

Sexual and Reproductive Health – Education, Training and Career Progression in Nursing and Midwifery

CLINICAL PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE





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This publication is due for review in May 2022. To provide feedback on its contents or on your experience of using the publication, please email publications.feedback@rcn.org.uk

Publication

This is an RCN practice guidance. Practice guidance are evidence-based consensus documents, used to guide decisions about appropriate care of an individual, family or population in a specific context.

Description

Nurses and midwives who wish to work in sexual and reproductive health need further education and training to do so. This publication offers detail on the routes available to train in these areas and signposts nurses and midwives to valuable information.

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Evaluation

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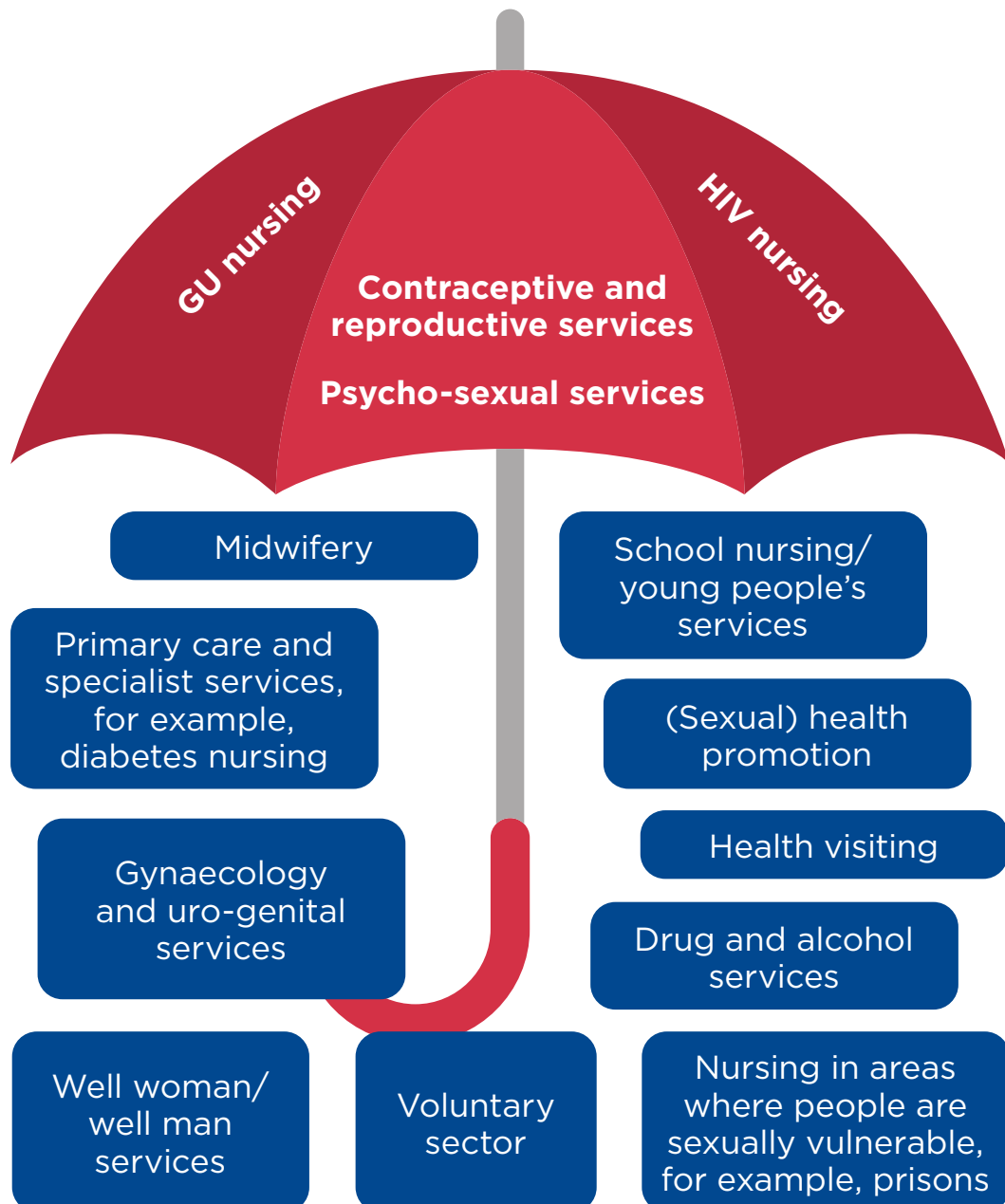
Introduction

Sexual health encompasses genito-urinary medicine, sexual and reproductive health, psychosexual counselling, abortion services and HIV.

Nurses and midwives who wish to work in sexual and reproductive health need further education and training to do so. It is a specialist area that requires post-registration education, training and development not covered on undergraduate programmes in enough depth.

Nurses and midwives may choose to work in sexual health, which was formerly known as

genito-urinary medicine, which addresses sexually transmitted infections, or reproductive services, which covers contraception and will need to have development specific to the type of service. Increasingly services are integrated which means that they provide all contraceptive methods and sexually transmitted infection diagnosis, treatment and management. For these services nurses will need to have development in both sexual and reproduction health (see the umbrella diagram below which shows the breadth within the specialty).



Flowcharts

The flow chart on [page 6](#) maps out routes that you may take to train in these areas. If you are interested in this area then universities and the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare offer introductory study days on sexual and reproductive health. You can find these at www.fsrh.org and through your local trust, practice development nurse and local university. It is important to note that these days do not allow you to work or practice independently in this area and would not qualify you to work to patient group directions (PGDs) or prescribe. They are intended to provide a taster on the subject to see if you want to progress and develop further. These introductory days should highlight the importance of early intervention and where/ to whom to refer.

The RCN has developed a directory aimed at providing an overview of the sort of education and learning required to practice in sexual, reproductive and HIV care and how to achieve this. It is available at: www.rcn.org.uk/sexualhealtheducationdirectory and will be updated regularly as new programmes and courses become available.

Local services may have developed their own pathway – the one here is a suggested national pathway.



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Sexual health training directory

You are here: [Royal College of Nursing](#) / Sexual health training directory

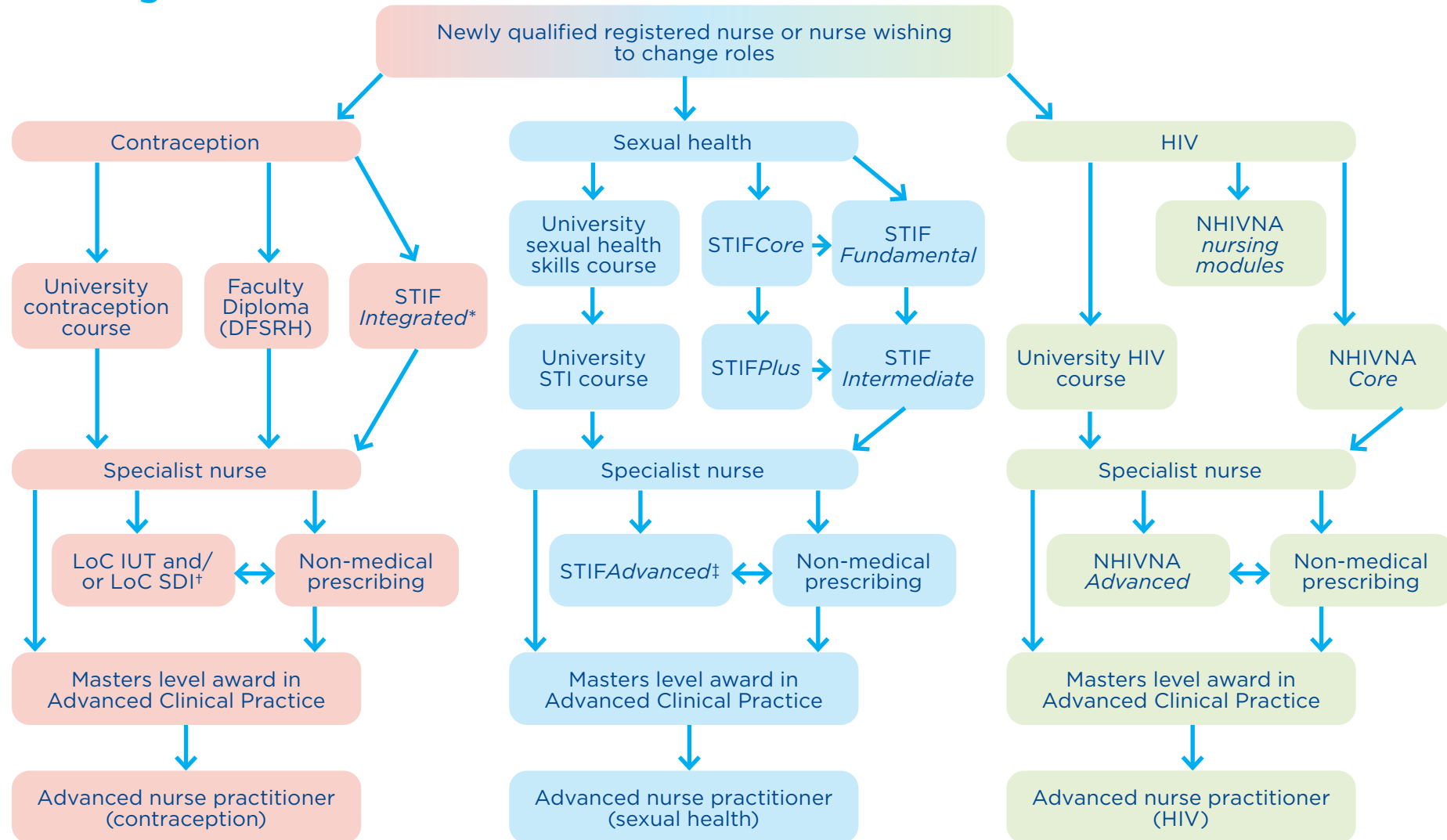
This resource highlights training and qualification requirements for registered nurses, midwives, health advisers and nursing associates as well as unregistered health care support staff working in sexual health.

Sexual Health (SH) encompasses: genito-urinary medicine, sexual and reproductive health, psychosexual counselling, abortion services and HIV. See the RCN umbrella diagram which shows the breadth of SH provision. It is delivered in various settings, providing care across specialised services as well in primary care and third sector organisations.

This resource provides an outline of the education and qualifications needed for nursing and midwifery staff working in sexual health and HIV care and the relevant qualifying bodies for these education programmes. Different



Flowchart: Education and training requirements for newly qualified registered nurses wanting to work in sexual health, contraception or HIV or those wishing to change roles

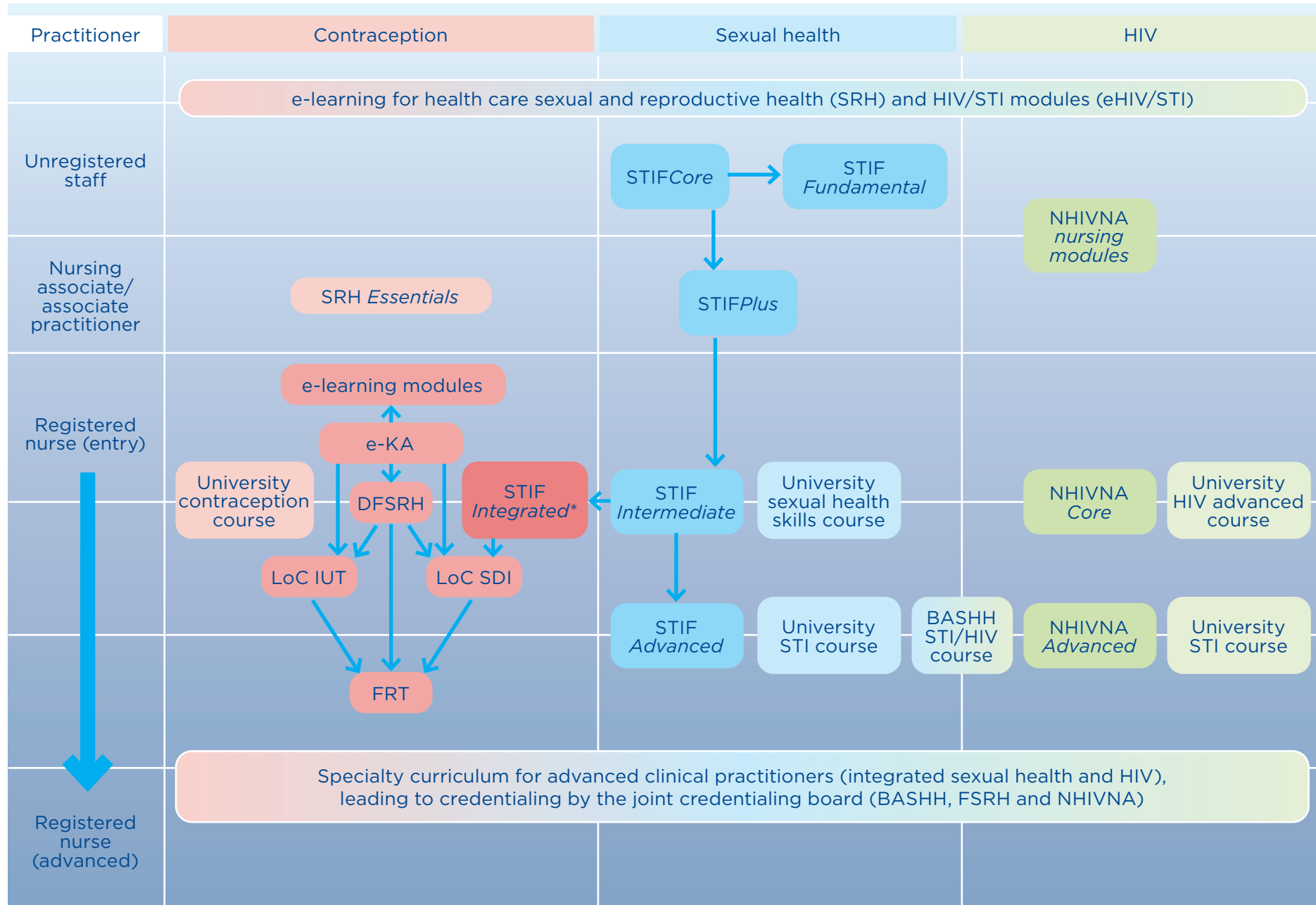


*STIF integrated is a bolt on contraception qualification to STIF *Intermediate*

† e-KA has to be undertaken to sit LoC IUT. e-KA or STIF *Integrated* have to be undertaken to sit LoC SDI

‡ STIF *Intermediate* has to be taken before STIF *Advanced*

Flowchart: Courses



Abbreviations

BASHH STI/HIV Course: a 10-day face to face course at an advanced level used as preparation by doctors to sit the Diploma in Genito-urinary medicine and/or Diploma in HIV, but is open to nurses

BASHH: British Association for Sexual Health and HIV

Co5: Course of 5, face to face workshop which forms part of the DFSRH

DFSRH: Diploma Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Health care

e-KA: electronic Knowledge Assessment

FRT: Faculty Registered Trainer

FSRH: Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Health

HEE: Health Education England

LoC IUT: FSRH Letter of Competence Intrauterine Techniques

LoC SDI: FSRH Letter of Competence Subdermal Implants

NHIVNA: The National HIV Nurses Association

NHIVNAAdvanced: Advanced competency qualification in HIV

NHIVNACore: Specialist competency qualification in HIV

SRH: Sexual and reproductive health

STIFAdvanced: Advanced competency qualification in STIs and related conditions

STIFCore and STIFPlus: Face-to-face theory course in STIs and related conditions

STIFFundamental: OSCE based assessment in core STI screening and management

STIFHealth advising: Specialist competency qualification in health advising

STIFIntegrated: Bolt on specialist competency qualification in contraceptive, to STIFIntermediate covering core contraception

STIFIntermediate: Specialist competency qualification in STIs and related conditions

Courses

University courses

Universities may offer different course and study days covering many areas relating to contraception and sexual health at different academic levels (diploma [level 5], degree [level 6] and masters [level 7] levels) and attracting different academic credits. These include: contraception, sexual health, and HIV as well as specialist sexual health courses (such as sexual dysfunction, health promotion, health advising, and abortion care). In addition, nurses would be able to undertake advanced clinical assessment skills, and independent and supplementary non-medical prescribing modules which can be used toward either undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications (BSc, MSc etc.)

e-Learning for Healthcare

e-Learning for Healthcare provides online education and programmes in a range of areas including contraception, HIV and STIs and is free to all NHS staff to access. Modules from e-Learning for Healthcare provide the basis of the theoretical learning for most of the BASHH, FSRH and NHVNA qualifications, but can be taken on their own. See www.e-lfh.org.uk

Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Health (FSRH)

www.fsrh.org/home

The SRH essentials course is designed specifically for primary care to give an introduction www.fsrh.org/education-and-training/srh-essentials and the (eSRH course) www.fsrh.org/education-and-training/e-learning-for-sexual-and-reproductive-healthcare-esrh/#how-to-access-esrh for regulated health care professionals at any level.

The electronic Knowledge Assessment (e-KA) is not a qualification, but an assessment of knowledge required for the other FSRH qualifications. The Diploma Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (DFSRH) at: www.fsrh.org/education-and-training/e-learning-for-sexual-and-reproductive-healthcare-esrh/#how-to-access-esrh is a contraception qualification for medical, nursing and midwifery professionals, it is assessed theoretically with the e-KA as well as in practice.

FSRH Letter of Competence Subdermal Implants (LoC SDI), is for those clinicians wishing to undertake subdermal implants and has several versions: insertion and removal (LoC SDI IR), insertion only (LoC SDI IO) and removal only (LoC SDI RO), those wishing to undertake this qualification have to have completed the e-KA or STIF *Integrated*. FSRH Letter of Competence Intrauterine Techniques (LoC IUT) is for those wishing to undertake intrauterine contraception (intrauterine devices or intrauterine systems), those wishing to undertake this qualification are required to have completed the e-KA.

Those individuals who have an FSRH qualification can become an FSRH registered trainer (FRT) by undertaking a Postgraduate Award in Medical Education or through an equivalence route. The FSRH also offers a range of specialist courses and study days which cover topics such as menopause, ultrasound scanning, and natural family planning/fertility awareness. See FSRH Education and training at: www.fsrh.org/education-and-training

British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH)

Sexually Transmitted Infections Foundation (STIF)

www.stif.org.uk/STIF/Home

STIF *Core* is the first part of the theory course as is required to undertake STIF *Plus* and STIF *Fundamental*.

STIF *Plus* is a more in-depth theory course and is recommended before undertaking the other STIF competency products.

STIF *Fundamental* is open to any healthcare worker (including unqualified staff) and covers the basics in asymptomatic STI screening and management.

STIF *Intermediate* as a specialist practice competency qualification covers the common STIs and related conditions and is assessed in clinical practice.

STIF*Integrated* is a bolt on contraceptive qualification that can only be taken with STIF*Intermediate* and is aimed at nurses working in integrated sexual health services. NB: the STIF*Integrated* programme is not currently available in Northern Ireland.

STIF*Advanced* is an advanced practice competency qualification, which covers the more complex presentations in the sexual health setting. The prerequisite for STIF*Advanced* is the STIF*Intermediate*.

BASHH also offer a range of specialist study days and courses including genital dermatology, high resolution anoscopy and the BASHH STI/HIV course www.bashh.org/education-careers/bashh-sti-hiv-course and health advisors course www.bashh.org/education-careers/nurses-and-health-advisors

The National HIV Nurses Association (NHIVNA)

www.nhivna.org

NHIVNA HIV nursing modules are a free online learning resource which covers the core areas of HIV nursing care www.nhivna.org/NHIVNA-HIV-nursing-modules

NHIVNA*Core* and NHIVNA*Advanced* have been developed in conjunction with STIF. NHIVNA*Core* is a specialist practice competency qualification aimed at experienced registered nurses and is assessed in clinical practice. NHIVNA*Advanced* is an advanced practice competency qualification covering the more complex aspects of HIV care.

Speciality curriculum for advanced clinical practitioners (integrated sexual health and HIV)

This curriculum, due to be launched in 2019, has been developed as a joint project between the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH), the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Health (FSRH) and the National HIV Nurses Association (NHIVNA), as a Health Education England (HEE) supported project to standardise advanced clinical practice in integrated sexual health and HIV services.

It has been developed to provide a clear and comprehensive guide to the expected level and breadth of practice for advanced clinical practitioners working in integrated sexual health and HIV and has been designed to support practitioners, managers, higher education institutions and commissioners.

The curriculum has been designed to be used in clinical practice to develop specialty specific competence as an advanced clinical practitioner and is to be used in conjunction with university-based master's programmes. The three organisations are developing a process for those advanced clinical practitioners who are able to demonstrate that they meet the requirements of the curriculum to be able to apply for credentialing as an advanced clinical practitioner in integrated sexual health and/or HIV.

For further details about the sort of education and learning required to practice in sexual, reproductive and HIV care and how to achieve this please go to: www.rcn.org.uk/sexualhealtheducationdirectory. The information contained in the online directory will be updated regularly as new programmes and courses become available.

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