

New Nurse Role to Address Staff Shortfall



Nursing Times reports that the government plans to launch a new nursing role that is specifically designed to bridge the gap between registered nurses and senior healthcare assistants. The launch is expected within the next few weeks.

The role will be assigned to a band of 4 and will be given the title of "Associate Nurse". It is still unclear whether those employed in this new post will be regulated by the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

The new role is set to be piloted at 30 sites in 2016 but it is believed that the role itself will be introduced before the pilots begin. Health Education England (HEE) is already working in collaboration with the Department of Health to develop this new role as one that would give patients the best possible safe and effective care. HEE has also revealed that it is chalking out a plan on how to make it easy for people with care experience to complete a fast-track nurse degree.

Dame Eileen Sills, chief nurse at Guys' and St Thomas' Foundation Trust explains that those who take on this role will be able to administer medicines under the supervision of registered nurses. There will be a clear title and boundaries similar to other members of a healthcare team. "There is a shortfall of nurses on the ground, and we can't continue working the way we are. Whatever happens with students, we have three years to wait so we have to do something different to protect the patient," she says.

She also points out that she has no problem supporting this new role but it needs to be regulated and its scope needs to be broad enough to add value to the nursing team.

Janice Stevens, interim chief nurse at Barts Health Trust in London also supports this change and says there is a need for something different to be able to tackle workforce vacancies. She does not believe that this new role would dumb down the profession. "It is about recognising care is complex and spans lots of needs... We've got to get off our professional high horse for the sake of quality," she said.

However, the Royal College of Nurses' Chief Executive and General Secretary Janet Davies is not as supportive and feels that the introduction of this role would be a retrograde step and could possibly recreate a second level nurse that were phased out during the 1990s. She feels this is a short-term solution and points out that the creation of a senior assistant care worker should be supplementary to and not a substitute for nurses.

Source: [Nursing Times](#)

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