

The nurse’s role in practice based education; Can this really influence care standards now and in the future?

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In 2007 the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) moved to a robust risk-based approach to quality assure UK nursing and midwifery education programmes. The assessment of these programmes focuses around five distinct areas, these being: Resources, Admissions and Progression, Practice Learning, Fitness to Practice, and Quality Assurance

This paper focuses on the practice learning element and identifies how practice placements are established, assessed and how these need to adapt to ensure the workforce of the future are able to gain appropriate clinical experience for their future clinical practice. The requirements in relation to quality of clinical placements and the educational requirements for mentors will be discussed.

The speakers will describe how clinical placements were supported by clinical educators, working within the ward settings. However, with the strategic direction of health policy moving from ward based care delivery, clinical placements have needed to adapt. The paper will describe the changes to placements and the need for a more robust clinical placement structure. A structure which follows patients and clients through the whole health and social care system, as health care is more focused to primary and community care delivery.

This change in health policy and the developments of clinical placements, has required changes to be made in the support structures required by students and mentors. The speakers will describe the new roles adopted to ensure appropriate student / mentor support and how the development of Practice Placement facilitators have increased the numbers and the quality of practice placements.

These individuals assure the quality of student experiences in relation to curricula demands. In the ever increasingly complex world of healthcare practice this is not a straightforward undertaking but is vital to the development of the nurse of the future. The speakers will discuss the wide ranging roles that have evolved and are advantageous to the future of practice education.