The unique Flying Start NHS® web based learning programme for supporting and nurturing newly qualified nurses, midwives and allied health professionals was introduced in 2006 by NHS Education for Scotland (NES) and the Scottish Government to support early career development and retention of our newest practitioners.

“The Flying Start NHS® programme gives newly qualified practitioners the structure they need in order to help them through that transition from being student to being responsible practitioners and being accountable for the care they deliver.”

Hazel Borland, Executive Director of Nurses, Midwives and Allied Health Professions, NHS Dumfries and Galloway.
Improved patient safety through Flying Start NHS®

Flying Start NHS® does not stand alone but is designed to underpin and articulate with the other projects and programmes for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals¹ directly linking in with the Healthcare Quality Strategy for NHSScotland¹. It supports practice as a quality learning environment and provides newly qualified practitioners evidence on their learning in practice.

Learning units, form the framework for the Flying Start NHS® programme. Each learning unit provides an aim, defines learning outcomes that participants can use to guide their work-based activity and sets a “concluding activity” that is designed to support reflective practice. The learning activities and supporting materials for managers and mentors were developed by NES to support the development needs of newly qualified practitioners in their first year in practice. The learning units are:

- Communication
- Clinical Skills
- Teamwork
- Safe Practice
- Research for Practice
- Equality & Diversity
- Policy
- Reflective Practice
- Professional Development
- Careers

One of Flying Start NHS® many strengths is that it uses the workplace as the learning environment, therefore keeping learning relevant and appropriate to each individual learner.

The importance of Flying Start NHS® to improving safe practice among new practitioners

The key success of Flying Start NHS® in promoting patient safety is the tripartite partnership between the newly qualified practitioner, his or her mentor, and the line manager. When newly qualified practitioners are effectively supported to complete Flying Start NHS® they can work within a safe scope of practice, work confidently with patients and carers, and be effective members of the multi-professional and multi-agency teams they work within.

The Safe Practice Unit

Safe Practice is a priority in NHSScotland with every practitioner being required to deliver safe and effective patient interventions. Knowing the policy context, the best practice guidance and how to manage risk effectively are key elements of the programme.

This learning unit covers:
• Clinical Governance
• Managing Risk
• Audits, Complaints
• Clinical Supervision
• Accountability.

Healthcare-related numeracy is the most commonly cited area of concern amongst newly qualified practitioners, especially in roles involving calculating medication dosage (NES 2006). In direct relation to this need, NES has responded by providing educational support through Flying Start NHS® for registered users by enabling access to an online programme specialising in calculating medication dosage.


The Communications Unit

Evidence suggests that effective communication in teams contributes to patient safety. The learning activities within the Communication learning unit encourage the newly qualified practitioner to reflect on different situations and develop their communication skills. It supports effective documentation and appropriate delegation. Some ways in which new practitioners develop communication skills with patients include:
• Observing a mentor or another experienced practitioner interacting with a patient or client and then being observed in a similar situation.
• Being involved in sharing information with patients and relatives which provokes an emotional response, for example, tears, anger or disbelief, and identifying how to approach this, and what support is available from team members when such challenges arise.

Impact of Flying Start NHS® on patient safety.

The following are quotes that illustrate the impact that Flying Start NHS® is having on supporting newly qualified practitioners:

“Through work carried out in conjunction with Flying Start NHS® I have been able to demonstrate that I have implemented change in my dietetic practice to improve patient care through clinical audit. It has been great to know that the time and effort I put into this work has been worthwhile and I now feel confident that the audit carried out will help lead to appropriate training for nursing and medical staff in order to improve patient care. Flying Start NHS® has been a major part in allowing this to happen and has given me the confidence to take my work forward.”

Dietician

“Working with my mentor, doing the learning activities within the Safe Practice unit and reflecting on my practice has made me more confident in my communication, especially surrounding patient assessments.”

Nurse

“Completing the Flying Start NHS® programme over the last year since embarking on my first post as a qualified midwife has helped me to consolidate my existing knowledge and has reinforced the importance of reflective practice and how continuing this habit of reflection on experiences in the workplace is an excellent tool to improve and enhance clinical practice and therefore the care I can provide for my clients.

The topics within the learning programme are very useful to a newly qualified practitioner, for example, clinical skills and safe practice. And I for one definitely feel my confidence and practice has improved as a result.”

Midwife


Improving patient safety through promotion of the learning resource outwith Scotland

There has been much interest expressed in the Flying Start NHS® programme not only from England, where “Flying Start England” is now available but also internationally.

The Scottish Government has set ambitious Health Service targets including the elimination of avoidable harm to patients. Education has an essential role to play which should not be overlooked just because it is difficult to quantify the impact of staff education on patient outcomes. Patient Safety education scenarios build on the established success of patient stories in using narrative and qualitative data as powerful levers for improvement. The scenarios in our portfolio demonstrate the impact of educational interventions on healthcare staff whilst caring for their patients.

Professor Philip Cachia
Chair, NES Patient Safety Multi-disciplinary Group, Postgraduate Medical Dean

The Scottish Government and NHS Education for Scotland are hugely proud of the programme.

Ros Moore Chief Nursing Officer and Jacqui Lunday Chief Health Professions Officer

Flying Start NHS® can be accessed at:
www.flyingstart.scot.nhs.uk/

Contact:
NES Patient Safety Multi-disciplinary Group
See link below

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