

What's a nursing associate?

Information for frontline staff

January 2020



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The nursing associate is a new registered role in England that bridges the gap between health and care assistants and registered nurses.

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.

Why are we introducing nursing associates?

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

- support registered nurses, freeing them up to focus on more complex clinical work
- provide career progression opportunities for health and care assistants
- 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 2020.¹

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.

However, their exact responsibilities will be determined by the employer, depending on where they work.

1. <https://www.nmc.org.uk/news/press-releases/health-and-care-leaders-celebrate-incredible-contributions-of-nursing-associates-on-1-year-anniversary-of-the-role/>

What's the difference between a registered nurse and a nursing associate?

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.

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 monitor care	Provide and evaluate care
Working in teams	Leading and managing nursing care and working in teams
Improving safety and quality of care	Improving safety and quality of care
Contributing to integrated care	Coordinating care
	Assessing needs and planning care

How can nursing associates add value?

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

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

Nursing associates contribute to service delivery and patient care by:

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



“ [The trainee] was professional and understanding of my clinical depression which I have had for six years...she conducted my health check in a relaxed and comfortable manner explaining each stage clearly to me.”
Service user, community setting

“*My ward is mental health, our TNA came back to the ward with experience in physical health. Our doctors love him because he’s able to do bloods, ECGs, and he talks to patients about their diets. He’s teaching our staff about wound care; we’re listening. He’s very excited about all the things he’s learned and he’s bringing that back.*”

Ward manager

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.

Where can I find out more?

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](#).

