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Welsh Government



## **Section 1 Value the necessity of IPC nursing advice**

IPC nursing advice is essential for ensuring patient and HCW safety as the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted.

The value and necessity of IPC nursing advice should be reflected in all health and social care structures and delivery in Wales, including, but not limited to: the Welsh Government, Public Health Wales, local health boards and authorities, employers and relevant agencies.

IPC nursing advice is multifaceted, diverse and fundamental to safe systems of work and care delivery. Advice provided by IPC nurses varies ranging from hand hygiene; laboratory analysis and decontamination; the sustainable procurement of personal protective equipment; individual case management and outbreak prevention and control; to crisis planning and surveillance. Additionally, IPC advice extends to the built environment to mitigate risks associated with air, water and engineering systems. This area of specialist nursing practice is unique in its breadth of practice and responsibility, as





A specialist IPC nursing role should further be included as part of multi-professional strategies for AMR activities and associated stewarding programmes.

### **Local health boards and employers**

Local health boards and employers within the health and social care sector must ensure that the necessity of IPC nursing advice is valued and available at all levels and that IPC is embedded into their organisational governance structures.

Every health board should have a consultant IPC nurse and the advice provided by a consultant IPC nurse should be made available to



An IPC nurse would also be able to provide educational and training opportunities for the community nursing team. This should be facilitated by local health boards, local authorities and relevant employers and agencies.

It is important that IPC nursing advice is accessible at all levels within local health board structures. Whether in a hospital setting, community, or care home, IPC nurses should be able to communicate the importance of IPC and provide crucial knowledge and expertise.





## **Section 2 Support and expand the IPC workforce**

The prevention and control of infections is fundamental to patient/resident health and health protection; this has been extensively explored within the first section. However, IPC is not a salient matter reserved only to the health and social care sector. Rather, IPC has a key role in reducing the spread of infections within local communities and in protecting the public in general.

A whole-system





As autonomous practitioners, registered nurses use their clinical skills and experience to inform their clinical judgement to recognise and anticipate problems, take deteriorating, and escalate their concerns in an appropriate way to avoid unnecessary hospital admissions. Registered nurses are key to managing acute illness, making decisions around the management of long-term conditions, and delivering complex interventions in emergency or crisis situations. They also help to support the seamless transition from hospital care and return to the care home when required.

However RCN Wales knows from information gathered by Social Care Wales (SCW) that there are only 1,545 registered nurses employed by commissioned care providers in Wales.<sup>2</sup>

The registered nurse workforce in the care home setting is feeling overworked and undervalued; this perception has been especially true the COVID-19 pandemic.

Care homes in Wales should have access to IPC advice and IPC nursing support.

To have structured and consistent support from specialist IPC nurses would greatly aid

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IPC nurses would be able to advise and educate on the interpretation and implementation of Welsh Government and PHW guidance and ensure that care homes have



IPC is directly related to this. RCN Wales strongly recommends that PHW values and respects the input





Whether a service is directly related to healthcare – such as the provision of social services, and school services – or is perhaps wider in its portfolio – such as waste management and environmental health – an IPC nurse can bring a breadth of knowledge that can and should be utilised to maximise opportunities to promote cities cities cities pevemnttecto



## **Section 3 Ensure a whole-system approach to infection prevention and control**

The IPC nursing workforce is passionate and dedicated to patient and public safety, but it is also tired. The COVID-19 pandemic has placed a huge demand on IPC services and the knowledge of the IPC workforce.

Urgent investment is needed to retain the existing, knowledgeable workforce and to increase the attractiveness of the role to ensure there is a workforce able to meet future demands. Succession planning to counter retirement is urgent and should be central to the post-COVID-19 response.

### **Nursing retention**

There must be a focus on retention. A matter of key importance for the IPC nursing workforce is career progression and the ability to advance within the field. This section will primarily focus on this topic, but before moving on, this section will touch upon mechanisms that would greatly improve retention





A fair, meaningful and early pay rise would greatly improve retention. To find out more about the RCN *Fair Pay for Nursing* campaign please [click here](#).

Investing in safe and effective care would be extremely beneficial for not only the IPC nursing workforce but the general health and social care workforce. The extension of Section 25B of the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act 2016 would protect the patient and empower the workforce by ensuring local health boards and trusts calculate and maintain nurse staffing levels according to a specified methodology.

### **Career progression**

It is important for the nursing workforce to have the ability to advance within their careers. Leadership, educational and research opportunities must be available to nurses at all levels.

Within IPC there are few opportunities or structures available for nurses to advance their careers. In order to retain the existing nursing workforce and attract the future generation of IPC nurses, there must be a meaningful way of progressing throughout an IPC career, underpinned by access to appropriate and specialist training and education.

### **Nurse consultants**

Nurse consultants hold extremely senior posts. Their role encompasses clinical practice, education, research and clinical leadership.



Investing in IPC nurse consultants would ensure Wales has the



In recent years they have been revised by the Education and Professional Development Committee of the Infection Prevention Society. These competencies can be used to design education programmes, assist staff appraisals, and set out the requirements for the IPC workforce.

Whilst the core competencies are important to ensure consistency in the fundamentals of IPC, there is a need to go beyond this. A coherent career pathway starting with a standardised, recordable qualification is needed to ensure IPC is recognised as the highly skillful and knowledgeable career that it is.

An IPC-specific career pathway should be developed by HEIW, NHS Wales, infection prevention and control specialists and key stakeholders. This should be reflective of existing career frameworks and pathways for post-registration nursing education.

Setting out a specific career pathway with a recordable qualification and trainee posts will attract registered nurses into the career, whilst ensuring



## Link nurses (LNs)

LNs

5.

LNs are important for succession planning and developing potential future IPC nurses, as the role provides the opportunity to engage with specialists and develop skills such as managing change, education and leadership. The role further provides the opportunity to support patient safety strategies through the dissemination of knowledge and best practice in health and care settings.

The role has numerous benefits for LNs and specialist teams. By promoting interaction between the two, it not only provides an insight for LNs into a potential career, it also takes pressure off the specialist and allows them to focus on their primary functions.

Despite a rise in popularity since the 1990s, LNs have not been utilised to their full potential in Wales.

In 2017, the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board teamed up with Bangor University to implement and evaluate a community-based LN programme on infection prevention in Wales. The programme specifically looked at nurses working in community hospital settings.

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<sup>5</sup> MacArthur 1998 as cited in Ce

allude to the importance of communication, changing perceptions,



Published in March 2021.

Please contact [Policy&PublicAffairs.Wales@rcn.org.uk](mailto:Policy&PublicAffairs.Wales@rcn.org.uk) for mor information



As a senior role in nursing, a nurse consultant has a wealth of knowledge, expertise and experience that can aid in the strategic designing of policies and guidance. Furthermore, they are crucial to ensure the control and prevention of infections within communal areas, such as a 4-bed hospital ward, leisure centre, staffing areas in healthcare settings, school and a care home social room.

The expansion of the IPC nurse consultant role is essential, not only to retain the existing workforce, but also to attract the future generation of nurses into an IPC role. With clear succession planning, the role of an IPC nurse will become more attractive to those within nursing. Furthermore, a clear, recordable qualification and access to trainee roles is required to expand the workforce.

The expansion and support of the IPC workforce will allow for a whole-system approach to be successful and embed IPC into the fabric of public health and safety.

## About the Royal College of Nursing (RCN)

and trade union of nurses, representing around 435,000 nurses, midwives, health visitors, healthcare support