

Developing social care placement opportunities in nurse education: An open letter to Higher Education Institutions from Ed Hughes, CEO, Council of Deans of Health and Oonagh Smyth, CEO, Skills for Care

With ongoing demand for nurses and nursing associates within the adult social care sector, we write to highlight the critical role Higher Education Institutions can play in increasing placement opportunities and providing a gateway for prospective social care placements.

Skills for Care has published new [guidance](#) to support the development of social care nursing placement opportunities. This has been published in collaboration with Deborah Sturdy, Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care at the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and key stakeholders.

Our stakeholders included Higher Education Institutions, employers who are currently hosting or interested in hosting student nurses and nursing associates as well as the voice of student nurses themselves. In addition to developing this guidance Skills for Care hosted a webinar on the same topic which was well received by a wide-range of participants interested in the development of placements in the sector.

Feedback received during the development of the guidance and from employers suggests that a key challenge for potential placement providers is a lack of knowledge of who to contact within Higher Education Institutions themselves to help begin the process of becoming a placement provider.

We recognise that in social care there is not the same infrastructure in place to provide an interface between Higher Education Institutions and the placement itself such as Practice Placement teams within the NHS. Therefore, it is crucial that potential placement providers in the sector are aware of who to contact within university nursing departments and have easily accessible routes to do so.

In developing the guidance, examples of good practice around entry points for placement providers were identified. For example, landing pages set up within university website such as the [University of Plymouth's](#) where placement providers can find out more about the process and connect with the relevant departments.

One straightforward way to enable easier contact with prospective placement providers is through promoting a centralised email address such as that used at Anglia Ruskin University workwithus@aru.ac.uk, thereby helping to avoid contact details becoming out of date.

For more examples of good practice please visit the [guidance](#).

At a time where placement capacity is a growing issue impacting on the recruitment of nursing students, we know that there is potential placement capacity in social care. Whilst many HEIs already provide placements in social care settings, this is often under-utilised despite the wealth of opportunities and valuable learning experiences that the social care sector has to offer to nurse education. Growing this type of placement provision further would also help to fulfil the NMC expectation that all nurses and nursing associates at point of qualification can work in any setting.

Without the knowledge of how to approach Higher Education Institutions however, or a commitment from Higher Education Institutions to invest in and value social care placement opportunities, this capacity will be unable to grow. We would encourage all Higher Education Institutions delivering healthcare education to take the time to review their process for developing placements in social care including providing a clear point of contact for social care providers to provide a gateway for prospective social care placements.

Yours sincerely



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