

Royal College of Nursing

A child's right to care at home

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The RCN represents over 390,000 registered nurses, midwives, health visitors, nursing students, health care assistants and nurse cadets in the UK. This makes the RCN the largest professional union of nursing staff in the world. The College promotes patient and nursing interests on a wide range of issues by working closely with government, the UK parliaments and other national and European political institutions, trade unions, professional bodies and voluntary organisations.

2.0 Position Statement

2.1 Every Child and young person has the right to expect care to be provided at home unless they need to be admitted to a hospital environment. Appropriate help and support from a children's community nursing team should be available for parents/families to enable them to care for their child at home.

2.2 The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly highlights a child's right to life, maximum development and access to the highest attainable standard of health and health care services¹. Access to appropriate specialist nurse staffing is a crucial element in the provision of good quality services

2.3 The House of Commons Select Committee in 1997² stated that:

- All children requiring nursing should have access to a children's community nursing service, staffed by qualified children's nurses....in whatever community they are being nursed
- This service should be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Every GP should have access to a named Children's Community Nurse.

Since that time these messages and the importance of community children's nursing services have been repeatedly reinforced^{3,4,5,6}

2.4 Community children's nurses are a diverse workforce with a variety of models currently in existence. The model of provision provided has evolved to address the needs of children and young people locally. Community children's nursing teams are able to provide:

- emergency care and triage, support for early discharge and assessment at home
- care and support for children and young people in the community with long term conditions, as well as those with palliative care needs

Community children's nurses have the potential to reduce and prevent hospital admissions, as well as attendances at outpatient clinics.

- 2.5 Numerous government policy initiatives and studies of service provision have highlighted the importance of the community children's nursing role, the shortfall in the number of community children's nurses across the UK, as well as the need to increase funding for this service.
- 2.6 The Royal College of Nursing recommends that for an average sized district with a child population of 50,000 a minimum of 20 WTE community children's nurses are required to provide a holistic community children's nursing service in addition to any child specific continuing care investment.
- 3.0 We are calling for:**
- 3.1 An end to the inequity of service provision received by children and young people
- 3.2 A clear strategy to address the deficiencies and patchy provision of community children's nursing services in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to enable a 24 hour, 7 days a week service
- 3.3 Development and recognition of an agreed education and competency framework for children's nurses working in community settings, along with greater inclusion of core competencies within pre registration children's nursing education programmes

References

¹ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

² House of Commons Select Committee (1997) Health Services For Children And Young People In The Community; Home And School Third Report of Session 1996-97. Report. together with Annexes and Proceedings of the Committee. House of Commons

³ Department of Health (2004) National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: Children and Young People who are ill http://www.dh.gov.uk/PublicationsAndStatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidanceArticle/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4089104&chk=8wzM6b

⁴ Welsh Assembly Government (2005) National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services in Wales <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/home.cfm?OrgID=441>

⁵ Department of Health (2008) Our NHS, Our Future – High Quality Care for All <http://www.ournhs.nhs.uk/>

⁶ Department of Health (2007) Palliative Care Services for Children and Young People in England: An Independent Review for the Secretary of State for Health http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_074459

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