



RCN Policy Unit

Policy Briefing 15/2007

Two consultations from Modernising Nursing Careers

**A Review of Pre Registration Education by
the Nursing and Midwifery Council
(UK - wide)**

**Towards a Framework for Post Registration
Nursing Careers by the Department of
Health for England (England only)**

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Introduction

On November 1st 2007 two consultations were published which have

To further help your understanding of the issues involved there are also two papers on the RCN website policy pages at http://www.rcn.org.uk/aboutus/policy/projects/future_nurse_future_workforce_project/modernising_nursing_careers *Pre – Registration Nurse Education: The NMC Review and the Issues*⁴ gives a brief history of nurse education and considers the need for change whilst *Ensuring A Fit For Purpose Future Nursing Workforce*⁵ by Jill Macleod Clarke sets out the rationale for change and a vision of how nursing could be organised in the future. Both are applicable to the UK.

A Review of Pre – Registration Education

The NMC review of pre registration education needs to be read, and thought through, in terms of how the content of pre registration nurse education can prepare nurses for future practice and the competencies they will need at a broad, and a specific, level. The NMC review asks a range of questions such as:

- Diploma or degree at exit level registration?
- Access to pre registration nurse education including step on and step off processes and shortened courses
- The balance between academic and practice experience learning
- Community experience and exposure pre registration
- The current four branch preparation of adult/child/mental health/learning disabilities – is it viable and fit for purpose in terms of preparation for future practice?
- Shared learning across the health care professions and within nursing
- European Directives and their implications
- Post registration consolidation – should there be a mandatory year of supervision?

Commentary, Issues and Questions

The RCN position on academic exit level for pre registration nurses education is that of an honours degree⁶. That is, an all graduate nursing

⁴ RCN (2007) *Pre Registration Education: The NMC Review and the Issues* RCN: London

⁵ Macleod Clarke, J (2007) *Ensuring A Fit For Purpose Future Nursing Workforce* RCN: London

⁶ RCN (2007) *Op Cit* – provides a background and discussion on this issue

profession at the point of registration. The RCN also recognises health care support workers (HCSWs) who work within nursing teams alongside registered nurses as members of the nursing family⁷, and would want

model in which registered nurses' careers begin in a hospital setting

- children and young people *within* supporting long term care or acute and critical care
- disease specific long term conditions such as multiple sclerosis *within* supporting long term care
- forensic mental health or addiction disorders *within* mental health and psychosocial care

Post registration education would most likely be organised on a modular basis in the future – a ‘pick and mix’ approach but leading to academic accreditation.

Commentary, Issues and Questions

Some key domains of practice for nursing expertise now and in the future are captured in this consultation. Such as supporting people with long term conditions which is an area prime for the development and leadership of *nursing* skills and interventions. For example in self- help and self – care, symptom control, palliative care. However at the moment we do not prepare nurses to work in this specific domain, even though it is a recognisable, important and growing area of health need. People with long term conditions are generally nursed within a portfolio of other nursing work, for example by district nurses, general practice nurses, community children’s nurses, or by nurses working with people with disease specific long term conditions such as parkinsons disease or multiple sclerosis.

First contact, access, and urgent care taken together also compose another domain of practice that nurses are not specifically prepared to work in – even though as health services evolve nurses will increasingly need to lead services in walk-in centres, poly clinics, minor injuries units, general practice and emergency care. They therefore need a broad level of competencies in assessment, diagnosis, referral and treatment that span client groups such as the elderly, children and those with mental health issues.

But the key question remains - are these the right career pathways and/or the only ones? It is appreciated that the pathways

These pathways are also not intended to be, or become, silos from which nurses cannot venture forth and expand practice. Or indeed combine work across pathways. For example nurse practitioners in general practice, which may be a key future role for nurses, often combine first contact work

these questionnaires and send to the RCN to ensure we represent your views. This is vitally important in order that we influence the future of the