

Bitesize Case Study: Development of an Accelerated Post-Registration Nursing Programme *from RN Adult to RN Child nursing*

Voluntary Sector North West

This case study is one in a series of studies curated to capture best practice, and highlight innovations, from the joint Health Education England (HEE) working across the North West and Voluntary Sector North West 'Learning Matters' awards 2017. The awards are part of a cross sector adult learning campaign delivered for the health and care sector through a number of key regional partnerships and collaborations. The overarching theme of the awards is simple: lifelong learning is good for people, organisations and health.

HEE Quality Standards met:

5 - Developing and Implementing Curricula and Assessments

What was the issue or problem? What did you set out to do?

The initiative arose from the identification of a workforce development need in the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital (RMCH), part of Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (CMFT). CMFT secured funding, in August 2015, from Health Education England (HEE) working across the North West in conjunction with the University of Salford to co-design, pilot and evaluate a curriculum and commissioning specification for a 12 month Accelerated Children and Young People's (CYP) Programme.



The theoretical component of the course would be delivered by the University of Salford with practice placements provided within the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital and CMFT child community areas.

The funding bid was submitted in response to the changing complex health needs of children and young people and the challenges within CMFT of recruiting and retaining children and young people's nurses to meet workforce demands. The bid acknowledged the issue that the current nurse education system reduces career flexibility for registered nurses wishing to expand the scope of their knowledge and skills into other fields of nursing. In order to change field of practice registered nurses have no option other than to leave their salaried employment to undertake a second registerable qualification in children's nursing as a student nurse. The need to return to unsalaried student nurse status and the length of the current three year programme acts as a disincentive.

What did you do? What was the intervention or initiative?

The programme aim was to prepare experienced adult nurses, registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), to undertake an accelerated course leading to a second registerable qualification as a Children's Nurse as well as a top up degree or Postgraduate certificate (depending on entry qualifications). The project addressed the urgent requirement to grow a workforce of nurses with unique skills to understand and respond to the complex health needs of children and young people. Experienced adult nurses bring transferable clinical and leadership skills which greatly enhance the skill mix within the workplace.

The programme aligns to the principles outlined in the Shape of Caring Report (2015) with the need to improve nurse training and to create flexibility to work across a range of disciplines. The need for the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital to comply with the Royal College of Nursing (2013) guidance on safer staffing levels for children and young people within acute and community environments, ensuring safe child to registered child nurse ratios are met, was an additional driver supporting the programme.

Funding was obtained for a pilot cohort of ten, who would be employed as Band 5 post registration nursing students during the programme, with the offer of a substantive post within Royal Manchester Children's Hospital upon successful completion of the programme. Initiatives began in September 2015 regarding the development of the programme, including consultation with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital Youth Forum, to inform content and collaborative working between RMCH and the University of Salford. The pilot cohort commenced in June 2016. The pilot cohort is scheduled to complete in June 2017.

What were the Key Outcomes?

- 1.** To develop a NMC validated curriculum to enable children's nurses to work flexibly across hospital and community locations. Placement pathways were developed to ensure the pilot cohort experienced community and a wide breadth of hospital placement experiences, including high dependency.
- 2.** To recruit a cohort of ten nurses with a minimum of two years post registration experience. This was achieved; however, one student did not start due to personal circumstances and one student left midway in the programme due to an unexpected personal issue.

3. For the pilot cohort of accelerated CYP nursing students to gain registration as children's nurses. 100% of the remaining students are on course to complete the programme and register with the NMC.
4. The graduates from this programme can elect to gain employment at the RMCH. 87.5% of the students who will complete the programme have accepted posts at CMFT.
5. For 100% ward managers within RMCH to be satisfied with the programme content and competencies achieved upon qualifying and overall preparation for practice. This will be informed as part of the ongoing evaluation of the programme.
6. Patient engagement through the involvement of the RMCH Youth Forum was an integral part of the programme development.

What were the lessons learned?

- Targeted marketing and planning are critical to the success of any such ventures.
- Recruitment and selection of experienced staff as full time students who are also seconded employees must be carefully considered in order to facilitate the smooth running of the programme and maximise the student and staff experiences.
- Role transition from qualified nurse to student to qualified nurse is a significant issue for students undertaking a full time programme of study

Key learning surrounding the short development timeframe for the curricular content and recruitment and selection of the pilot cohort has been a steep learning curve for both educators and practitioners. Steering and Implementation Groups were set up to share ideas and determine actions in relation to programme development, evaluation strategies and information sharing. This has been shared in the form of minutes, action logs and Gantt charts to enable all members to be aware of developments and learn what was required for this new venture. Any issues that arose were shared and joint solutions generated.

Student and staff expectations were ascertained at the outset and it became clear that there was a mismatch between the two in relation to perceived competence in caring for children which has implications for staff and mentor preparation for future courses.

In addition, key learning regarding the complexity of line managing a pilot cohort, who were full time students and also NHS employees, has informed the line management of the Trainee Nurse Associates within the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital.

The greatest project challenge was the recruitment of the pilot cohort in a very small window between NMC approval and the projected start date. Recruitment is a multi-faceted process and encompasses different stages, pre-advertisement, advertisement, management of the application process via e-recruitment, joint Higher Education Institution (HEI) interview and selection and pre-employment checks, each with their specific challenges.

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The pre-advertisement stage consisted of writing and ensuring the job description reflected the specific nature of the programme. In addition, as the pilot cohort were being paid at Band 5, as per Agenda for Change (AfC), this meant that the job description had to meet the AfC guidelines and follow the organisational processes associated with this. The delay in getting the job description approved had a domino effect on all stages of the recruitment timeline. In hindsight this process should have commenced earlier to avoid the Christmas and New Year period but the team was faced with the dilemma of not yet having had NMC approval for the first course of its kind in a one year timeframe.

Although the programme was advertised on the Trust Jobs Portal as well as nationally, via NHS Jobs, the project group received colloquial comments, following the interview process, that interested parties within the Trust were unaware of the programme. This promoted discussion within the project group that greater use of social media and other trust communication links should have been used to ensure trust employees were fully aware of the programme. In retrospect the project group felt the advertisement needed to be bolder in design and clearer in its message regarding the programme and highlighting that the student would be paid a Band 5 and seconded to do the course to increase interest.

The interview and selection part of the recruitment process highlighted the successful partnership working between the university and trust, with representatives from both involved with the interview and selection process.

Level of award: Nominee - Projects

Organisation(s): University of Salford and Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (CMFT)

Author: Karen Sutcliffe

The pre-employment stage was the greatest challenge as timing was critical in relation to the approved programme start date and successful candidates being ready to start on that date, with all pre-employment checks and academic requirements completed. This stage required close collaboration with colleagues in Human Resources, with the Matron responsible for recruitment, pursuing candidates on a weekly and then daily basis and liaising with university colleagues. The delay in getting the job description approved provided the catalyst for this. Lessons learned for the project group are for job descriptions to be finalised as early as possible in the planning stage of any project in order to meet strict recruitment timelines.

References

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Key contact(s): Karen Sutcliffe, Matron for Education and Workforce, CMFT
karen.sutcliffe@cmft.nhs.uk;

Mike McNamee, Matron, Education & Staff Development (RMCH) CMFT,
michael.mcnamee@cmft.nhs.uk;

Robert Kennedy, Lecturer (Multi-Professional Post Graduate Studies & Children and Young People's Nursing, University of Salford)

r.kennedy@salford.ac.uk