

Engagement and empowerment: Emancipating healthcare support workers to become registered professionals

'Recruit and train staff to demonstrate the right values and behaviours....'

Francis (2013)

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...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland

Overview

Northern Ireland, like the rest of the Western world, faces unprecedented demand for healthcare, driven by an ageing population and changing demographic, an increasing chronic disease burden, greater expectations from service users, and increasing use of technology to support diagnosis and treatment

(Suzman & Beard, 2011)



Contexts

Regional context

- An ageing population
- Increasing disease burden
- Greater expectations from service users
- Transforming Your Care (2011)
- The Donaldson Report (2014)

Policy context

- Values based recruitment
- Workforce improvement initiatives
- Recruitment and funding challenges



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History of the OU programme

- Programme started in 2004 (Dip. Higher Ed)
- Changed to BSc (Hons) Nursing in 2013
- Commissioned by DHSSPSNI
- Work-based
- Different because it offers access to nurse education to Trust employees who 'Earn while they learn'



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The evaluation

The need for the evaluation of the programme:

- Meeting current policy agendas
 - Widening access
 - Strengthening collaboration
 - Graduates fit for purpose & practice
 - Creating career pathways

- Impact on social cohesion

- Evidence base for future planning and growth



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Evaluation approach

Questionnaire: Key domains

- Year commenced and completed programme
- Area of practice on entering programme
- Area of practice on completion of programme (as a registrant)
- Age / Sex / Number of dependents / Marital status
- Years of experience prior to commencing programme

Focus Groups

- Students
- Managers



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Findings and demographics

Demographics (12% response rate)

- Age range > 25 to over 50 (2 over 50)
- 92% female and 8% male

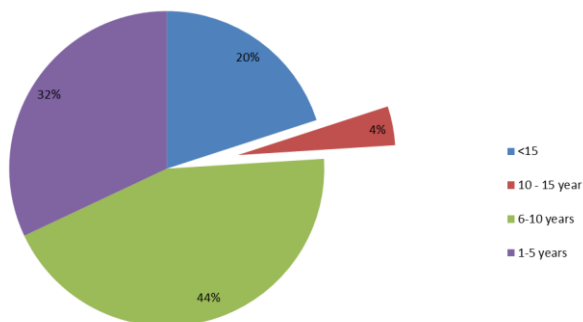
Prior experience of students

- Adult medicine/surgery and mental health, midwifery, OPD and others
- 32% of entrants had minimum of 5 years prior experience as a HCA
- Little change overall between areas of practice pre and post study



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Years of experience of those commencing programme



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Benefits to individuals

- Application is open to all nursing support staff within SET, and the other 4 HSCTs
- Academic and professional development – progression from band 2/3 to band 5
- Synchronous and asynchronous online learning plus face-to-face tuition
- Students earn their stable salary while they study
- Support from peers, mentors, practice education team and senior nurses
- Impact on social mobility
- Nurse education immersed in care delivery linking theory to practice every day



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Benefits to organisation

'All healthcare service providers must be full partners in nursing education, and recognise that the culture of the workplace is a crucial determinant of its success' (Willis, 2012)

- Allows organisations to ensure they have the right number of staff with the right skills, knowledge and behaviours to meet their objectives in delivering person-centred, safe and effective care
- Enables senior managers to identify suitable candidates to apply
- Assists with workforce plans to provide band 5 registered nurses
- Creates a framework of social cohesion where HCAs can develop their skills and contribute to the Trust workforce
- Philosophy of 'Growing our own staff' provides the Trust with an opportunity to invest in employees and enhance career progression



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In summary

'Nursing is an incredibly self-aware profession, constantly striving to improve and give patients the best possible care. It is imperative that nurses are provided with the right education and skills to equip them for their roles' (Willis, 2012)

VIDEO



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Future research

- Continued tracking of students from programme start to entry into the workforce
- Investigation of the impact on social cohesion and social mobility
- Destinations: Where do these OU graduates end up working as registered nurses? How do their careers progress?
- 'The end is the beginning': Investigating OU nursing graduates who decide to study further



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Future – continuing to grow our own nurses locally

'High quality recruitment campaigns should be targeted at all potential nurses with a diversity of entry points and career pathways into nursing, including graduates of other professions, healthcare assistants and mature people as well as school-leavers, to encourage the best possible range of applicants'. (Willis, 2012)

As a team evaluating the OU PRNP since 2004, we felt that this study was useful in confirming for all the partners, current students and prospective students, that there were many benefits to the BSc Hons Nursing Degree. In 2016 SET will increase entry to the programme from 25 to 50 student places



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