

Queen's Nursing Institute announces 'time to reinstate district nursing' in major new report on the state of district nursing in the UK



The Queen's
Nursing Institute

13 January 2009

The Queen's Nursing Institute today launches a major new report into the state of district nursing in the United Kingdom, and its future in 21st century health services. One hundred and fifty years after the first district nurse was employed to nurse people at home, the nature of health care and society has changed profoundly. The report concludes that 'there is no need to reinvent district nursing ... but it is necessary to reinstate district nursing, recognising its centrality and expertise in a key arena for health care over the next decade: the patient's own home'.

The report, entitled '2020 Vision – focusing on the future of district nursing', refocuses attention on the core values, knowledge and skills of district nursing. The report is based on a review of policy and literature concerning community nursing and the views of district nurses from all parts of the UK through a survey conducted with the British Journal of Community Nursing, and an online consultation group.

The report was launched at a general meeting of Islington district nurses at Bingfield Primary Care Centre, part of Islington PCT on 13 January 2009.

Key messages from the report are:

- 1) An increasing volume of care, including highly specialised care, is being delivered in people's homes. The skills required to nurse patients in the home are very different from the skills needed in hospitals or even those needed in clinical settings in primary care. The number of qualified district nurses has declined by 23% in the last decade, though total numbers of nurses in primary care have gone up by 38%. We need to make sure that community nurses have the right skills to give expert care in the home.
- 2) District nursing has too often been judged by its individual tasks, rather than the complex and holistic service it provides, leading to a serious undervaluing of the knowledge and expertise required for the role, which is frustrating and demoralising for district nurses.
- 3) We should celebrate and develop the home as a setting for care, and reinstate district nursing as embodying the specialist knowledge and practical skills necessary to nurse in the home – though this may well be delivered along care pathways in future rather than in traditional DN services.

Rosemary Cook CBE, Director of the QNI said, "The Queen's Nursing Institute is concerned that in some quarters the huge importance of district nursing to primary care has not been fully appreciated. District nursing was not mentioned in Lord Darzi's Next Stage Review report, even though district nursing embodies many of the essential aims of the Review. The direction of health services today – from hospital to home, using the latest technology combined with relationship-based care – means that district nursing has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to step into a future for which it is uniquely suited.'

Sarah Hayes, Acting Clinical Services Manager for District Nursing at Islington PCT welcomed the report saying "District nursing is right at the heart of health services and integral to new developments in

primary care over the coming decade. District Nursing is rising to meet the challenge of looking after people with very complex needs at home and the level of integrated working across Health and Social care boundaries reflect this. In Islington we work with our multidisciplinary partners to develop our team members' specialist skills and we are at the forefront of using electronic systems to improve care coordination and communication across the health and social care team."

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The Queen's Nursing Institute is a registered charity, No.213128. We support community nurses in any specialty with project funding, professional development, information networks, financial and personal assistance, and work to influence national policy affecting nurses in primary care.

2. '2020 Vision' is the successor to the report 'Vision and Values – a call for action on community nursing' – which the QNI published in April 2006. Copies of Vision and Values and 2020 Vision are available by contacting the QNI.