



# Developing nursing placement opportunities in social care



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## Glossary of terms:

**PVI** - Private, Voluntary and Independent sector

**HEI** - Higher Education Institutions

**SSSA Standards** - Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment

**NMC** - Nursing and Midwifery Council

**PA** - Practice Assessor

**PS** - Practice Supervisor

**AA** - Academic Assessor

**EPAD** - Electronic Practice Assessment Document

**ICB** - Integrated Care Board

**ICS** - Integrated Care Systems

**PEF** - Practice Education Facilitator

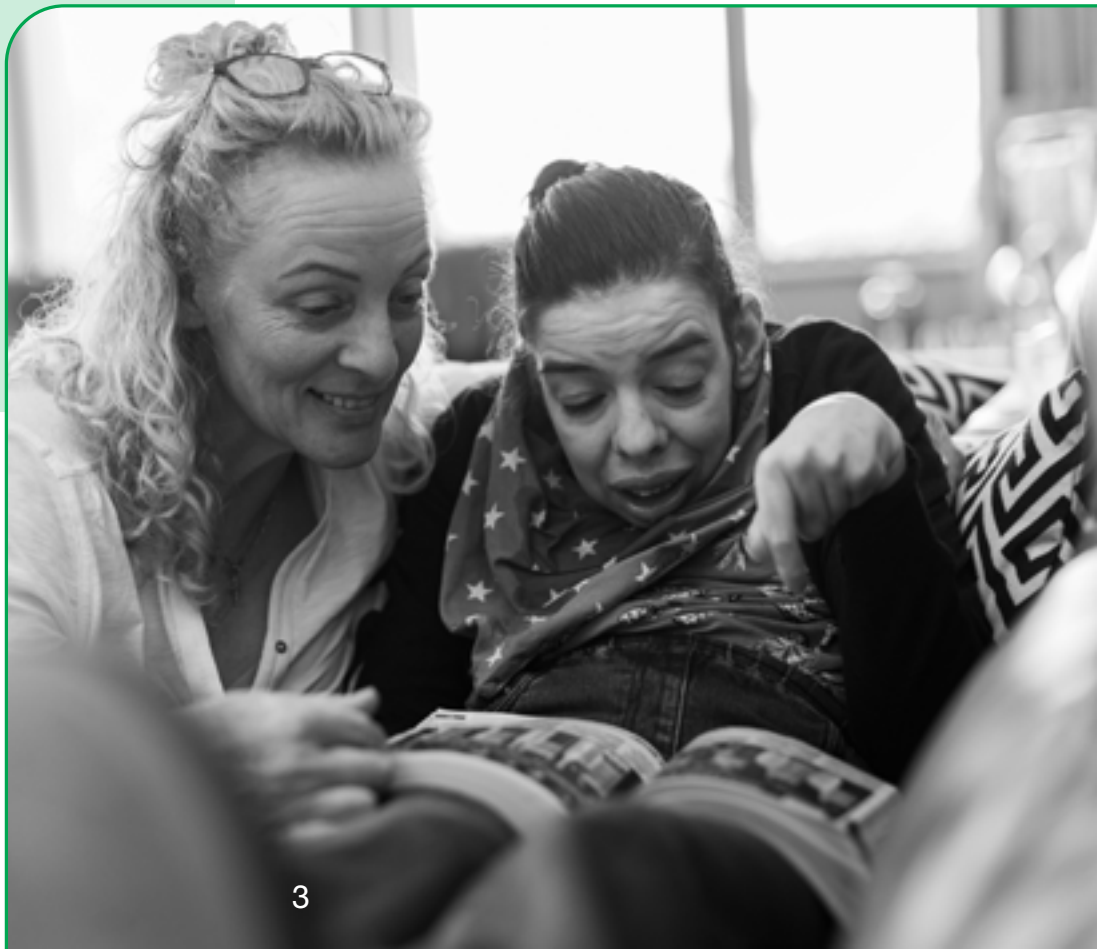
# Introduction

There's an ongoing demand for nurses and nursing associates within the adult social care sector. Increasing placement opportunities for student nurses and nursing associates is crucial to help meet this demand, and employers and practice learning partners play a vital role.

This guide is designed to support the education, training and professional development of nurses and nursing associates. It will help employers to understand the process of providing a safe and suitable learning environment for students and the various routes that are available to students into the nursing profession.

## Who is the guide for?

This guide is for employers, practice assessors and practice supervisors who are responsible for assessing and providing learning opportunities for student nurses and nursing associates across the adult social care sector. It highlights responsibilities and expectations around workplace learning and supports the development of high-quality, innovative learning and teaching environments. Having these high-quality environments in place is important to meet the requirements of both the Nursing and Midwifery Council and the Approved Educational Institutions who govern the preparation of pre- and post-registration students.





## Foreword from Deborah Sturdy

### Chief Nurse Adult Social Care, Department of Health and Social Care

Lived experience is critical to understanding what it means to be a social care nurse and take full advantage of the opportunities offered by this amazing profession. Undergraduate placements, across a variety of care settings, are the best way to create the next generation of social care nurses and nursing associates, equipped with the skills, knowledge, and intuition to deliver exceptional care.

Social care nursing is uniquely person centred, but also acutely alert to the complexities of the wider health and care system, including its regulation and management. Serving the needs of the individual, whilst navigating these organisational challenges, requires real world, frontline experience, which only these placements can offer. With all this in mind, this guide is designed to help you facilitate student placements in your services. These sometimes daunting and complex tasks are made easier with this practical 'toolkit', informed by the experiences of those who have already created positive learning environments for previous students.

This positivity, combined with your focused guidance, will help you create the nursing leaders of tomorrow. We want all students to consider - and take advantage of - the diversity, flexibility and opportunity our profession offers, but this can only be achieved by making the most of your talents as experienced social care nurses. Please use this guide to inform the placement offers you make to students. With your help, the choice to pursue long, rewarding and evolving careers in social care nursing will be the best decision they ever made.

# The routes into nursing and nursing associate professions

Students can enter nursing or nursing associate roles and achieve Nursing and Midwifery Council registration by a variety of routes.



## Nursing degree

Completing a nursing degree is the most well-known route into nursing and requires students to study for a minimum of three years. They can study in any of the four fields of nursing: learning disability, mental health, child or adult. Some universities are also offering 'dual field' degrees which are usually four years long. During their degree students will be required to have a 50/50 split of theory (time in university) and practice (time in a practice-based learning environment).



## Nursing degree with foundation year

Students who don't have the entry requirements for a nursing degree have the option of a four-year programme of study, with a foundation year offering the opportunity to gain the required credits to progress onto the nursing degree.



## Registered nurse degree apprenticeships

This route allows the student to remain in salaried employment whilst studying for their degree. There are no costs to the apprentice, with study fees and salaries being paid by the employer. There are full time and part time options available. A shortened route is available to apprentices with some evidence of prior learning (for example having already completed a nursing associate course). This could be an option for providers who are able to fund staff to undertake this route into nursing.



## Masters degree in nursing

This typically offers students who have already completed a degree an opportunity to study for a two-year condensed route into nursing. Usually, students are required to have some prior evidence of providing care or care experience to meet the entry requirements for this route of study.



## Return to practice

Some nurses may have left the nursing register and want to return to practice. They can either undertake a test of competence or a [return to practice course](#).

Return to practice courses must be Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) approved and are offered by various universities who offer shortened routes back into the profession. The length of the course can range from three to 12 months. This is determined by a variety of factors such as how many practice hours the individual will need to achieve, how long they've been out of practice etc. Completion of practice hours is a required element of this option so a placement will be sourced.



## Nursing associate

Nursing associates bridge the gap between support workers and registered nurses and are a regulated profession in their own right. The role has been introduced to increase the capacity of the nursing workforce while assisting nurses and other members of multi-disciplinary teams to focus on more complex clinical duties. Nursing associates take a route similar to nurse degree apprenticeships in that they are often employed and study at university part time for a foundation level degree. They can use their qualification to complete a nursing degree or apprenticeship if they wish as recognition of advanced learning.



I began my nursing associate foundation degree in 2021. I decided to complete this as opposed to the nursing degree due to the ease of being in an apprenticeship - being able to continue working at my nursing home for 2 days a week and also attending university 2 days a week was much more convenient for me and helped me to gain more knowledge. I was also able to choose my own placements and was able to attend a multitude of different places. This helped to broaden my knowledge surrounding different services. I absolutely love being a nursing associate and enjoy advocating for my service users and ensuring they are receiving the best possible care for them. I chose to work within social care as I am able to build a stronger relationship with my service users and have a stronger rapport with them.

**Gabrielle Riley, Nursing Associate**

Scotia Heights complex care home, Exemplar Healthcare



# Where to start

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I am really interested in hosting student placements although I wouldn't know where to start. Do our nurses have to have mentorship and preceptorship training to host students or has this now changed? Having students would be beneficial for our residents and for students as they can utilise and develop their clinical and communication skills to provide person centred support. It will also help them to understand the complex and varied needs of those we support.

**Dawn Cropper, RN (MH)**

Operations Director, Northern Healthcare, Mental Health Supported Living Services

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## Liaising with higher education institutions

Most universities in England are very keen to increase their placement capacity, particularly in non-NHS learning environments. Some universities are developing a collaborative approach with other universities in their respective regions to develop placements and learning opportunities in social care settings.

The starting point is to contact local universities offering relevant programmes of study. If there's more than one university in the local area, then you have the option to host students from various universities according to capacity of your supervisors and assessors.



Post-Covid, the placement circuit for nursing students in Leeds has faced increasing challenges and has highlighted a need to develop a diverse approach to developing learning opportunities. Since the start of 2023, nominated individuals from the three universities in Leeds (University of Leeds, Leeds Beckett and Leeds Trinity) have worked collaboratively with a colleague from Leeds City Council Adult Social Care to expand nursing placements into the social care sector with the aim of developing a coordinated approach to bringing on board placements outside the NHS for nursing students (adult, mental health, learning disability) and providing support to future practice assessors and supervisors.

**The nominated individuals involved: Julie Brown (Practice Learning Facilitator (Nursing), Leeds Trinity University), Dean Butcher (Organisational and Workforce Development Advisor, Adults and Health Directorate, Leeds City Council), Mark Chamberlain (Mental Health Nurse Tutor, University of Leeds), Kathryn Waldegrave (Practice Learning Lead (Nursing), Leeds Beckett University)**



## Academic practice placement teams

All universities offering nurse or nursing associate education will have teams set up with a focus on placements and practice learning experiences. These teams are made up of **academic practice leads** who connect with practice areas according to their field of practice (mental health, adult, child, learning disability) and are the link between the university and practice.

Once you've contacted a university, you'll often be put in touch with the practice lead for the private, voluntary and independent sector providers. This practice lead will manage placements outside of the NHS.

Some universities have staff specifically focused on increasing placement capacity and these staff may have a range of titles such as 'Placement Capacity Lead'. They will be keen to liaise, build a relationship, and help navigate through the process of becoming a placement provider.

These teams are also a point of contact should any questions or need for support arise as a placement provider. They are also a point of contact for students should they wish to raise any concerns about a placement area.

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Anglia Ruskin University is committed to increasing placement capacity in health and social care settings, recognising the importance and value of partnering with different organisations to provide diverse experiences for learners on nursing programmes. Our placement expansion and practice learning team work closely with placements to prepare staff to support and assess students. Ongoing support is provided by experienced education champions.

**Dr Mary Edmonds**

Deputy Dean for Practice Learning and Simulation, Faculty of Health, Medicine and Social Care, Anglia Ruskin University

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The value of pre-registration nursing placements in social care is becoming more recognised by higher education institutions, which is great news! At Middlesex we have worked hard to establish and maintain relationships in the sector, more recently in collaboration with the locality training hub. To engage potential areas, we have offered bespoke support from the first meeting to establish interest and provide information, including developing a six-step process map to support the new practice areas.

Any practice area wishing to offer student placements is continuously supported, from the initial conversation, through setting up the placement and developing staff and resources, to the first students arriving. This continues with student forums, meetings with staff teams, and dedicated members of the university practice support team available to offer guidance, regular contact and feedback on an ongoing basis.

We see this very much as reciprocal partnership working - offering our students valuable health and social care learning opportunities and for the adult social care teams, access to CPD, including practice assessor training and wider opportunities for personal and professional development, for example in the clinical skills labs - all working towards the development of the next generation of social care nursing workforce and offering the current workforce opportunity to share their knowledge, skills and experience.

**Pam Hodge**

Senior Lecturer in Practice Learning, Middlesex University

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## Placement profile

A placement profile is required which details the information that students and universities will need about the learning environment. This can include basic information like when shifts start and finish, what students can wear and what provision is in place for students in break times etc. It's also an opportunity to indicate the diversity of learning opportunities on offer for students. This might include the opportunity for them to learn from a variety of professionals from different disciplines, or to engage in activities that they might not have exposure to in other areas.

## Placement/workplace learning agreements

This agreement sets out the expectations of all involved in the partnership between education providers, placement providers and the student. This is likely to include information regarding the minimum standards that will be expected in terms of support offered to students and aspects like health and safety in the learning environment. This will need to be signed and returned to the education provider before placements are offered.

## Allocation process

It may be possible for a practice area to host students from multiple fields of practice due to the variety of learning opportunities on offer. The university manages allocations and determines which students will be allocated to an area and when. They will advise how long they need a placement for and ask how many students can be accommodated at any time. This is entirely dependent on the placement provider's capacity for supporting students and availability of staff to supervise and assess them.

Academic calendars vary from university to university meaning that the dates that placements will be sourced are determined by when students are scheduled to attend university for theory hours and when they are out on placement completing practice hours. The placement model that universities utilise also varies. This means that some placements could be longer in length and some shorter. A 'hub and spoke' model is one that some universities utilise. This means that the placement that is used the longest and is their 'home' placement is the 'hub' and is where their practice assessor will be based. They can then 'spoke' off to other areas to experience something different, sometimes for a shorter period. Placement providers may be able to offer both approaches, or may prefer to be a 'spoke' (offering a shorter placement). Placement teams will discuss these options according to preference.

Placement allocations are usually visible on university online systems or via an allocation report which will be provided. This is helpful to keep track of how many students will be arriving and when. Placement providers should be able to access these via log-in details that will be provided once the placement is set up.

## Payment for hosting students

There is a tariff attached to hosting students in most settings. The university that a provider enters into partnership with will provide more information on how this works and how payments are made. Further information is available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

## The role of Integrated Care Systems and Boards

Integrated care systems (ICSs) are partnerships of organisations that come together to plan and deliver joined up health and care services. Each integrated care system includes an Integrated Care Board (ICB), and many are involved in supporting placement capacity, with some regions engaged in the Clinical Placement Expansion Programme (CPEP) funded by National Workforce, Education and Training Directorate at NHS England.

### **Devon Clinical Placement Expansion Programme Report 2020-23 found that the benefits of placement expansion in primary/social care were that:**

- workplaces become multi-professional learning environments
- experience in primary and social care develops more rounded practitioners
- they support the development of integrated practice within an integrated system
- students become more aware of people's holistic needs
- having students energises the workforce and the system learns to work and learn together.

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As Integrated care systems become more involved in education and training planning there are opportunities to develop placements for healthcare students across primary, community and social care, to give students valuable experience in the delivery of care outside hospitals and introduce them to wider career opportunities. In my role in Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board the number of placement providers in social care has increased from five in September 2020 to 41 today. This is mainly in nursing homes but also includes some residential homes and domiciliary care providers. For nursing students, having placements in social care is so important as it exposes them to different care settings, helps them expand their learning opportunities and opens new possible career options for when they qualify. Staff supporting the students can help develop their core skills such as person-centred care and communication in a nurse led environment and contribute to developing a skilled and effective workforce for the future.

#### **Sharon Goodchild**

Manager Non-NHS Placements (Nursing and Nursing Associate)  
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board

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# The benefits of hosting students

There's a wealth of opportunities available to students within social care settings as outlined in our useful [placement guide](#). There are also a wide range of benefits for placement providers, including the opportunity to showcase the variety of careers on offer in social care with potential for social care to be a destination of choice for students once qualified.

In this section you'll hear from those involved in placements and the benefits for them.

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## Feedback from residents and staff at Highbury House Nursing Home in Stourbridge, part of the Rushcliffe Care Group.

'The students we had were lovely and approachable. They were observant and were able to understand how to approach people based on their needs, as some people can be a bit more sensitive or require a particular level of support like prompting. It's important to build confidence and build a rapport and trust with residents so that they can come forward and be honest about how they feel. Learning how to be comfortable and communicate with people is important for students as breaking down barriers and learning what matters most to the individual is the most important skill they will learn. They all have to learn somewhere, and they offered fresh ideas and it's wonderful to see new faces when you've lived somewhere for a long time' **Debora**

'They [student nurse] helped me with my care and learned how to look after everyone. Nice people. We thank them.' **David**

'One of the students who came here always had a smile on his face which cheered me up. They were lovely, kind and caring in every way. They made sure everyone was alright and looked after. One of the students helped me with my dressings and showed a lot of concern.' **Kathleen**

'They were friendly and they helped me with things like cleaning my room. They also helped with giving medication and checking things like my blood pressure and my weight. They always got jobs done. They learn how to work with clients and once they learn this they can go on and become a professional nurse.' **Michael**



Students bring the most up-to-date knowledge that they've gained through their studies which we can apply and use to improve our practice. They bring enthusiasm, challenge our way of thinking, and enable us to have a strong partnership with higher education institutions. Hosting students also offers us the opportunity to embed some of our own values into their practice with a view of offering employment when they qualify and complete their studies.

**Clifford Nyasango**  
RMN, Registered Manager

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It is vital for our student nurses and nursing associates to have the opportunity to learn in practice across a range of social care settings. This exposure ensures that they see the way in which care is delivered across the health and care system. It also allows our future healthcare workforce to see the value of social care career opportunities. Our student nurses and nursing associates will be providing care in an evolving health and care system. They will lead and influence the future of nursing care delivery, co-producing the social care nursing and nursing associate roles of the future. It is so important that they have this experience from the very start of their careers. Here at the University of Salford, we are committed to working in close partnership with key stakeholders in the development of the holistic and integrated workforce of the future; working to develop opportunities for our students in a range of practice learning experiences. The recent announcement that the University of Salford will host the RCN Foundation Chair in Adult Social Care Nursing embeds our commitment to this vital development. This role will take a strategic lead in shaping teaching and research in adult social care at a local, national, and international level.

**Dr Vicky Halliwell**

Acting Dean, University of Salford

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During my career I was fortunate to spend some time working for a local authority as a mental health nurse and service manager, where I learnt about social care values, which changed my thinking as a nurse. It strengthened my focus on patient empowerment and person-centred care, and moved me away from a more traditional model of nursing.

Whilst, in my experience, placements in social care are clearly of benefit to student nurses and nursing associates, having this nursing input is also of benefit to providers. You not only get to showcase your service to a potential new generation of staff, but also get to benefit from the skills, expertise and knowledge of these students.

**Ellie Gordon**

RN (MH), Senior Nurse, Learning Disability and Mental Health National Workforce, Training and Education Directorate, NHS England



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The number of people with learning disabilities who are supported in social care settings has risen in recent years and it is expected that with the introduction of integrated care services, this growth will continue. It is vital therefore, that learning disability nursing students have exposure to this type of service provision. Social care settings provide a wide range of innovative services and there are some fantastic examples of person-led, co-produced and creative approaches by the highly specialist nurses and care staff across the sector.

The learning experiences offered in the social care sector provide learning disability nursing students the opportunity to experience the skills and knowledge required to meet the excellent standard of practice required on registration. In turn, learning disability nursing students provide their own creative initiatives and experiences to service provision across the sector. It is vital to the ongoing care and support of people with learning disabilities and the growth of this important aspect of service provision that learning disability nursing students have exposure to practice placements in social care settings.

**Vicky Sandy-Davies**

RN (LD), Lead Nurse, Independent Health and Social Care - West Midlands region, Royal College of Nursing

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Hosting student nurses and nursing associates has proved to be beneficial for our service. We can evidence best practice as the student nurses and nursing associates are given opportunities by their supervisors to demonstrate their acquired knowledge. This has brought about change within our service and quality care has been evidenced in all care domains. We embedded the nursing associate role in our service to upskill our staff and to bridge the gap between healthcare staff and registered nurses, improving overall outcomes for residents which has been captured by residents themselves and their loved ones in care reviews

**Lyn Mataranyika**

Registered Manager, RGN, Springbank Nursing Home, Stoke on Trent



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Our placement providers get the opportunity to enhance their culture of learning in nursing practice, raise their profile of expertise, attract staff with the right values to aid recruitment, develop their teams through staff engaging in critical inquiry and implementing evidence-based practice, whilst enabling their nurses to evidence continuing professional development. These placements also increase the profile of the social care sector as a potential career opportunity, enabling integration of health and social care in a holistic approach.

**Andy Cunningham**

Healthcare Practice Placement Development Lead (PVI Placement Team), University of Plymouth

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With our student placements, we can offer first-hand experience of living with a brain injury for those training in clinical professions. This enables students to develop a deeper understanding of the challenges patients with brain injuries may face, and the life and therapies available to them and their families outside of clinical settings. This increased awareness and understanding can help future clinical practitioners to support patients more effectively through treatment and recovery and help improve services overall for those recovering from brain injury. In addition to this we really benefit from the energy and variety that students bring to our day centres. This is a great way to bring a new sense of purpose to what we do, get new ideas into our service and ensure we are at the cutting edge of the latest training for clinical practitioners.



**Hannah Blatchford**

Student Placement Coordinator, Headway Devon

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The benefits to having student nurse placements is the added vibrancy that the students bring, the questioning, the desire to learn and for our nurses to be able to share their very unique expertise and skills and add value to their training to ensure that the next generation of qualified nurses have a rounded and holistic picture of not only health but social care as well. It supports our nurses to maintain their skills in teaching/training, meeting their learning objectives and supports their revalidation.

**Niki Richards**

General Manager, RN, South Africa Lodge, Cornerstone Healthcare, Waterlooville, Hampshire

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Sanctuary Care is committed to helping raise the profile of nursing in social care and create an equal platform with nursing in other sectors. The provision of pre-registration student nurse placements offers opportunities to showcase the fantastic experiences available in social care settings. Students will learn about and participate in a diverse range of learning opportunities from the essentials of nursing, person centred holistic care provision, clinical and communication skills, team working, autonomous practice through to leadership and management. This will also enhance the skill set of colleagues working within the services as they teach, mentor and coach students to develop their skills. Homes can also benefit from the new knowledge and practices that student nurses bring and enhance the care of residents. Offering placements will also help to build a highly skilled compassionate workforce for the future.

**Masline Chitura**

Head of Clinical Development, Sanctuary Care, Worcester (Queen's Nurse, Social Care Nursing Advisory Council Chair)



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Working in older people's care, students are able to experience a branch of nursing that is given very little focus during training despite the huge numbers of nurses employed by the sector. Students are the most up to date in terms of practice and so learning is a two-way experience. I can personally say my passion for nursing was ignited due to a placement where my mentor was an inspirational character. There is no downside to student placements, extra workload is minimal compared to the benefits they bring.

**David Willis**

RMN, Home Manager, Barty House Nursing Home, Maidstone, Canford Healthcare

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When I received my first placement within a nursing home, I did not know what to expect. I think people have perceived images of what nursing homes represent and look like. I was pleasantly surprised when I started my placement, the home was welcoming and clean and fresh. I was welcomed into the team straight away which made me feel comfortable in my learning, nothing was too much trouble from care staff, nurses or management if I was unsure or needed help with something. I loved the residents and their different personalities. I also enjoyed the fact that the home had three floors with different nursing needs, from challenging behaviour, mental health to dementia and end of life care. My placement was an awesome experience and I loved every minute of it.

During the second and third year of my course, both the manager and some of the care staff kept in touch with me. I was overwhelmed when the manager approached me during my third year and offered me a job, which I accepted without hesitation. Since starting work at Belvidere, with the continued support and help, my confidence is starting to improve immensely. All the staff are always on hand to help me if needed and the teamwork is impressive. They have also been supportive in working my shifts around my children too. I would say to people to never dismiss working in social care, as you may find just what you are looking for and the job is so rewarding.

**Ann Marston**

Newly qualified RN (MH), Belvidere Court Nursing Home, Bilston



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# Providing high-quality practice learning environments

## Learner induction

For students to thrive and succeed in any learning environment they need to have a sense of belonging. Induction is extremely important where they are welcomed to the practice learning environment and orientated to where they will spend a great deal of their time over several weeks, possibly months. This process often starts before they arrive, through those first few conversations. It can alleviate a student's anxiety if they know that you are expecting them and what the expectations will be on their first day. Understanding the different stages that a student may be at within their learning, and providing them with learning opportunities that reflect this, is extremely important.

## Educational audit

The education provider will carry out an audit of the placement area. This will ensure that the placement area provides the right learning opportunities for students and is operating in adherence to various policies and procedures, such as health and safety and risk assessment. Part of this evaluation will include Care Quality Commission (CQC) ratings. Auditors will want to know what processes are in place should students or the education provider need to escalate any concerns.

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Whilst the educational audit may seem like a daunting process the university will be able to guide you throughout. You will find that you meet most of the requirements due to other activity you are undertaking, and with a little work you will be ready for a successful audit.

**Victoria Firmin**

RN, Lead Practice Education Facilitator for student placements in the private and voluntary sector, Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board

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Part of the audit will include an appraisal of whether the placement area operates in line with the [Nursing and Midwifery Council \(2018\) Standards for student supervision and assessment](#). Practice Supervisor and Practice Assessor training is offered by many universities.

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I am the Clinical Placement Lead for the four-year Nursing MSci Adult and Mental Health Nurse Programme. With a background throughout my 38-year nursing career working in or with social care I am in a privileged position to support the university in expanding our social care approved placement providers. Part of my role is visiting social care providers and delivering relatable practice supervisor training for the nurses and social care registered managers, in addition to running regular support sessions virtually or in person. The Nursing Academy knows our placement providers are as integral to the nursing programme as our academic staff, and social care placements play an important part of our student's clinical practice experience, helping bridge the gap between primary and secondary care and demonstrating there are rewarding career opportunities for a nurse outside of the NHS.

**Cathy Rant**

Lecturer – Academy of Nursing, Clinical Practice Co-Lead,  
University of Exeter

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## Practice supervisor role and indirect supervision

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) have recently updated the supporting information for the Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment (SSSA). This update helps to clarify who can be a practice supervisor and support students on NMC approved programmes.

The update includes:

- anyone registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) including registered nursing associates and registered nurse level 2
- any registered professional from a statutory professional regulator e.g., General Medical Council (GMC), Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC)
- professional registered with an organisation accredited with the Professional Standards Authority (PSA), for example, British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP)
- any registered care home manager (the individual must be registered, not just the organisation in which they work).

Dr Julie Dixon, Nurse Education Adviser at the NMC says:

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We hope that this update will increase the breadth of practice learning experiences available to students, which is a crucial step towards ensuring future nurses and nursing associates learn the knowledge and skills needed to deliver the safe, person-centred, holistic care that people have a right to receive - we believe students accessing and learning in social care environments offers an invaluable route towards achieving this.

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Other professionals can continue to support student learning and assessments by liaising with practice supervisors, providing feedback and sharing observations. If your organisation doesn't have anyone that meets the above criteria, then there is still the option to consider indirect supervision using the six principled approach - [Supporting Information on Indirect Supervision - The Nursing and Midwifery Council \(nmc.org.uk\)](https://www.nmc.org.uk/supporting-information-on-indirect-supervision/).

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We are opening social care placements at scale, that extend beyond traditional health care. As a university we have a bank of nurses who provide indirect supervision and assessment, so are able to support students in social care who maybe do not have health and/or social care registrants. This model works well as we have opened over 200 private, independent and voluntary organisation and social care placements in 18 months across our region.

**Dr Kate H Knight**

RN (Child), Associate Professor, Head of Practice Learning, University of Chester

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## Practice assessor role

All nursing students on placement must be allocated a practice assessor. This must be a Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) registered nurse or in the case of student nursing associates this may also be a NMC registered nursing associate. For nursing students this role should be undertaken by NMC registered nurses with appropriate equivalent experience for the student's field of practice.

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As a practice assessor within the care home setting it is good for us to have the experience of teaching and imparting our knowledge to the next generation of nurses. They also share latest practice and new ideas with us. Belvidere has nine nurses all willing to supervise and assess and assist in the training and monitoring of student nurses. This enables us to show care homes in a different light; many have a stigma attached and we can enlighten the upcoming workforce that it's not all you hear. We have a variety of units that offer different experiences within mental health and adult nursing demonstrating the overlap in the holistic care of the patients we care for.

Students experience a variety of ways of doing things and finding out what works for them. Many students come with numerous tasks to achieve so at induction we go through these and put a strategy in place on how these will be achieved and who best in the multi-disciplinary team can help. Students are also able to visit our stakeholders like GP's and gain further knowledge and experience. We also find that these students go back to hospital settings with an improved understanding and knowledge of the way care homes operate and impart this to hospital staff.

### **Gail Goddard**

(RGN) Practice Assessor and Deputy Manager at Belvidere Nursing Home

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## Academic Assessor Role

Academic assessors are registered nurses or nursing associates who work in the education setting and contribute to monitoring student progression in terms of academic achievement. They will work alongside the Practice Assessor in providing a link between the education setting and the practice setting and making shared decisions on student progress.

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In my role as academic assessor, I provide the link between practice environments and the university setting, which can take a variety of forms, depending on what is needed. It might be offering practical information about the course, how practice fits into the overall programme, or how the assessment document should be used and completed; and it will always include communicating with the practice assessor as we both input into our sections of the assessment document. On the (rare) occasions where a practice area has concerns with a student's progress, the academic assessor will visit the practice area, meet with the practice assessor and the student, and support the development of an action plan to guide the student's progress for the rest of the placement.

### **Dr Louise Bouic**

Senior Lecturer - Mental Health Nursing, Academic Practice Lead,  
University of Wolverhampton

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## Electronic versions of practice assessment document

Most students in practice will be shifting towards using an electronic version of what was the paper practice assessment document. Different universities and regions have different versions of this but these typically enable documentation to be completed in relation to:

| Who signs what?                | Practice Assessor                                                                   | Practice Supervisor                                                                                                                       | Academic Assessor                                                                     |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Confirmation of practice hours |    |                                                          | Completes verification                                                                |
| Orientation to practice area   |    | <br>and/ or nominated individual if indirect supervision |                                                                                       |
| Initial interview              |                                                                                     |                                                          |                                                                                       |
| Midpoint interview             |  |                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                       |
| Final Interview                |  |                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                       |
| Assessment of proficiencies    |  |                                                        |                                                                                       |
| Professional values            |  |                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                       |
| Episodes of care               |  |                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                       |
| Medicines management           |  |                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                       |
| Ongoing Achievement Record     |  |                                                                                                                                           |  |

## Simulated practice learning

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) standards (2023) now specify that for pre-registration nursing programmes, up to 600 hours of the required 2,300 hours of practice learning can be simulated practice learning. This is particularly useful where students may struggle to practice a certain skill in a practice environment due to lack of opportunities to do so, such as nurses in the field of mental health who may not have as much exposure to procedures such as catheterisation for example.

Students may inform their practice assessor that these proficiencies have been achieved through simulation within a simulated practice environment at their university. It is important for practice assessors to liaise with academic assessors to confirm what students may have achieved through simulation.



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Having worked in nursing homes and dementia care, elderly care is my passion. Research suggests that nursing older people is perceived as less attractive than acute settings, therefore part of my work is to challenge this and inspire our learners about the complexity and value of this career choice. Social care is an important placement for learners and we use simulation to ensure students are positive and excited about these placements.

We embed elderly care in care homes within our simulation sessions throughout the nursing programmes. This is designed to develop empathy and self confidence in our learners and to empower them to deliver compassionate care. An example is the development of a simulated nursing home experience using actors as residents and relatives in a six-bed student flat to highlight the challenge and complexity of care of the older person, and we will be running a dementia simulation day including lived experience. The simulation sessions give feedback to learners which are uploaded to their practice assessment document to evidence the work they have done. This evidence can be read by practice assessors, communicating what the university and the learners have been doing in exploring this important foundation to social care practice, which enables clear communication and partnership between the higher education institution and placement providers.

**Claire Hollywell**

RN, Senior Lecturer - Nursing Apprenticeships, University of Winchester

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Find out more about [simulated practice strategy](#).

References:

[Nursing and Midwifery Council \(2018\) Standards for student supervision and assessment](#)



## LSBU and St Mungo's Partnership Working



London South Bank University (LSBU) has worked with St. Mungo's for many years supporting Social Work placements. In 2015, the partnership expanded to involve nursing student placements. As a leading third sector organisation serving London and the South of England, St.Mungo's provides a wide range of services linked to homelessness and sleeping rough that includes preventative work as much as outreach work and helping people into accommodation alongside services to help them rebuild their lives. The learning potential for nursing students was clear and placement expansion occurred rapidly, with the partnership recognised with a Student Nursing Times Award in 2018.

Feedback from students and St. Mungo's service managers is very positive. The rapid and profound personal and professional development is clearly evident in the students after just a few weeks, unlike any other type of placement they undertake throughout their pre-registration programme. The placement challenges stereotypes, pre-conceived ideas about the client group, provides new knowledge, understanding and experience of the health and social needs of the clients, and showcases inter-professional and inter-agency working. As one student told their LSBU link lecturer: "I will never walk past a person sleeping rough on the street again and think the same as I did".

St. Mungo's has also recognised the huge benefits nursing placements has brought to service users and staff. As Jill, a St. Mungo's Social Work Practice Assessor and Nursing Practice Supervisor states, "having student nurses with the teams is greatly appreciated, with the students bringing in an emphasis on health which strengthens the holistic approach and ethos of St Mungo's and provides teams with opportunities to discuss barriers to accessing health, with future professionals, increasing understanding on both sides and helping to get rid of the 'them and us'."

St Mungo's is now an established and highly valued social placement provider for LSBU students. The recent introduction of Long-arm Registered Nurse Practice Assessors from the university has further expanded placement potential for nursing students augmenting the assessment in practice component of nurse training and further adding to the mutually beneficial quality partnership the two organisations enjoy.

**Dr. Yvonne Halpin, Associate Professor (Practice Learning) and Kim Davis, Associate Practice Learning Developer for Nursing, Institute of Health and Social Care | London South Bank University**

## Rebalancing Health and Social Care in the Northwest of England

Innovations by the University of Chester - leading the Cheshire and Merseyside (C&M) Practice Learning collaborative consisting of four Higher Education Institutions:



The purpose of the C&M collaborative is to work together to increase quality and capacity of student nurse and allied health professional placements within social care, with the aim to provide a high-quality learning experience for our students to ensure all learners experience placement learning within social care to promote more students transitioning into this rewarding career, post qualification.

All learners require supervision and assessment e.g. in line with NMC (SSSA, 2018). As a team we provide training and wrap around support to practice assessors (PA) and practice supervisors (PS) to enable them to deliver high quality learning experience for students as follows:

- **Free bookable PA and PS training and workshops:** delivered monthly via MS Teams, which can be used for initial training or as a refresher.
- **Northwest Educator Learning Hub:** a free; easy to access resource for educator preparation regardless of which professional background you come from within social care.
- **Outreach Skills Clinic for Assessment (OSCA) Social:** developed to overcome some of the challenges of achieving some skills, procedures and competencies in practice using simulation as a learning and assessment strategy; the aim to enhance and increase learning opportunities for social care staff. The clinic staff travel out to social care staff and students to provide teaching, simulation and assessment (where applicable).
- **Private, Independent, Voluntary Organisation (PIVO) including Social Care drop-in sessions:** an opportunity for registered nurses supporting students in Private, Independent and Voluntary organisations to “drop-in” to ask any questions they may have.
- **Proficiency toolkits:** The purpose of the toolkit is to support nursing students and their practice assessors and supervisors during the nursing assessment period, on placements, by offering examples of opportunities to enable students to evidence completion of each specific proficiency.
- **Dedicated team mailbox:** a generic email address for social care colleagues to direct any of their queries to a member of the team and have quick access to support.
- **Signposting to resources:** keeping social care colleagues up-to date with any relevant support and help them networking with others.
- **Social Care Preceptorship:** a pilot provided by a local college to support those new to social care.
- **Designated Practice Education Facilitator Team:** a designated team who respond to requests from social care practice remotely and/or face to face. The team visit students on placement to offer additional bespoke student/placement area support.
- **Placement Evaluation and Feedback:** requested from students at the end of placement, any concerns or areas of good practice are disseminated, and any action plans supported to ensure quality and governance.

- **Resource Pack for Placement Areas:** includes a handbook with key document templates for adaption to practice area and signposting to resources.
- **Webinar with Social Care Colleagues:** a platform to explore the challenges and find solutions to some of the myths surrounding social care as a career and provide peer to peer support.

Additionally, we have recently piloted supporting students on a corporate/leadership placement within the team, which not only provided an excellent leadership and learning opportunity for the student but also provided us with that all important student perspective, feedback as follows:

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Before coming on placement, I had a lot of reservations about social care and saw this as “just” nursing home care, I was under the impression that there was not much range for learning, and I felt proficiencies would be difficult to achieve. But I can certainly say now. That all of that is not the case and I’ve had my mind completely changed. Social care is a vital part of the nursing field, it is flexible, valuable, and most importantly the front line to supporting individuals within our communities in a safe and homely environment. Without social care, there would be many individuals who would struggle at home and wouldn’t be able to receive personalised care to the extent they can in social care settings.

As a student, I’ve been welcomed, encouraged, involved, and valued every time I’ve been a part of a social care experience. Social care gives students a huge range of opportunities such as spoke days, time with the wider multidisciplinary team (as they have more exposure to this than the hospital setting), and even sign off most proficiencies. But most importantly, they WANT students there, they want us to learn, and the social care placements understand how vital students’ learning is and they always say how students are valuable to them as an organisation. I can certainly agree, **I’ve never felt more valued as a student nurse.**

These social care settings are a gateway for student nurses to work across disciplines and really develop professional relationships with other fields of nursing to bridge the gap between these fields. I feel honoured as a student to have had the opportunity to delve into social care placements on my time on placement and I thank every single person I’ve met during this time and thank them personally for their kindness.

**3rd year nursing student – adult field**

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Going forward we will continue to build professional relationships with our social care colleagues and listen to feedback from our students and placement providers, so we can continue to build upon what we know works well and look at new and innovative ways to maximise quality exposure and experience for our students within this important and rewarding career.