

Could newly-qualified Nursing Associates play a key role in the future of School Nursing?

The developing role of the Nursing Associate continues to provide an abundance of added value across the Healthcare workforce.

They receive high-quality training, across all fields of nursing, which allows them to learn the highest professional standards and values needed to forge a successful career.

Having been exposed to nursing children, adults, people with learning disabilities and mental health issues (to name just a few), it's safe to say that Nursing Associates have a broad spectrum of knowledge.

Not only do they study up to Level 5, they also have the option to progress further by completing an extra year to achieve Registered Nurse status, if required.

With such a varied skill mix on their CV, there's no doubt they have the experience to complement the existing workforces in School Nursing teams.

School nursing is crying out for team members who can demonstrate that they have the ability to support children and their families.

Nursing Associates are used to working in complex situations and boast experience of supporting both adults and children who may have mental health issues or learning disabilities.

Having successfully completed their Foundation Degree studies, Nursing Associates are usually encouraged to apply for a suitable Band 4 role.

Some of the fortunate applicants will manage to achieve this. Hopefully, in a position which is a great first step in a long and fruitful nursing career.

However, those who do not secure a suitable Band 4 role often end up being employed as a Band 2. In most cases, this role does not need a skillset as high as those displayed by a newly-qualified Nursing Associate.

Having already undergone a great deal of diverse training, and soaked up a breadth of on-the-job work experience, this is probably not the best use of their skills or qualifications.

Throughout their studies, they've been employed as a Health Care worker (Band 2) in a hospital setting. As a result, they know the protocols and systems in place – and can competently work in roles to promote health and prevent ill health. This built-up knowledge means they have the skills and ability to confidently put their hand to any situation. More importantly they are registered and accountable to the NMC.

Working under the direction and supervision of a Specialist Public Health Nurse, they could easily develop from a Nursing Associate to become a registered School Nurse.

With two years of Nurse training already completed, they would only need to commit to a two-year top up to become a fully-qualified School Nurse.

Creating this pathway is not just good for the people who've worked hard to kick-start their Nursing careers, it's also positive for the School Nurse profession, which would benefit from a continual stream of highly-qualified team members.