Assistant/Associate Practitioner Steering Group Meeting  
Isis Room, Rivergate House, Newbury, 28 July 2009

Present:
Adedayo Odubayo (AO), NESC  
Anita Esser (AE), Southampton University Hospital Trust  
Ann Stainton (AS), Progress South Central  
Avis Mulhearn (AM), Skills Academy for Health  
Emma Wilton (EW), NESC  
Jenny Simmons (JSi), Heatherwood & Wexham Park Foundation Trust  
Jo Sandy (JSa), Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust  
Julie Abdalla (JA), Hampshire Community Health Care  
Sue Byrne (SB), Oxfordshire PCT  
Toni Sanderson (TS), NESC  
Jon Bramley (JB), Hampshire and Isle of Wight LLN  
Richard Billings (RB), NHS Education South Central  
Mary Lewis (ML), South Central Strategic Authority  
Mary Sommerville (MS), Skills Academy for Health

Apologies:
Barry Hodgson, Portsmouth Hospital NHS Trust  
Joan Potterton, Royal Berkshire Foundation Trust  
Suzanne Rankin, South Central SHA  
Chris Wintle, Skills for Health  
Sam Donohue, Oxfordshire Assistant Practitioner Programme

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<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Item</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><strong>Apologies and Introductions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Introductions were made and apologies given.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td><strong>Minutes of Steering Group Meeting on 28 April 2009</strong></td>
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<td>2.1</td>
<td>Minutes of the last meeting were agreed as an accurate record.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td><strong>Matters Arising</strong></td>
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<td>3.1</td>
<td>The consultation regarding the National AP Standards closes on 31 July. The National AP Steering Group is meeting on 16 September to review the feedback. This will be discussed again at the next Steering Group Meeting.</td>
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<td>3.2</td>
<td>At the last meeting, levels of LLN required from trainee and qualified APs were discussed. CW provided copies of the Skills for Health Employability Skills Matrix which identifies the skills, attributes and behaviours required at each level of the NHS Career Framework. It is designed to support staff to access a grade of post, sustain effective working and support progression. An electronic version of the publication is available on the Skills for Health website.</td>
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4. **CPD Framework Bands 1-4 final report and workshop.**

4.1 MS and AM presented the CPD Framework for Bands 1 – 4 Report. The report aims to support flexible and accredited pathways of learning which can enable transferability of skills and competence between organisations and improve quality assurance, monitoring and enhancement of education provision. Copies of the Report will be sent to Learning and Development and Widening Participation Leads and Directors of HR. AE also suggested a copy should be sent to all CEOs. 

4.2 To advance the CPD project, the Skills Academy for Health and NESC are jointly organising a full day event on 17 September in Newbury focussed upon implementation of the report. Members agreed that the event should be interactive, with group activity sessions throughout the day.

4.3 The event will target Learning & Development/Widening Participation and HR Leads who are involved in workforce development and commissioning education and training for staff in bands 1 - 4. It was suggested that activity sessions could be focussed upon the commissioning cycle on page 35 of the report, populating the CPD Framework Exemplar on page 40 and discussing implementation of recommendations made within the Report. 

4.4 AS informed members that recommendations from the 17 September event could be taken forward in the Health and Social Care forum which will be hosted by Progress South Central on 5 November. This will include delegates from Education Providers.

5. **RCN Assistant Practitioner Discussion Paper**

5.1 Discussions were held around the RCN Assistant Practitioner paper. The document considers some of the key policy issues regarding emergence of the AP role, including the remit and purpose, reasons for the introduction and its place within a changing workforce.

5.2 Future demands for nursing interventions are outlined. Substantial increases to the numbers of APs is considered to be a sustainable solution to meeting these increased demands.

5.3 The AP is highlighted as an important role to encourage a wide entry gate into an all-graduate nursing profession. However, it is reported that confusion still exists around role boundaries and duties of the AP, which could act as a potential barrier to development of the role. AP case studies could be collected across NHS South Central to help reduce this confusion and highlight the benefits to patient care and service delivery. 

5.4 Discussions of potential cost savings are outlined within the paper, but it is made very clear that the AP should not be introduced at the detriment of improving patient outcomes or quality. The paper concludes by stating that the RCN is not opposed to the AP role, and that it recognises the
value for patients and the nursing team.

5.5 AE explained that 12 trainee APs have been recruited within SUHT, working within ward settings. They will begin their training in November. This will constitute the NVQ in health plus additional training. The Trust is exploring the potential of reducing the numbers of staff employed at bands 3 and 6, as the numbers of APs increase.

6. **NHS South Central Commissioning Strategy**

6.1 Work is being undertaken to develop an Education Commissioning Strategy to support growth of the AP role across NHS south Central. An internal Advisory Group will meet monthly to facilitate this. Members of the Steering Group may be asked to join this group at a later stage.

6.2 It is proposed that education and training for the AP, including Foundation Degrees, is designed around the 8 NSR pathways. Whole Foundation Degrees or individual modules could be procured. This will support growth of the AP and allow CPD. Members agreed that this will aid the progression of staff both vertically and horizontally.

6.3 A Proposal of Intent will be drafted to establish the core principles which will be embedded within the design, delivery and procurement of education provision for APs. Scoping demand for the AP will also be considered.

6.4 It is proposed that a common pricing framework be agreed across NHS South Central with education providers. This will promote consistency, transparency and transferability.

6.5 Accreditation of prior learning will help to recognise all relevant, previous education and training achievements and encourage learning pathways to be designed more closely to local needs.

6.6 Possible funding to support this work may be available from P South Central. AS and EW to discuss outside of the meeting.

6.7 BH was unable to attend the meeting but sent EW information about relevant work being undertaken within Healthcare Science. BH is a member of the Modernising Scientific Careers Team, led by the Department of Health. A training curriculum for staff working within Healthcare Sciences at bands 1 – 4 is being developed. Also, in partnership with Skills for Health, an Education and Training Framework that links into modernised registered workforce career routes will be published later in the year. Part of this programme will be to develop/commission education and training provision that fits current and future roles in bands 1 - 4.

6.8 Portsmouth Hospitals Trust are currently using a workforce planning tool for Pathology. The Tool is commissioned by the Department of Health and is designed to support modelling of existing and future workforce configurations. BH to present further information at the next meeting.

7. **Service User Mentor Update**
7.1 Additional Service User Mentors (SUMs) are being trained to support students commencing Foundation Degrees in 2009/10. NESC has received feedback from students who are currently matched with SUMs and as a result, it has been agreed that SUMs will not be matched with students until the final term of their first year. An evaluation is currently ongoing and will be extended to all new students and SUMs.

7.2 NESC is currently looking at dissemination of the SUM role.

8. **Next step and priorities**

8.1 The following next steps and priorities were agreed:
- MS to circulate Programme for the 17 September CPD Event to members for comment.
- Develop NHS South Central Proposal of Intent for development of the AP
- Inform AM if representation required on group from Skills Academy for Health.

9. **Date of Next Meeting**

9.1 27.10.09, 14:00 – 16:00hrs, Isis Room, Rivergate House, Newbury.