

# **Nursing Associates Fact Sheet**

## **What is a Nursing Associate**

The nursing associate is a new registered role in England that bridges the gap between health and care assistants and registered nurses. Nursing associates are new members of the care team, who are trained to foundation degree level. Nursing associates work with people of all ages in a variety of settings in health and social care. They deliver hands-on, person-centred care as a vital part of a wider health or care team.

The role is a vital part of the nursing team and aims to:

1. support registered nurses, freeing them up to focus on more complex clinical work
2. provide career progression opportunities for health and care assistants
3. increase the supply of nurses over time by providing an additional route into nursing.

The first training programmes started in 2017 and over 1,500 nursing associates were registered with the NMC (Nursing and Midwifery Council) by January 2020.

## **Why do we need Nursing Associates?**

The nursing associate role was introduced in response to the Shape of Caring Review (Health Education England, 2015), which aimed to ensure that nurses and care assistants receive consistent, high-quality education and training that supports high quality care. This review identified three specific problems which led to the recommendation for a new role, namely:

1. A lack of training and development opportunities for care assistants, who were providing over 60 per cent of hands-on care.
2. An ageing population with more complex needs, requiring nurses to delegate fundamental aspects of care so they can focus on more complex tasks.
3. The nursing shortage and need to widen access to the profession.

## **What training do they receive?**

Training involves working towards a foundation degree, awarded by an NMC-approved provider. Typically taken over two years, the programme includes both academic and work-based learning. It prepares trainees to work with people of all ages and in a variety of settings in health and social care. Trainee nursing associates can either earn while they learn as part of an apprenticeship programme or go through a self-funded route. Nursing associates can go on to train as a registered nurse by doing a shortened nursing degree or nursing degree apprenticeship.

## **What can they do?**

Nursing associates can work across a range of health and social care settings. They contribute to the planning, delivery, and evaluation of care as part of the nursing team.

The NMC has developed and published [standards of proficiency for nursing associates](#). These standards provide a clear picture of what nursing associates know and can do when they join the register.

## What is the difference between a registered nurse and a Nursing Associate?

Source: NMC Website

Nursing associate 6 platforms	Registered nurse 7 platforms
Be an accountable professional	Be an accountable professional
Promoting health and preventing ill health	Promoting health and preventing ill health
Provide and <b>monitor</b> care	Provide and <b>evaluate</b> care
Working in teams	<b>Leading and managing nursing care</b> and working in teams
Improving safety and quality of care	Improving safety and quality of care
<b>Contributing</b> to integrated care	<b>Coordinating</b> care
	<b>Assessing needs and planning care</b>

The [Nursing and Midwifery Council \(NMC\)](#) has summarised its standards of proficiency for both the registered nurse and nursing associate role as shown in the table below.

## How can Nursing Associates add value?

The nursing associate role has been shown to have several benefits, including:

1. improving service delivery and patient care
2. improving staff retention through career progression
3. starting to provide a home-grown nursing workforce.

Nursing associates contribute to service delivery and patient care by:

1. assisting nurses with a greater range of care-giving responsibilities
2. improving patient communication
3. providing more patient-centred care and acting as patient advocates
4. identifying and escalating patients with deteriorating health
5. exchanging skills, knowledge and good practice across health and care settings.

## How are Nursing Associates regulated?

The NMC is the regulator for the nursing associate role in England and began accepting individuals onto the nursing associate part of the register from January 2019.

This means that, like nurses, nursing associates are individually accountable for their own professional conduct and practice. They will need to meet the NMC standards of proficiency to register and continue to meet the standards and the [code of practice](#) as a condition of their

registration. The title 'nursing associate' is protected in law in England. Only those qualified and registered as nursing associates can use this title.

## What are the benefits to my organisation?

Employers have invested in the nursing associate role as part of wider workforce planning and skills mix transformation. An independent evaluation of the first two waves of the nursing associates programme revealed a few benefits arising from the introduction of the role, including:

### 1. Improve service delivery and patient care

Trainee nursing associates are making a **greater contribution to service delivery and patient care** as they develop new skills and competencies.

This can include:

- ✓ Improved patient communication
- ✓ Assisting nurses with a greater range of care-giving responsibilities
- ✓ More patient-centered care and acting as a patient advocate
- ✓ Identifying and escalating patients with deteriorating health
- ✓ Displaying leadership qualities and supporting other trainees' development
- ✓ Exchanging skills, knowledge, and good practice across settings, enhancing the quality of services.

### 2. Improve staff retention through offering career progression opportunities

Introducing the nursing associate role provides a recognised career pathway for bands 1-4 staff and widens access into nursing, ensuring the workforce reflects local populations.

Most trainee nursing associates join the programme to progress their careers and develop their skills. Many see the apprenticeship route as an opportunity to go to university that might otherwise not be possible due to family and financial commitments.

The programme helps retain staff, with 65% of trainees in wave two of the test programme intending to continue working as a nursing associate in their current setting in the following year. This reduces staff turnover and, in some cases, spending on agency staff.

Nursing associates are registered and regulated by the NMC, giving the role professional status and a clear sense of responsibility and accountability.

### 3. 'Grow your own' nursing workforce

Nursing associates can also go on to train to be registered nurses by doing a shortened nursing degree or nursing degree apprenticeship. Close to half of surveyed trainees in wave 2 (47%) said they intended to enroll onto a pre-registration nursing degree programme within three years of qualification.

## 4. Invest in your workforce by offering an effective and financially sustainable education and training programme

Approaching the end of the training programme, 85% of trainees surveyed felt prepared to enter the workforce as a nursing associate. As a result of the programme, trainee nursing associates have developed:

- new skills and knowledge
- greater confidence and self-belief
- a greater focus on delivering patient-centered care, rather than a series of tasks.

### Placements and Support

If the nursing associate programme is delivered through the apprenticeship route, the training costs can be met by utilising the apprenticeship levy. However, for most general practices, they will not be levy paying organisations so non-levy paying employers will share the cost of training their apprentices with government - this is called 'co-investment'. Under 'co-investment' the practice contribution would be 5% of the total cost so the employing practice could be liable to pay £750 towards the fees. Further information on co-investment should also be obtained via the education provider as not all HEIs have the same access to government funding. It may be possible for a levy paying organisation to 'gift' some of its unspent levy to general practice and if a gifting arrangement agreed, would mean the general practice would pay nothing towards tuition fees.

Salary costs throughout the duration of the 2-year period will be met by the employing practice and it is recommended that starting salary for trainee nursing associates in the NHS is the equivalent of Agenda for Change band 3, progressing to band 4 on qualification.

### Funding

HEE currently offers a funding package to support the implementation of the nursing associate role, this current package is due to end in March 2021. However, it is expected a new very similar package will be released imminently. For those trainees who have received the funding package, the amount payable to employers was £8000 (£4,000 per year over two years). This amount is payable to the practice and is to support the work-based learning environment of trainees.

To receive any funding, all employers of trainee nursing associates are required to:

- Adhere to HEEs Quality Assurance arrangements
- Meet the requirements as set out in the HEE Learning and Development Agreement (LDA)
- Where a LDA is not in place, agree and sign a Non-Learning Development Agreement Contract prior to the release of any payment.

**Source:** HEE National Team

### Opportunities in General Practice

For General Practice, this is an exciting prospect. Health Care Assistants who are currently employed in General Practice have the opportunity of embarking on a work-based learning journey that can lead to a Nursing Associate or even registered nursing role. This is helping to

increase the capacity of the general practice nursing team and offers a genuine opportunity for General Practice to 'grow their own' and play a key role in developing the nursing workforce needed for the future. The following information will be of interest to Health Care Assistants, General Practice Nurses, managers and employers.

## **Nursing Associates and ARRS**

The ARRS entitles PCNs to access funding to support recruitment across different roles, which includes training nursing associates and nursing associates. The ARRS is an NHSE scheme and is about recruitment targets and the salary costs for these roles. All roles included in the ARRS are 100% funded. While the 26,000 can essentially be made up of any professions. Primary Care Networks do have NAs and TNAs within the Additional Roles, however, they only came onstream from October 2020 onwards.

## **What happens next?**

The purpose of the NA role in General Practice is to support the delivery of core services in a cost-effective way. Releasing the GPN to work in an extended role and develop specialist services. The target for 2021/22 for these roles is yet to be agreed however it is anticipated that with the roles being included in the ARRS that Primary Care will help to fill these roles – we also have a real opportunity to utilise the expertise of working with our Training Hubs to see a rise in the numbers within PC.

One of the issues (amongst many) is that getting the correct and most helpful information out to lead employers and practices is tricky as to support a trainee there needs to be a good understanding of what is required from an educational perspective as well as understanding apprenticeships, professional requirements (NMC), placements, supernumerary time, value that NAs can bring to general practice and much more.

## **Who can provide support?**

Within HEE several colleagues can provide support, if you require support please see the list below:

East Midlands - Gillian Beardmore [Gillian.beardmore@hee.nhs.uk](mailto:Gillian.beardmore@hee.nhs.uk)

West Midlands: Heidi Davis [Heidi.Davis@hee.nhs.uk](mailto:Heidi.Davis@hee.nhs.uk)

Generic enquiries: [midlands.traininghubs@hee.nhs.uk](mailto:midlands.traininghubs@hee.nhs.uk)

## **Links to further information**

Please visit:

The [HEE website](#) for information on nursing associates for employers

The [Nursing associates website](#) for information for potential trainee nursing associates

The [NHS Employers guide to nursing associates](#)

[Nursing and Midwifery Council \(NMC\) resources](#)

Information on nursing associates in social care on the [Skills for Care website](#)