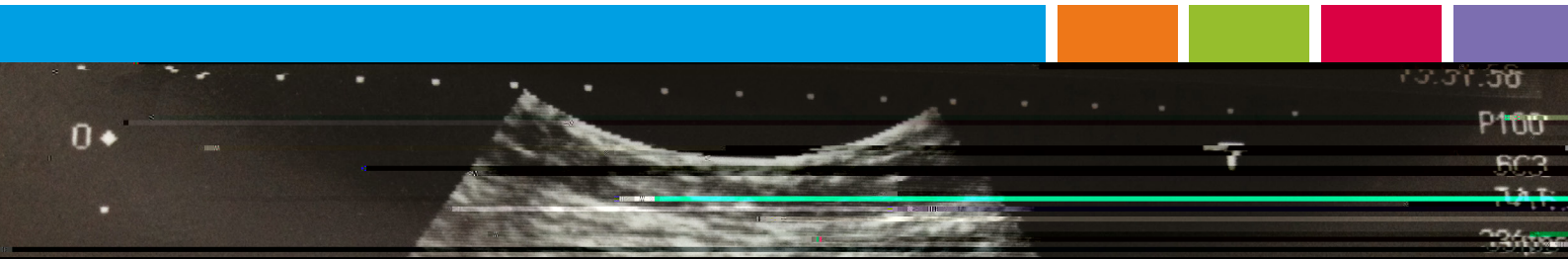


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Notes

It is recognised that services are provided by nurses and midwives in a range of settings. For ease of reading, the generic terms 'nurse', 'nursing' and 'nurses' are used throughout this document.

The RCN recognises and embraces our gender diverse society and encourages this standard to be used by and/or applied to people who identify as non-binary, transgender or gender fluid.

The *RCN Education and Career Progression Framework for Fertility Nursing* was published in March 2018. It was intended to enhance career progression and provide standards for clinical practice development.

The framework was produced to raise standards of education within fertility nursing, as well as provide an assessment tool that could be implemented within the clinical environment to ensure that nurses working in fertility care are being assessed to a national standard.

In 2021, the publication was due for review and to assess the value and effectiveness of the framework, the RCN embarked on an impact assessment, in the form of an online survey. This was a collaborative project, including the British Fertility Society (BFS) and Senior Infertility Nurses Network (SING).

This collaboration was also aimed at future national work, to establish a cohesive and collective approach to enabling fertility nurses to enhance their career pathways, both in the NHS and the independent sector (where the majority of fertility services are provided).

Three years on from publication, it was important to carry out an impact assessment on the framework, to ascertain how aware nurses are of the document, and how widely it had been used. Anecdotal feedback has been very positive since publication and the intention of the project team was to develop intelligence to help inform the revised edition in 2021.

This took place during the pandemic, and the authors fully acknowledge that whilst it was important to gather information about this publication, the assessment took place in the middle of a very challenging time, both professionally and personally, and this may well have impacted on the results received.

The evidence gathering was achieved via an online targeted survey. The survey was created by the project team, tested and distributed online via the RCN Fertility Nursing Forum (FNF), BFS and SING. It is also acknowledged that fertility nursing is a very specialist area of practice, with a small number of practitioners working in fertility care.

The overall total respondents was 86. The information gathered has been outlined below, and has informed the development of a revised framework, published in 2021.

The themes used for analysis are:

1. profile of respondents
2. how the *RCN Education and Career Progression Framework for Fertility Nursing* is being used in practice
3. career support and progression
4. the role of managers

Profile of responders

The survey identified that almost 85% of respondents were working in fertility care, and that 70% of those had worked in this specialist field for more than six years. As with previous work carried out by the FNF, this confirms that once nurses find a career in fertility care they are likely to remain there for some time.

It was encouraging to note that some 66% of respondents felt their career had progressed during that time, however that left almost a third of nurses who did not agree with that sentiment.

75% of respondents only work in fertility care, with the remaining 25 having roles in general gynaecology, outpatient department nurse, endometriosis, surgical ward, education, vaccination centre, early pregnancy clinic sonographer, own business and menopause care. 84% of respondents were registered nurses.

- they have been adapted for local use
- also used for discussing pay grades
- guidance for health care support worker (HCSWs) competencies/help for new nurses into the field of fertility
- competency guide - beginner/advanced, etc.
- specific standards required for each level of competence and experience
- the assessments.

This suggests that the framework is being used for both the induction of new staff and ongoing career development.

The details of how the framework has been used can be found in Figure 3 and demonstrates that respondents mainly use the document for self-development (75%) and for demonstrating their role in practice (over 50%).

Figure 3

Career support and progression

When enquiring about annual reviews, 90% of respondents confirmed that they had an annual appraisal, however only 12% agreed that the framework was used as part of that process.

Some of the comments demonstrating how it is used included:

The low 12% usage was somewhat disappointing, as part of the original aim was that it would form an integral part of professional development for nurses working in fertility care across the UK. Having said that, further questions in the survey identified that it was being used in other ways, in particular around general staff development, and for new starters both registered nurses, nursing associates and health care support workers.

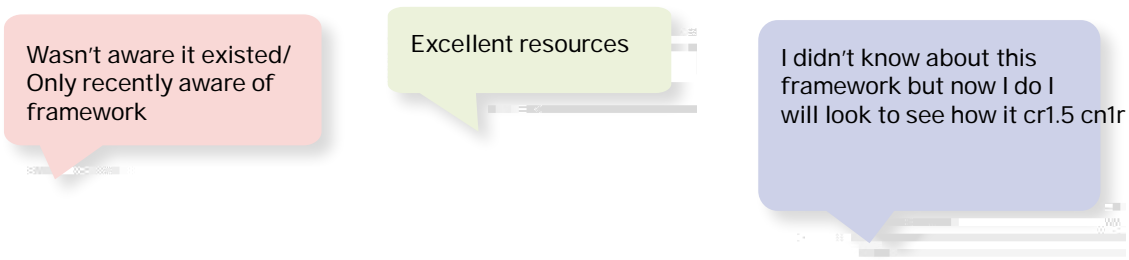
The survey did inquire as to what, if anything else, is being used, and the replies included:

The role of managers

Over 50% of respondents confirmed that they managed staff, and the project team were keen to find out how they used the framework. Figure 4 provides an overview of this. Of those who responded, a large number did not use the framework, despite the

General comments

Comments collected, which also helped to inform the project team's recommendations and the updated copy of the framework included:



The conclusion of this impact assessment has led to some key recommendations published below. The *RCN Education and Career Progression Framework for Fertility Nursing* has been updated to include a quick guide to use, has taken account of the outputs from the survey, and can be found at rcn.org.uk/publications (publication code: 009 926).

Recommendations

1. The RCN Fertility Nursing Forum believes that the *RCN Education and Career Progression Framework for Fertility Nursing*, enables career progression and development and will continue to promote greater use, in the belief that nurses need ongoing opportunities to better understand how to progress their careers.
2. The RCN Fertility Nursing Forum believes that there is a need for improved access for fertility nurses to CPD opportunities, especially that which leads to master's level education, This will include enabling a better understanding of the need for graduate and post graduate education and how that can improve and enhance career progression.
3. The RCN Fertility Nursing Forum recommends that a roundtable discussion be held with key stakeholders led by RCN, to include BFS, SING, HFEA and other relevant organisations, to consider how the framework could be embedded with employers nationally.
4. The RCN Fertility Nursing Forum recommends that the framework should be integrated into or combined with other generic tools, with a goal towards national usage, which could be considered as part of a roundtable discussion on increasing the use of the framework.
5. There is a need for more formal courses in ultrasound training, accredited by the Consortium for the Accreditation of Sonographic Education (CASE), which should include a commitment to access to practice placements for registered nurses.
6. The RCN Fertility Nursing Forum will consider the option of creating the framework as an online interactive tool, which could be used as part of self and service development.

The aim of this project was to assess the value and impact of the *RCN Education and Career Progression Framework for Fertility Nursing*. When asked about the overall use of

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