Assistant/Associate Practitioner Steering Group Meeting
28th October 2008

Present:
Ann Staiton   Progress South Central
Camilla Leach  NESC
Emma Wilton   NESC
Jenny Simmons  Heatherwood and Wexham Park Foundation Trust
Jo Sandy      Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust
Julie Abdalla  Hampshire PCT
Mark Statham   NESC
Ruth Monger   South Central Strategic Health Authority
Sam Donohue  Oxfordshire Assistant Practitioner Project Lead
Sue Byrne     Oxfordshire PCT
Toni Sanderson  NESC
Adedayo Odubayo  NESC

Apologies:
Anita Esser   Southampton University Hospital Trust
Cathy Geddes  South Central SHA
David Slingo   O.B.M.H
Mary Sommervile  Progress South Central
Richard Billings  NESC

1. Apologies and Introduction
   Introductions were made and apologies given.

2. Minutes of Steering Group Meeting on 29.07.08
   The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising
   Following the discussions at the last meeting and comments from the Directors’ of Nursing meeting, EW has updated the Definition and the Code of Conduct for the Assistant/Associate Practitioner. These papers can be found on the NESC’S website following the link below:-
   http://www.nesc.nhs.uk/research_and_innovation/widening_participation/ap_development.aspx

   A meeting has been arranged between Foundation Degree Forward (FdF) and NESC to discuss the development of an education framework for Assistant/Associate Practitioners.

4. Reviewing Workforce Plans – establishing demand for the Assistant/Associate Practitioners
   RM presented the Skill mix paper which gives information about staff employed with bands 1-4 across NHS South Central. Also, she informed members that the Electronic Staff Register (ESR) will be the source for capturing future data.

       • 37% of the total workforce across NHS South Central is employed at Bands 1-4.
• Trusts and PCTs across south central have recorded an increase in growth of the number of staff employed at Band 4. At the HR Best Practice forum EW attended, suggestions were made around the inclusion of the admin staff members into the Assistant/Associate Practitioner framework.

• Members raised concerns on how meaningful demand forecast can be captured from Trusts and PCTs across South Central for the use of this steering group and the need for uniformity in the level of commissioning and placements across south central.

• The issue of regulation was also raised and members suggested that there should be parameters in place for the Assistant/Associate Practitioners.

• Data is needed regarding demand for the Assistant/Associate Practitioner in 2009/10 and 2010/2011. This information is required by the end of December to inform financial plans. RM will develop a template for capturing data which will be shared with steering group members for comment.

  **Action**: RM to develop AP demand template to be shared with steering group.

5. **Education Framework**

• MS and EW met recently to discuss development of a Continuous Professional Development Framework for staff employed in bands 1-4. A graphical representation of the framework was shared.

• The core elements of the framework are based on Lord Darzi’s pathways and the primary objective is to broaden out CPD across south central, from bands 1 - 9.

• Programmes for development (such as Foundation Degrees) will be based upon clinical pathways. The framework will include progression from NVQs into Foundation Degrees, and beyond. It will adopt a Modular approach.

• Members felt that HEIs must be able to provide programmes that will be sustainable and structured around the pathways. Also, there should be suite of modules available to provide Assistant /Associate Practitioners with CPD. Provision must be flexible and easily accessible.

  – E.g. Distant learning e.t.c.

• EW informed members of the scheduled meeting with Dr Sue Tatum and Dr Helen Thomas of Foundation Degree Forward, where the practical embedding of this framework will be looked into.

6. **Feedback from Clinical Standards and HR Forum**

• EW presented the definition and the Code of Conduct for the Assistant/Associate Practitioner at the last Clinical Standard’s meeting and the HR Best Practice Forum.
• There were positive comments from these two groups and the Code of Conduct and the Definition for the Assistant/Associate Practitioners has been amended to reflect the feedback received.

• The Clinical Standard Committee is happy to support the work of the Steering group and endorse the Definition and Code of Conduct for the Assistant/Associate Practitioner.

• RM informed members of work being undertaken to scope the nursing workforce and to develop maternity support workers across NHS South Central.

• Members suggested that the Assistant/Associate Practitioner title should be kept open to accommodate employees who are qualified as Assistant/Associate Practitioners but have different title.

• The impact of clarity, transferability and consistency in the commissioning of the Assistant/Associate Practitioner project was also discussed.

• EW informed members of the discussion at the HR Best Practice Forum regarding the growing demands for the Assistant/Associate Practitioner. HR Leads felt that an exciting potential exists to develop the new role into existing teams, but that work needs to be undertaken to make these teams aware of the competences and abilities of Assistant/Associate Practitioners.

  **Action:** EW to attend the Social Partnership Forum and will feedback at the next meeting.

7. **Evaluation Report**

• Dependent upon trust needs, there are areas on the national occupation shortage list where it may be helpful to expand the number of Assistant/Associate Practitioners. CL sighted examples of Speech and Language Therapy.

• CL informed members of how enthusiastic Assistant/Associate Practitioners are about their jobs. They were keen to suggest ways to expand the post and utilise their skills and training more fully.

• The Majority of Assistant/Associate Practitioners CL interviewed had undertaken Foundation Degrees, and had also previously undertaken NVQs. They appear to prefer Foundation Degrees to NVQs as they are of the opinion that Foundation Degrees has much more benefits than NVQs. They felt that Foundation Degree gave them a greater depth to their work and equipped them with a greater capability to assist qualified staff.

• The issue of awareness for the role of the Assistant/Associate Practitioner was also raised as the Assistant/Associate Practitioners interviewed were constantly explaining to both new and old staff, their role and the benefits attached to it and the difference between their role and that of the Health care assistants and registered staff. Thus, they all wanted more publicity and better communication about the role.
• Some Assistant/Associate Practitioners would like to partake in any event aimed at the interests of the Assistant/Associate Practitioners that would be held across the patch where they will be able to network and share experiences and ideas with their colleagues.

8. **Website Update**
   • The amended Definition and Code of Conduct have been updated on the NESC’s website. Examples of Job Description and Personal Specifications can be accessed by following this link: [http://www.nesc.nhs.uk/research_and_innovation/widening_participation/ap_development.aspx](http://www.nesc.nhs.uk/research_and_innovation/widening_participation/ap_development.aspx)

   • EW circulated the draft copy of the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) to members. **Action**: Comments and Feedbacks to be sent to EW.

   • CL informed members of the existence of a Society of Radiographers Strategic Group that develop the education of the Assistant/Associate Practitioners.

   • It was felt that contacts links of Leads for the Assistant /Associate Practitioners across the patch should be provided. **Action**: EW to add contacts to the FAQs

9. **Long Term Conditions Foundation Degree Update**
   • The Pathway has started at the University of Southampton with 6 students. There are other 6 students who are yet to decide the pathway to go through.

   • Thames Valley University are currently recruiting as the commencement of the pathway has been deferred till February 2009.

   • Service Users Mentors (SUM) are being developed by the Expert Patient Programme to support students as reflective practice facilitators. The use of the Service Users Mentors will be evaluated.

   • Elaine Schurch, Project lead, is now working 5 days in a month, until 31st March 2009.

10. **Next Step and Priorities**
    • NESC to meet with the Sue Tatum and Helen Thomas (FdF) regarding the CPD framework.

    • EW to attend the Assistant Practitioner National Working Group meeting.

    • The educational equivalence to Foundation Degrees to be mapped.

    • Consider how this work fits with the Skills Academy being developed within NHS South Central and how to complement and work in synergy with Skills for Health.

11. **Any other Business**
• It was suggested that the uniforms of the Assistant/Associate practitioners’ should be looked into.

• The issue of foreign nationals who come to work in the NHS within the UK was discussed. Some people who are registered practitioners are unable to gain registered jobs in the UK so may chose to work as Assistant/Associate Practitioners. This may require support to develop their English language skills and to overcome residency challenges.

• The Progress South Central Leaflet was distributed by AS.

12. Date of next meeting

• Date of the next meeting will be confirmed as soon as possible.