



RCN Policy Unit

Policy Briefing 06/2007

**Modernising Nursing
Careers**

April 2007

Introduction

This briefing paper sets out the background and ongoing work of the Modernising Nursing Careers initiative. It also highlights some of the issues for future pre and post registration education and career pathways.

The UK chief nursing officers will work with the new and existing independent sector providers on supporting modern careers for nurses.”

- Prepare Nurses to Lead in a Changed Health Care System

“The Health Departments will work with key stakeholders to provide information for the profession on the

other external stakeholders including the RCM, CPHVA/AMICUS, NMC, NHS Employers, UNISON, Council of Deans, Skills for Health. This group met for the first time in November 2006.

A key current focus of work is scoping options for pre and post registration education and career pathways. A 'one-off' UK wide 'education consensus event' was held in February 2007 to scope key principles for the following:

- Pre-registration education
- Preparation for specialist and advanced nursing roles
- Nurse educator roles

Following this there have been regional workshops in England, and events in the other countries, to explore education and career pathways for the future with practicing nurses and HCAs. There have also been two workshops to look specifically at the future for nursing in community settings. The RCN has been represented at all of these.

A discussion paper on nurse education and career pathways is planned for September 2007. The Nursing and Midwifery Council is the lead to take this work forward.

The RCN Response

The RCN policy documents *The Future Nurse: The RCN Vision Explained*³ and *The Future Nurse: The Future of Nurse Education*⁴ set out a similar future scenario for health care delivery and nursing work within that. These suggest that nursing in the future will need to be:

- Delivered by nursing teams which include Health Care Assistants⁵ as acknowledged members of the nursing team and nursing family
- Integrated across the patient care pathway so that it stretches across institutional boundaries and care settings, and the continuum of health care from public health to management of acute episodes of illness including emotional and mental health
- Focus more on management and self-management of chronic illness and health improvement

³ RCN (2004) *The Future Nurse: The RCN Vision Explained* RCN; London

⁴ RCN (2004) *The Future Nurse: The Future for Nurse Education* RCN; London

⁵ Exact titles vary, for example, health care support workers, assistant nurses, nursing auxiliaries

- Graduate status at the point of first nurse registration with developed pathways for advanced nursing practice

They also set out a future whereby some nursing teams practise more as generalists – that is across population groups and illness categories – with support from more specialist nursing teams as appropriate. However, generalism and specialism – or the levels and competencies of these domains of practice – are not specifically defined in the documents.

RCN work on MNC is led by the Future Nurse Future Workforce project which is a UK wide cross organisational group that brings together the expertise and knowledge of a range of RCN departments and countries. Currently we are engaged in:

- Scoping the evidence base including ‘soft’ evidence for the outcomes of pre registration education for nursing practice
- Exploring funding options for nurse education in the future
- Looking at developments in Europe on nurse education and practice
- Commissioning work that models future workforce scenarios for nursing including numbers⁶
- Exploring and refining previous RCN work on competency levels for advanced practice - both advanced generalist practice, for example nurse practitioners in primary care, and advanced specialist practice, for example nurse practitioners in cancer care, clinical nurse specialists, some consultant nurses.

What Are The Issues?

The fundamental issue that must underpin work on taking forward MNC is that we produce nurses fit for practice in the future, at both new registrant and advanced practice levels. This is important, not only in terms of meeting public and patient needs, expectations and views. But also in terms of the viability of the future nursing workforce as recognised key

- Developing career frameworks that enable nurses to both progress their careers *and* have in-built flexibility and transferability to enable them to move between different career portfolios and employment settings
- Ensuring post registration education facilitates and enhances the above
- Ensuring that there is a proper framework to develop and support HCAs and assistant practitioners, including progression into registered nursing if they wish
- Movement towards