General Practice Nursing – how to get a foot in the door..

General Practice Nursing (GPN) is an exciting place to work but if you’ve never worked as a GPN before, how do you get your first job?

The experience of many nurses is ‘no experience, no job’ and ‘no job means no experience’. It’s a catch 22. If you’re committed to making the transition, however, there are some things that you can do:

- Send your CV with a letter of why you want to work in general practice to practice managers of local practices. Each practice is an independent business and unlike departments in a large trust, there’s little networking between each practice so you will need to contact practices individually. Show that you are keen and enthusiastic and ask them to help direct you to vacancies they know about if there are none currently in their own practice.

- Contact local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). Some employ practice nurse leads or facilitators and these people should be able to help. The CCG should also be able to direct you to practices where there are vacancies, if they’re known about.

- Shadowing an experienced GPN will show that there’s a real commitment to making the change and this can be possible to arrange with a specific practice by contacting the practice manager. Even though you might not have experience as a General Practice Nurse, exposure to the working environment and showing a commitment to finding out more should be to your advantage.

- The East Midlands General Practice Nurse programme, delivered by De Montfort University, is on offer in the East Midlands to nurses who are new to general practice in the last year or so. However, applicants do need to be employed as general practice nurses (GPNs). The programme is of real benefit not only to new GPNs but also to the employing practice as all the training needed for a new practice nurse is in one place, quality assured with structured learning and objective assessment of competence. Find out more about this training and make sure that practice you contact know that you know about the programme and are keen to enrol.

- See also ‘Developing your General Practice Career’ which describes what the programme offers a new nurse.
Look at ‘Equipping Nurses for General Practice’ - this describes how a practice can benefit by supporting a new nurse through the programme.

Many GPN jobs are advertised on NHS jobs but it’s also worth keeping an eye on local press as often practices advertise locally too.

There’s a forum where jobs are shared too. Various topics related to General Practice Nursing are discussed informally on this national site and familiarising yourself with some of the topics and issues will give you a more in-depth insight into the GPN role.

If you get an interview with practice advertising for a GPN, you will need to ‘sell’ your transferrable skills. There are advantages to employing a nurse new to general practice rather than employing an experienced GPN. A practice can mould and shape a new nurse and often the enthusiasm new nurses bring can be very attractive.

Reading up about the changing NHS again will show a degree of commitment to the role and there is some good information about the role and expected GPN competencies on the Royal College of General Practitioners website.

The new HEE framework for GPN and Dental Nurse careers sets the context for developing the role.

The Queens Nurse Institute has developed some very helpful resources.