



## Press Release

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# Homeless Health Network Reaches 10 Year Milestone

The Queen's Nursing Institute (QNI) is marking a decade of progress since the launch of its Homeless Health Network for community nurses in November 2007.

Homeless health is one of the most complex areas of nursing, addressing poor physical health, mental health, addictions and the wider determinants of health including immigration, housing and poverty. It demands skilful, compassionate, and advanced nursing skills.

### Beginnings

In 2007, Homeless Health Nurses Jane Cook and Dr Jane Gray OBE met Rosemary Cook CBE (then Director of the QNI) to explore the potential for a national network of homeless health nurses, facilitated by the QNI. The two nurses had already been providing voluntary support to a large cohort of homeless health nurses, but they recognised the need for a more formal structure.

The new network was officially launched at homelessness social enterprise The House of St Barnabas in London in November 2007, with Islington MP Jeremy Corbyn as a speaker, alongside Jane Gray and QNI Fellow Pippa Bagnall.

Over the years the network has attracted significant funding from the Big Lottery Fund, John Paul Getty Jr Foundation, Merchant Taylors Company, Monument Trust, and Oak Foundation to support nurses with development opportunities, including learning and networking events, forums, conferences, resources, national advisory groups and policy work.

### Today

From a small start, the network has today grown to over 1500 members. The QNI has organised conferences attracting over 120 delegates and was commissioned by the Department of Health to develop a report that has influenced the education of health professionals across the areas of Homeless and Inclusion Health.

Multiple regional learning events have brought nurses and other professionals together to learn and share experiences. Issues covered have included some rarely explored in the wider health sector, including the health of sex workers, refugee health, historical psychological trauma, and dual diagnosis.

The QNI has worked with the network to create evidence-based resources to support best practice on homeless health topics including safeguarding, nutrition, mental health, the criminal justice system, foot care, oral health, epilepsy and a specialist holistic health assessment. Nurses from the network were also instrumental in helping create the Transition to Homeless Health Online Learning Resource, a guide for nurses starting out in homeless healthcare, launched in July 2017.

### The Future...

The QNI is currently funding ten nurse-led innovation projects, which aim to improve healthcare for people who are homeless and, looking ahead, the QNI will be working with members of the network to shape the programme of learning events and resources over the next three years.

Commenting on the ten year milestone, The QNI's Chief Executive Dr Crystal Oldman CBE commented:

"Nurses working with people who are homeless are highly skilled professionals working to support the health and wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable in our society. With no accredited specialist training available for the role

and nurses often working for small employers, the QNI homeless health network and the provision of our continuing professional development provides a professional lifeline for these nurses. The QNI's Homeless Health work has been an effective source of support over the last ten years, helping community nurses to grow skills, knowledge and confidence, increase their range of knowledge and to have a voice in policy at a national level."

Founder members Jane Cook and Dr Jane Gray OBE (both now Queen's Nurses) said:

"Ten years ago, we gathered information about the needs of nurses working with the homeless and other vulnerable groups (asylum seekers, Travellers and sex workers) across the UK. The nurses were all aligned in our unfaltering belief that the best way to develop and to deliver professional, high quality and respectful care to people who were homeless was by ensuring nurses had the right support to do their work. The QNI set up the Homeless Health Network in response to our request.

"Working in this field is demanding and these nurses often felt isolated, so the network became a vital resource. It helped nurses to support each other, promote a specialist area of nursing, and develop innovations to improve the quality of care.

"The QNI has been the ideal host for the network, as an established charity for nursing in the community. The network has far exceeded our expectations in terms of the quality of support for nurses working in this field, promoting the health needs of people who are homeless, and developing the right resources to improve the quality of care. We have been blessed to have the QNI driving forward this essential aspect of healthcare."

Notes for editors:

To find out more please visit our **new web page** detailing some of the history and achievements of the network.

Read the **Homeless Health Impact Report 2014-2017**.

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