

Developing nursing leadership and a support for nurses is crucial to the quality of patient care

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Ward sisters/Charge nurses need to be given a more prominent leadership role in hospitals if standards of acute nursing care are to be improved according to a new paper from the University of Birmingham's leading health policy unit the **Health Services Management Centre**.

</Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/HSMC/publications/PolicyPapers/policy-paper-twelve-time-to-care.pdf>

The paper, **'Time to Care? Responding to concerns about poor nursing care'** (</Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/HSMC/publications/PolicyPapers/policy-paper-twelve-time-to-care.pdf>), makes a series of recommendations to support nurses working in acute hospital care to deliver a better service for patients. As well as recommendations focussed on leadership the paper also identifies the need for a systematic approach to supporting nurses with the emotional stress of caring work and a recognised training programme for healthcare support workers.



A number of external reports including the Francis Inquiry (2010) and most recently the Care Quality Commission report Care Quality Commission 2011 have highlighted problems with nursing care in the NHS.

Researchers gathered views of those working in the NHS before convening a series of focus groups involving senior nurses, particularly Directors of Nursing, a job that is designed to oversee good nursing care in the NHS, to explore the relevant issues and seek practical solutions.

The seven core recommendations are:

Environment of care

1. Ward sisters/Charge nurses need to be given a more prominent leadership role in hospitals if standards of acute nursing care are to be improved according to a new paper from the University of Birmingham's leading health policy unit the Health Services Management Centre
2. Senior Nurse leaders need to be freed from the competing demands placed upon their time to enable them to fulfil the prime role of leading clinical nursing
3. Where new ward designs limit the visibility of nurses, systems of 'intentional rounding' should be introduced to ensure organisational processes enable nurse patient contact to be maintained.
4. Clinical dashboards that measure nursing care indicators, which can then be reported to the Board, are an important tool which should be introduced into every acute hospital trust

Education and development

5. Student nurses need to feel a greater sense of belonging to the nursing profession rather than being identified primarily as a university student.
6. Healthcare support workers would benefit from a recognised training programme in every organisation, underpinned by a probationary period for all new starters.

Emotional Labour of Nursing

7. Boards should recognise the emotional labour of nursing and establish a systematic approach to supporting nurses. This should be evaluated to assess its impact on nurses as carers and the subsequent outcome for patients.



Lead author **Yvonne Sawbridge** (</staff/profiles/social-policy/sawbridge-yvonne.aspx>), **Senior Research Fellow at HSMC** explains: "Maintaining the quality of nursing care is a policy focus for all governments and this has meant regular changes to the system nurses work in.

What we try to do in this paper is provide some clear principles for improving the experiences of nurses working in acute care, as the literature identified the emotional cost of care, but this recognition was not embedded in practice. Whilst many would acknowledge that nursing is an emotionally difficult job, this rarely features in current debates, and organisations rarely discuss nursing in these terms.

Giving nurses systematic support would enhance the experience for all nurses and their patients on acute wards and send a clear message that the role nurses play in acute care is genuinely valued"

Do you agree that new plans to improve nursing care need to focus on developing nursing leadership and support for nurses?

Have your say - read the full opinion (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/perspective/nursing.aspx>)

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