

The Royal College of Nursing response to the QNI/QNIS Standards for Senior General Practice Nurse Education and Practice Project.

With a membership of around 435,000 registered nurses, midwives, health visitors, nursing students, health care assistants and nurse cadets, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) is the voice of nursing across the UK and the largest professional union of nursing staff in the world. RCN members work in a variety of hospital and community settings in the NHS and the independent sector. The RCN promotes patient and nursing interests on a wide range of issues by working closely with the Government, the UK parliaments and other national and European political institutions, trade unions, professional bodies and voluntary organisations.

The Queens Nursing Institute (QNI) identified that there was a lack of consistency in the educational opportunities for General Practice Nurses (GPN) and a pressing need to recruit more nurses to these roles. The QNI have undertaken a project to review and enhance the NMC Standards for Specialist Practice for General Practice Nursing, which were written in 1994, to reflect contemporary GPN education and practice. The project commenced in January 2016 and has been guided by a project advisory group that the RCN have been involved in and reflects a range of perspectives across the four UK countries.

The new standards have been written as practice outcomes to describe what senior GPNs should be able to do in practice. They are focused on the role of the Senior GPN (SGPN) and have been designed to reflect the requirements of this role working in new models of care and to reflect the rapid changes in General Practice and broader primary care. They are NOT designed to be for nurses new to General Practice and a separate stream of the project is developing standards to reflect the requirements of educational preparation at this level. Neither are they aimed at Advanced Nurse Practitioners working within GPN.

The QNI and QNIS have provided a consultation phase, via a survey monkey, and the link to this and the proposed standards have been widely disseminated across RCN networks to allow members to contribute to the development of the final standards. This response is a reflection of that consultation period and the responses given by RCN professional forums and members.

Survey monkey questions and RCN responses

Do the practice standards broadly reflect your expectations of the contemporary and future role of the senior GPN?

Yes.

Please briefly comment if you have answered NO.

Are there any practice standards that are unnecessary?

No.

Please briefly comment if you have answered Yes

Are there any key areas missing or needing further development (recognising that the practice standards need to be broad)?

There needs to be a stronger emphasis on health promotion and public health, especially in terms of the health needs assessment of the practice population and also addressing the health promotion needs of individuals and families. We recommend that this is addressed in the new standards.

If you have any further comments please briefly list them below.

- The review of the NMC Pre-registration nursing education standards may lead to changes in the terminology around practice based learning (PBL) and supervision, so we recommend that the new standards should be future proofed by using a more flexible language around PBL rather than use the term 'mentor'.
- The RCN would expect this level of practitioner to be involved in leading and supporting revalidation of junior nursing staff members and may also be a reflective discussion partner; so we recommend this needs emphasising in the new standards.
- These standards are being developed at time of unprecedented change in health service delivery across the UK and in some respects the new standards may be premature. For example in some areas we are seeing areas of work such as vaccination services, wound care, lymphoedema and ear syringing services being handed back to local health boards and as such may not fall within the GPN remit going forward.
- The RCN response is taken from across the UK. We are waiting to hear what the Welsh Government recommendations are in relation to the GPN workforce.
- The QNI/QNIS Voluntary Standards are only to be undertaken by senior GPNs, however in Wales there is no development programme at present for nurses new to GPN.
- In Scotland the new GP contract is being negotiated and it is not known how this will impact on GPNs. The CNO has agreed to undertake a national review of GPN in light of the integration of health and social care, the District Nurse review and the Primary Care transformation work to see what a future role needs to be and what their education requirements will be. As the RCN we will be involved in any working groups associated with this, and we can use the new QNI/QNIS standards as a benchmark of current thinking.