

LLN training equips nurses for clinical practice NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde improves nurse workforce IV numeracy skills

There are many of us who might benefit from brushing up our literacy, language and numeracy (LLN) skills. For those working in a busy clinical practice, it's likely that certain skills will be called on with greater frequency to support evolving healthcare services. As healthcare managers look to nurses to be competent in the administration of IV drugs, making sure they have the correct level of numeracy skills is critical for safe delivery of healthcare services.

This was a challenge recognised by Education and Practice Development staff within NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC) Acute Division. Following a successful bid to NHS Education for Scotland (NES) and Learning Connections to improve the numeracy skills of registered nurses in clinical practice, they decided to integrate numeracy training into an existing intravenous module for nursing staff.

NES had identified numeracy as a priority issue in the provision of healthcare across the many disciplines supported within the NHS. As a result, the intravenous (IV) drug administration educational programme provided in the Acute Division of NHSGGC was enhanced to allow for greater emphasis on the teaching of numeracy skills.

IV Educators and the resident Adult Literacy & Numeracy (ALN) co-ordinator for the Get Ahead Project (Glasgow Community Learning Strategy Partnership ALN Project) formed a working partnership. Using an integrated approach, they devised a baseline calculations self assessment for prospective course participants to identify their numeracy learning needs. In response to these identified needs, the team adapted the existing study day programme. As a result ALN supported learning in the workplace has to date become an integral part of the IV drug administration educational programme across four of NHSGGC main sites.

“ Having embedded literacy and numeracy support within the calculations part of the programme has made a big difference to the hundreds of nurses who have participated, and we are glad to see that it has made them more confident. The formal evaluation showed that with the enhanced support, nurses feel better able to perform at work and offer an improved service to patients. ”

Debbie Thompson ALN co-ordinator, organisation

A key strategic objective of Skills for Health is to improve participation in learning and employability in the health sector workforce through implementation with partners of a strategy to improve literacy, language and numeracy and information technology skill levels. There are many ways in which enhanced LLN skills levels can benefit the health sector. For example, improved numeracy skills can help staff to widen their competences, enable them to take on extended roles, and support greater workforce flexibility.

The Benefits

- Participating nurses feel more confident about administering IV drugs.
- Safer, more effective services for patients.
- Nurses now offered targeted one to one support to help prepare for IV drug programme.
- Greater flexibility of teams to handle IV clinical activities.
- NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde developed pan-organisation integrated programme accessible to more RNs.

By offering one to one support, the enhanced programme has shown nurses that they have a part to play in making the most of available help and resources and they need to take greater ownership for learning. The contact details of the ALN co-ordinator now appear on the study-day confirmation letter and the ALN coordinator is involved in co-teaching all calculation sessions.

Initial evaluation and feedback from focus groups has shown a positive response among learners and greater confidence and competence in their approach and attitude

to dealing with numeracy issues. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde is sharing the lessons learned with colleagues from other organisations who are also involved in the delivery of IV drug administration programmes. It is expected that the work could support a recognised standard based on National Workforce Competences across the country.

Organisations like Skills for Health continue to promote the benefits of LLN training with a range of interactive tools which have been developed specifically for the health sector, and support a competence based approach to learning and development.

Skills for Health is the Sector Skills Council for the UK health sector (the National Health Services, independent healthcare providers and voluntary organisations). Our purpose is to implement solutions that can deliver a skilled and flexible workforce to improve health and healthcare.

Use our interactive guides to find out more about LLN and how you can unlock the potential of your workforce at: www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/lln