LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

Shaping the future leaders of community nursing

A new leadership programme for Queen’s Nurses aims to align training with the current issues facing nurses in the community.

By Lynne Pearce

The Future Community Leaders programme is being developed by the Queen’s Nursing Institute (QNI) under the guidance of its newly appointed programme manager, Sharon Aldridge-Bent.

She has already surveyed the UK’s 1,030 Queen’s Nurses (QNs) to find out what they want from their bespoke leadership programme, and has carried out a literature review and looked at other organisations’ programmes. ‘I’m starting from inception, with lots of ideas and enthusiasm,’ she says.

Ms Aldridge-Bent, who became a QN in 2014, believes the programme will help to plug a gap.

‘As a leading organisation that is all about community nursing, for us not to do anything like this feels remiss,’ she says. ‘We are going to talk about community and not apologise for it.’

Innovative approach

A senior lecturer at Buckinghamshire New University, Ms Aldridge-Bent has been teaching district nurses for 12 years, and developing her own innovative leadership learning approaches over the past five.

‘We decided that the module we were running was very “chalk and talk”, so we rewrote it,’ she says. ‘It’s good to be able to come to the QNI and replicate some of what I’ve done.’

CONTINUED

How to stay motivated

➢ a holiday is always a good idea. It reminds you that the festivities don’t last forever.

Watch your energy levels

You don’t have to be a superhero, so ask for help at home when you need it. Save time and energy by shopping online or delegating this task to someone else. Even though your working week will continue, try to accept that routines often change at this time of the year.

Christmas can be stressful, and the pressure to have a ‘perfect’ home in which to welcome guests can add to this. But to be there for your family as well as your patients, you need to look after yourself. So grab every opportunity to sit back and relax, and don’t feel guilty about it.

Be mindful

If faith is important to you or your colleagues, spend some time together discussing practical ways to respect this.

Christmas isn’t always a happy time, and past losses or regrets can be magnified. Seek support if you need it, and look out for signs that those around you are struggling.

Mandy Day-Calder is a freelance writer and life/health coach.
Evidence and Practice
A guide to working in partnership with your patients and carers
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Paediatric research is underfunded, attracting only 5% of funds in the UK each year, according to Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH). Since 2010, the trust has received £25 million from the EU – 10% of its funding – for research into new treatments and cures.
Source: GOSH

5%

Her interactive module looked at different leadership styles and models, but also developed an event that involved bidding for funds in a Dragons’ Den-style presentation. ‘This was a lot of fun, but it also taught students about the commissioning process and how to deliver an efficient service,’ says Ms Aldridge-Bent. ‘We were trying to plug students into the new NHS agenda, which is about operating more like a business, measuring what you do and how you do it.’

Community focus
Her own experience of being on training programmes is that they don’t always reflect what’s happening in the community. She says she welcomes the chance to create something that incorporates current issues. Although it is still in the planning stages, she has begun mapping the content.

‘My vision is for people to develop themselves, identifying and understanding where they are on the leadership journey. I want to develop a leader who understands where they are in the organisation and where they are going.’

The programme is set for launch in May next year, and the first cohort will likely comprise 15-20 QNs who will earn their place via an application process. ‘I want robust selection so people know they have met the criteria and are the right person,’ says Ms Aldridge-Bent. ‘In 3-5 years’ time, they will be moving into community leadership roles. Here they are picking up their tools.’

Lynne Pearce is a freelance journalist

60-SECOND INTERVIEW

‘Don’t be afraid of failure’
Step outside your comfort zone, because fortune favours the bold, says RCN Nurse of the Year Venetia Wynter-Blyth

Venetia Wynter-Blyth has worked in oncology for 15 years. She spent 12 years as an upper gastrointestinal (GI) clinical nurse specialist before taking up her current post as Macmillan nurse consultant in upper GI cancers at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust in London. She was named RCN Nurse of the Year 2016 for creating PREPARE, a holistic ‘prehabilitation’ self-management programme for people with cancer who require surgery.

What are your main work responsibilities?
My role is divided between clinical responsibilities, related to patients with oesophago-gastric (OG) cancer and the PREPARE for surgery programme, and research, education and service development.

What do you love about your job?
Knowing that you are in a position to influence people’s lives for the better is a privilege. I enjoy getting to know my patients, their families and carers throughout the cancer pathway.

What do you find most difficult?
Due to an under-resourced NHS, we are constantly having to negotiate challenges and create new ways of working.

What is your top priority at work?
Delivering high quality patient care and ensuring the service is responsive to patient need, and promoting positive change.

How have you developed your skills in this role?
Undertaking a quality improvement leader fellowship enabled me to better understand patient and clinical engagement.

What career advice would you give your younger self?
Don’t be afraid of failure and step outside your comfort zone. My husband always says ‘fortune favours the bold’, though this is often easier said than done.

If you hadn’t become a nurse, what would you have done instead?
It may sound boring, but I don’t think I would or could be anything else. I am immensely proud of the nursing profession.