in care delivery. Can assist with fitness for purpose issues. Keeps all areas of the current workforce involved in developing the future workforce.
Ensure new models of service delivery include a commitment to provide learning for students.	Assists with ensuring graduates are fit for purpose as they receive training in the settings in which they are most likely to work.
Analyse the current arrangements for supporting mentors in the workplace.	Helps your senior team to identify whether the educational support structure is appropriate or needs revision.

that employers will have students who are job ready and able to deliver the types of services their patients need.

The introduction of the new NMC standards provides an opportunity for employers to think differently about the provision of learning in the local health economy. Employers often tell us that they have difficulties recruiting and retaining skilled nurses and that newly qualified nurses are not fit for purpose.

The following activities, linked to the placement programme, can help to address these concerns.

Keeping in touch

Preparing to implement the new standards in pre-registration nurse education is complex and multi-faceted and it is essential that work at senior level within your organisation commences now to manage the transition.

It is also important to recognise that implementation is an evolving process. Employers are encouraged to retain close working relationships with local partners and ensure there are mechanisms in place to keep up to date with the UK-wide messaging from the NMC and in England from the Department of Health.

NHS Employers will be keeping you up to date via our website and through regular items in our NHS Workforce bulletin. To subscribe to this free weekly bulletin visit www.nhsemployers.org/workforcebulletin

We will be seeking to share further learning as the new programmes are implemented over the next three years. Your experiences could help other organisations facing similar challenges. If you would be willing to share them, please email nursing@nhsemployers.org

Key questions for employers

What does your current nursing workforce look like?

Accurate baseline data on the profile of the whole nursing workforce is critical to informing future changes in service delivery and education and training models. Profiling by skill base, pay level and age will provide valuable data for your senior team.

Who are the mentors of your students?

It is important to understand the profile of your mentors and the support structure that is in place for them. Mentors will need to be fully aware of the requirements of the new programme and have the appropriate knowledge and confidence to mentor graduate trainees.

What educational governance arrangements are in place to support quality in both the supervision and mentoring of students and mentors?

Consider how you measure, evaluate and report on the education and mentoring provision within your trust.

Are you working with your local education provider(s) to develop the new programme and thinking creatively about where students can receive learning opportunities to support your future needs?

Service delivery models are changing all the time and it is important to think about how learning for students can be maximised when organisational and service changes are implemented. Learning opportunities can span care boundaries and be delivered in non-traditional settings.

*(Key questions for employers cont.)***How are you ensuring that you cultivate a cultural attachment between student and employer to aid recruitment and retention?**

Recruitment into registered nursing posts can be enhanced by ensuring that the students who you train want to work with you. This may not always be possible, particularly if training capacity exceeds your employment capacity but an aspiration for employers should be that students leave their clinical placements with a desire to work with the team.

Does your project plan take account of the financial, workforce and service changes?

A whole systems approach to the project is essential. Changes to the nursing profession should be considered within a financial, workforce and service context. Without full consideration of these, it will be challenging to reap the benefits of this opportunity.

Have you identified a responsible officer(s) for liaising with education providers on curriculum development, recruitment to programmes and issues with struggling or failing students?

Named contacts, responsibilities and defined processes will ensure that accountability for education delivery is clear and should reduce confusion for both employers and universities.

Do you have a robust review and evaluation process in place with your education provider?

To ensure that training and education remains fit for purpose both now and in the future, close working relationships are needed with local education providers including regular review and evaluation of the programmes. This should lead to the constant development and enhancement of training for the future cohorts of students.

Do you have a clear communication and engagement strategy?

Developing a communications strategy using national messages and tailoring them to your needs will help you to reach staff, students and stakeholders affected by the changes. However, communications will not deliver successful outcomes unless this is accompanied by an engagement strategy to support the messages. Where possible, utilise your existing communications and engagement channels to introduce, discuss and implement the changes. Selecting relevant staff to become 'change champions' or 'change agents' can support the implementation of the new standards and provide valuable insight into how they are received.

Do you have an internal reporting system to assess state of readiness?

Regular reporting to the board or senior team on progress, risks and mitigating actions and costs will help to ensure that the implementation programme delivers the intended benefits.

Are you part of a regional reporting system to assess state of readiness?

Your internal reporting system can be used to provide evidence to your SHA of the progress being made and any risks to successful delivery of the programme. Identifying and escalating risks to regional forums and, ultimately, to the national England Implementation Group (EIG) will help improve the programme for students, staff and patients. One of the functions of the EIG is to work in partnership at a national level to support local delivery. Your risks or obstacles may be common to other employers and it may be possible to find a regional or national solution.

Further information

NHS Employers, Nursing workforce www.nhsemployers.org/nursing

NHS Employers, Discussion paper 3: *Role of the nurse (2009)*

www.nhsemployers.org/Aboutus/Publications/Documents/The_role_of_the_nurse_discussion_paper.pdf

NHS Employers, Staff engagement

www.nhsemployers.org/EmploymentPolicyAndPractice/staff-engagement/Pages/Staff-Engagement-And-Involvement.aspx

NHS Employers, NHS Workforce bulletin www.nhsemployers.org/workforcebulletin

Nursing and Midwifery Council, *Standards for Education (2010)* www.nmc-uk.org

Department of Health, *Widening participation in pre-registration nursing (2010)*

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_116553

Department of Health, *Education commissioning for quality framework (2010)*

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_110774

Department of Health, White paper, *Equality and excellence: Liberating the NHS (2010)*

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_117353

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- pay and negotiations
- recruitment and planning the workforce
- healthy and productive workplaces
- employment policy and practice.

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Contact us

For more information on how to become involved in our work, email getinvolved@nhsemployers.org

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