Changing roles, new tasks and new ways of working mean that people need to be trained and educated in new ways. Crucially, the Taskforce is responsible for encouraging the development of the whole primary care workforce. This multiprofessional approach has already identified a gap in practice nurse training and led to investment in a new training programme (see page 3). There also needs to be further development and support of healthcare assistants. The Taskforce is also exploring new types of roles such as physicians’ assistants, an idea imported from the US but gathering momentum in this country.

The Taskforce is also nationally leading the delivery of appraisal to general practitioners. Appraisal is set to be the cornerstone of regulation as revalidation is introduced in 2009.

"Healthcare professionals are finding themselves in new roles and situations and the division of responsibilities between members of the team is also constantly changing," said Nick Lyons, Primary Care Taskforce Lead.

While planning for the long term, the Taskforce can quickly launch small scale projects.

"We are really encouraging individuals to develop educational initiatives in their local area. So far we have funded actors in the training of health care workers, offered training in educational leadership, established mentoring schemes and looked at how to support individuals who sometimes struggle to deliver consistent high quality care," said Nick.

Funding for local initiatives

If you have an education or training initiative that supports the development of the primary care workforce the Taskforce would like to hear from you. The Taskforce can offer funding and all the support you need. To talk through your ideas contact nick.lyons@nesc.nhs.uk.
NESC presentation and poster success at RCGP conference

The NESC School of Primary Care made a strong showing at the Royal College of General Practitioners 2008 Annual Conference. In addition to a joint presentation made by Associate Dean Mark Rickenbach, and Research and Development Manager, Sam Scallan, on the development of the organisation’s approach to quality assurance, NESC was particularly visible in the poster category accounting for 12% of the posters shown.

The conference provided an opportunity to network and share ideas with colleagues working in similar areas nationally and internationally. The interest and comments generated by the posters made attending the event worthwhile, and will contribute to future project development.

Projects were drawn from the Primary Care Taskforce and Schools of General Practice (Wessex and Oxford) working in collaboration with NESC’s Research and Development Team. The projects presented were:

- Annual Review of Competence Progression Panel
- Peer Review for GP Appraisers
- Quality Assurance for Newly Trained GP Appraisers
- Developing your skills as a GP Educator: the Professional Reflective Enrichment Tool
- Extensions to Training for General Practice
- Foundation Training in General Practice
- Llama Intranet Project
- Practitioners with Special Interests
- Practice Leader Programme

For further information on these projects, email sam.scallan@nesc.nhs.uk

Meet the NESC Heads of Schools

Dr Richard Weaver,
Head of School of General Practice, Wessex

I came to Wessex in 1980 on a three-year GP training scheme in Bournemouth and Poole and secured a practice partnership in Bournemouth in 1983.

As a GP for over 25 years I have been extensively involved in GP education. I have experience as a small groups leader, GP Tutor for the Bournemouth area, Course and Programme Organiser and as the Associate Director for Dorset for 10 years. I have worked at the Deanery since 2004, first as Deputy Director, and was appointed Head of School at the beginning of 2008. I assumed my role full time from mid-September 2008 working Mondays to Thursdays.

I have been involved in most aspects of general practice, CPD and training for over 30 years in the Wessex area. I feel very privileged to have been part of this excellent Deanery and plan to revitalise and rebuild following recent reorganisations. I look forward to working with all of you.

Glynis Buckle,
Head of School of General Practice, Oxford

I have a background in primary care management and education, making the move to full time medical educationalist in January 2004 working across both Oxford Deanery and Leicestershire Northamptonshire and Rutland Deanery (now part of East Midlands Deanery).

I became a CPD Tutor in 2000, an HPE (Higher Professional Education) Tutor in 2001 and then a VTS Course Organiser (Programme Director) in 2003. I joined the Oxford Deanery Associate Director team in January 2004, taking responsibility for directing and delivering the New Teachers Course. At the same time I became Deputy Director of the LNR Foundation School, where I remained until being appointed to the role of Deputy GP Dean and Head of School in Oxford Deanery in November 2007. This is an exciting and challenging role, but one in which I am very well supported by an excellent team.
NESC is funding a pilot of what is possibly the first foundation training programme for general practice nurses (GPNs). The pilot recognises the need to create a training pathway for nurses to enter into practice training and is starting to draw national attention.

The programme has been specifically designed for nurses who have not previously worked in primary care. It is modelled on vocational training for GPs, with practical workplace training supplemented by a day release course. The theoretical training is being delivered locally and accredited by the University of Plymouth.

Ten nurses from GP training practices across Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire started the first phase of the programme in September.

Programme manager Sandy Tinson sees this as an important initiative. “Most of the skills required by GPNs are not part of pre-registration nurse education, nor are they usually found in nurses working in other settings. There is no pathway into general practice, so gaps in skills have to be addressed on the job, and training varies enormously depending on the practice’s resources. We believe this programme will ensure a level of consistency and competency for the GPN in the future, and hope the pilot will secure funding for the future.”

Kate Ronaldson from Falkland Surgery in Newbury is currently on the programme and is aiming to become an advanced clinical practitioner.

“It’s a comprehensive skills-based course, with a clear aim of producing highly competent, confident practice nurses,” said Kate.

“The programme is led and taught by inspirational role models and there’s great support from training surgeries. I think it’s a fantastic course and great fun!”

The second phase of the project will commence in Hampshire, Dorset and the Isle of Wight in January 2009.

To find out more, email sandy.tinson@nesc.nhs.uk

Kate Ronaldson is one of the first practice nurses on the programme

Community staff get skills boost

A new course for primary care practitioners is designed to give nurses, AHPs and other roles a rapid skills update.

The Community UpSkilling the Workforce Programme (CUSP), ensures that participants have the skills to carry out a physical examination, take a detailed history from a patient and be confident with the decision-making process regarding treatment and/or referral of clients.

“The programme is also a stepping stone to more advanced practitioner roles and further studies, like non-medical prescribing and modular courses such as management of minor injury/illness and long term conditions,” said Elaine Bowden, Education Commissioning Manager.

The course is delivered by Oxford Brookes and Bournemouth Universities. For more information contact:

shsc_cusp@brookes.ac.uk
(Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire)
bedwardes@bournmouth.ac.uk
(Hampshire and Isle of Wight)

Increase in GP training on the way

At least half of the doctors qualifying from medical school are set to become GPs in the future, thanks to an increase of 800 new trainees over the next three years. The measure is part of The Next Stage Review – A High Quality Workforce and underlines the NHS “commitment to supporting and improving primary care”.

The review’s recommendations are based on increasing demand in general practice, with greater complexity of care and an ageing population, even without the planned transfer of secondary care into primary care and the new “Darzi centres”.

There is further recognition of the challenges of the future, including a decreasing workforce supply, fuelled partly by an increase in part-time working and an anticipated bulge of retirements in the next five to 10 years.

Simon Plint, GP Dean and Head of School of Primary Care, said: “In the context of reports of underemployment from newly qualified GPs, the announcement may appear counter-intuitive, but there is robust evidence that unless the expansion begins immediately the GP workforce will never make up its numbers and if there are workforce shortages, prophecies of secondary care practitioners coming out to primary care will be self-fulfilling.”

For both Oxford and Wessex Deaneries this will translate into an expansion of 50% from the present numbers over three years – requiring the creation of new hospital training posts and the recruitment and development of large numbers of new training practices. All general medical and dental practices in NHS South Central have been invited to submit expressions of interest in grants being offered by the Primary Care Taskforce to become training practices.

For more information email simon.plint@nesc.nhs.uk
Thirteen delegates from the Oxford and Wessex Schools of General Practice presented papers at this year’s Association of Medical Educators in Europe (AMEE) conference in Prague.

The topics presented ranged from innovative ways of supporting and teaching GP specialty registrars, to reviews of the recent implementation of workplace based assessment, ARCP panels and practice accreditation.

The important role played by administrative staff to support doctors in training was further highlighted by Oxford Deanery office managers, under the banner of Quality Management of Training.

“AMEE is a wonderful opportunity not just to read about what is happening elsewhere but to actually get to talk to the people who are doing it. Like most conferences the value of the informal networking cannot be overstated and this often leads to longer term collaboration on issues that we thought were particular to us but are in fact shared by many others,” said Glynis Buckle, Deputy GP Dean and Head of School of General Practice, Oxford Deanery.

The conference was attended by over 2,500 delegates, predominantly from Europe but also from Canada and the USA.

Zishan Ali’s path to becoming a GP has had its ups and downs, including a few embarrassing cases of mistaken identity!

I started off on the vocational training scheme as a mere SHO, but soon became labelled with a variety of titles, some new, others more recognisable, including GP Registrar, ST3 and the new “associate in training (AIT)”. With the new titles came new methods of learning, teaching and examination. Long gone are the days of the mid-term and end-of-job assessments. Now, rightly so, assessments take place throughout the placements in the form of an e-portfolio, using a variety of assessment tools. The e-portfolio is a fantastic learning tool, which allows you to record all of those interesting patients and conditions that you have come across in your training. The other major advantage is that now I also no longer have dozens of sheets of paper lying around at home, as all the information is conveniently stored away onto my e-portfolio!

The AKT exam was held in the Pearson Vue Test Centre where all the driving theory tests take place. Having sat my driving theory paper in the test centre several years ago, I wasn’t looking forward to returning to it with its drab 1970s interior. To my complete surprise, it has had a refurbishment. Now it is all shiny and gleaming with several computer portals. Despite all the exams, the majority of the training this year has been in the practice itself, seeing the patients. My favourite part has been the home visits. The privilege of being allowed into someone’s home is immense, coupled with the satisfaction of helping them in their hour of need; it is something that only a healthcare professional can truly understand. It is from these home visits that I have had my most memorable experiences. On one occasion, I was mistaken for a double glazing salesman and almost chased off the property; worse still, on another, I was mistaken for a burglar! Fortunately, after utilising my communication skills the visits were able to go ahead with no further problems. All in all, I can say that being an AIT (Associate in Training Royal College of General Practitioners) has been tremendous fun and thoroughly satisfying right from the beginning to the very end.

NESC presents at AMEE

NESC Primary Care Taskforce has been awarded the contract to deliver 2008/09 appraisal to all GPs from Dorset, Bournemouth & Poole and Portsmouth City PCPs following the successful trial of the Wessex Deanery-led appraisal in Dorset PCT last year.

In addition, NESC is working closely with leadership and appraiser training to develop appraisers in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

NESC appraisers will be among the first in the country to undergo competence-based assessments to provide evidence of their fitness to appraise and receive feedback on their individual areas for development.

Dr Susi Caesar, NESC Appraisal Lead, said: “The cornerstones of the project are the ability to deliver supportive, developmental and educationally valuable appraisals within a framework of encouraging individuals to provide ever increasing standards of evidence in preparation for their revalidation portfolios.

"By reaching every practising GP in the NHS in the participating PCPs, with highly skilled appraisers, standards will be raised."

For more information email Dr Susi Caesar at srcaesar@doctors.org.uk

Improved appraisal aims to raise standards

Well done!

RCGP award for Caroline

Congratulations to Dr Caroline Scott from the Oxford Deanery who has been awarded the Fraser Rose Medal 2008 from the Royal College of General Practitioners for achieving the highest overall mark in the membership exam.

We are also delighted that Caroline has now been appointed as a programme director on the Reading VTS.

Well done!
An innovative programme is giving newly qualified GPs and mid-career GPs a unique opportunity to develop their leadership and management skills.

The Practice Leader Programme is running in two pilot sites (Milton Keynes and Portsmouth), and funds eight newly qualified GPs to work in 16 practices, working alongside a more experienced GP colleague.

The philosophy underpinning the Practice Leader Programme is that leadership skills development goes hand-in-hand with service delivery and development. The programme therefore supports participants in designing and implementing a practice-based service improvement project.

The newly qualified GPs help to increase access for patients, enabling their more experienced colleague to take part in a programme of CPD focussing on personal and practice development. The newly qualified GPs also take part in an ‘Action Learning Set’ which looks at the topics of leadership, systems thinking, commissioning and expert clinical skills, aimed at building on their VTS training. All the newly qualified GPs will have the opportunity to gain a Postgraduate Certificate in General Practice.

In Milton Keynes, participants may also join the Milton Keynes PCT senior executive team to gain a PCT perspective on healthcare issues, and work with the Care Service Improvement Programme (CSIP), aligned with the Department of Health for 10 days of government level health strategy work.

“This will give GPs real insight into strategic working and healthy policy development. By working alongside clinicians working on PCT priorities, they will be able to apply this strategic insight to their local practice plans,” said Marion Lynch, Project Director (Milton Keynes).

The programme has been conceived as a pilot for the fifth year of the proposed five year GP speciality training.

For more information contact Marion Lynch, Project Director (Milton Keynes) at mlynch@oxford-pgmde.nhs.uk or Dr Richard Mann, Project Director (Portsmouth) at richard.mann@nhs.net
Reflections of a lay assessor

Doctors have been accused of knowing best, but NESC has appointed a panel of lay assessors to provide an external view and challenge to our processes. This is Rod Walker’s experience.

A cynic might suggest that a recently retired head teacher taking on the role of a deanery lay assessor has simply exchanged one set of targets and acronyms for another but I have found this new challenge has stimulated me as a professional and, more importantly, reassured me as a member of the public.

As the only medically unqualified member of a deanery panel, I have found my new colleagues invariably encouraging and appreciative of the contributions I have been able to make. In return, I have reminded myself how I often felt when a lay school governor offered me the “solution” to a complex educational issue and I have tried to remain silent when I have nothing useful to say; incredibly difficult for any teacher!

Arriving when new processes are replacing old ones (eg ARCPs for RITAs), has been good for a new member as every panel I have served on is currently reviewing its procedures. I suspect experienced colleagues are understandably less enthusiastic about unlearning (once again) old processes and acronyms.

Life after work!

Frank and Clair Smith, formerly GP Director and Postgraduate Dean for Wessex respectively, have sent this photograph from their part-time home in Italy to show that their work-life balance is well and truly sorted!

We want to hear from you!

If you would like to contribute or comment on this newsletter please email caroline.crabtree@nesc.nhs.uk

This newsletter will be produced three times a year, the next copy deadline is: 31 January 2009