

Profession: Nursing

Roles and responsibilities of the professional

Nurses form the largest group of practitioners in the National Health Service (NHS) UK.

Nurses are instrumental in the delivery and coordination of physical and psychosocial care for a variety of patients, clients and their families. They work both independently and as members of larger health care teams in ensuring that holistic care is provided.

Nurses and midwives play important roles in health promotion, disease prevention and maintaining health and wellbeing. Nurses care for patients in a wide range of settings and at different points along their care pathways.

In order to provide excellent and client focused care nurses work in a variety of settings from the patients home to community facilities and also in more acute settings like hospitals and health centres. Nursing involves working across all age ranges and members of society.

The main roles and responsibilities of nurses are

- To assess the needs of individuals both health and social.
- Plan and carry out evidence based care
- Demonstrate leadership in managing care
- Liaison with a wide range of professionals within health, social care and the voluntary sector
- Research in all aspects of their roles and to improve patient outcomes
- Communication experts remaining at the centre of patient discussions and ensure seamless care
- Teachers to patients in the exchange of advice and instruction on best options for on-going care and or choice of health behaviours
- Educators to nurses and other professionals in training
- Custodians of safe ethical practice

Nurses are governed by the Nursing and Midwifery Council [NMC] which ensures safety to the public and setting of standards which all nurses need to attain and adhere too. They are also responsible for ensuring that all those that are registered maintain the highest professional standing.

Each nurse is expected to take on a lifelong learning approach and to ensure that they remain up to date and credible within their sphere of work. Though the majority of nurses are engaged with looking after patients and clients many go on to take on management, leadership, specialist and education roles.

Nursing remains a diverse and challenging role in an ever changing health care environment.

Modern Perspective

Today there are a wide range of nursing options several of which can be followed during training and many of these lead to work within a specialist area, e.g. children, mental health, adults, learning disabilities. In addition post-qualification and registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), it is possible to take further study to become an advanced practitioner working in public health, in primary care as a practice nurse or a district nurse or health visitor.

Nursing is now moving to become a degree profession (from 2012 in the UK). Study is a minimum of three years full-time working attached to a Higher Education Institution (HEA) and within health care organisations to achieve the standard expected.

It is possible to take on a support caring role which requires in-house training and this can lead to progression onto a course recommended and endorsed by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and the NMC.

Life Long Journey

A career trajectory can now lead from early clinical consolidation of training within a chosen area of practice to post-qualified training towards more senior positions. Many nurses go onto become consultants working in very specialist posts. Others progress careers in research and academia taking up teaching posts. In addition management opportunities are available within hospital settings e.g. Modern Matrons who work both clinical and in management, director posts on different Health Boards etc.

See also:

Department of Health website: [doh.org.uk: http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/index.htm](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/index.htm) (accessed April 11th 2011).

NMC, website: <http://www.nmc-uk.org/Nurses-and-midwives> (Accessed April 11th 2011)

Royal College of Nursing web site:

<http://www.rcn.org.uk/nursing/becomenurse> (accessed April 11th 2011)