

Answering your questions on the Nursing Associate role

July 2019



Pictured: Trainee nursing associates in Walsall - Danielle Meegan, Donna Bangham, Luke Smith and Sian Cadman.

What is a nursing associate?

The nursing associate is a new role in England that bridges the gap between care assistants and registered nurses. Nursing associates are able to deliver hands-on, person-centred care for people of all ages and in a variety of settings in health and social care.

Pictured: Trainee nursing associate Emma Henderson from West Yorkshire.



The nursing associate role has been introduced to help build the capacity of the nursing workforce and contribute to the core work of nursing, freeing up registered nurses and the wider multidisciplinary teams to focus on more complex care delivery. The nursing associate role is a stand-alone role, but one that can also provide a progression route into graduate level nursing.

How did the nursing associate role come about?

Health Education England (HEE) developed the nursing associate role following the publication of The Shape of Caring Review (Raising the Bar) in March 2015. The report suggested an outline concept for a role that would bridge the gap between care assistants and registered nurses, to help to improve delivery of patient/service user care.

HEE led the development of the role and piloted it in 35 test sites across England. The first 1,000 trainee nursing associates started their two-year nursing associate programmes in January 2017, with a further 1,000 starting in April 2017. The test sites delivered a work-based learning programme of education and training in a range of health and care settings, including care homes, acute, community and mental health trusts and hospices. This range of care settings represents the variety of places where nursing associates may be deployed once qualified and registered.

What can nursing associates do?

The NMC has developed and published standards of proficiency for nursing associates. These standards of proficiency provide a clear picture of what nursing associates know and can do when they join the register. These standards help employers to understand how nursing associates can contribute to the provision of nursing care.

Like registered nurses and other healthcare professionals, nursing associates may expand their scope of practice, through further education and experience after they have qualified and joined the nursing associate part of the NMC register.

The HEE Nursing Associate Implementation Group have developed guidance to support employers in developing job descriptions for qualified nursing associates. This guidance provides prompt questions to help employers consider specific responsibilities and expectations of the post, specific to the organisation and deployment setting. The guidance also includes a template person specification for the role, which aligns to both the NMC Standards of Proficiency for nursing associates, and to the relevant agenda for change job profile.

What qualifications will a nursing associate have?

Trainee nursing associates must successfully complete an NMC approved pre-registration nursing associate programme at Foundation degree and meet the NMC Standards of Proficiency for nursing associates to be eligible to apply and join the NMC register.

Pictured: Trainee nursing associate Oleogum Ologum from Derby.

Are nursing associates regulated?

The NMC became the regulator for the nursing associate role in England in July 2018. The NMC regulate nursing associates in broadly the same way that they regulate nurses and midwives. This means that nursing associates are individually accountable for their own professional conduct and practice; must meet the NMC Standards of Proficiency to join and remain on the register; are expected to uphold the NMC Code, to work within their scope of practice and to raise concerns where needed. The NMC will investigate concerns about a registered nursing associate's conduct or practice and take action, if needed, to improve care and keep the public safe.

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

What opportunities does the introduction of this role present?

Introduction of the nursing associate role aims to provide employers with a wider skill mix within teams. Nursing associates deliver a higher proportion of fundamental patient care as part of the nursing team and support registered nurses by undertaking some of the caring skills and responsibilities that both roles can deliver. This provides capacity for registered nurses and the wider multi-disciplinary teams to focus on elements of more complex care delivery

When will we see the first nursing associates entering the workforce?

The first nursing associates have now started to complete their training and enter the workforce from January 2019, when they became eligible to join the nursing associate part of the NMC register.



What impact will nursing associates have on the health and care workforce?

As the first cohorts of nursing associates complete their training and are deployed as part of a carefully considered skills mix, we recognise the need to establish a robust evidence base for their impact within the health and care workforce. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) have been commissioned to deliver a thorough programme of research that demonstrates and evaluates this impact, as deployment of the role progresses.

Where can I find out more?

- [Health Education England nursing associate resources](#)
- [NMC Nursing Associates](#)
- [NHS Improvement safe, sustainable and productive staffing improvement resource for the deployment of nursing associates in secondary care](#)
- [NHS Employers guide to nursing associates](#)
- [CQC briefing for providers: Nursing associates](#)

Visit our NHS Health Careers service website for more information about becoming a nursing associate.
Contact HEE if you have queries about nursing associates or any area of our work.

Nursing associate milestones

The infographic is a vertical timeline of milestones for nursing associates, presented in a grid-like format with two columns. Each milestone is represented by a colored box containing a date, a brief description of the event, and a small icon. The milestones are as follows:

- October 2016:** First 11 test sites announced. Draft Curriculum Framework released. Case for regulation submitted to Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care.
- July 2018:** NA legislative change agreed after debates in the House of Commons and House of Lords. 10 new partnerships approved. Trainee nursing associates visit Number 10 Downing Street and meet the Prime Minister.
- Jan 2017:** First 1000 trainees start. Secretary of State for Health request accepted by Nursing and Midwifery Council to become regulator.
- September 2018:** Nursing and Midwifery Council approves all elements of regulation.
- April 2017:** Next 1000 trainee nursing associates start across 24 test sites. Scrutiny and Medicines Group formed by Health Education England.
- October 2018:** Apprenticeship trailblazer group begins resubmission of nursing associate standard.
- November 2017:** Nursing associate apprenticeship standard agreed. First national conference.
- December 2018:** First trainee nursing associates qualify.
- January 2018:** Next wave of trainees start using apprenticeship. National medicines guidance approved by the Home Office and the Department for Health and Social Care.
- January 2019:** Nursing and Midwifery Council register opens.

At the bottom of the infographic, there is a logo for 'Developing people for health and healthcare' with the website 'www.hee.nhs.uk' and the NHS Constitution logo with the tagline 'the NHS belongs to us all'.