
Leading the Way: The role and value of nurses in general practice in England

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INTRODUCTION

NHSE and NHSI commissioned Sonnet as part of the General Practice Nursing Ten Point plan to research and write a report to encourage further investment in and development of the profession. The full extent of the General Practice Nurse (GPN) role has been explored and a framework has been articulated through which the GPN role can be properly understood and valued. It makes a compelling argument for further investment in general practice nursing and a sustained focus on education and training, career development, supervision and leadership opportunities. The future of the NHS is built upon a firm foundation of primary care and the GPN workforce are key contributors.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

GPNs are highly skilled and resourceful professionals who play an essential part in the daily running of a general practice. They provide expert clinical care, take the lead in facilitating and supporting patients to manage their health conditions, and act as ‘super connectors’ between other healthcare professionals and service providers both within and outside of the practice. GPNs have specialist skills which complement those of other professionals in primary care. Their understanding of the social determinants of health, influenced by lifestyles and communities, means they work with a wide and holistic view of delivering health and wellbeing outcomes

The clinical knowledge, expertise and skills required for the role are vast and complex but often downplayed or poorly articulated by GPN themselves and underestimated by others. The perception of the public is shaped by their own experience and that of the media. There is no common understanding across the NHS of the true value that GPN bring to primary care and this makes it difficult to raise the profile of GPN.

The research found that GPN create value through eight distinct factors which are enabled by education, training and holistic approach.

- Leadership
- Networking
- Systems approaches and strategic prevention
- Improving diversity of access
- Supporting and enabling self-care
- Development of support communities
- Skilled care delivery
- Specialist areas of care

RECOMMENDATIONS

The potential value of GPNs cannot be achieved through their own efforts. The research has identified a number of barriers that limit their potential and if addressed could unlock innovative ways of working that will drive the effectiveness of the primary care system.

- 01 Campaign to **raise the profile** of GPNs
- 02 Support the development of **new pathways for newly registered nurses** wishing to work in primary care
- 03 Education and training programmes should reflect an **enhanced understanding** of the GPN role
- 04 GPN training courses should include modules to equip GPN with **entrepreneurial skills** to support the practice as a business
- 05 Investment in a **GPN professional support framework** so that GPN are provided with the resources, networks, information and authority that they need to do their job well including support to work across the PCN as a network team offering peer support and knowledge sharing.
- 06 Line management of nurses by non-clinical managers should be balanced by a **professional support infrastructure** across the ICS.
- 07 Efforts should be made to ensure **consistency in GPN pay and terms** and conditions of employment
- 08 GPNs should be actively **recruited to key stakeholder groups** such as PCN and ICS boards.

WHAT IS BEMS DOING TO HELP REMOVE THESE BARRIERS?

Raise the profile

- Have a dedicated GPN Network that is recognised by system partners
- Will involve GPN in ICA Integrated Neighbourhood Teams
- Worked with Wessex LMC to produce a podcast promoting GPN at practice, PCN and place/Federation level.

New pathways for newly registered nurses

- Help facilitate undergraduate nurse placements in primary care
- Link newly registered nurses to new to nursing network provided by BSW TH
- Link newly registered nurses to BSW TH GPN preceptorship programme
- Lead Nurse Primary Care development met with undergraduate nurses across BSW
- Help support PCN with TNA and NA that could become registered nurses in the future

Enhanced understanding of the GPN role

- Invite guests as appropriate to GPN Forum
- Write business cases for the system that promote the role of GPN
- Use GPN in the planning of new services or redesign of existing
- Hosted out of hospital nursing conference on integration.
- Developed GPN induction packs.

Entrepreneurial skills

- Nurse competency framework has rough costs of different grade of nurses that can be used by nurses in their internal business case in the practice
- Hosted GPN leadership programme in partnership with Education for Health.

GPN Professional support framework

- GPN Network
- GPN page on BEMS website

Professional support infrastructure

- Lead Nurse Primary Care Development provides advice to practice managers about issues relating to GPN

Consistency in GPN pay and terms

- BEMS offers same rate of pay and T&C to all nurses working in the same service e.g. Improving Access

Recruited to key stakeholder groups

- BEMS has a GPN that attends MEC
- BEMS Council has a GPN
- B&NES Primary Care Collaborative has a GPN

CONCLUSION

WHAT MORE COULD BE DONE?

- **Raise the profile**
- Share project work undertaken by GPN across primary care using B&NES and BSW forums
- Host out of hospital nursing conference to include care home nurses
- Support lead nurse primary care development to continue to raise profile of GPN with Chief Nursing Officer.

New pathways for newly registered nurses

- Review VTS schemes from elsewhere and share learning
- Work with other BSW health providers to set up innovative new roles
- Keep promoting GPN induction pack with B&NES practices

Enhanced understanding of the GPN role

- Promote Sonnet report within B&NES

Entrepreneurial skills

- lead nurse primary care development to provide peer review to GPN considering partnership options.

GPN Professional support framework

- GPN to continue to receive BEMS newsletter with service updates
- GPN sent BSW Primary Bulletin directly
- Keep database up to date of GPN working in B&NES

Professional support infrastructure

- Utilise local and national core competencies and skills framework for GPN in service redesign

Consistency in GPN pay and terms

- Utilise core competencies and skills framework to set rates of pay for nurses working in or for BEMS

Recruited to key stakeholder groups

- BEMS CEO continue to champion role of GPN in key stakeholder groups

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BEMS is a B&NES based GP Federation, and local not-for-profit organisation, working across the community to provide a wide range of community services during weekdays, evenings, and weekends. BEMS oversee the work programme for the Bath and North East Somerset locality of the B&NES, Swindon and Wiltshire Training Hub. We continue to develop GPs with Extended roles, support specialist staff working in GP practices, promote student placements and run education and training sessions for primary care staff including nurses and Health Care Assistants.

About the authors:

Julia Griffith, BEMS CEO

Julia has been a prominent figure for over 20 years in Primary Care in B&NES and Wiltshire localities. She brings vast experience of GP, Dental and Ophthalmology contracting, and commissioned and services such as the GP Out of Hours, MIU and has led teams for Health Visiting and District Nursing. With her passion for primary care Julia joined BEMS to help lead the organisation in supporting GP practices in B&NES.



Becky Wych, BEMS Lead Nurse Primary Care Development

Becky is a Primary Care nurse in B&NES. She brings vast experience and is lead nurse and partner at her practice, Combe Down Surgery in Bath. Becky is a keen and enthusiastic advocate of Primary Care nursing which she champions as the only role to deliver patient care from pre-birth to death. Becky's role within BEMS allows her to support B&NES nurses and lead the way in promoting and sustaining this key practice role within our locality.

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