Case Study: Reducing Nursing Placement Attrition

Attrition within student nurses is a long-standing and well documented problem within the UK (Orton. S. 2011). For some nursing programmes the attrition rate can be as high as 50% (Lord Willis, 2015).

At East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust (ELHT) the Practice Education Facilitator (PEF) team looked to see if it could change the focus of its work to reduce student nurse attrition at the trust by:
• Increasing student contact
• Offering local mentor support and development
• Providing a consistent approach to improving education quality

Key Outcomes

• Student Friends and Family test | **94%**
Would you recommend your placement area to your friends & family?
(Sep 12 Cohort UCLAN Nursing Students. 30th June 2015) (See Appendix 1)

• UCLAN Student nurse evaluations 2014 – 2015 satisfaction rate | **88%**
(Average of 316 evaluations. Nov 2015)

• Student complaints 2014 – 2015 | **1**

• Best placement nominations 2015 | **24**
(Nominated by Sep 13 ELHT cohort of student nurses. Nov 2015)

Practice Education Facilitator Team

- Supporting students to maximise their potential & become competent practitioners
- Facilitating inter-professional learning
- Providing closer links between the trust & our local universities
- Listening & acting upon student feedback & concerns
- Mentor & clinical educator training & development
- Monitoring of multi-professional clinical placement audits
- Support and advice for all health care students, mentors & educators
- Improving the quality of placement learning environments

Safe | Personal | Effective

- Most supportive staff nominations 2015 | **84**
(Nominated by Sep 13 ELHT cohort of student nurses. Nov 2015)

- Mentor update attendance 2015 | **86%**
(86% of 1006 Nurse Mentors. Oct 2016)

- Health Education England working across the North West PEF outcomes 2014 -15 | **96%**

- Student attrition reduced from
22% to 8%
(Jan 14, Mar 14, Sep 14 & Mar 15 Cohorts UCLAN Nursing Students 30th Sept 2015)

Background

East Lancashire Hospitals is an NHS hospital trust in Lancashire, England. It was formed in April 2003, as the result of the merger of Blackburn Hyndburn & Ribble Valley (BHRV) NHS Trust and Burnley Health Care NHS Trust.

ELHT is made up of Royal Blackburn Hospital, Burnley General Hospital, Pendle Community Hospital, Clitheroe Community Hospital, Accrington Victoria Hospital and Adult community service for Burnley, Pendle & Rossendale.

Each year ELHT provides clinical placements to over 500 pre-registration students from 16 professional groups and links to 9 universities in the north of England.

The PEF team support students, develop mentors and placements, enhance student clinical skills and maintain education quality.

What led to this project being set up?
The causes of student nurse attrition are multi-factorial (Pryjmachuk. S, et al. 2009).

At ELHT in 2011 22% of student nurses left their course whilst a further 10% stepped off their programmes. This meant that almost a third of student nurses were not qualifying as expected at the end of 3 years.

Our PEF team consisted of 3 Band 7s. Although HEE PEF outcomes were being met (2013-14 HEE PEF outcomes 94%) Trust and student expectations were not being met, there were increasing student complaints and the high attrition meant insufficient student numbers to meet workforce needs.

HEE challenged HEIs (Health Education Institutions) and placement providers to reduce attrition to 13%.

Within the existing funding the Clinical Education team looked at how the PEF team could work differently to improve retention and enhance placement experience.

Resources

Funding for the new Assistant PEF came from within the existing HEE PEF allocation

Key Aims

The PEF role has well established outcomes that are set by HEE. In addition to these a number of additional outcomes were established:

New priorities
- Increase student contact
- Local mentor support
- A consistent approach to improving education quality

Key aims
- Reduce student attrition
- Improve student satisfaction
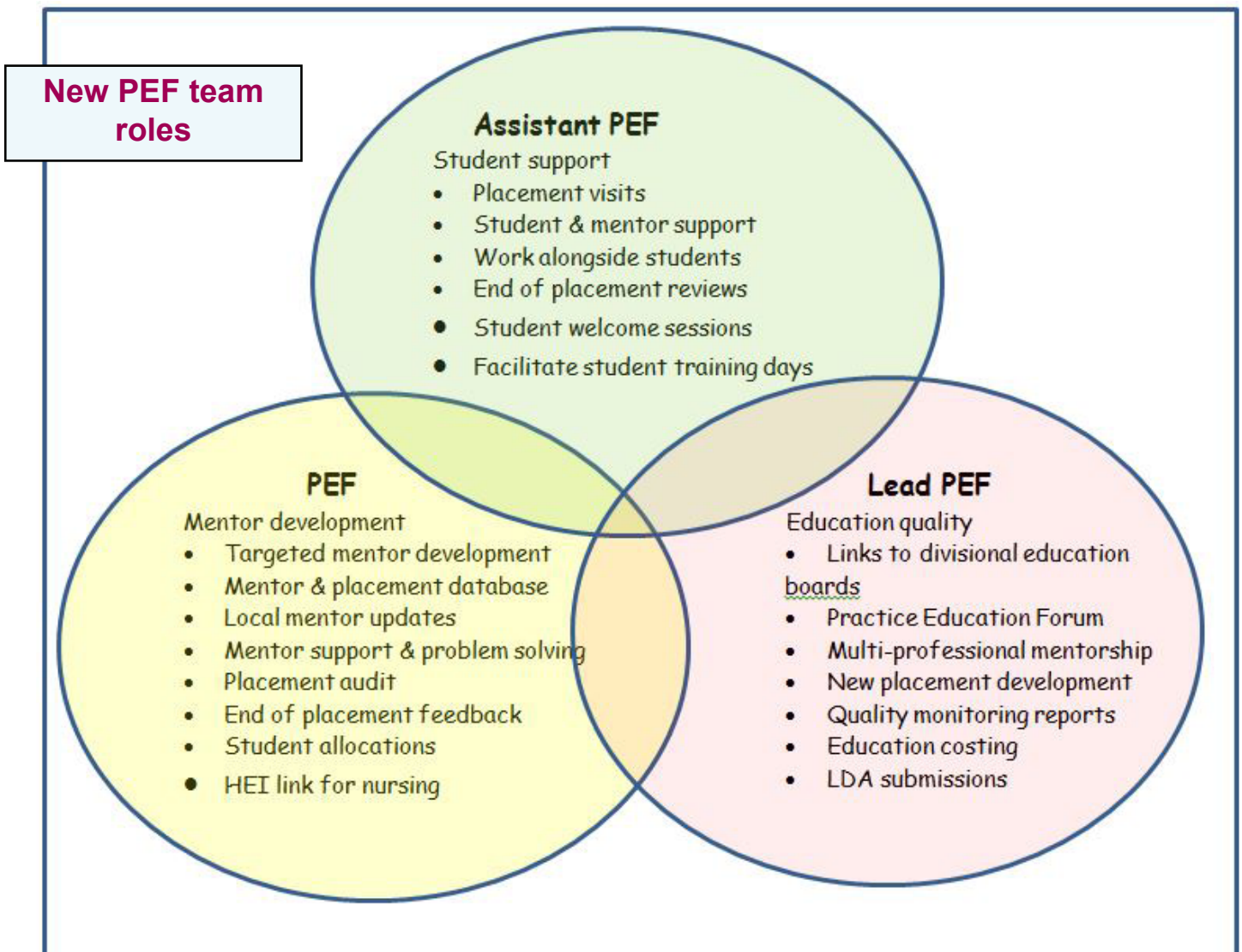- Enhance mentor skills and knowledge

Key Stages of Set-Up

A focus group consisting of the clinical education leads, the PEF lead and the chief nurses identified the new priorities for the PEF team.
Rather than simply continue with the existing PEF team structure the opportunity existed to establish a clear team structure and to develop a new role of Assistant PEF.

New PEF team structure
- Lead PEF   Band 7
- PEF   Band 6
- Assistant PEF   Band 5

Each role in the team was interlinked but the focus group identified definite priority for each member of the team. Approval for the new PEF team structure was given by HEE.

New PEF team roles

Assistant PEF
Student support
- Placement visits
- Student & mentor support
- Work alongside students
- End of placement reviews
- Student welcome sessions
- Facilitate student training days

PEF
Mentor development
- Targeted mentor development
- Mentor & placement database
- Local mentor updates
- Mentor support & problem solving
- Placement audit
- End of placement feedback
- Student allocations
- HEI link for nursing

Lead PEF
Education quality
- Links to divisional education boards
- Practice Education Forum
- Multi-professional mentorship
- New placement development
- Quality monitoring reports
- Education costing
- LDA submissions

How it Works

Developing a sense of ownership

• PEF team meet students in fresher's week and during prep for placement at the university.
• Trust welcome for all student nurses.
• Students meet the PEF team & are welcomed by the Chief Executive and Chief Nurse
• Students complete corporate induction as if they were a member of staff and are provided with ID badges, internet access etc.
• Daily placement visits across the trust by the assistant PEFs offering support to students and mentors. This allows problems to be identified early and solutions to be put into action. The assistant PEF can also work alongside the student to provide additional support to the student or the mentor.
• All new students receive a visit by the PEF team in their first week of placement

Listening to our students

• End of placement reviews (EoPR) provide students with a safe, supportive environment in which concerns can be shared. EoPR's also allow students to highlight positive experiences.
• Student first complete a Friends & Family test and then highlight practices that need STOP, START, or CARRY ON (See Appendix 1)
• Chief executive and chief nurse attend student feedback sessions
• Representatives from our local HEI are also invited to attend EoPR
• Feedback of outcomes 'You said-We did' during next placement

Improving quality

• Friends & Family results are shared with matrons, managers, the HEI and with other students groups.
• All Incident Reports (IR1's) involving students copied to PEF team for action.
• Student feedback is incorporated into placement audit action plans.

Sustainability

• In 2015 85% of mentors were updated. To achieve this 80 mentor updates were completed. 60 of these updates were delived in the placement areas focussing on the specific needs of those teams. On some units the update only includes mentors whilst on others the whole team (including HCA's) attend the update.
• Multi-learner education audits. The PEF team support each placement manager with the education audit and to set capacity. The audit includes details of all learners who come into the placement area.
• Local management of placement capacity and student allocation. The OEF team allocate student placements which give much greater flexibility in how the circuit in utilized.
• Assistant PEF's make daily visits to placement areas to meet with students. The aim is to visit each student at least once in each placement.
• Students complete an end of placement review at the end of each placement. The Friends & Family results and feedback is then incorporated into mentor updates and fed into trust QA processes.
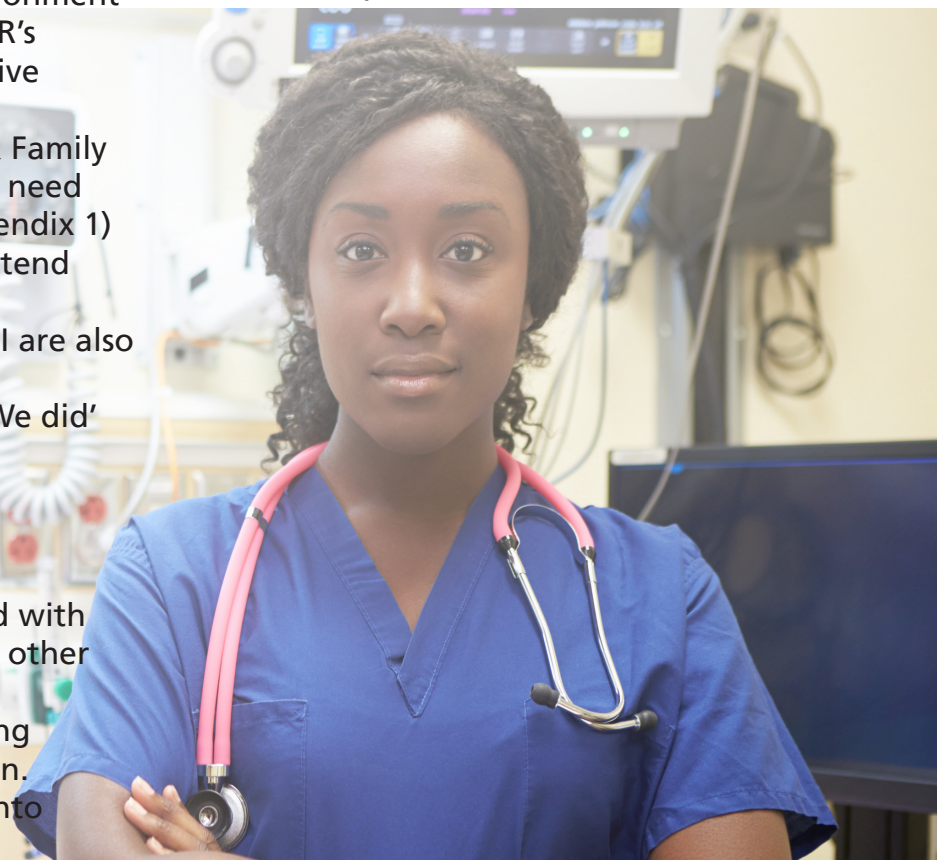
• Best placement and best mentor awards. Students in their final placement are asked to nominate their best placements and most supportive members of staff.
All placements and mentors that are nominated are awarded a certificate (See Appendix 2). These have proved to be hugely successful with the placements and the mentors taking a great deal of pride in their award.

Key Learning

The differentiation of the three roles within the team allowed us to:
• Establish key aims for each role
• Fully utilize the skills of each team member
• Reduce duplication of work
• Provide a consistent approach to the work of all team members

Local mentor updates allow the PEF team to respond the individual needs of our placement teams and mentors.

Listening to students has increased their satisfaction whilst on placement, has reduced attrition and increased the number of students who choose to work at ELHT once qualified.

The biggest lesson however is the difference the new focus has made to our students.
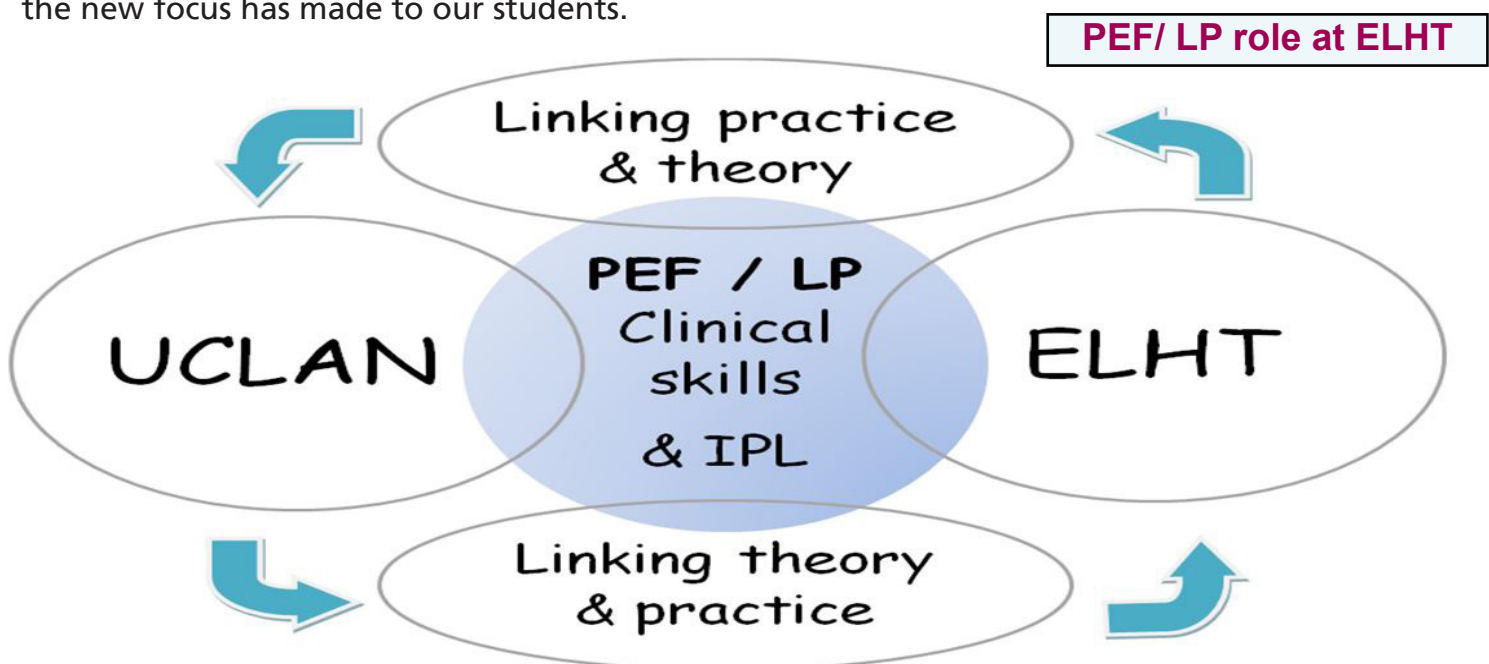
> " The PEF team saved my nursing career. I felt like throwing in the towel but the PEF team helped me so much. They supported me & made me feel like I wasn't alone."
>
> March 2015 UCLAN student nurse, End of placement review 12/08/2015

Next Steps

'Raising the Bar' (Lord Willis, HEE, 2015) highlighted the importance of developing student nurse confidence as well as their competence. Integral to this is the development of clinical skills to be ready to practice. In the end of placement reviews our students identified that they would like to access clinical skills training whilst on placement that was specific to the practice they see at ELHT.

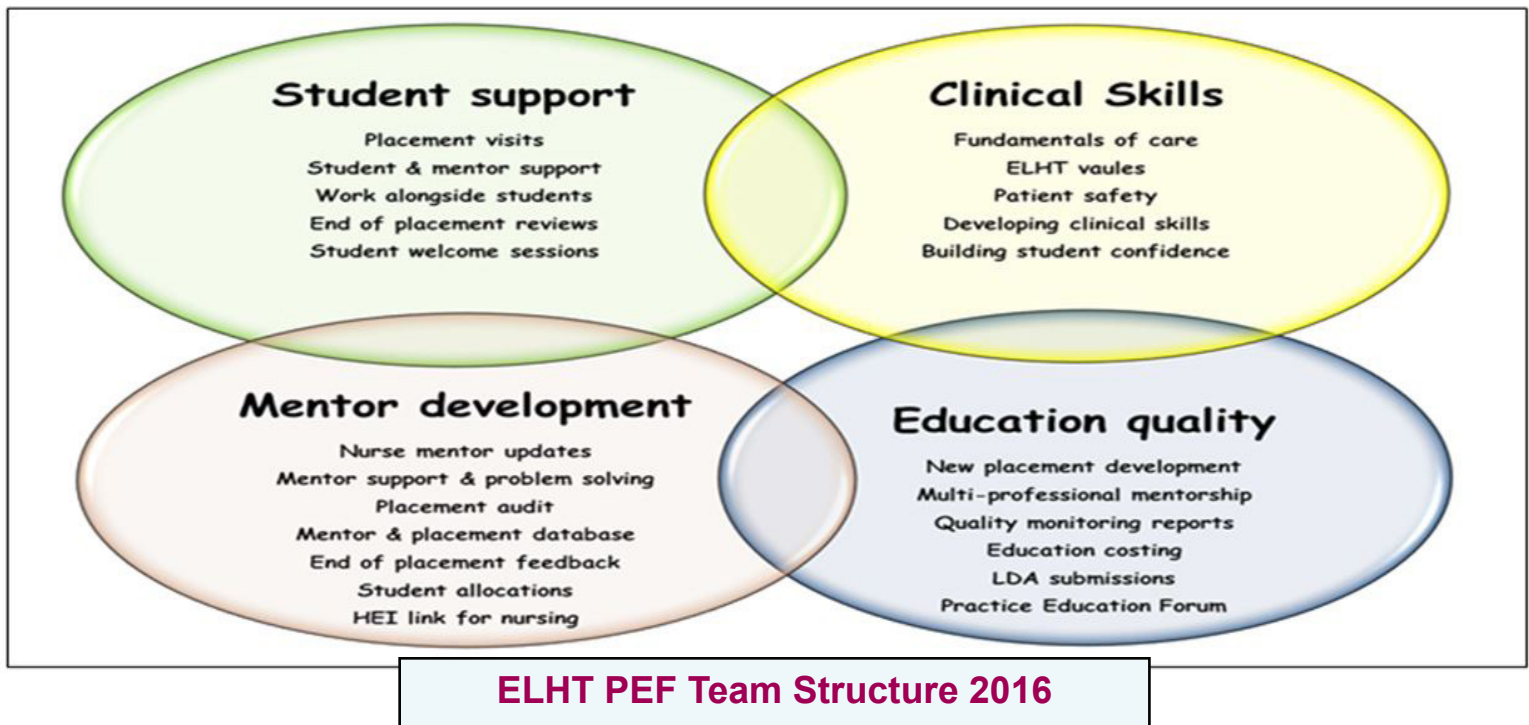The team have worked with UCLAN to utilize part of the PEF resource to appoint a PEF / lecturer practitioner (LP) (See Appendix 3)

PEF/ LP role at ELHT

Linking practice & theory

UCLAN

PEF / LP
Clinical skills & IPL

ELHT

Linking theory & practice

Role of the LP PEF

- Improve links with UCLAN
- Emphasise fundamentals of care
- Prioritise patient safety
- Develop clinical skills
- Build student confidence
- Underpin ELHT values
- Enhance the clinical skills our students are taught at the university and on placement

The team asked lead nurses to identify the skills they thought were essential for students and have built these into a weekly programme of skills sessions. The team now have a 4 pronged approach (see below) to supporting students and mentors and will continue to develop this structure over the coming years.

Student support
Placement visits
Student & mentor support
Work alongside students
End of placement reviews
Student welcome sessions

Clinical Skills
Fundamentals of care
ELHT vaules
Patient safety
Developing clinical skills
Building student confidence

Mentor development
Nurse mentor updates
Mentor support & problem solving
Placement audit
Mentor & placement database
End of placement feedback
Student allocations
HEI link for nursing

Education quality
New placement development
Multi-professional mentorship
Quality monitoring reports
Education costing
LDA submissions
Practice Education Forum

ELHT PEF Team Structure 2016

Supporting Material

Appendix 1 – Friends & Family Test
Appendix 2 – Certificate
Appendix 3 – Lecturer Practitioner role

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References:
Orton, S, (2011). Rethinking attrition in student nurses. Journal of Health and Social Care Improvement. [Online] Available at: http://www.wlv.ac.uk/media/wlv/pdf/Rethinking-Attrition-in-student-nurses-SophieOrton.pdf [Accessed October 2016].

Pryjmachuk, S. Easton, K. & Littlewood, A. (2009). Nurse education: factors associated with attrition. Journal of Advanced Nursing, 65(1), 149-160.

Lord Willis, (2015). Raising the Bar - Shape of Caring: A Review of the Future Education and Training of Registered Nurses and Care. HEE.