

A message from Diane Sarkar, Director of Nursing

Nursing / Midwifery and Care staffing levels



As a Trust we take nursing and midwifery (including healthcare assistances) staffing levels very seriously and have undertaken a considerable amount of work over the last 18 months which include:

- A review of the nursing structure to provide a greater focus on quality, safety and patient experience
- A full skill mix review of inpatient wards resulting in an additional investment of £1.7M (Board of Directors – May 2013)
- Regular updates provide to the Board of Directors and trust management meetings (see journey for nursing skill mix review)
- Extensive executive led recruitment campaign
- Review of potential implementation of 11.5 shift pattern
- CNS role review, standardisation and review of Job descriptions
- A review of “patient dependency” nurse / HCA (Health Care Assistant) utilisation
- A review of compliance with “Expectations relating to nursing, midwifery and care staffing capacity and capability”. (Board of Directors April 2013)

There are always opportunities for us to improve the way we deliver services and care for our patients. There is an ever increasing emphasis on ensuring that the care we provide is consistently delivered by the right people with the right skills at the right time to maximise patient outcomes. There is a greater focus now on ensuring that we have the right size nursing and midwifery workforce to meet the needs and expectations of our patients.

We all want to be able to give the best service to our patients but sometimes traditional patterns of work can make this harder. Continuity of care and of team work are key factors in providing consistent care to our patients and motivation to staff.

It is important to recognize that evidence demonstrates that poorly staffed wards increase staff sickness, burnout and motivation, all of which have an impact on poor outcomes of care. It is essential that wards have strong leadership and clinical metrics on which to be measured.

Recognizing the importance of this, a series of work streams have been established to review current practice and consider, where appropriate, more effective solutions. The six work streams are:

- 1) **Patient dependency:** To establish a consistent and reliable model for assessment of patient need and utilisation of nurses providing increased supervision
- 2) **Efficient rostering:** To apply a consistent approach to planning rosters to ensure better continuity of care, fair allocation of staff leave, to improve patient safety and experience and enhance staff satisfaction.
- 3) **Shift standardisation:** To ensure a consistent approach to shift working across the trust to enhance patient care and experience through improved continuity of care and staff satisfaction.
- 4) **Agency and bank:** To make the most efficient use of our temporary workforce through managing cost and booking patterns in order to provide greater continuity of care and team work.
- 5) **Skill mix:** To review skill mix in clinical areas to ensure optimum cost effective use of skilled staff to maintain and improve patient safety and experience
- 6) **Clinical Nurse Specialists:** To review the work patterns and scope of practice of Clinical Nurse Specialists, to ensure effective use of patient facing time and direct support within clinical areas.

It is crucial that our nursing and midwifery staff feel able and can escalate their concerns regarding safe staffing levels. This is enabled at a daily "Stepping Up" meeting where confirmation is gained from an executive of safe staffing levels across the hospital for the forthcoming 24 hours, a minimum of three times a day capacity meeting and individual direct lines of communication to the executive, if necessary.

As a Trust, we will be open and transparent regarding our nursing/midwifery numbers, including healthcare assistants. We will always strive to achieve planned staffing numbers, and /or additional staff, where required to ensure the optimal safety of our patients. We welcome feedback from staff, patients and visitors on the care which is provided by our staff.



Diane Sarkar
Director of Nursing

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