



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

This is a repository copy of *Care home role needs direction*.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:
<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/97436/>

Version: Accepted Version

Article:

Spilsbury, K orcid.org/0000-0002-6908-0032 (2015) Care home role needs direction. *Nursing Standard*, 29 (50). pp. 64-65. ISSN 0029-6570

<https://doi.org/10.7748/ns.29.50.64.s46>

© 2016 RCNi Ltd. This is an author produced version of a paper published in *Nursing Standard*. Uploaded in accordance with the publisher's self-archiving policy.

Reuse

Unless indicated otherwise, fulltext items are protected by copyright with all rights reserved. The copyright exception in section 29 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 allows the making of a single copy solely for the purpose of non-commercial research or private study within the limits of fair dealing. The publisher or other rights-holder may allow further reproduction and re-use of this version - refer to the White Rose Research Online record for this item. Where records identify the publisher as the copyright holder, users can verify any specific terms of use on the publisher's website.

Takedown

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.



eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/>

Care homes play an essential role in providing care for an older population with increasingly complex health care needs. As well as being an important source of long term care, care homes also prevent admissions of older people to acute hospitals and provide intermediate care to support discharge from hospital.

Whilst there is considerable overlap in dependency levels and care needs amongst care home residents with and without nursing, there are important differences in the ways in which nursing care is provided and limited understanding of the role of registered nurses (RN) employed by care homes. Little is known about the characteristics of this RN workforce, the scope of their roles, their education and training and opportunities for career development. A recently completed scoping project funded by the RCN Foundation addresses these gaps in understanding.

There is considerable variation in staffing levels and turnover between care home organisations and individual homes, but little is known about what factors influence this variation and a lack of information about employment patterns and career trajectories for these nurses.

What is known is that the RN role in care homes is broad and multifaceted and includes:

- * Managing acute illness and emergencies
- * Preventing health problems
- * Maintaining older people's functioning and well-being
- * Promoting mental health and well-being
- * Organising complex medication regimes and therapies
- * Expertise in palliative and end of life care

The RN has a pivotal role in supporting, supervising and leading the assistant workforce in care homes. Since there are also administrative, regulatory and managerial functions that the RN must fulfil, the attributes needed to address this broad remit are considerable. But how well is the nursing workforce prepared for these roles in the care home sector?

Current undergraduate pre-registration programmes are not adequately preparing the future care home nursing workforce to deliver high quality care to older residents. These programmes focus predominantly on acute care nursing with an insufficient focus on such issues as care for older people; frailty; co-morbidities; complex long term conditions; dementia and end of life care. In addition, care homes are not always providing supportive learning opportunities for pre-registration nurses.

To attract, recruit and retain the future nursing workforce, the care home sector needs to consider ways of providing challenging and rewarding career pathways for RNs. Continuing professional development opportunities for care home nurses are essential, and desired by nurses in the sector, but are currently difficult to access because of a lack of appropriate courses and funding; lack of access to NHS courses; poor understanding by commissioners of the training needs of care home nurses; and problems identifying who is responsible for assessing competence and development needs for nurses in the sector.

Looking to the future, a post-registration specialist qualification for care of older people including care home nursing, would raise the profile of the sector to attract and retain nurses and support them towards clinical leadership. Nurses employed in the sector require specialist knowledge to manage the care of residents and to liaise with, and engage, other health professionals in ensuring the needs of care home residents are met. This will promote quality in care, as well as minimising avoidable admission to acute care. Arguably, it is time for the role of the care home nurse to make its way on to political, practice, education and research agendas.

Box> Estimates of RN numbers in care homes>

Employed full time	53%
--------------------	-----

Annual turnover	29%
-----------------	-----

Current role for <3 years	50%
---------------------------	-----

End box

Resources>

RCN Foundation report: tinyurl.com/SpilsburyetalCHNs

End resources

Author: Karen Spilsbury is Professor of Nursing at the University of Leeds