DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL CARE NURSES:

ENHANCED OR ADVANCED PRACTICE?

A CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Restorative Justice for All International Institute

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND, IMPETUS AND METHODOLOGY:

This e-book forms part of a larger programme led by Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy (BHSCA) in partnership with the RJ4All International Institute and Bucks New University (BNU). The programme aims to develop a framework for advanced or enhanced practice in nursing in social care settings. To this end, there is a need to understand the competencies required for enhanced and advanced nursing practice in social care, and to articulate the training that is currently on offer for nursing staff working in social care settings.

The overall programme hypothesis is that the evolving social care system requires the deployment of both enhanced and advanced nursing competencies and the creation of career grade opportunities; such competencies require further description and definition to demonstrate the benefits of employing enhanced and/or advanced social care nurses.

This study takes the first step in this larger programme and is based on a comprehensive review of the extant literature. The overall programme's research objectives are:

- To describe the current opportunities that exist for the employment of enhanced and advanced social care for nurses across a range of settings (e.g. in domiciliary care, for older persons and within intellectual disability services.
- To outline the competencies required for both enhanced and advanced social care nursing practitioners.
- To evidence how enhanced and advanced social care nursing practice could be integrated successfully into a career progressional pathway for social care nurses. If so, what would the career pathway look like?

The research of the overall programme is structured around three phases. Phase 1 involves comprehensive desk-based research to establish a baseline for subsequent investigations. Phase 1 is concluded within this study. Phase 2 is based on the key findings drawn from phase 1 and will be carried out through original fieldwork that combines qualitative research methods. These methods include in-depth semi-structured interviews, focus groups and an online questionnaire. Subsequently, phase 3 will triangulate the findings from the secondary and primary research by comparing results across phases and with key stakeholders from BHSCA and BNU.

The programme is fully aligned with UK and international research ethics standards, and where necessary, research ethics approval was sought. Sensitive data are protected following UK Data Protection legislation and the EC GDPR.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE EXTANT LITERATURE

- Social care nurses have an intricate role extending beyond traditional healthcare settings, requiring adaptability, flexibility and commitment beyond the application of typical clinical knowledge. These nurses take on quite complex responsibilities, which demand a focus on relationship-based wellbeing, person-centred nursing, and adept navigation of the complex regulatory landscape.

- Despite high autonomy, managerial tasks and leadership responsibilities, social care nurses remain under-supported by the regulatory bodies in terms of: (a) career progression and pay rises, (b) training and educational support, and (c) retention schemes in their jobs. In the social care sector, nurses face less standardised pathways for their professional advancement.

- This complexity of nurses' role should be reflected in the different levels of practice, existing in health and social care jobs. Advanced clinical practice represents a high level of autonomy and complex decision-making, which requires a master's level award or equivalent. This proficiency spans the four pillars of clinical practice i.e. leadership, management, education, and research. On the other hand, enhanced clinical practice precedes advanced practice. This denotes a high level of proficiency among professionals with extensive knowledge and experience in diverse healthcare settings. These practitioners navigate unpredictable environments through reflective practices, adaptability, and continuous learning. While adept at managing risks within their scope, major decisions may involve collaboration for a comprehensive approach.

- The social care sector, particularly for social care nurses, lacks comprehensive framing and support regarding advanced and enhanced practices. The existing regulatory frameworks for different levels of practice, with the most important one being the advanced clinical practice (ACP) framework developed by Health Education England in 2017, prove to be inadequately applicable to the unique challenges and dynamics within the realm of social care.

- Furthermore, the clear delineation between advanced and enhanced practice holds significant importance, particularly for social care nurses who should be able to know at which level they operate, what is expected from them and how their tasks align with their level of work. However, the current regulatory frameworks lack clarity in establishing a precise distinction between these levels, posing challenges in defining the roles and responsibilities within the social care sector. It has been observed that the current workforce engages in high-volume complex tasks without knowing whether their practices fall within the advanced or enhanced criteria of practice. Given that the academic requirements (master's level) and expectations are different, the level of practicing should be clear.

- With the above in mind, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive reform of the existing frameworks or development of a new one regarding the levels of practice for social care nurses. It is evident that generic frameworks applicable to health infrastructure does not work sufficiently, leaving social care nurses unprotected and unsupported in their career progression.

- The necessary reform in terms of frameworks regulating advanced and enhanced practice is closely intertwined with adaptability of the educational programmes and specialisations offered to social care nurses. Advanced or enhanced practice level educational programmes should be equally reformed to capture the special needs of social care nurses and meet the requirements of their work environments.

- Along with all the above, there is a compelling need for a shift from secondary care to primary care closer to home, underscoring the importance of better equipping social care nurses to meet requirements of the evolving healthcare landscape. This imperative shift is intertwined with the prevalent misconception around the role of social care nurses, unfairly downplayed by the public, highlighting the urgency for a more accurate understanding and acknowledgment of their crucial contributions in the healthcare continuum.

- The above key findings, namely the lack of a standardised framework for advanced and enhanced practice for social care nurses, the lack of educational support and clear career progression pathways contribute at the moment to high turnover rates and impede effective service provision. A clear framework of advanced and enhanced practice should support these ongoing and outstanding issues that nurses and the social care sector face.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHASE 2:

The original fieldwork that is to be carried out during Phase 2 of the programme should:

A. ***Investigate the following Phase 1 emerging key themes:***

1. The regulation of the two different levels of practice, advanced and enhanced, should receive equal attention and regulation effort. This is contrary to the current situation in which advanced practice is more well defined and understood.
2. Extension of the existing advanced clinical practice framework, that currently regulates the health sector jobs, also to social care settings. Alternatively, development of a new comprehensive regulatory framework particularly for social care nurses.
3. Strategic enhancement of social care nurses' professional progression; there must be clear and standardised career progression pathways within their clinical expertise, which mitigates the need for managerial shifts.
4. Establishment of more standardised practices, applications and methods among employers. Employers currently act independently of standardised practices, which has left the social care sector in a state of disarray when it comes to terms of unified processes and practices.
5. Tailored social care sector educational programmes for advanced and enhanced levels of practice.
6. Improvement of the public's recognition and perception of the social care sector and of the immense contribution of social care nurses.
7. Strategic shift from remote, hindersome specialised secondary care to accessible primary care offered closer to home.

B. ***Involve sample groups from:***

1. Frontline practitioners, namely registered nurses working in social care settings.

2. Employers in the social care sector.

3. Educational and training providers, offering programmes of advanced or enhanced level of practice.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASC-WDS | Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set

ACP | Advanced Clinical Practice

APN | Advanced Practice Nurses

BHSCA | Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy

BNU | Buckinghamshire New University

HEE | Health Education England

HEIs | Higher Education Institutions

NHS | National Health Service

NMC | Nursing and Midwifery Council

QNI | Queen's Nursing Institute

RN | Registered Nurse

RNDA | Registered Nursing Degree Apprenticeship

INTRODUCTION

I Background and rationale of the project

This study concludes the first step of a three phased programme aiming at investigating the development of a framework for advanced and/or enhanced practice for nurses in social care settings.

There is a pressing need for the development of this framework. This need arises from a recognition that the evolving landscape of health and social care demands a nuanced understanding of the competencies associated with advanced and enhanced nursing practices. Both the health and social care sectors find themselves at a critical juncture of restructuring due to the transformative shifts in the health needs and demands of the population. The emergence of complex and chronic health conditions, coupled with an aging demographic in the UK, has propelled a demand for a more integrated and responsive approach to social care. As the complexities of health conditions intensify and the scope of care expands, the call for a more sophisticated framework for advanced and/or enhanced practice has become a rather heated topic. While both the health and social care sectors warrant attention, the social care sector appears to be of heightened concern, given its historical under-support and pervasive misconceptions regarding the nature of professions within it. This will also be the focus of this study.

This project seeks to rectify the social care sector oversight by systematically analysing and articulating the characteristics of each practice level, elucidating the corresponding demands and benefits, addressing workforce development needs, and giving guidance for the development of a framework tailored to the unique infrastructure of social care. By exploring the potential impact of this framework on the workforce and delving into the implementation process, the research aims to ascertain the purpose of the framework and contribute insights into the capabilities required for enhanced and advanced nursing practices in social care.

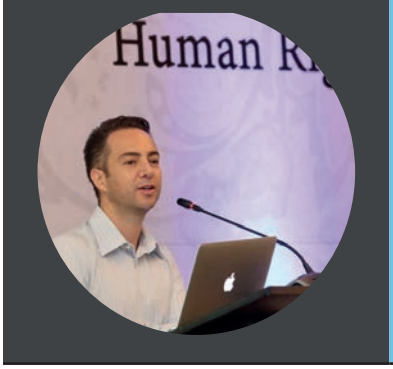
II Project hypothesis and overall research objectives

We posit that the evolving social care system demands the deployment of both enhanced and advanced nursing capabilities, necessitating a robust career progression framework for registered nurses (RNs). It is envisaged that the outcomes of this research will contribute to the refinement of social care nurses' practices by painting a clearer picture of the current opportunities across diverse settings such as domiciliary care, older persons care, and intellectual disability services. On top of that it will facilitate the outline of capabilities required for practitioners engaged in enhanced and advanced level. Eventually, the project should serve as a compass for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and regulatory bodies to respond to workforce development needs of social care employers, supporting the process of integrating enhanced/advanced social care nursing practices seamlessly into a progressive career pathway.

III Purpose and structure of this report

This study consisted of a comprehensive desk research aimed at establishing a baseline for the subsequent phases. Primarily, our desk research aims to draw the baseline regarding social care nurses, exploring and articulating what advanced and enhanced-level practices look like within this context. Central to this exploration is addressing the demands and benefits associated with each level, alongside a comprehensive analysis of workforce and professional development needs within the social care sector. In addition, we contextualise the social care model in contrast to the health infrastructure and we delineate the distinctions between primary and secondary care. By presenting the current opportunities and barriers within the social care landscape, this report aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the practice of social care nurses. Furthermore, as part of our broader exploration, we seek to delve into the landscape of large employers within social care and conduct a scoping of practices currently in place. This multifaceted approach will contribute to a holistic understanding of the current state of social care nurses, setting the stage for the in-depth investigations to follow. Through the lens of workforce development, capabilities delineation, and the unique demands of social care, this desk research endeavours to carve a path towards a more responsive nursing practice in the social care sector.

ANNEX I:
ABOUT THE RESEARCH TEAM

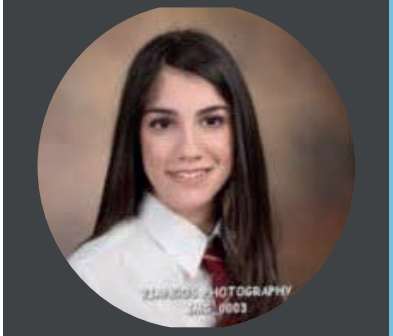


Dr. Theo Gavrielides

Professor and expert in health equalities and human rights, harm prevention and criminal law, restorative justice, violent radicalisation and youth policy. Barrister and recipient of **The Liberty of the Old Metropolitan Borough of Bermondsey Civic Award 2021**. Founder and Director of the **Restorative Justice for All International Institute.** Founder of **The IARS International Institute**. Editor-in-Chief of the peer reviewed **International Journal of Human Rights in Healthcare**, **Youth Voice Journal** and the **Internet Journal of Restorative Justice**. Founder of **RJ4All Publications** and **RJ4All Sports**. Pioneer of user-led research methods, and advisor to the European Commission, and governments. He has published extensively in peer reviewed journals, and edited monographs, edited collections and special journal issues.

Sofia Sideridou

Senior social sciences researcher and a qualified lawyer. Currently working as a Research Assistant for Professor Theo Gavrielides. Previously, she was a Youth Ambassador for the Right to Peace for Greece and a legal researcher for Centre For African Justice, Peace and Human Rights. She has a Master of Laws (LLM) from Maastricht University and Bachelor of Laws (LLB) from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. She has worked on multiple Erasmus+ research projects and is training to be a restorative justice practitioner.



Marianna Iosif

Enthusiastic and motivated Biomedical Sciences graduate from the University of Sussex and a current Postgraduate student at the University of Sussex studying Genetic manipulation and Molecular cell biology. Marianna is open to work in entry - level roles such as: Laboratory assistant, Medical/Scientific writer etc. in order to apply the broad knowledge of her undergraduate and postgraduate degree offered. She is particularly interested in genetics and any form of molecular biology. She is also really interested in cancer research. Key skills include: Cell culture techniques, Immunofluorescence staining/Fluorescent microscopy, Gel Electrophoresis, Western Blotting, Simplifying and communicating complex scientific concepts, Critical Writing, Communication.

Clara Hurney

Clara Hurney currently serves as an intern at the RJ4All Rotherhithe Community Centre. An alumna of Colby College, she earned her bachelor's degree in Global Studies/Global Public Health, Russian Language, and English Literature. Clara's academic journey reflects her keen interest in advancing public health systems that foster equity, with a particular focus on community-based models of preventative care.

THE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE SERIES

CATALOGUE

This is the first ebook in a series of three publications that form part of a larger programme that was conducted in October 2023 – April 2024. The programme aimed to develop a framework for advanced or enhanced practice in nursing in social care settings in the United Kingdom. To this end, there is a need to understand the competencies required for enhanced and advanced nursing practice in social care, and to articulate the training that is currently on offer for nursing staff working in social care settings. The overall programme hypothesis is that the evolving social care system requires the deployment of both enhanced and advanced nursing competencies and the creation of career grade opportunities; such competencies require further description and definition to demonstrate the benefits of employing enhanced and/or advanced social care nurses. The research of the overall programme is structured around three phases. Phase 1 involves comprehensive desk-based research to establish a baseline for subsequent investigations. Phase 1 is concluded within this e-book.

"This e-book represents a pivotal first step in the exploration of Advanced or Enhanced levels of practice for registered nurses within social care settings. Through comprehensive desk-based research and an extensive review of the existing literature, the research team manages to establish a crucial baseline for subsequent investigations, setting the stage for the development of a framework aimed at advancing the practice of social care nursing. I was thrilled to see that this initial piece of work already clarifies the intricate role of social care and initiates discussions around its challenges and gaps, laying the groundwork for further exploration."

Juliet Anderson, Director, Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy

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RESTORATIVE JUSTICE FOR ALL INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE FOR ALL (RJ4ALL) INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE

RJ4ALL INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE
30 PLOUGH WAY LONDON SE16 2LJ
+44(0)7708758600 | +44 7502 201799
WWW.RJ4ALL.ORG

£0.99 GBP RRP.

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