

Defending the value of field-specific pre-registration training for children's nurses

Following the publication of the article 'Is it time for us to rethink field-specific training'¹ in March 2023 there has been an upsurge in discussion about the importance of preserving pre-registration training for children's nurses. Pursell and Sagoo¹ argue in their article, that the 'time for generic training and a nursing workforce with broad experience is now' proposing that generically trained nurses could specialise after their initial training. This is not the first time that abandoning pre-registration children's nursing qualifications has been proposed.

The ABPN are experienced in arguing for the fundamental value of pre-registration children's nursing and defending against threats to this part of the register. Since it was founded in 1938, the ABPN has always been proactive in the debates around the education of nurses who work with babies, children, young people, and their families. Evidence of this can be found in our 'Blue Book' which records the history of the Association².

The argument about the need for a specific route for children's nursing has been live for over a century. Despite many challenges, regulatory agencies have recognised that children's nursing is a field that requires unique training, skills, and competencies.

Recent challenges during and in the wake of Covid have reinforced the arguments for field-specific preparation of professionals, whether that is for providing child centred care within family focused settings^{3 4}, supporting children and young people facing mental health challenges⁵, managing consent, legal and ethical issues or dealing with the unique nature of children's experience of ill-health^{6 7}.

Pre-registration children's nursing remains a popular entry point for nursing⁸, with the number of children's nurses growing from 55,062 (April 2022) to 56,010 (1.7%) (September 2022)⁹. Recruitment and retention in children's nursing is of fundamental importance. Children's nursing does not need the disruption and distraction that arise from threats to its place as a pre-registration field of practice.

Once again, the ABPN recognises and advocates for the value of skills, knowledge and experience of children's nurses who are trained to meet the specific needs of babies, children, young people, and their families.

The ABPN is clear in its call to retain the safeguards for children and young people by retaining pre-registration education for children's nurses. The ABPN believes that this is best achieved through field-specific pre-registration education. Without this there will be insufficient numbers of specifically prepared nurses to care for babies, children, and young people. Without sufficient pre-registration children's nurses, the current and future health and well-being of babies, children, and young people will be at risk.

References

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