

# Unit Four

## Education and professional development from an education provider's perspective

### Key messages

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

- *accrediting and encouraging work-based learning for general practice nurses (GPNs)*
- *other possible routes for training.*

### Educational needs of GPNs

The demands for new and modernised services in primary care require flexible and skilled professionals working at a range of levels. The future development of GPNs is dependent on different levels of professional competency underpinned by appropriate education at a variety of academic levels. As the remit of general practice nursing is very broad, education providers need to ensure that they have a wide enough range of courses to fulfil the educational needs of their local GPN population.

General practice needs nurses with access to high-quality education programmes that equip them with skills in a wide variety of areas, such as diagnosis and management of minor-illness and specific long-term conditions.

Guidelines, including national service frameworks and primary care trust (PCT) standards, stipulate that nurses undertaking nurse-led services should be appropriately qualified, with evidence of post-registration education relating to the specific work being undertaken.

The *new General Medical Services contract (nGMS)*<sup>1</sup> is likely to herald more nurse-led clinics in the management of long-term conditions. The standardisation of care delivered in nurse-led clinics will help with clinical governance, and perhaps with differing levels of competency, and assessment. The adequate provision of local courses that satisfy clinical standards will help to ensure a degree of parity and quality. In order to appeal to GPNs, employers and PCTs, the outcomes of these courses should be made explicit. This means that education providers need to focus on service outcomes as well as learning outcomes when designing courses, in order to create practitioners who are fit for purpose.

See [Tool – Creating service outcomes for courses](#).

GPNs generally have a less-developed academic profile compared with other community nurses. This is undoubtedly linked to the lack of a statutory post-basic qualification.

Higher education institutes (HEIs) are needed to regulate and oversee the education process. The proposed blend of clinical and academic skills will enable mutual recognition of expertise and will ensure that GPNs undertaking courses demonstrate achievement of designated learning outcomes. This will ultimately serve to enhance patient care and comply with the principles of clinical governance. In addition, it will ensure that GPNs receive formal recognition for their continuing professional development by the credit accumulation and transfer scheme (CATS) points, which can be shaped into academic awards such as an honours degree or Masters degree.

When developing courses, education providers need to link to the *Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF)*<sup>2</sup> – this is central to *Agenda for Change*,<sup>3</sup> which many PCTs will be encouraging practices to adopt.

## Marketing GPN education provision

When marketing courses you need to demonstrate that GPNs will achieve real benefits, and also show that employers and PCTs will achieve enhanced quality care in line with clinical governance. Benefits may include clarity of links to various levels in the *KSF*. This will make the courses more popular.

Education providers who involve GPs in their course design or delivery will appear more credible, as they will be in touch with the requirements of general practice. Introducing inter-professional and multi-professional education will add a new value and richness to courses. Similarly, courses that appeal to both primary care and hospital-based nurses will help to improve the primary–secondary care interface by creating a better understanding of each other's roles. Education providers who link with deaneries could gain new insights into requirements and opportunities for joint working. Most deaneries will have general practice education committees who meet regularly in each area – attending these meetings to raise the profile of GPN education will be invaluable and could lead to more opportunities for inter-professional learning.

## Work-based learning

Many GP practices find it very difficult to release their valued GPNs to attend courses. However, they will be aware that one of their responsibilities outlined in the *nGMS contract*<sup>1</sup> is to develop staff. Therefore, they may be receptive to the idea of work-based learning packages that are created by education providers for use within practices or localities. These work-based learning packages could comprise problem-based learning scenarios – for example, around long-term conditions highlighted in the *Quality and Outcomes Framework*,<sup>4</sup> with various exercises for the practice to work on together. It may be possible to arrange for GPNs to gain accreditation for working through materials, if they wish.

# What HEIs should try and achieve in terms of GPN education

Education providers should:

- *continue to develop strong partnerships with workforce development directorates or their successor bodies to support delivery of the principles of good quality, service-driven education for GPNs*
- *work with education commissioners to achieve the target of a common educational framework for GPNs to work up in developing their career, taking into account GPNs who already have a vast amount of experience*
- *work with PCTs and practices to gain access to high-quality practice placements and experience for student nurses and GPNs undertaking further study.*

See **Tool – Ways of improving the uptake of GPN education** for some examples of activities to improve uptake of GPN education.

## References

1. Department of Health. *Investing in General Practice: the New General Medical Services Contract*. London: Department of Health; 2003. Available at: <http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/07/19/67/04071967.pdf>.
2. Department of Health. *The NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework*. London: Department of Health; 2004. Available at: <http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/09/08/61/04090861.pdf>.
3. Department of Health. *Agenda for Change: What Will it Mean for You?* London: Department of Health; 2004. Available at: <http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/09/08/59/04090859.pdf>.
4. Department of Health. *Quality and Outcomes Framework*. London: Department of Health; 2004. Available at: <http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/08/86/93/04088693.pdf>.