

2024 Teaching & Learning Conference

Integrating Educational Thinking

Infographic - Wednesday 10th July, 10.15-10.45

Conference Abstract

Improving nursing and midwifery student attrition and experience through collaborative working providing restorative supervision

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Using restorative supervision (RS) to support students before they become registered professionals has been proven to support student's progression and reduce attrition rates with their academic studies. One particular model is the A-EQUIP (NHS England 2017, 2021) which has a particular focus on a restorative practice to enhance quality of care.

The NHS workforce is reported to be at crisis point with more staff than ever before leaving the profession two-years post qualifying. Changing needs of the population and demographics of the workforce make for a combination of challenges. The NHS National staff survey (2023) identified 177,121 Nurses and Midwives, 39.7% staff reported feeling burnt out due to their work, with staff morale declining for a second consecutive year. This negatively impacts on the workforce who are keeping patients safe and who care for the most vulnerable at their time of need; if the staff are well cared for, so are the patients. Professional Midwifery Advocates (PMA) facilitate RS to support midwives' emotional wellbeing and encourage the development of resilience, which demonstrates a common trait of effective midwives (Hunter and Warren, 2014).

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) Report (2022) recommended that:

- Government pledged to increase number of nurses working in the NHS by 50,000.
- 68,000 to 75,000 more nurses to be trained in England by 2024.

This should be achieved via; nursing degrees, apprenticeships, conversion courses and return to practice. The Government reports to be on track to achieve targets to attract extra nurses to help with the COVID-19 backlog and replace people leaving the NHS.

From 2018-2021 the UK attrition student nursing rate was 33% before this, the figure was 24-25%. HE Statistics Agency data gives broadly the same picture – the lowest number since 2014-15. Attrition in nurse education is a complex phenomenon. It is unclear if related to funding or upheaval from the pandemic, but they are important factors to consider. There is limited research on specific support needs of nursing students. Restorative supervision (RS) could provide one approach, whilst enhancing student experience.

The Professional Nurse Advocate (PNA) programme delivers training for colleagues in England. The PNA was launched in March 2021, and this was seen as the start of a point of recovery post pandemic: for patients, services and workforce. The A-EQUIP model can be applied to any healthcare environment. Applying this approach to student nurses and midwives can demonstrate increased awareness of interpersonal, professional and communication skills (Driscoll et al, 2019). The restorative function is most valued when facilitated in an environment where humanistic principles (non-judgement, empathy and trust) are present (Sheppard et al, 2018). RS in pre-registration nursing and midwifery education supports student resilience, personal and professional development (Stacey et al., 2017; Stacey & Cook, 2019; Stacey et al., 2020).

Conference theme: Inclusive education

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