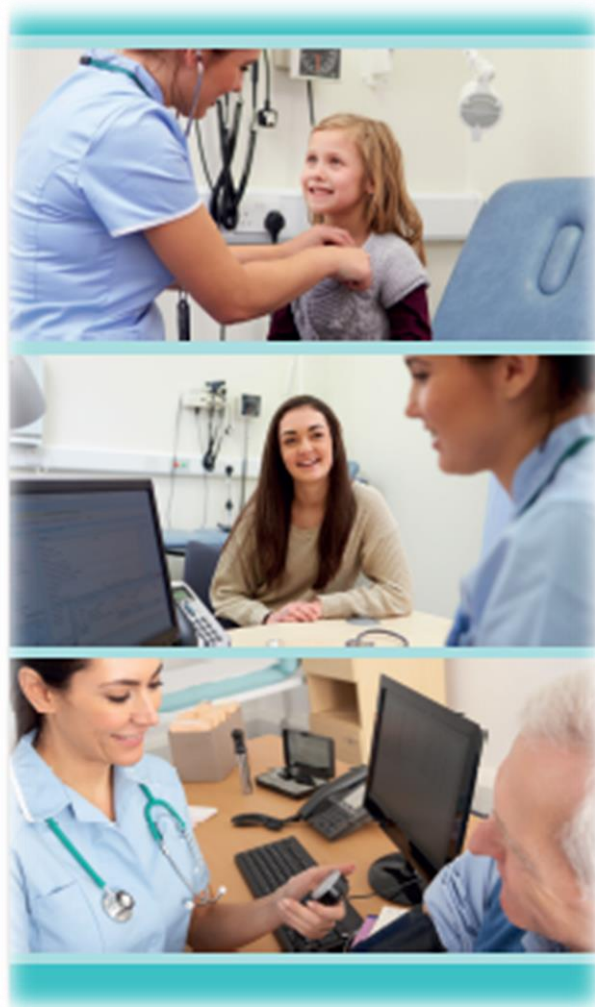


Primary Care Nursing Roles Now and in the Future Engagement Event 27th June 2024



Contents

Foreword	3
1. Background and Introduction	3
2. Context	6
3. Front Line Discussion	8
4. What Needs to Happen?	12
5. Reflections: (Heather Reid: Director of Nursing and AHP's, PHA)	15
6. Evaluation.....	16
7. Next Steps	17
8. Acknowledgements	17
9. Appendices.....	17

Foreword

Primary care is the bedrock of our health and social care system and provides around 95% of the care people need throughout their life. General Practitioners (GPs) and multidisciplinary Primary Care teams have a key role to play in improving population health and wellbeing, as well as developing care pathways and services to meet the population needs (DOH, 2017).¹ Nursing is integral to this wider multidisciplinary Primary Care team.

The evolving role of the Primary Care nursing workforce equipped with generalist and specialist, knowledge, experience and skills, is pivotal in contributing to the success of the transformation of Primary Care services in Northern Ireland.

1. Background and Introduction

The Primary Care Nursing Steering Group (**Figure 1**), chaired by the Public Health Agency (PHA), was established in 2016 to drive forward and provide strategic oversight to the implementation of the key recommendations set out in 'Now and the Future. A General Practice Nursing Framework for Northern Ireland (PHA, 2016)². The majority of this work has been progressed with elements requiring ongoing development and review over time.

The purpose of this collaborative group is to provide strategic leadership, professional and expert direction, contributing to the transformation and delivery of a stable and sustainable Primary Care nursing workforce for Northern Ireland. This in turn will contribute to the wider health and social care system, positive population health outcomes and quality person-centred care closer to the patient's own home.

The Primary Care Nursing Steering Group recognise the need to engage the frontline Primary Care nursing workforce to demonstrate their unique contribution to patient and population health and shaping the future of Primary Care nursing and the health and social care system as a whole.

¹ [Health and Wellbeing 2026 - Delivering Together | Department of Health \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/health-and-wellbeing-2026-delivering-together)

² [Now and the Future: A General Practice Nursing Framework for Northern Ireland | HSC Public Health Agency \(hscni.net\)](https://www.hscni.net/publications/now-and-the-future-a-general-practice-nursing-framework-for-northern-ireland)

The Public Health Agency funded and led on a *Primary Care Nursing. Roles Now and in the Future* engagement event on the 27th June, 2024 at Dunsilly Hotel, Antrim. The aim of the event was to explore the current Primary Care nursing roles and look at the future landscape and opportunities and how they contribute to the wider health and social care system, positive population health outcomes and quality person-centred care closer to the patient's own home.

Invitations to the engagement event were extended to members of the Primary Care Nursing Steering Group, Health and Social Care Trusts, universities and frontline Primary Care nurses and non- registrants (attendance list in **Appendix 1**).

This was the first in a proposed series of events seeking to explore current and future roles with subsequent events aiming to engage with and influence policy and decision makers that Primary Care nursing is part of the solution to an effective and efficient health and care system for Northern Ireland.

The Opening Address

On behalf of Maria McIlgorm, Chief Nursing Officer, Department of Health, Mary Frances McManus, Deputy Chief Nursing Officer gave the opening address.



Primary Care is an ever changing, demanding and complex environment and is often the first point of contact for patients and their families accessing health services. The strength of the Primary Care team is the collaborative working between the many disciplines, who are supported by external stakeholders, some of whom are represented at the event. There is a need to work together at a strategic level to maximise the development of this workforce.

As outlined in the Chief Nursing Officer's 'Nursing and Midwifery Task Group Recommendations'³, Primary Care nursing is at the forefront of long-term condition management and population health. The Chief Nursing officer is committed to the stabilisation of generalist and support roles, and the development of specialist, advanced, consultant and leadership roles more generally.

In line with The Chief Nursing Officer's 'Shaping Our Future. A Vision for Nursing and Midwifery in Northern Ireland, 2023-2028'⁴, there is a need to understand what is required for Primary Care nursing in respect of workforce, education, career pathways and quality assurance more generally.

The event will focus on, and explore, the current range of Primary Care nursing roles which are essential to support the transformational changes required for the world class service described in Health and Well Being: Delivering Together. The value and contribution of the frontline nursing workforce is acknowledged and their views will ultimately help shape, stabilise and maximise the nursing contribution to population health.

An overall question is posed: what roles do we need and what needs to happen next?



³ [NMTG-report-and-recommendations.pdf \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

⁴ [Five-year vision outlined for Nursing & Midwifery | Department of Health \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

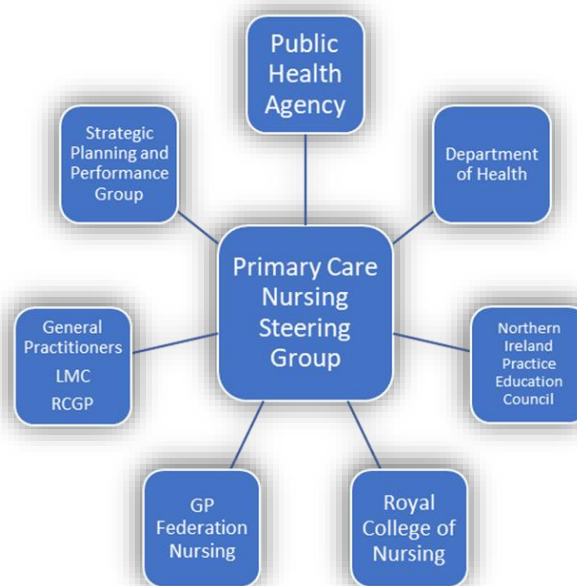
2. Context

Siobhan Donald, Assistant Director of Nursing, Public Health Agency described the context for the event.

What has already been done?

- Establishment a Primary Care Nursing Steering Group made up of multi-agency partners

Figure 1: The Primary Care Nursing Steering Group



- Introduction Advanced Nurse Practitioners in Primary Care
- Establishment of dedicated posts:
 - Nurse Consultant for Primary Care at PHA
 - Project Lead for Primary Care and Delivering Care at PHA
- Secured a dedicated budget for post-registration education in Primary Care (limited)
- Issue of General Practice Now and in the Future. A Framework for Northern Ireland (2016)⁵
- Issue of A Career Pathway for General Practice Nursing in Northern Ireland (2019)⁶

⁵ [Now and the Future: A General Practice Nursing Framework for Northern Ireland | HSC Public Health Agency \(hscni.net\)](https://www.hscni.net/now-and-the-future-a-general-practice-nursing-framework-for-northern-ireland)

⁶ [Career Pathway for General Practice Nursing | NIPEC \(hscni.net\)](https://www.hscni.net/career-pathway-for-general-practice-nursing)

- Delivering Care Phase 7 Primary Care (2019 link unavailable)
- Development of a draft paper: Primary Care Governance and Leadership Infrastructure for Nursing Workforce (2023 unpublished)

What are we doing now?

- Hosting a series of engagement events
- Benchmarking with other jurisdictions
- Commissioning a Primary Care nursing workforce literature search
- Developing a process for Primary Care nursing training needs analysis
- Analysing the data gathered via the Primary Care nursing workforce census (14th February, 2024) to produce an estimated Primary Care nursing workforce data set for Northern Ireland and inform future workforce planning.

Early findings of the workforce survey were presented. A report will be developed and shared with relevant stakeholders in due course.

Other Factors impacting on the delivery of Primary Care services

- The workforce challenges facing GPs
- The introduction of Primary care Multi-Disciplinary Teams
- The acute/secondary care pressures and interface
- Budgetary restraints



3. Front Line Discussion

It is imperative that the Primary Care nursing workforce is championed as an enabler to meeting some of the challenges that exist in our health and social care system. The unique potential needs to be showcased. The voice of frontline practitioners is key to understanding current roles and shaping those of the future. Frontline practitioners employed by GP practices, GP Federations and Trusts were invited to answer a series of questions by Amber McCloughlin, Nurse Consultant for Primary Care Workforce and Education, PHA:

- General Practice Nurse: Emma McAfee
- Nurse Practitioner: Rosie Clarke
- Health Care Assistants: Emma Welsh and Suzanne Baker
- Trust Treatment Room Nurses: Joanna Hanna and Helen Doherty
- Advanced Nurse Practitioners: Pamela Smith and Sarah Lyons



The other frontline practitioners were encouraged to answer the same questions on a template which was reviewed post- event.

The questions and themed responses from frontline practitioners (all roles):

Q1 Can you tell us about your current role and how long you have been in post?

Themed answers:

- Length in post ranged from a 1-30 years in Primary Care
- Evident academic and career progression within Primary Care
- Clinical expertise and interventions
- Leadership/managerial responsibilities
- Passion for the role and contribution to patient and population health

Q2 What made you decide on a career in Primary Care?

Themed answers:

- Preventative health, reducing hospital admissions, delivering care closer to people's homes
- First point of contact for people seeking health advice
- Continuity of care, long term therapeutic relationships with people and communities
- Exposure to treatment room and community placements as a student nurse
- Work life balance

Q3 Tell us about two things that you are proud of in your role, that makes the most positive impact on patient or population health?

Themed answers:

- ✓ Health promotion, making every contact count, shared decision making
- ✓ Improved patient journey, care closer to home, improving access to Primary Care, sharing workload/freeing up GP time.
- ✓ Reduced costs to the Health and Social Care System for example avoiding hospital admission, medicines optimisation and reduced wound care treatment costs.
- ✓ Therapeutic reach – 25-30 patients triaged or seen on a typical clinical day
- ✓ Working at skilled and advanced level, top of scope of practice

Q4 Tell us about two things that have the biggest positive impact on your work?

Themed answers:

- ✓ Positive working environment and culture, shared vision and learning, employer support.
- ✓ Positive feedback from patients and colleagues, valued as a nurse
- ✓ Autonomy, prescribing, assessing, undifferentiated diagnosis, treating, ability to manage long term conditions.

Q5 Is there anything that you do in your practice that is unique to your role?

Themed answers:

- ✓ Generalists delivering care across the lifespan for wide ranging presentations and to all abilities, backgrounds and individual needs.
- ✓ Improving access to Primary Care
- ✓ Reducing impact on GP and secondary care workload
- ✓ A gateway to other statutory and community services, self-help pathways



Summary

This was a 3-hour event with the acknowledgement that the short questions and answers would not reflect the full depth and breadth of the individual roles, providing only a snap shot for the audience. Some aspects were role specific.

This section of the event, demonstrated that the Primary Care Nursing workforce can see almost anyone of any age and with almost any possible presentation. There is a clear leadership, preventative, assessment, diagnostic, treatment, referral and follow up focus to the work, positively impacting on patient and population health. The Primary Care nursing workforce is contributing to reducing the challenges facing our stretched health and social care system.

Speakers also highlighted the challenges regarding:

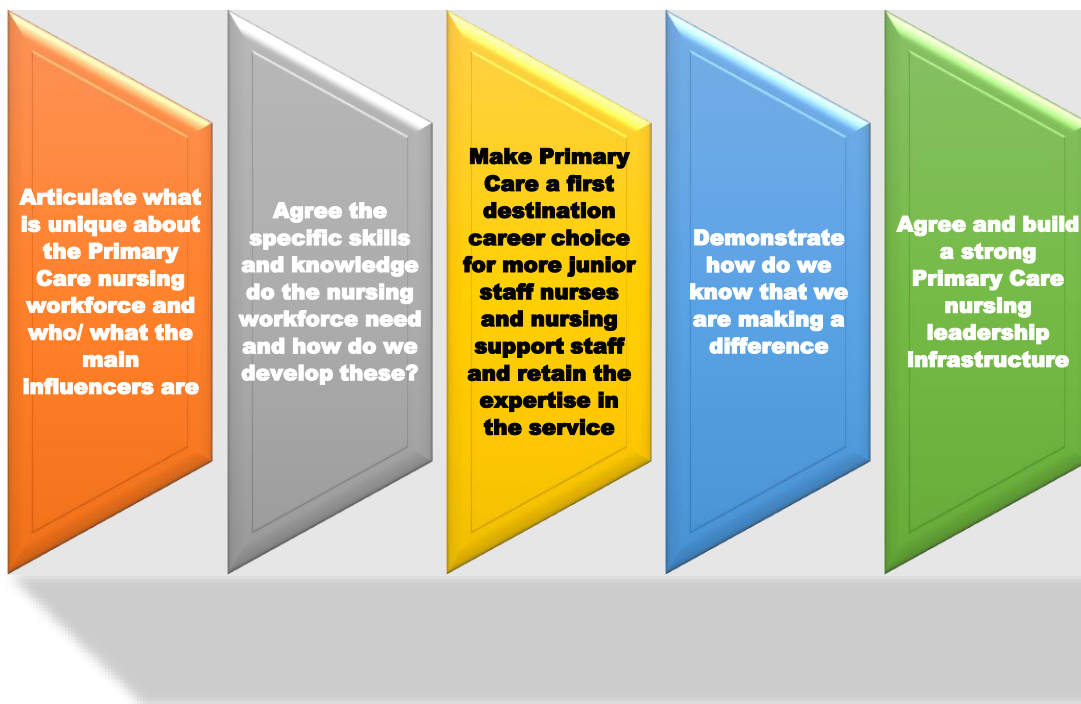
- Lack of an integrated workforce plan
- The need to develop scope of practice, particularly in treatment rooms
- Allocation of resources to bridge the primary/secondary interface and provide more care closer to the patient's home.



4. What Needs to Happen?

There is a finite resource in the system and every role is valued and required. Any available funding needs to maximise the Primary Care nursing workforce contribution to population health and to support a burdened health and social care system. Aspirations, the required roles, education, skills and competencies need to be articulated. The importance of agreeing and collecting data to assist in demonstrating worth is imperative.

We need to:



Nursing needs to be showcased. New graduate nurses are qualifying with enhanced assessment, diagnostic and treatment knowledge and skills. The uniqueness, value, current and potential capabilities of primary care nursing needs to be demonstrated to: the wider system, other nurses, GPs, the Strategic Planning and Performance Group, the Department of Health and patients and populations.

Two questions were considered in table group work and the following pages represent a summary of the discussion.

1

What are the unique skills, qualities, attributes and knowledge requirements that are required to work in Primary Care Nursing that will help meet the needs of the population now and in the future?



2

How currently, and in the future, can we evidence this unique contribution of Primary Care Nursing and Do we understand the data?



Summary

As there was limited time for verbal feedback, tables were also asked to highlight their take away messages for future Primary Care nursing roles:

- ✓ A clinically responsive expert workforce collaborating with others to improve population health.
- ✓ Role (and responsibility) clarity, stratification and standardisation linked to the Career Pathway for General Practice Nursing.⁷
- ✓ Workforce intelligence and a strategic workforce plan
- ✓ Measuring and demonstrating value and outcomes.

5. Reflections: (Heather Reid: Director of Nursing and AHP's, PHA)



Firstly, I want to thank all the contributors this evening. The passion and enthusiasm from you all both individually and collectively across the room, demonstrates the potential and ambition to provide first class services to the public that we all serve within Primary Care

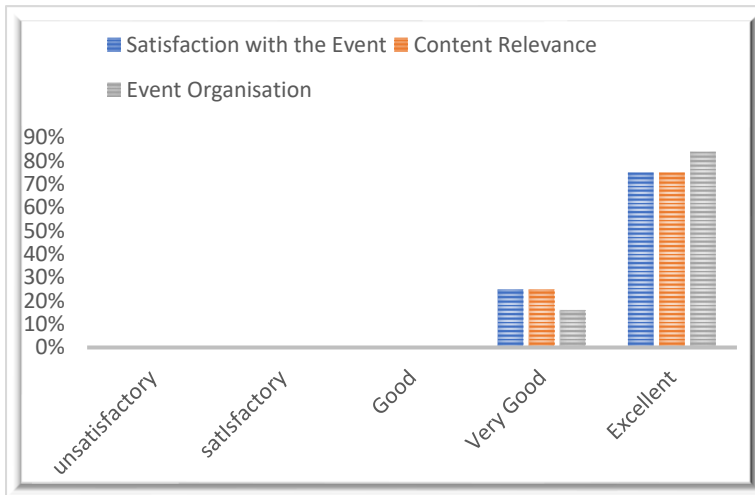
Tonight, has also demonstrated the importance of us coming together to ensure that Primary Care is left, right and centre of the transformational change required to improve patient and population outcomes: preventing ill health, keeping people out of hospital, supporting those with long term conditions and delivering high quality care closer to the patients' home. We need to gather, interpret and understand the data so as to inform and lead change and demonstrate and add value to improve the effective and efficient use of resources and population outcomes. The Primary Care nursing workforce can be a major part of the solution to the challenges that we currently face in health and social care.

⁷ [Career Pathway for General Practice Nursing | NIPEC \(hscni.net\)](https://www.hscni.net/career-pathway-for-general-practice-nursing)

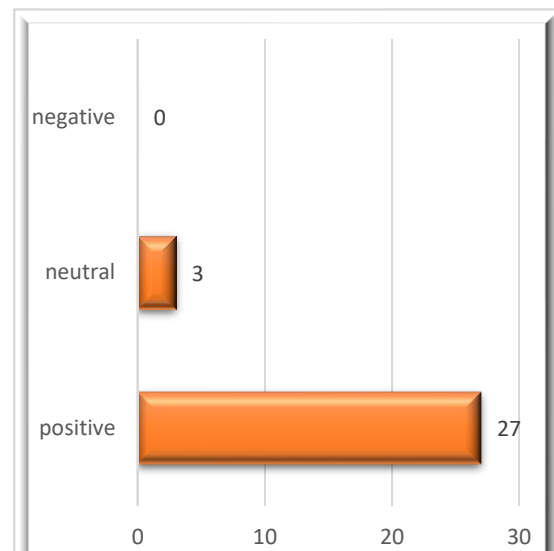
While we are not making a definite plan tonight, the PHA will commit to developing a report which we will share with you and other key stakeholders. We will also commit to continuing to listen, engage and learn from you, the frontline experts and promote inclusivity in decision making and planning.

6. Evaluation

The event was very positively evaluated.



Participants expressed in one word how they were feeling about Primary Care nursing. The majority were positive:



Overwhelmingly the discussion with the frontline nurses from the various roles was the most positive aspect of the event demonstrating the contribution to patient and population health. It was described as catalyst for future work, extending to a wider audience for example other nurses and stakeholders, such as GPs and policy

makers. Members were keen to receive further information regarding the Primary Care nursing workforce census of 14th February 2024. There were additional benefits of networking with peers and other organisations.

Learning for future events was to consider the time and duration of the event with more time allocated to group work detailed feedback.

7. Next Steps

The PHA will:

Host another event to include wider stakeholders early 2025

Share the event report with participants and other stakeholders

Share the primary care nursing workforce report with participants and other stakeholders

Consider the findings to inform future work

8. Acknowledgements

Gratitude goes to:

- ✓ Heather Reid, PHA for leading on and funding the event
- ✓ Mary Frances McManus for supporting and opening the event
- ✓ Senga Curry and Caitriona Carr for organising the event

9. Appendices

PRIMARY CARE NURSING ROLES: NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

27th June 2024

Laburnum 1 suite, Dunsilly Hotel, Antrim

IN ATTENDANCE

Jill Armstrong, Lead Nurse Workforce Planning, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
Suzanne Baker, Healthcare Assistant, South Eastern Area
Frances Barratt, Nurse Practitioner, Belfast
Andrea Beeks, Interim Locality Manager, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
Katie Brown, Advanced Nurse Practitioner, Belfast
Sharon Burnside, Nursing Officer for Education, Department of Health
Caitriona Carr, Project Lead for Primary Care, Public Health Agency
Rosie Clarke, Nurse Practitioner, Belfast
Senga Curry, Personal Secretary, Public Health Agency
Maura Devlin, Lead Nurse, Down GP Federation
Briege Dobbin, Nurse Practitioner, Belfast
Helen Doherty, Treatment Room Lead, Western Health and Social Care Trust
Siobhan Donald, Assistant Director of Nursing, Public Health Agency
Nicola Givan, Trainee Advanced Nurse Practitioner, Craigavon GP Federation
Lynda Haire, Advanced Nurse Practitioner, Derry GP Federation
Joanna Hanna, Treatment Room Lead, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
Leanne Jones, Nurse Lead, Education, Workforce and Development, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
Biji Jose, Professional Officer, Ethnic Diversity, NIPEC
Sheila Kinoulty, Nurse Consultant Workforce, Education and Professional Governance, Public Health Agency
Sarah Lyons, Advanced Nurse Practitioner, Northern GP Federation
Emma McAfee, General Practice Nurse, GP Federation
Patricia McCann, Service Manager, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
Joanne McClean, Director of Public Health, Public Health Agency
Amber McCloughlin, Nurse Consultant Primary Care Education and Workforce, Public Health Agency
Eileen McEaney, Lead Nurse, Ards GP Federation
Brendan McGrath, Assistant Director of Nursing, Workforce Planning and Modernisation, Western Health and Social Care Trust
Charlene McGuigan, Head of Service Integrated Care Teams, Southern Health and Social Care Trust
Angela McLernon, Director of Nursing, West Belfast GP Federation
Louise McMahon, Director of Primary Care, Strategic Planning and Performance Group
Mary Frances McManus, Deputy Chief Nursing Officer, Department of Health
Ashley Ramsay, Lead Nurse Community Care, Northern Health and Social Care Trust
Heather Reid, Interim Director of Nursing, Midwifery and AHP's, Public Health Agency
Marian Robertson, Lead Nurse, East Belfast Federation and Southern GP Federation
Mark Ryan, Primary Care Lead Nurse, Southern Health and Social Care Trust
Pamela Smith, Advanced Nurse Practitioner, Southern Area
Una St Ledger, Lecturer, Open University
Joanne Torrens, Community Nursing Services Manager, Western Health and Social Care Trust
Evelyn Walton, Nurse Lecturer, University of Ulster
Deirdre Webb, Lead Nurse, South West GP Federation
Emma Welsh, Healthcare Assistant, Belfast
Anne Witherow, Lead Nurse, Derry GP Federation and Northern GP Federation