

Linda Kendall, DCN, discusses her role as Flying Start Facilitator for newly qualified nurses.

As a facilitator for Flying Start, I feel my role is to guide and support newly qualified nurses in the transition from student nurse to registered nurse. We know that transition can obviously be a very stressful time for them and providing support and guidance has been shown to be of significant value. Having spent three years preparing for practice with the support of the university, peer groups and when on placement, practice supervisors and assessors, the reality of practice can feel quite different without these support systems.

When the NQN starts, I get together with them to discuss the Flying Start NHS programme and let them know that I will be their facilitator and will be available if they have any questions or require any help or support with the pillars of practice and learning outcomes. I reassure them that our aim during their first year is to increase their knowledge and confidence, develop their clinical practice by building on the foundations of good practice and that all of the experienced members of the team within our unit are here to help them achieve this and to develop into being capable practitioners.

I feel the benefits of Flying Start for the NQNs is that it is a structured learning tool. Having the protected time really helps as I feel the NQN has so much to learn and complete within their first year of practice and this time means they can focus on Flying Start requirements away from the workplace. The fact that it is learner directed and they complete the programme at their own pace is hugely beneficial. NQNs come with a wealth of knowledge and experience from being in different areas throughout their studies. They can provide insight into new ideas and give suggestions on how to make improvements for the unit.

One way I try to support them is working with them to allow opportunity for teaching and educating them, which helps identify areas of competence and areas for development. Teaching and education also helps build their confidence and trust. I ask them to think about the learning and development they are undertaking and where this fits with the Flying Start learning outcomes, as this allows them to see that it is their day-to-day activities that will help them to achieve these. Frequent communication is another way I support them – listening to them to ensure I understand what support they need, as well as checking in frequently to ask how they are getting on and if they are needing any help, advice or support. I also encourage them to take care of themselves as doing so can help lessen some of the stresses they may be feeling, which in turn supports them to carry out their professional role.

In relation to Flying Start, when the NQN sends me their evidence of achieving their learning outcomes, we meet to ensure progress and to discuss and review the evidence. If the evidence demonstrates they have met the learning outcomes for the clinical pillars, I confirm completion of the programme.

Supporting staff through Flying Start, aligns with the NMC Principles of Preceptorship which highlights the importance of this support for new staff in any area and is extremely important to help them integrate into the new team and work environment.

As a facilitator, I found the [facilitators' information sheet](#) really useful as it directed me in my role and also explained a little more about the programme. It also helped me to keep track of the dates of meetings.

Personally I find being a facilitator is a rewarding experience. Working closely with an NQN through their first year and supporting them as they transition from student to registered professional is quite a privilege. Being able to provide them professional support is important however, learning how to unwind after a busy shift or just talking about how to deal with difficult situations is hugely beneficial to us both. Professionally, it contributes to my NMC Revalidation requirements particularly when requesting feedback as I don't often ask NQNs for it. Also, as no one has the same experiences it is good to reflect on each others, we can learn so much from one another and this can only be positive.