

Improving staff retention – case studies

Establishing a Preceptorship Programme for General Practice Nurses

Leeds GP Confederation

What was the problem?

There is a significant shortfall of NHS nursing staff both generally, and within primary care general practice nursing (GPN). In the next 5 years, up to 42% of the current nursing workforce in Leeds is eligible to retire and at the same time recruitment to General Practice Nursing posts are becoming increasingly challenging. The majority of practices in Leeds have reported difficulties in the last year and other local providers in Leeds have considerable numbers of registered nurse vacancies. At the same time as struggling to recruit to nursing posts, training for General Practice Nurses (GPN's) has become increasingly difficult to access. Traditionally GPN's have undertaken training for several long-term conditions e.g. COPD, Asthma, CVD, Diabetes etc., in addition to training in wound care, cervical cytology and vaccination and immunisation, and this can be extremely expensive.

As a result of the above, the competition to recruit nurses becomes more intense and primary care practices need to consider doing new and innovative things to address this, as well as considering different ways of providing training to ensure the offer is robust, timely and adequate in terms of number of places available. In response to this and other challenges the Leeds GPN strategy was developed to consider all options for attracting more registered nurses into primary care in Leeds and retaining them.

What was the solution?

A preceptorship scheme was established through investment from the CCG. The traditional definition of a preceptorship is 'a structured period of transition for any newly qualified staff member' (NMC, 2006), which has now been broadened to include any staff member moving to a new area of work e.g. from hospital nursing to primary care. During this time, the individual should be supported by an experienced practitioner, a preceptor, to develop their confidence as an independent professional, and to refine their skills, values and behaviours (Health Education England, 2018).

The aim of the scheme was to attract 15 new nurses entering primary care for the first time, into those Leeds practices with vacancies. Led by experienced practice nurses, new nurses would be supported through a 2-year programme, offering training and development as well as supported practice to ensure competence is gained in the relevant areas.

What were the challenges?

The transition from hospital nursing to primary care is difficult as it is as there is a large skills and knowledge gap that requires general practices to dedicate a lot of time and resource to make dedicated training, education and development available. The current constraints within primary care are high workloads and low numbers of nursing staff, which makes facilitation challenging for individual practices. The proposal is that a package of financial support is available to practices to ensure adequate backfill for appropriate training/shadowing etc. Alongside this there will be a dedicated preceptor to provide support to both the preceptee and the practice generally.

Another area of challenge was ensuring that the correct training and development could be delivered to several new starters at the same time. Some of this has been overcome by providing in house training, and the rest by working with education providers to ensure there was capacity to provide the training.

What were the results?

Our lead general practice nurse was in post from July 2019, and as of December 2019 all 15 preceptorship places had been recruited to. Our new nurses are currently working within their practices and being supported by the lead nurse with contact on a weekly basis. One of the preceptees said "I've never had so much support and guidance when I've started a new job before". Additionally, we have sourced training that could not be provided in house by working closely with education providers and will be looking to complete more in-house training over the coming months as we train more trainers. Finally, the practices with new nurses and the nurses in the scheme themselves, have, and continue to, report a high degree of satisfaction. Some feedback we've received is:

"It's so good to be able to talk to people who are at the same stage of training and experiencing similar challenges, you don't feel so lonely"

"I didn't think I would ever get into practice nursing as all the jobs said you needed experience up until now"

"Tracking down relevant training and dates is usually such a labour-intensive process; it's so good that bit can be done for you."

What were the learning points?

This is a robust way of supporting new to primary care nurses and therefore supporting primary care to be sustainable. It is important to have strong clinical leadership for this type of work to ensure credibility and a strong programme of training and development is created. It is also important to ensure good communication with the practices participating in the scheme to ensure they understand what is required of them to support the new nurses.

Next steps and sustainability

Primary care in Leeds needs to attract more Registered Nurses into working in a primary care setting. We also need to ensure that nurses working in primary care have the skills and competencies to work across the whole sector e.g. patients own homes as well to ensure we have a robust nursing workforce for the future. Similarly, the community trust staff also need to have the skills and competencies to work in, and support, primary care in the future. This will ensure that we have a flexible and robust nursing workforce. It may also help us attract more nurses to work in an out of hospital setting if we can offer variety and flexibility within the roles.

The introduction of a dedicated preceptorship programme is expected to attract more nurses to make the transition from hospital to primary care nursing and to support practices to support these new staff in their first two years in primary care. Work is ongoing to ensure the preceptorship lead post is funded on a recurrent basis to ensure the scheme can continue. The scheme has been shared with other areas and there have been presentations on the work at a number of events.

Want to know more?

Stephanie Lawrence, Executive Director of Nursing and Allied Health Professionals, Leeds Community Healthcare and Leeds GP Confederation Slawrence6@nhs.net

To see the other case studies in this series: visit the NHS Improvement website at:
<https://improvement.nhs.uk/resources/improving-staff-retention/>

Appendix

Item A –

Contact us: **0300 123 2257** | **enquiries@improvement.nhs.uk** | **improvement.nhs.uk**
 **@NHSImprovement**

© NHS Improvement 2019

Publication code: SL **XX**/19