The QNI Standards of Education and Practice for Nurses New to General Practice Nursing

2020

Introduction

The Queen's Nursing Institute (QNI) was commissioned by NHS England (NHSE) to develop a set of voluntary standards of education and practice to support nurses new to General Practice Nursing (GPN). The development of the standards is in response to the requirements of the NHSE General Practice Nursing document 'Developing confidence, capability and capacity: Ten point action plan for General Practice Nursing' (NHSE, 2017). The ten point plan put in place investment of £15 million from the General Practice Forward View (GPFV) funding (NHSE, 2016) to support action to address the significant workforce challenges and to support improvements in General Practice Nursing by 2020.

Leading experts in General Practice Nursing including GPNs, Higher Education Institution (HEI) programme leads, training hub leads and current GPN students have worked together to develop these standards that make explicit the practice expectations for a level 5 registered nurse new to General Practice Nursing. A principal aim of the standards is therefore to provide guidance in their new role. In line with the current Health Education England (HEE, 2015) 'District Nursing and General Practice Nursing Education and Career and Development Framework, the standards also aim to guide education providers developing introductory GPN programmes and Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) approved Specialist Practitioner Qualification (SPQ) programmes that underpin the expected knowledge and skills for General Practice Nurse education and practice.

These standards have been designed to provide a contemporary and structured overview of expected best practice, standards and guidance for nurses embarking on the General Practice Nursing career pathway. They are a precursor to the QNI/QNIS (2017) 'Voluntary Standards for General Practice Nursing Education and Practice', which provide the foundation for the next stage of a GPN career as a senior nurse. The term 'voluntary standards' differentiates them from regulatory or mandatory standards, such as those set by the NMC.

General Practice Nurses

With the inception of Primary Care Networks and publication of the NHS Long Term Plan (NHSE/I, 2019) and the proposed investment and focus of more health care services moving from hospitals to primary and community care, this is an exciting time for nurses choosing a career in General Practice Nursing. The evolving role of the General Practice Nurse (GPN) with specialist knowledge and skills is pivotal in contributing to the success of this transformation of primary care services. However, this brings unique challenges for nurses selecting General Practice Nursing as a new career choice as many GPNs are directly employed by General Practitioners with variations in roles, responsibilities, terms and conditions, in addition to variances in role preparation and continuing professional development opportunities. Thus, future GPN education programmes need to sufficiently prepare the registered nurse with the contemporary specialist knowledge and skills to fulfil the role as a GPN. They must also offer consistency, as current GPN education provision across England varies widely in length, level of qualification and expected clinical competence.

Aim of the standards

These standards have been designed and developed to reflect best practice and provide guidance to prepare nurses for their new role as a Registered Nurse in General Practice Nursing, in addition to:

- Providing the public with a contemporary description of the role of a Registered Nurse new to General Practice Nursing;
- Providing an overview of the key practice and education requirements of the GPN role for nurses new to General Practice Nursing;
- Supporting and guiding universities in developing future education programmes which are focussed on agreed best practice;
- Enabling nurses new to General Practice Nursing to be able to articulate their role and the value of their role;
- Providing a framework for service commissioners, education commissioners, training hub leads, General Practitioner employers and other providers in planning primary care nursing services.

Following the publication of the QNI/QNIS GPN Voluntary Standards for General Practice Nursing Education and Practice in September 2017, this project (outlined in Appendix 1) and outcomes from the subsequent survey of current academic Introductory General Practice Nurse programmes, identified stark inconsistencies in the academic and practice preparation programmes for Registered Nurses new to General Practice Nursing. In light of the additional inconsistencies in introductory GPN programme length and academic level, there has been a consensual recognition for agreed standards to inform future GPN roles and to ensure a consistent approach to the practice and educational preparation of nurses new to General Practice Nursing.

A collaborative consultation with Higher Education Institution (HEI) programme leads, training hub leads, GPNs, student GPNs and an expert patient, has led to the development of these standards. They do not focus on discrete clinical skills, as it is expected that these are assessed in the clinical environment using the nationally recognised Royal College of General Practitioner (RCGP), General Practice Foundation/RCN General Practice Nurse

Competency Framework (RCGP, 2015) or equivalent. These voluntary standards for nurses new to General Practice Nursing have been drafted encompassing four key domains of:

1. Clinical Care
2. Leadership and Management
3. Facilitation of Learning
4. Evidence, Research and Development.

Using the standards

Current General Practice Nurse education is not mandatory and these standards are not set to prescribe academic levels or how introductory GPN programmes should be delivered, as this will be determined by local negotiation. However, it is anticipated that HEIs will adopt these voluntary standards as a best practice guide in developing future 'Introduction to GPN' programmes, as the current educational content of GPN programmes and training vary in length and content across England. To promote consistency, the standards provide a framework for developing future education programmes which are focussed on agreed best practice.

To ensure quality, safety and retention of new GPNs the development of these standards serve as an opportunity to recommend that service commissioners, GPN employers and organisations recognise the importance of a well-considered minimum period of induction, supervision and preceptorship for any NMC Registered Nurse entering General Practice Nursing, that includes:

• A minimum of a one week period of orientation;

• A minimum one month induction period with implementation of the General Practice Nursing Induction Template (NHSE, 2019);

• A period of preceptorship with an identified experienced GPN Practice Supervisor and an identified GPN Practice Assessor (NMC, 2018) usually employed in the same General Practice;

• Completion of a HEI accredited introductory programme for nurses new to general practice of at least six months, within their first year;

• Assessment of clinical competencies utilising a competency framework with the RCGP competencies for GPNs (RCGP, 2015) or equivalent competency framework, by a Practice Assessor usually employed in the same General Practice.

Voluntary Standards for Nurses New to General Practice Nursing Education and Practice.
At the end of a programme mapped against the new QNI Voluntary Standards, nurses new to General Practice Nursing will be able to:

Domain 1: Clinical Care

1.1 Evidence a working knowledge of the practice population demographics and health needs for patients across the age range and four fields of nursing (Adult Nursing, Childrens Nursing, Learning Disabilities Nursing and Mental Health Nursing) within the practice and across the Primary Care Network, to inform evidence-based care pathways.

1.2 Demonstrate effective communication skills and ability to foster therapeutic relationships with patients enabling patients with specific needs to know they have been listened to with respect and compassion.

1.3 Demonstrate effective communication with all members of the multidisciplinary team in order to ensure a safe, effective and seamless care pathway.

1.4 Utilise contemporary evidence-based consultation tools and develop effective consultation skills in assessment, implementation and evaluation of health care outcomes in a safe and time effective manner.

1.5 Identify signs of deteriorating ill health and recognition of the connection between physical and mental health issues, acknowledging the complexities across the age range of the population.

1.6 Demonstrate the role of the General Practice Nurse as an autonomous practitioner in promoting personalised care, initiating social prescribing, care management plans and anticipatory care, acknowledging the support strategies available.

1.7 Practise in an inclusive way ensuring that individual's rights, beliefs and culture are considered when supporting their health choices in the primary care setting.

1.8 Develop effective problem solving, influencing and negotiation skills and adopt a partnership approach when undertaking person centred consultations (individual or group), fostering a culture of self-care.

1.9 Ensure optimal patient care, identify health promotion opportunities and facilitate behaviour change with education and support, enabling shared decision making to ensure person-centred care.

1.10 Identify when additional expertise or referral to other specialist services is necessary, initiating objective and appropriate referrals using recognised assessment and referral pathways and best interest decision-making.

1.11 Engage with and work in partnership in the Primary Care Network, including the voluntary and third sector to promote the health and wellbeing of the practice population and ensure that public health needs of the community are addressed.

1.12 Demonstrate a broad range of evidence informed clinical expertise and competently undertake the range of skills required within the scope of the general practice nurse role and responsibility.

1.13 Engage in diagnostic health screening, health surveillance and therapeutic techniques applied to individuals and groups across the practice population.

1.14 Demonstrate effective decision-making skills to ensure that quality care is provided to people, families and carers experiencing a range of complex health care issues.

1.15 Demonstrate an evidence-based knowledge of common clinical conditions presented in primary care to be able to support and respond to the needs of people with multi-morbidity.

1.16 Demonstrate and utilise risk management strategies in the General Practice setting and take account of individual's responsibilities, whilst promoting patient and staff safety and preventing avoidable harm.

1.17 Develop specific GPN clinical competence utilising the GPN Induction template and the nationally agreed Royal College of General Practice Foundation/RCN General Practice Nurse Clinical Competency Framework (RCGP, 2015) or equivalent.

1.18 Ensure a reflective, enquiring, critical and innovative approach is adopted to inform accurate decision making in practice, identifying variation in individuals and ensuring correct referral and management pathways are followed.

1.19 Adhere to Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) standards and revalidation requirements, demonstrating reflective practice that enables critical analysis of personal practice.

1.20 Engage with and utilise digital technologies to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of communication within the Primary Care Network.

1.21 Engage and use digital technologies to support patient self-care.

Domain 2: Leadership and Management

2.1 Articulate the context of the general practice setting, appraising the role and responsibilities of the General Practice Nurse and individual staff within the Primary Care Network.

2.2 Identify the unique characteristics and professional issues within General Practice, for example, the use of Patient Group Directives (PGDs), Patient Specific Directives (PSDs), Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) and professional indemnity arrangements.

2.3 Following a period of induction and preceptorship of an appropriate length commensurate with previous experience, knowledge and skills, demonstrate competence and confidence in professional practice, justifying clinical decision making, within an agreed scope of practice.

2.4 Contribute to national screening programmes, audit and overall service improvement strategies that support quality assurance.

2.5 Develop leadership skills contributing to delegation of safe and effective distribution of workload. Articulate how empowerment, education and change management skills ensure effective resource management.

2.6 Demonstrate an understanding of national and local public health strategies and how these align to support the health of the practice population, in partnership with other disciplines and agencies.

2.7 Articulate how the General Practice Nursing team are integral to the implementation of strategies and legislation for example, The Long-Term Plan (DH, 2019).

2.8 Contribute to supporting the General Practice Nursing team within regulatory, professional, legal, ethical and policy frameworks. Promote and model effective team leadership ensuring all staff feel valued.

2.9 Promote the value of General Practice Nursing in meeting improved health outcomes and business objectives within the Primary Care Network.

2.10 Engage with learning and development opportunities to enhance personal and professional development in line with current evidence.

2.11 Contribute to the assessment and supervision of other health care professionals (HCPs) where applicable and implement appropriate strategies when escalating concerns with staff performance to senior clinical staff.

2.12 Evidence knowledge of socio-political and economic

policies and drivers that impact on the practice population and wider community. Analyse how these may impact on the design and delivery of General Practice Nursing services in meeting the needs of the practice population.

2.13 Identify vulnerable adults and children ensuring all team members understand their responsibilities in terms of safeguarding legislation, policies and procedures.

2.14 Understand the range of change management strategies and the way in which they support the team to respond flexibly and innovatively to changing contexts of care.

Domain 3: Facilitation of learning

3.1 Analyse the NMC (2018) Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment (SSSA). Advocate and incorporate the roles of Practice Supervisor and Practice Assessor within the General Practice Nursing learning environment.

3.2 Support the development of a safe and effective practice learning environment for nursing and other clinical students, and contribute to ensuring sufficient support and supervision is in place.

3.3 Demonstrate effective professional and clinical leadership in general practice, supporting and supervising students and providing constructive feedback on their progress and achievements.

3.4 Participate in evaluating the impact of educational and practice interventions for the students, staff and patients.

3.5 Contribute to developing systems to assess the learning and development needs of junior staff in the General Practice Nursing team and negotiate strategies with the practice to meet these needs.

3.6 Demonstrate the skills that support learning and assessment for undergraduate nursing students, Health Care Support Workers, Assistant Practitioners and Nursing Associates in clinical learning environments.

3.7 Role model non-judgemental and value-based care in practice creating a culture of openness and recognition of the duty of candour, promoting these values in other members of the General Practice Nursing team.

3.8 Evaluate personal learning and development through reflective practice to enable critical analysis of personal practice as a new GPN through the appraisal process and development of a personal development plan.

3.9 Locate and participate in clinical supervision opportunities, fostering a culture where clinical supervision is valued and applied to all levels of staff.

Domain 4: Evidence, Research and Development

4.1 Locate contemporary evidence-based literature to inform and implement best practice within the complex and unpredictable health and social care environment of General Practice Nursing.

4.2 Participate in the development of evidence-based guidelines for the practice and Primary Care Network and support staff to ensure all care is evidence informed and based on best practice.

4.3 Contribute to the development, collation, monitoring and evaluation of data relating to service provision and development, evaluating the impact on quality assurance and improvement.

4.4 Participate in the development of innovative practice that meets the needs of individuals through patient participation groups, valuing feedback that enables patients to share their experiences of care confidentially.

4.5 Adhere to duty of candour and contribute to the systematic improvement of services in response to patient feedback.

4.6 Adhere to governance systems in place for General Practice Nursing staff to ensure patient follow up, referrals, correspondence and safety alerts are actioned.

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Appendix 1 - Project Background and Methodology

In 2016 the QNI published a report: 'General Practice Nursing in the 21st Century' based on the responses to a survey of 3400 GPNs, which highlighted the challenges they face in practice. Key findings included the need for clarity of the GPN role in the public domain and the need for a national focus on GPN recruitment and retention in light of 33.4% of GPNs reportedly planning to retire by 2020. This report was able to influence the current agenda for GPNs and formed the foundation and actions of the NHSE GPN ten point action plan (NHSE, 2017).

Inconsistencies in GPN education and professional developmental opportunities were identified as not meeting the needs of the contemporary role of the GPN which has evolved considerably since the only professionally approved NMC post-registration education standards for GPNs were set in 1994. In 2015, Health Education England (HEE) developed an educational specification for introductory courses for nurses new to General Practice Nursing, but this has not been applied across England.

The subsequent development of the 2017 QNI/QNIS Voluntary Standards for General Practice Nursing Education and Practice for Senior GPNs has contributed to the educational and development needs of senior GPNs working in General Practice, preparing them to develop their roles to align with new ways and models of working, introduced as part of the Five Year Forward View and the 2016 General Practice Forward View. Since publication of the 2017 QNI/QNIS Voluntary Standards, many HEIs that either deliver NMC approved programmes or 'Introduction to GPN' modules and programmes have reportedly mapped the QNI/QNIS GPN voluntary standards to their programmes.

Research from the development of the 2017 QNI/QNIS GPN standards identified inconsistencies in the length, content, assessment, academic level and practice support of introductory academic programmes for nurses new to General Practice Nursing. In view of these findings and in response to the aim and objectives of the NHSE GPN ten point plan, NHSE commissioned the QNI to undertake a project to develop standards to inform and support the education and practice of nurses new to General Practice Nursing.

The project commenced in October 2018 and a project manager with in-depth knowledge and experience of General Practice Nursing and higher education was appointed. Development of the project was based on the same methodological approach that was taken with all the previous QNI/QNIS Voluntary Standards for Nurse Education and Practice encompassing four key domains:

1.   Clinical Care
2.   Leadership and Management
3.   Facilitation of Learning
4.   Evidence, Research and Development.

A survey was developed as a first line action for the development of best practice educational standards for nurses new to General Practice Nursing and to establish provision of current introductory GPN programmes. Data collated yielded 26 responses and identified that 11 HEIs provide the GPN Specialist Practitioner Qualification (SPQ); 9 in England and 2 in Wales. No NMC approved GPN programmes were identified in Scotland or Northern Ireland. The data also highlighted the inconsistencies of current introductory GPN programmes in HEIs which range from 4 weeks (one 30 credit module) to one year full-time (or 2 years part-time), based on attendance of 2 academic days, 3 practice based days, completing with 60 credits for Post Graduate Certificate or 120 credits at BSc or Post Graduate Diploma levels. In terms of clinical practice assessment, the survey data evidenced 88% of programmes utilise the 2015 Royal College of General Practitioners/ General Practice Foundation Competencies for General Practice Nurses as an exemplar framework for practice assessment.
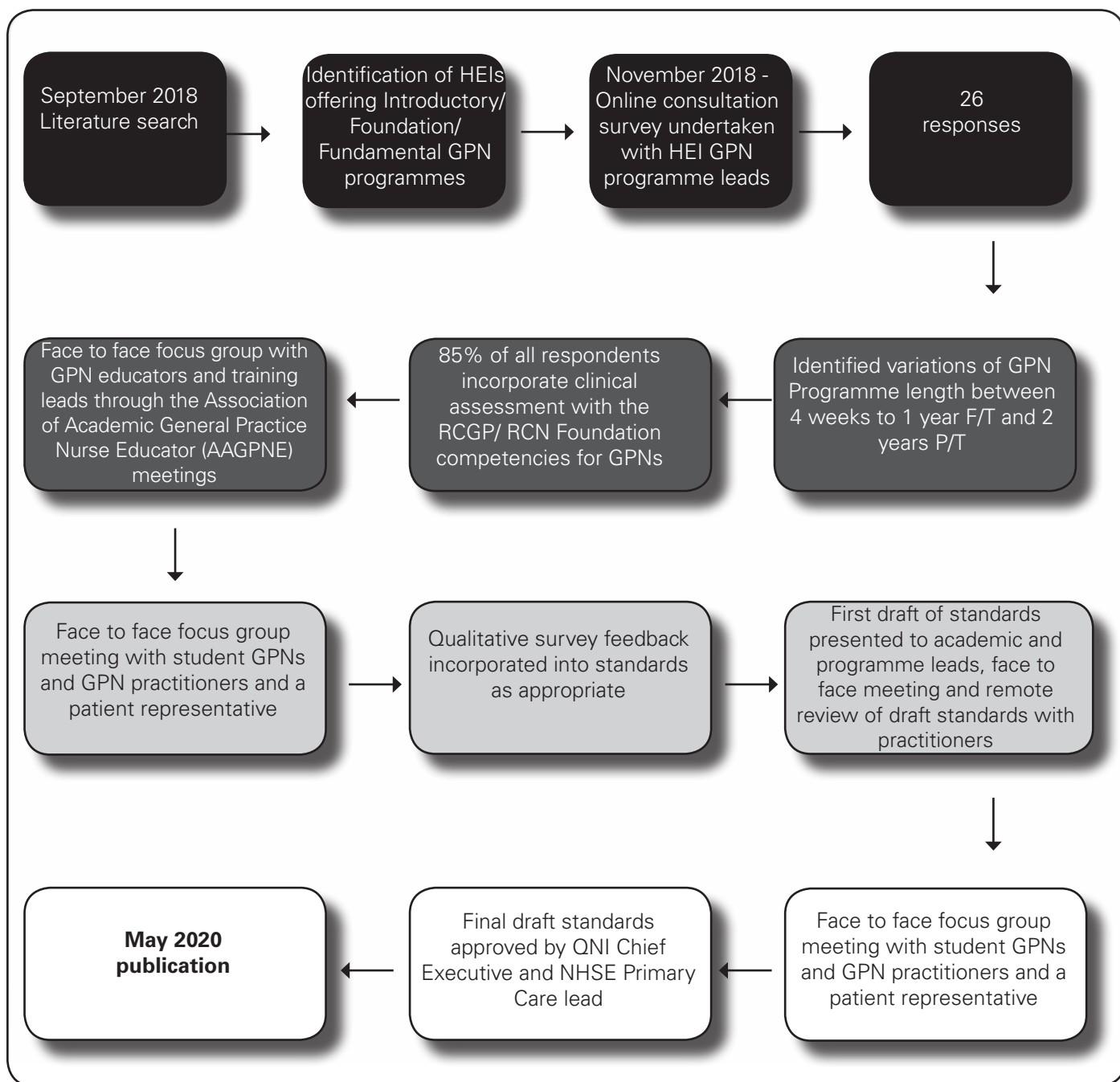
Following data collation, the project lead received overwhelming support from academic programme leads, training hub nurse leads, GPNs and GPN students, recognising the need to establish clear standards to inform future introductory GPN programmes in England. Early face-to-face focus groups and consultations established inconsistencies with GPN programme title descriptors (Fundamentals/Foundation), causing confusion, particularly for nurses expressing an interest in pursuing a career in General Practice Nursing. Therefore, it was agreed collectively to title the standards work as: 'Standards of Education and Practice for Nurses New to General Practice Nursing' to encompass all introductory GPN programmes on offer.

The development of the project (Diagram 1) sets out agreed education and practice standards for registered nurses embarking on a career in General Practice Nursing and serve as a precursor to the 2017 QNI/QNIS Voluntary Standards for General Practice Nursing Education and Practice for GPNs. It is anticipated that this project work will inform the 2019/2020 NMC consultation review of current NMC approved post-registration education and practice standards and to provide support for the development of future HEI introductory GPN programmes.

To address the inconsistencies in the length of current introductory GPN programmes, and to ensure sufficiently robust education and practice preparation for nurses new to General Practice Nursing, there need to be agreed recommendations with HEIs and stakeholders. In light of the extensive consultation to develop these standards, and for sufficient time to develop the knowledge, skills and competence to meet the standards, the minimum recommended length of future introductory GPN programmes should be 6 months, with a minimum period of induction and a robust period of preceptorship in place. For those seeking career development to lead and manage General Practice Nurses and others, they may refer to the 2017 QNI/QNIS Voluntary Standards for General Practice Nursing Education and Practice.

Diagram 1. Development of Standards

September 2018 Literature search → Identification of HEIs offering Introductory/ Foundation/ Fundamental GPN programmes → November 2018 - Online consultation survey undertaken with HEI GPN programme leads → 26 responses

Identified variations of GPN Programme length between 4 weeks to 1 year F/T and 2 years P/T ← 85% of all respondents incorporate clinical assessment with the RCGP/ RCN Foundation competencies for GPNs ← Face to face focus group with GPN educators and training leads through the Association of Academic General Practice Nurse Educator (AAGPNE) meetings

Face to face focus group meeting with student GPNs and GPN practitioners and a patient representative → Qualitative survey feedback incorporated into standards as appropriate → First draft of standards presented to academic and programme leads, face to face meeting and remote review of draft standards with practitioners

May 2020 publication ← Final draft standards approved by QNI Chief Executive and NHSE Primary Care lead ← Face to face focus group meeting with student GPNs and GPN practitioners and a patient representative

Appendix 2 – Project Reviewers

Name	Role	Organisation
Dr Crystal Oldman CBE	Chief Executive	The Queen's Nursing Institute
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