

Practice nurse apprenticeship scheme

The practice nurse apprenticeship scheme aims to:

- *establish a structured pathway for nurses to enter general practice*
- *offer a one-to-one mentorship arrangement*
- *develop and support, through practice and education, the knowledge and clinical skills required to work in general practice*
- *attract motivated, knowledgeable nurses into a clearly defined career pathway.*

This project has been developed in response to particular identified needs:

- *predicted shortfall in numbers of practice nurses*
- *expected increase in the number of practice nurses required to work in primary care*
- *wide variation in the skills and competences of practice nurses working across England*
- *lack of a clearly defined practice nurse pathway.*

The practice nurse apprenticeship scheme recruits qualified nurses into general practice. It offers education, training and support in practice in order to equip the nurse with the core competences required to meet the needs of the practice population.

Qualified nurses are recruited for a 6-month contract at the first level (band 5). The nurse is employed by the primary care trust part-time (15 hours) into a large group practice with established nursing services. A nurse mentor in practice is identified as the nurse's point of contact and regular sessions are arranged to discuss, inform and guide the nurse's progress. The nurse maintains a learning log to demonstrate new learning, which includes reflection and evidence of competence in key skills. The nurse meets with the education manager on a regular basis in order to monitor and evaluate the project.

The nurse attends the introduction to primary health care module at the local university, in this case Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) in Chelmsford, and any other educational courses as seen appropriate, to include the ear care study day and the immunisation half day. Phlebotomy training is also available if appropriate.

The ARU course is delivered at level 3 and successful completion provides 15 credits. This is seen as the first step on a career pathway towards undertaking specialist practice modules within general practice nursing.

Benefits of the apprenticeship scheme:

- *establish a structured pathway for practice nurses to underpin safe, effective practice*
- *develop clinical skills and expertise, supported through practice and education*
- *expand and refine clinical practice through a one-to-one mentorship relationship*
- *attract motivated, knowledgeable nurses into a clearly defined career pathway.*

Clinical competence in practice is assessed through formative and summative assessment of practice in key areas. A structured learning log is used to ensure that competence is met in clinical skills. However, those completing the course are made aware that the level of their knowledge requires further development in order for them to expand their role.

This scheme has placed more than 50 nurses in general practice across Essex in the past 4 years. For further details please contact Jackie Jones at Jackie.Jones@essex.nhs.uk.