Trainee nursing associates (TNAs): An exploratory study of an emerging role

Steve Robertson on behalf of the SRA

Special thanks to Dr Rachel King
Background to NA role

The Healthcare workforce in the UK is becoming a barren wasteland!

It is hoped that Nursing Associates are one solution
Aims of TNA research

- Examine participants’ career aspirations
- Observe career trajectories
- Describe systems of clinical support
- Evaluate well being
- Explore workplace identity issues
Methods:
Exploratory study
Longitudinal Cohort Study

Exploratory study
• Stakeholder engagement
• Focus groups

Cohort study
• Questionnaires
• TNA interviews and diaries
• Stakeholder interviews
• Repeat annually for 4 years
Focus Groups: 15 participants

April 2017 cohort
- FG 1 (n=3)
- FG 2 (n=3)

June 2018 cohort
- FG 3 (n=9)

Average length of discussions: 52 minutes

Generate and test ideas recommend future changes

Small number but still dynamics
# Background of Participants

**Gender**
- 6 male
- 9 female

**Experience in Healthcare**
- 6 months - 20 years

## Background Areas
- Learning Disabilities
- Surgery
- Orthopaedics
- Haematology
- Emergency Care
- Maternity
- Mental Health
## Thematic analysis (using Quirkos)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drivers for undertaking the training</td>
<td>Lack of previous training opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affordable local career development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic concerns and support solutions</td>
<td>Placement variations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role ambiguity</td>
<td>Role clarity (TNAs and colleagues)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role expectations and perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career development</td>
<td>Personal growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career ambitions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Drivers:

Affordable, local, career development

“I’ve got a young family so I couldn’t afford to go and get a loan. I couldn’t even live on a bursary. So this was the only way of developing for me.” (FG 1, Carl)

New knowledge & opportunities

“You get stuck in a rut when you’ve worked on a ward for so long ... I got a bit fed up just doing my bit and then seeing the nurses struggle, I wanted to be able to do more to support them.” (FG 2, Julie)
Pragmatic concerns:

Placement issues

“I was given two mentors but then I got onto the ward and found they’ve not actually passed their mentorship course, so I ended up with nobody. For six months I’ve not had anybody.” (FG 3, Hannah)

“Because we’re counted in the numbers, I don’t think we get as much opportunity as we’d like. I think that’s the biggest issue for me.” (FG 2, Julie)

Academic concerns

“You’ll be doing assignments, you’ve got exam revision. And there’s not enough hours. A lot of people naively came into it not expecting that, and I think that’s where a lot of upset was caused.” (FG3, Hannah)
Findings

Role ambiguity:

“Personally the first question nearly everybody asks you when you see them on placement is “what actually is a TNA?”” (FG 1, Scott)

“It’s quite stress inducing that though, trying to explain something you’re not really fully understanding what you’re doing yourself.” (FG 1, Carl)

“On some of the placements, it’s like you’ve been sent to learn how to be a healthcare assistant in another setting.” (FG, 1 Rob)

“It’s quite hard to try and like change your cap throughout the shift.” (FG 2, Julie)
Support solutions:

“I’ve had support from all staff, they’ve been going through this journey with us and they’re in the same boat.” (FG 2, James)

“They choose to get to know us... it’s not just ‘we’re teaching you this’, they get to know us individually as people rather than as students.” (FG 3, Claire)

“Everybody’s supporting each other, everybody’s...you know, they’re willing to talk about stuff and things like that, aren’t we.” (FG 2, James)

“... so we’re part of this Facebook group that’s got all the TNAs in.” (FG 2, Julie)
Career Development

Two-thirds intended to go on to do RN training

Unclear career pathway

“I asked last week and somebody said that they would potentially be writing something while we’re doing this class for a top up. If not it could be like a home learning thing where you stop on your base placement.” (FG 3, Anna)
Implications:

*TNA growth is facilitated by:*

- **Affordable local training**: crucial in developing enthusiastic, motivated previously unregistered healthcare workers
- **Role clarity and support networks**: key to successful mentoring and utilisation of TNAs
- **A clear pathway for career progression**: enables TNAs to achieve their aspirations of becoming registered nurses
Next steps

• Cohort established
  • Recruited: 126
  • Completed: 99
  • Qualitative progress establishing sub-cohort (approx. 30)

• Stakeholder work under consideration – emphasis on HEI stakeholders
Questions?

With thanks to the rest of the SRA team: Rachel King, Michaela Senek, Emily Wood, Beth Taylor, Jane Seymour, Peter Allmark, Angela Tod, Tony Ryan