

Unit Five

Career development from an education provider's perspective

Key messages

Once you have read this Unit, you should have an understanding of:

- *the variety of career opportunities that exist within general practice nursing*
- *the current range of courses available*
- *whether the courses provided are sufficient – education provision on an increasing range of skills may be required.*

There should be close links between the local NHS community, local universities and other educational bodies. Ideally, training need, compiled from staff development reviews (appraisals), will inform and influence the planning process for course development.

Education providers should be aware of the funding for general practice nurse (GPN) training and development. This may be through the general budget for continuing professional development (CPD) from the primary care trust (PCT), the strategic health authority (SHA) workforce agency, or direct from the practice or individual nurse.

PCTs may have good networks with local higher education institutions (HEIs) and work collaboratively on community nurse training and development requirements. However, they may be less informed about the development needs of nurses in general practice. Being aware of the variety of roles that exist within general practice nursing will enable HEIs to be proactive in providing education to equip GPNs with the skills required to progress from one level of practice to another. To help identify these roles, see

Tool – Varying roles within general practice nursing

Profiling GPN workforce development needs

As the majority of GPNs are directly employed by GP partnerships, it is less likely that there will be up-to-date information available on this workforce as a global entity. However, many PCTs employ a lead GPN as a professional lead, or GPN development facilitators to work across practices, and coordinate the education requirements for GPNs. It is therefore essential to seek out these key individuals in order to determine how you can work together to maximise the opportunities available to GPNs.

Although PCTs and HEIs will be familiar with the requirements for the Nursing and Midwifery Council specialist practice programmes,¹ the number of GPNs accessing these qualifications are usually low in comparison to district nurses and health visitors.² This may be because these programmes do not deliver what is required within many general practices. Many practices would prefer GPNs to access degree programmes that include independent and supplementary prescribing.

Engaging in dialogue with both PCTs and practices is the only way to fully appreciate the local requirements. Many GPNs access educational opportunities alongside their GP colleagues at local seminars or deanery events. If this is the case it may be worth considering whether this work-based learning could be accredited

by establishing the learning outcomes and creating appropriate assessments. Accumulating 'credit accumulation and transfer scheme' points from bite-sized chunks of learning could lead to significant credits that then feed into degree or Master's degree programmes. This is likely to be popular with both GPNs and their employers if it means that they do not need to take additional time out for academic study. To calculate the adequacy of your current provision for GPNs, see [Tool – Matching career progression and education for GPNs](#).

Gaining credibility with GPNs

If you do not already have any GPNs within your teaching team consider taking on a GPN as a part-time secondment. This will help to inform curriculum development, and will also contribute to a wide range of teaching opportunities that could help to raise the profile of general practice nursing – from pre-registration through to advanced level post-registration courses. Lecturers with a GPN background will have capacity to teach across diverse subject areas because of their broad experience in dealing with patients with minor illnesses and long-term conditions. They therefore represent a good investment to any teaching team. Lecturer-practitioners are particularly welcomed by GPNs because if they are maintaining active links with practice, they will be able familiar with the current clinical issues facing GPNs. It may be relatively easy to recruit for a part-time GPN lecturing post as applicants would still be able to work in practice.

References

1. Nursing and Midwifery Council. *UKCC Standards for Specialist Education and Practice Nursing*. London: NMC; 2001.
2. Campbell P. *A Report on Primary Care Nursing in Shropshire and Staffordshire*. Shropshire and Staffordshire Strategic Health Authority; 2004.