A Kent, Surrey and Sussex Primary Care School Guide to the Nursing Associate Role in Primary Care

Nursing associates are an integral member of the registered nursing workforce in primary care. The additional roles scheme has enabled many Primary Care Networks (PCNs) to employ student nursing associates (formerly known as trainee nursing associates) and nursing associates to expand the multidisciplinary team.

The nursing associate role intends to bridge the gap between health care assistants and registered nurses. A nursing associate is a registered professional who has met the standards of proficiency from the NMC, who practices under the direction of a registered nurse or registered healthcare professional. As a registered professional the nursing associate works within the same professional code as registered nurses and will revalidate every three years.

Nursing associates can work independently, prioritising and managing their own workload within defined parameters of practice, under the direction of a registered nurse or registered healthcare professional, to deliver care in line with an agreed/defined plan of care.

Therefore, nursing associates can **contribute** to and **monitor** care that has been delegated by another registered nurse or registered healthcare professional, as per their individual scope of practice.

A nursing associate should not independently coordinate, plan, assess or evaluate care delivery, therefore they should not be working in isolation running independent clinics without supervision from a registered nurse or professional.

The Queens Nursing Institute (QNI) highlight the significant differences between the standards for registered nursing associates and registered nurses, recognising that nursing associates support registered nurses to provide and monitor care and contribute to integrated care. Whereas registered nurses assess, plan, and evaluate care, as well as providing the leadership and management of the team, as demonstrated below from the NMC.

The Primary Care and General Practice Nursing Career and Core Capabilities Framework provides guidance on the level of education and expected role requirements for all members of the nursing team including nursing associates.

Nursing associates can provide additional capacity within the nursing team, contributing to wound care, management of long-term conditions and care that meets quality and outcomes framework targets. With post registration continued professional development, nursing associates can increase their scope of practice, for example cervical cytology screening.

Additionally nursing associates can work as practice assessors offering supervision, support, to nursing associate students, health care support workers and those new to care roles, reviewing the quality of the care they provide, promoting reflection and providing constructive feedback whilst acting as and act as a professional role model.

The Royal Collage of Nursing (RCN) has several position statements and guides to support the nursing associate role development.

- Newly Registered Nursing Associate Guide
- The Role of Nursing Associates in Vaccination and Immunisation
- RCN Travel Health Nursing: career and competence development
- Registered Nursing Associates Training in Cervical Screening

PCNs are now also able to claim reimbursement for nursing associates training to become a registered nurse. This is where nursing associates can undertake a ‘top up’ Registered Nurse Degree Apprenticeship programme, utilising Recognised Prior Learning (RPL), to train to become a registered nurse while continuing to deliver their nursing associate role within the PCN.

Further information about funding support for employers to recruit and train both student nursing associates and nursing associates can be found here. Information about the nursing associate role and apprenticeship can be found here.

Additional guidance is also available from your local training hub.

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