



The nursing and health visiting contribution to the continuing care of older people

United Kingdom Central Council
for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting

Protecting the public through professional standards

The nursing and health visiting contribution to the continuing care of older people

Introduction

In 1994, the UKCC established a project group to address concerns about the nursing and health visiting contribution to the continuing care of older people. The purpose of this booklet is to share with the nursing and health visiting professions the issues raised through the work of the group. We also hope that it will widen the debate about continuing care generally and help to promote good practice in caring for older people.

The project group comprised UKCC Council members and external experts. While continuing care is available for people of all ages, the group's objective was to consider "care which occurs in institutional and non-institutional settings, is accessed by older people and aims to promote and maintain maximum potential for self-care." The work of the group included:

- a literature search
- expert witness advice provided through formal presentations to the project group
- interviews, discussions and written submissions
- analysis of current health authority policies on continuing care, including eligibility criteria.

Requirements for an effective contribution to continuing care

To maximise the effectiveness of care, the following are necessary:

- appropriate education, induction and clinical supervision
- an organisational culture that is committed to continuing care
- positive attitudes expressed by nurses and health visitors towards older people
- supportive and committed management processes
- respect for the contribution of other members of the care team
- appropriate delegation and supervision.

Issues for debate

The questions posed below are designed to encourage you to reflect on how you are promoting effective continuing care of older people in your working environment.

Appropriate education, induction and clinical supervision

In the interests of quality care for your client group, are you:

- providing a good role model for your staff
- equipped with the skills to recognise specific needs
- able to access relevant literature, education and expertise to support your practice
- able to access continuing professional development to support changing practice
- aware of research to inform your practice
- accessing and providing mentorship, preceptorship and clinical supervision to support you and your colleagues
- clearly able to demonstrate the appropriate competence of staff
- able to support staff in developing specialist skills and knowledge to meet needs
- employing appropriately qualified staff with the specialist knowledge to deliver appropriate care?

An organisational culture that is committed to continuing care

In order to create the appropriate culture, do you:

- take responsibility for promoting that culture
- initiate practice developments rather than waiting to be told
- ensure that the care environment is appropriate to the needs of older people
- review your practice
- take pride in the quality of care delivered
- ensure that organisational values reflect patient and client need
- provide incentives to access quality care
- recognise excellence through a national or local award?

Positive attitudes expressed by nurses and health visitors towards older people

Can you and your staff demonstrate commitment to caring for older people by:

- having chosen to work with older people
- articulating the holistic nursing and health visiting contribution to care
- sharing staff, client and carer perceptions of the needs of older people

- sharing good practice
- communicating with other colleagues who are caring for older people
- recognising that needs assessment, promotion and rehabilitation are important aspects of care?

Supportive and committed management processes

Does your organisation:

- acknowledge and value your contribution
- offer opportunities for sharing and implementing ideas
- provide an open and honest environment where feedback is encouraged
- have regular performance reviews
- reward quality care
- actively seek external accreditation of care
- consider issues from an individual as well as an organisational position?

Respect for the contribution of other members of the care team

Does the care delivered reflect:

- evidence of team working
- recognition of the need for team working
- the agency or profession which is best able to offer the most appropriate care for the patient or client
- an increasing understanding of the benefits of the contribution of other professions
- working in partnership with patients, clients and their carers?

Appropriate delegation and supervision

Can you or your staff ensure that:

- any delegation is appropriate to meet the needs of the patient or client
- there is adequate supervision and support of both newly registered and unregulated health staff
- the initial assessment of care is carried out by appropriately qualified staff
- the delivery of care is monitored and supported by registered practitioners?

The nursing and health visiting contribution

The project group identified four key areas where nursing and health visiting can make a positive contribution to continuing care.

The need for specialist practice skills

Patients who have access to specialist nurses and health visitors are more knowledgeable, more proficient in self-care and more satisfied with the care they receive. Gerontological teams could be led by nurses and health visitors, while clients in residential homes would benefit from easier access to specialist district nursing, health visiting and practice nursing skills. There is both the potential and the need to develop a similar model to teaching hospitals in the nursing home sector. These 'teaching nursing homes' would be centres of academic and practice excellence and would provide clinical practice placements for pre- and post-registration students.

Assessment of needs and review of needs

Nurses and health visitors should play a crucial role in needs assessment and review. They offer a fundamental holistic perspective upon assessment and meeting individual, family and community needs. Assessment tools must reflect adequately the nursing and health visiting care required.

Health promotion and health maintenance

Health promotion in the continuing care of older people is frequently undervalued and unrecognised. Promoting health and preventing ill health is a major nursing and health visiting responsibility, particularly in continuing care, where improved fitness can minimise illness, disability and dependency.

Working in partnership with clients and carers

Continuing care is enhanced by partnerships with those who provide care. Nurses and health visitors have a crucial role to play in promoting this partnership approach. They are required to act as advocates and to support self-care and autonomy for older people. A good working relationship between nurses and health visitors, carers and older people promotes informed decision making and patient or client autonomy.

Conclusion

By asking yourself the questions and addressing the four key areas noted above, we hope that you will be able to reflect upon your current practice and develop your future practice in the interests of quality patient and client care. For further information, please contact Angie Roques, Director of Policy Development, at the UKCC's address or by telephone on 0171 333 6543.

November 1997



United Kingdom Central Council
for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting

23 Portland Place, London W1N 4JT Telephone 0171 637 7181 Fax 0171 436 2924

Protecting the public through professional standards