

Transition to the District Nursing Service

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Section C - The future - personal and professional development

Chapter 10 - Developing your Career in District Nursing

The aim of this Chapter is to:

- Consider your confidence and competence in District nursing
- Start to consider your own personal development plan
- Career planning

As a qualified District Nurse it is imperative that you maintain currency in all aspects of your role. You should be a role model for other members of your team who want to aspire to become a District Nurse. There are numerous opportunities for you to attend study days and refresher courses and it is your responsibility to attend the most relevant and appropriate updates. These will all form part of your continuing professional development and will be necessary for NMC revalidation.

Importance of CPD

What is the purpose of continuing professional development (CPD)? The overall aim of CPD is to give all those working with patients the opportunity to update their knowledge and skills in their area of work. NMC revalidation is the new process that all nurses are required to follow. You must have undertaken 35 hours of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) relevant to your scope of practice as a nurse in the three year period since your registration was last renewed, or when you joined the register (NMC, 2016). For further details of the NMC revalidation process please refer to the NMC website – www.nmc.org.uk/standards/revalidation.

One of the main strengths of the revalidation is that it reinforces the Code (NMC, 2015) by asking nurses and midwives to use it as the reference point for all the requirements, including their written reflective accounts and reflective discussion. All nurses will be required to maintain a record of practice hours, maintain a verifiable record of any CPD activities, show five pieces of practice-related feedback, five reflective accounts and a reflective discussion form. You must also make a declaration of health and character and demonstrate that you have appropriate indemnity insurance in place. Further in depth details can be found on pages 7-9 on the NMC revalidation guidance online.

If you are not sure whether to apply for a District Nurse course, but would like to remain working in the community, attending study days is an opportunity for you to look at various career paths that you might like to follow in the community setting. There may be study days on palliative care, tissue viability, chronic obstructive airways disease, diabetes, tuberculosis, public health – the list is almost endless. However, the obvious career path for a staff nurse working in the community is to apply for the Specialist Practice District Nursing programme. This may not be a chosen career for all community staff nurses, but should you decide to follow the Specialist Practice route an explanation below will highlight where district nursing is today.

The Standards for Specialist Education and Practice (NMC, 2001) remain for now as the sole regulations for district nursing programmes

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in England. However, the Queens's Nursing Institute and QNI Scotland have worked with a number of representatives from universities across the UK to develop new voluntary standards for District Nursing, which were published in 2015. These are not regulated by the NMC, but complement the current NMC standards and many universities are now incorporating these standards into their District Nursing programme.

Specialist practice is the exercising of higher levels of judgment, discretion and clinical decision making in clinical care, to enable the monitoring and improvement of standards of care through supervision of practice, clinical audit, the development of practice through research and teaching, the support of professional colleagues and the provision of skilled professional leadership (Boran 2009).

These views are now supported by Health Education England and are articulated within the District Nursing Career Framework (HEE: 2015). In 2004 the NMC (NMC: 2004) created a third part of the professional nurse register for all Specialist Community Public Health Nurses that included school nurses, health visitors and occupational health nurses. This did not include District Nurses who remained on the first part of the register with a recordable rather than registered qualification (Dickson et al (2011)). This division in community nursing has generated much debate around the education of District Nurses. There have been calls for the standards to be revised to meet the needs of contemporary community nursing from organisations such as the Association of District Nurse Educators (ADNE) (Cook et al. 2011), who are committed to raising the profile of District Nursing.

The band 5 and 6 practitioners who may not wish to follow a District Nursing pathway, preferring to practice in more generalist roles in primary care, are being encouraged to follow new educational programmes, aimed at enhancing clinical skills, knowledge and competencies of the support staff workforce (Boran (2009)). For example, since 2011 Buckinghamshire New University has offered a module in 'Transition to Community Nursing' for community staff nurses. The module acknowledges that practitioners are often working alone in homes that are not set up as health care environments and stresses the need to be able to transfer skills and manage collaborative relationships with clients and families, but also with health, social and voluntary agencies. Nurses working in primary care settings also need to be able to make more autonomous decisions than their hospital based colleagues

(Drennan and Davis 2008).

Service and resource pressures are building while the number of people who wish to be cared for in their own homes is multiplying daily. Therefore District Nurses and their teams will need to be resourceful and innovative in the way they approach each new day. The Five Year Forward View (NHS 2014) states that the NHS has dramatically improved over the past fifteen years, but demand has also increased over the same period. The District Nurse is therefore pivotal in providing a quality service to their population.

There are a variety of opportunities for District Nurses to enhance their role. For example the following areas could be explored further and District Nurses could expand their knowledge or take on an active role in these areas:

- Education
- Management
- Leadership
- Research
- New Technology
- Clinical Commissioning Groups

What is your view of NHS careers for District Nursing and working as a member of a District Nursing team?

The NHS 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 specific interests are, so spend time working through this site: www.nhscareers.uk

A number of health care assistants also work as part of a primary care team and they also should be involved in continuing professional development. Whilst they are not accountable to a professional body, they still have their own individual integrity and individual responsibility to ensure that they are working as a safe practitioner.



Exercise

It is imperative to know what your level of knowledge is if you are to work within your competence. Look at the diagram above, where would you place yourself on the ladder of competence?

Level 1 – Unconscious Incompetence – You don't know that you don't know

Level 2 – Conscious Incompetence – You know that you don't know

Level 3 – Conscious Competence – You know that you know

Level 4 – Unconscious Competence – You don't know that you know – it just seems easy!

Using this ladder as a tool will assist you in identifying where more learning needs to take place, but it also give reassurance when you are competent.

The following website, www.mind.tools.com/pages/article/newISS-96htm, introduces you to a number of leadership and management strategies which you might find useful when you identify which level on the above ladder you sit. Please remember that leadership and management not only happens in senior management positions, but every member of a team will have some leadership role to play.



Exercise

- Having identified where you are on the ladder what action are you going to take to change your position on the ladder?
- 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

This website www.emotionaliq.org/EI.htm will introduce you to emotional intelligence and the different models used. 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 (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

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Case Scenario

You are visiting a patient who is terminally ill and she has a syringe driver in situ. Whilst visiting the patient she appears to be in distress and very uncomfortable. On careful examination of the patient you see that the syringe driver is not working as it should.

You have previously worked in a hospice and regularly worked with syringe drivers. Since joining the community you have been on further training and you have been signed as competent what action will you take to make the patient feel more comfortable?



Reflection trigger point

- Were you competent to deal with the syringe driver?
- If you did not feel competent to deal with the syringe driver – what action would you take?
- Did you compromise the care for this patient in taking this action?

Possible actions taken:

- You may have felt very competent and able to deal with the syringe driver so you insert a new syringe driver with the relevant medication according to the drug chart.
- As you did not feel competent you inform the patient that you are going to contact the District Nurse/Macmillan Nurse to come and attend to this situation. In the meantime the patient continues to have a lot of pain
- Did you consider that there may have been other means of pain relief that the patient could have been given until such time that the DN or Macmillan Nurse arrived to deal with the syringe driver?
- Whichever action has been taken above, have you considered what your Trust/employer’s policy is on administering medication on your own?
- If you had worked outside of the trust policy where would you stand regarding the NMC and also your own professional accountability?
- Were there other actions that could have been carried out?
- If so, what were they?

Personal Development Plan

What is required of a personal development plan? A development plan is designed to help you to reflect on your career to date and for you to put together a SMART action plan to assist you to reach your next goal.

There are several key stages in working on a personal development plan:

1. Identify what is required of your current role?
2. 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 SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely) action plan to assist you to move forward in the direction of your chosen career
4. Have you considered any other community career paths you may want to follow – e.g. Specialist Nurse, Community Matron
5. What steps/actions do you need to take to follow your chosen career pathway

Having devised this personal development plan it will pave the path for you when you attend interviews and will also assist you when writing your CV as it will have outlined clear objectives in the form of your SMART action plan. www.worldwork.biz/legacy/www/downloads/Personal_Development_Plan.pdf

Applying for jobs

Firstly, find out background information about the company whether it is a NHS Trust or a Social Enterprise, Charity or Private company. Information can be found on the website. Find out what their vision and strategy for the future is. What skill set are they looking for – do you have the skills they are looking for? It is essential that the job description is scrutinised and that you look at the essential skills and desirable skills that are required of the position that you are applying for. When you compile your CV ensure that the CV meets the criteria in the job description. Be as succinct as possible when you answer questions on the application form and do not add unnecessary information that has no bearing on the job application. Refer to the HEE Careers Framework to identify where you are on the District nurse Career Framework (HEE, 2015). Are you applying for a Level 6 District Nurse/Team Leader role/ Level 7 Senior District Nurse/Team Leader role or a Level 8 Advanced Community Nurse Practitioner?



Key responsibilities of a Level 6 District Nurse/Team Leader:

- Enhanced critical thinking and ability to critically analyse a broad range of policies, literature and evidence to support clinical practice
- Ability to analyse service provision both in relation to quality assurance and quality monitoring and to focus on patient outcomes wherever possible
- Strong clinical leadership of the team, including robust preceptorship of new staff, and clarity of expectation of team members with respect to quality of care delivery and values inherent in nursing practice, demonstrating emotional intelligence to recognise pressures on staff and the development of mechanisms to support and develop staff to recognise the impact of caring for people alone in complex situations
- Enhanced knowledge of the local community, needs and resources available and the ability to profile key aspects of the community and the district nursing caseload
- Ability to work collaboratively with others to meet local public health needs for individuals, groups and the wider community
- Ability to build strong relationships with the secondary care teams, particularly for patients receiving shared care to ensure an effective flow of patient information to ensure high-quality care
- Ability to reflect in action and be actively engaged with the NMC revalidation process both for themselves and for others

Key responsibilities of a Level 7 Senior District Nurse/Team Leader:

- A Level 7 Senior District Nurse /Team Leader must have all the essential skills outlined for a Level 6 District Nurse as well as being able to use new knowledge in innovative ways to take responsibility for developing and changing practice in complex and sometimes unpredictable environments.
- They must be able to work in multi-agency environments and interdependent decision-making systems within these teams. They must be able to support staff to feel confident and competent in moving across agency and professional boundaries
- At Level 7 the clinician will be highly experienced in their field and either continues to develop this expertise to be used in a consultancy capacity for advising others on evidence-informed complex community nursing issues or to have management responsibilities for a defined team/section department. They will have responsibility for a caseload, the size depending on their responsibilities, and be expected to provide training, support and supervision to staff.

Key responsibilities of a Level 8 Advanced Community Nursing Practitioner:

- In addition to level 7, this level 8 role will have achieved and consolidated Advanced Nurse Practitioner (ANP) status, demonstrating highly specialised knowledge in community nursing. (HEE, 2015; p 35-38)

If you are invited for an interview it is a good idea to have a practice interview with someone who has an understanding of the role you are applying for. If you have recently completed your SPQ in District Nursing you should be well versed with the government policies and workforce developments within Primary and Community care. Ensure

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you know about the workforce developments taking place in your area so that you will be able to demonstrate what key skills you as a District Nurse can bring to the organisation. Make sure you are up to date with government and Department of Health policies that potentially will impact on your practice. Be enthusiastic and remember to let the interview panel know what specific skills you will be bringing to the role. If you are asked to present at interview it is likely that you will have ten minutes to present. Prepare your power point slides. Keep these to a minimum (not more than 10 slides) and only write headers or bullet points so that you can talk around the slides and remember to speak slowly and articulate your words. It is also a good idea to bring your portfolio of personal development which will demonstrate how you have been updating yourself and what you have learnt from the updates. <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/advice/getajob/interviews>

Helpful hints for future interviews:

- Make yourself familiar with the workforce planning strategy in your area
- Revisit your skill set – can you add to this?
- Think broadly and beyond what a job specification requires
- What innovative practice can you draw on and bring to your next interview? This does not have to be your idea, but something you have seen elsewhere and would like to replicate.
- Remember applying for a District Nurse position will require vision and a philosophy – what is yours?

Should you be unsuccessful at interview it is always a good idea to ask for feedback from the panel – this will help you when you apply for further jobs.



Exercise

- Now that you have completed this online resource what do you plan to do? Has working through the various chapters assisted you in challenging your practice?
- Do you feel more confident now?
- Are you going to pursue your studies further?
- Do you have a clear direction where you want to be in 12 months/ 3 years/ 5 years? This will help you to set personal goals and targets

The website below will give you a lot of valuable information regarding the format of CV writing and the way of using specific words that will enhance your CV: www.monster.co.uk



Chapter Summary

This chapter has looked at the importance of recognising your individual competence in the role you are currently working in. It has given some recognition to how you can recognise your level of competence. This can really only occur if the individual concerned has a self-awareness that will enable them to act on their incompetence and put a strategy in place to deal with this.

The career pathway for working in the community was looked at, recognising that not all staff nurses will want to study for the Specialist Practice District Nurse programme.

The importance of having a personal development plan was discussed and also it was stressed that preparation in the form of CV writing, interview skills and application processes were important when applying for any new role in the community setting.

Further Web Resources

- www.adne.co.uk
- www.nhscareers.uk
- www.jobs.nhs.uk
- www.changemodel.nhs.uk
- www.kingsfund.org.uk
- www.cno.dh.gov.uk
- www.nmc.uk.org
- www.rcn.org.uk
- www.careers.guardian.co.uk
- www.businessballs.com
- www.hee.nhs.org.uk
- www.leadershipacademy.nhs.uk