

Supporting Quality in Pre-registration Nursing and Midwifery Education

Welcome to this first edition of NES' bulletin on developments in pre-registration nursing and midwifery education in Scotland.

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Raising awareness,
encouraging involvement

INTRODUCTION



NES provides a process of assurance for the Chief Nursing Officer's (CNO's) Directorate that pre-registration nursing and midwifery programmes commissioned by the Scottish Government:

- provide a consistent and evidence-based range of undergraduate education; and
- support the development of new graduate nurses and midwives who are competent and confident to deliver safe, effective, person-centred care.

NES' role in the performance management of pre-registration nursing and midwifery programmes forms one part of an interconnected "quality" and "performance" process that includes:

- Nursing & Midwifery Council (NMC) statutory regulation and monitoring;
- Quality Assurance Authority education review and enhancement processes;
- institutional-level quality improvement and education enhancement work; and
- the strong support provided by university and NHS Board partnership groups.

These interconnections can produce a complex landscape, but they also provide a real opportunity to generate a more comprehensive and collaborative perspective on quality and performance for all stakeholders, including students.

Universities are always striving to achieve even higher standards, and they are working together through the *Scottish Collaboration for the Enhancement of Pre-registration Nursing and Midwifery Education* to achieve ongoing improvements in the programmes they deliver. You can read about the group's work on page 6.

NES, in partnership with universities and NHS Boards, has supported a number of innovative and collaborative projects as part of the quality and performance agenda. One of these is a national survey of students, mentors and senior charge nurses, team leaders and care home managers (SCNs)¹ that we carry out each year. The 2012 survey drew responses from almost 3000 participants, and you can read more about the survey starting on page 3.

You'll see that the results present a very positive picture of students, mentors and SCNs working together with university staff to develop caring, compassionate and competent nurses and midwives. And at a time when the professions are under scrutiny as never before, this is a very welcome finding.

I hope you find this bulletin helpful and look forward to continuing collaboration in enhancing pre-registration nursing and midwifery education in Scotland.



Dr Colette Ferguson,
Director of Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions, NES

¹Reference to "SCNs" in this bulletin includes senior charge nurses, team leaders and care home managers.

2012 NURSING AND MIDWIFERY PRE-REGISTRATION SURVEY: HIGHLIGHTS

This section of the bulletin highlights some of the key findings from the survey.

The survey

The Scottish Government set up the *Student Nursing & Midwifery Pre-registration Education Programme Quality Assurance Survey* in 2008. NES further developed the survey in collaboration with education and service stakeholders and has been conducting it annually since 2010. It does this as part of its responsibility to assure the Government that university programmes are of high quality and are producing new graduate nurses and midwives who are competent to deliver safe, effective, person-centred care.

The survey involves all six of the universities commissioned by the Scottish Government to provide pre-registration programmes and their partner service providers, who fulfil the vital responsibility of supporting students in their practice placements. It gathers the views of third-year student nurses and midwives, their mentors and SCNs on the education programmes and students' preparedness for their roles as registered practitioners. Participants complete a questionnaire electronically and can make additional comments on issues important to them.

The 2012 survey brought almost 3000 responses. While this figure is down slightly from the excellent response in 2011, which saw a 30% increase in student participation and a substantial 94% rise in mentors and SCNs from 2010, it is still considerably higher than has been achieved in previous years.

Responses show that students are having a very positive experience in university and service settings and are greatly valuing their learning in key areas such as providing holistic care and practising ethically. Mentors and SCNs are recognising students' high levels of motivation, caring and compassion at the point of exit from their courses and rate their attitudes, professionalism and team-working skills very highly. In addition, the vast majority of mentors are receiving university-based formal preparation for their mentoring role and are meeting NMC requirements.

New nurses and midwives seen in positive light

The central purpose of pre-registration programmes is to prepare students to become practitioners who are competent, safe and effective and who practise in a person-centred way. Mentor and SCN respondents to the 2012 survey indicate that newly registered nurses and midwives are achieving these outcomes.

Top qualities identified by mentors and SCNs included the new registrants':

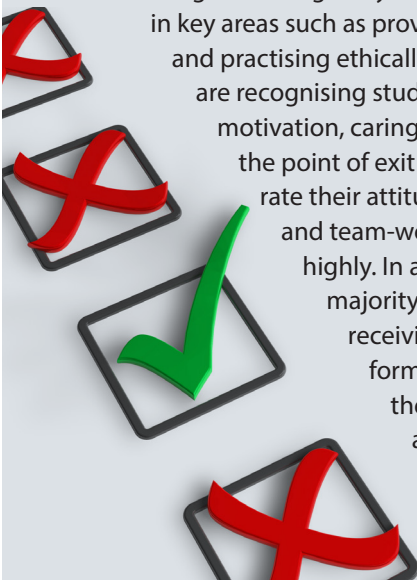
- caring and compassionate approaches;
- professionalism, conduct and behaviours; and
- ability to work with new colleagues as part of a team.

Associate CNO Hugh Masters, who holds the education brief for CNO Directorate at Scottish Government, believes this signals pre-registration programmes' success in developing practitioners who are genuinely fit for practice and who embody the best traditions of nursing and midwifery.

"The nurses and midwives emerging from the programmes are demonstrating compassion, are person-centred in their focus and are strongly motivated to make the lives of the people in their care better," he says. "They are bringing caring attitudes and a high degree of professionalism into very complex health care environments, and it's not the students themselves who are telling us this – it's the mentors and SCNs they work with."

Most students exit their programmes with a degree as Scotland moves towards all-graduate status, and Mr Masters believes the survey shows the potential impact of degree-level preparation.

"The early indications are that preparation to graduate status is producing students who are focused on safety and quality, are capable of identifying care needs and acting to ensure good practice, and are committed to developing themselves and their services throughout their careers," he says. "We now need to ensure that we can continue to support and nurture that potential as they move into, and through, their careers."



Mentors getting strong support

Mentors are central to supporting students in practice placement areas, enhancing their experience and role-modelling the attitudes, skills and behaviours they will need as registered practitioners. It is vital that mentors receive preparation to fulfil their roles, and the survey shows that the right support is in place in Scotland.

Mentors now require either formal preparation or accreditation of prior learning to effectively carry out their roles. More than nine out of ten mentors responding to the survey reported receiving formal university-level preparation (half of them within the last three years) and almost all had participated in regular mentor updates. Ongoing support is clearly in place at local levels, with strong evidence of mentors networking with peers and keeping in regular contact with clinical colleagues and practice education facilitators (PEFs). Managers and university lecturers are also cited as important sources of support.

"This is good news for mentors, and also good news for students," says Paula Ingram, NES Practice Education Regional Coordinator for the South East. *"Students describe how important a strong mentor is in adding value to their practice placements. The fact that mentors are receiving the support they need to perform effectively speaks very highly of the collaborative input of universities, PEFs, NHS Boards and other service providers who are clearly committed to supporting the role."*

Get involved

The student, mentor and SCN surveys for 2013 are now closed, but this is an annual process and we'd really like to encourage all stakeholders (students, mentors, SCNs, PEFs and university staff) to support even better engagement with next year's survey.

Are you a student moving into the third year of your programme, a mentor and/or SCN working in Scotland? Then we'd like to invite you to:

- look out for the feedback from this year's responses;
- see what the issues are; and
- take the opportunity to make a big impact on the quality of pre-registration nursing and midwifery education by taking part in the 2014 Student Nursing & Midwifery Pre-registration Education Programme Quality Assurance Survey.

The online survey will go live again in early 2014 and links to access and complete it will be circulated widely.

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RECRUITMENT REACHING OUT TO ALL PARTS OF COUNTRY

Work being taken forward in Scotland is showing very encouraging signs of progress in student recruitment and retention.

Pre-registration nursing and midwifery programmes are providing opportunities for students from all parts of Scottish society to enter higher education and increasing numbers of students are completing their programmes and moving successfully through to registration, evidence reveals.

The national Recruitment and Retention Delivery Group (RRDG), which includes representation from universities, the NHS and other key stakeholders and is supported by the NES Data Team, analysed university cohorts and linked this to postcode information from the *Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)* and the *Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification*. The work supports closer analysis of the geographical distribution of students from across Scotland, which is critically important in evaluating and ensuring access to programmes wherever potential students may live.

The group's analysis showed that pre-registration nursing and midwifery students are being recruited from across a far wider social spectrum than occurs in other courses (Figures 1 and 2).

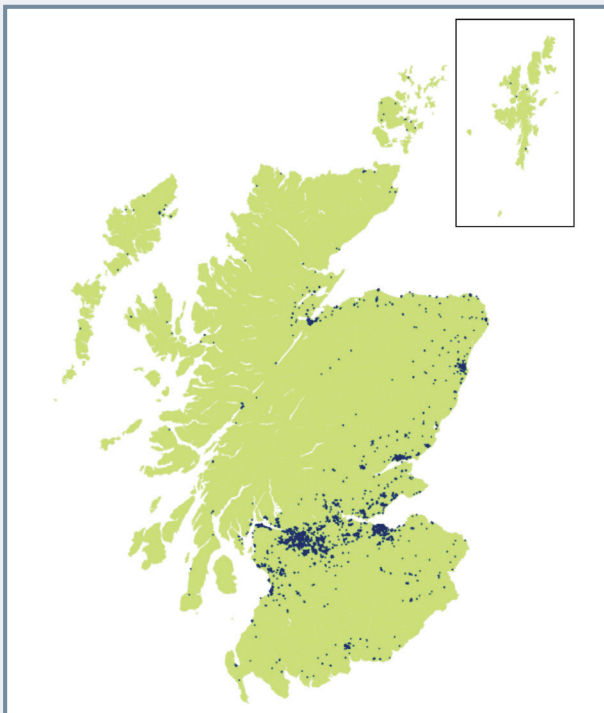


Figure 1. Dispersal of student nurse and midwife recruitment (2009 cohort)

Associate CNO Hugh Masters believes this shows the important impact that nursing and midwifery pre-registration programmes can have on supporting access to university-based education across the social spectrum and from all parts of Scotland.

"The NES/RRDG analysis suggests that recruitment is effective across Scotland's wide population diversity and that students are reflecting the communities they aspire to serve as registered practitioners," he says.

Mr Masters also welcomes the finding that the probability of a student leaving his or her programme early has fallen sequentially over each of the last four years, with more students progressing through their pre-registration programmes to completion.

"This excellent news suggests that students who are motivated to be nurses and want to see their studies through to completion are being recruited," he says. *"It also points to joint working between universities, NHS Boards and NES increasing the focus on support for students and impacting positively on retention rates."*

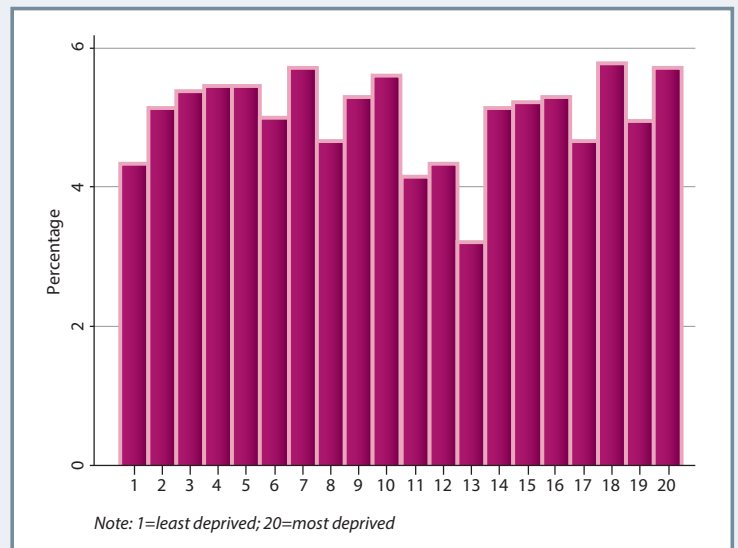


Figure 2. The 2009 cohort by SIMD

PRE-REGISTRATION GROUP PROMOTING COLLABORATION

The Scottish Collaboration for the Enhancement of Pre-registration Nursing and Midwifery Education is a rather grand title for a working group. But it's one that group chair John Lee, Head of the Division of Undergraduate Studies in the School of Nursing and Midwifery at the University of Dundee, believes fits the bill perfectly.

"It's exactly what we're about," he says. "We're working collaboratively across Scotland's universities along with the health sector and NES to enhance the processes, outcomes and experiences of pre-registration nursing education in Scotland."

The group has representation from all six universities commissioned by the Scottish Government to offer pre-registration programmes, the four institutions that provide non-commissioned honours-degree programmes, the Open University and NES.

NES facilitated the establishment of the group in 2010 to address the implications of the revised NMC standards for pre-registration education, but it has widened its remit since then to consider all factors that impact on programme provision at pre-registration level.

"We work very closely with groups looking at issues such as practice learning and recruitment and retention, but our focus is specifically on pre-registration education provision," John explains. "We want to look at what we can do better to enhance nursing in Scotland by working collaboratively and learning from each other about day-to-day management of our programmes."

The group has evolved into a forum for sharing experiences, ideas and learning among partners.

"Universities continue to be in competition with each other in many ways, and that is right and proper," John says. "But we also share many issues, challenges and questions – there is no competition on the basic elements of developing and running quality programmes that create quality practitioners, and that's what we want to share."

Apart from regular meetings, the group also hosts an annual conference. This year's event, which will be held on 6 November at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, is taking an innovative approach to student engagement.

"We want students to take the lead," John explains. "The group will facilitate, but students will determine the conference agenda, identify speakers and define topics they want to discuss. It will be their conference, run by them, for them." Students are invited to contact NES to find out how they can get involved.

The group undertakes individual projects in specific areas, with user and carer involvement in programmes and the issue of "due regard" currently being identified as key topics.

"We're interested in developing a specifically Scottish approach to user and carer involvement," John says. "The universities are promoting involvement, but we're all doing it differently. Our project is scoping how it is being delivered across the country, identifying best practice and setting out how it can be done better."

Due regard relates to ensuring NMC-approved processes are in place to enable students to achieve the required standards of proficiency for safe and effective practice, defining crucial details such as the appropriate clinical backgrounds, experience and expertise of mentors in clinical placements.

"We're looking at a number of different placement environments to find out how due regard is being reflected and what issues are arising as a consequence," John explains. "The aim is to identify things that can be done across Scotland to ensure the stipulations are being met."

John sees involvement in this kind of focused work – identifying a relevant topic, investigating what is happening on the ground, reviewing the international literature and developing guidance on practice – as being the direction of travel for the group for the future. But the underpinning of its success will continue to be the sharing of learning and experience.

"The group is very keen on seeing improvement across the board in pre-registration nursing education, and that means sharing our knowledge and experience with each other," he says. "That's our raison d'être."