Causes of ATtrition in CHIldrens NursinG (CATCHING) study

(Examination of the causes of attrition in pre-registration Children’s Nursing programmes in the Health Education, North Central and East London Local Education Training Board geographical area)

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Outline

Background
Aim
Mixed methods
Quantitative aspects
Qualitative aspects
Limitations
Recommendations
Attrition

“non completion of a training programme for whatever reason”

(Jinks et al., 2014)

Multifactorial (Orton, S. 2011)

Recognised factors

Clinical placements (Hamshire et al., 2012)

Gender (McLaughlin et al., 2010)

Prior qualifications (Pryjmachuk et al., 2009)

Age (Pryjmachuk et al., 2009)
‘Push’ factors – considered in deliberations

- Challenges of academic work
- Burden of other demands
- Financial strain
- Lack of support
- Negative early experiences
- Illness/injury

‘Pull factors’ helped students remain

- Determination / stubbornness
- Commitment to chosen profession
- Informal support
- Formal support
Challenges facing UK nursing students

(Royal College of Nursing, 2008)

August to October 2008
Online survey of 4,500 UK nursing students (11% children’s nursing)

Results
44% nursing considered leaving their nursing course
(74% university personal tutor not aware)

Reasons for considering leaving
Financial (62%)
Experience on a clinical placement (39%)
Personal problems (26%)
Doubts over nursing as a career (24%)
Insufficient support from a university tutor (21%)
Childcare difficulties (19%)
Travel (15%)

Reason for staying
Desire to finish their course (85%)
Support from family and friends (63%)
Starting paid work (25%)
Support from a university tutor (15%)
Other childcare arrangements (4%)

Further work
17.5% children’s nursing attrition rate
(Royal College of Nursing 2013)
What we do not know

Are there specific issues related to children's nursing? Has moving to a graduate course made a difference? Are these differences university specific?

Study aim

To explore the causes of attrition within pre-registration children’s nursing courses across the four higher education institutions (HEIs) in North Central and East London

More specifically

- The reasons for attrition from pre-registration children’s nursing courses (BSc and PG Dip) across the four HEIs.
- Any similarities and differences in the reasons for attrition across the four HEIs.
- Whether there are any differences between HEIs in the reasons why pre-registration children’s nursing students leave the course across the three years of the programme.
Universities

- University of Hertfordshire
- Middlesex University London
- City University London
- London South Bank University
Methods outline

Mixed methods study
LSBU research ethics approval (UREC 1511) 10th June 2015

Quantitative
- Attrition numbers and reason

Qualitative
- Semi structured interviews with students who have left a pre-registration children's nursing course
- Semi structured interviews students have stayed on a pre-registration nursing course despite difficult circumstances
Quantitative aspects

Attrition numbers and reason
Percentage attrition according to; university, course, and academic year

![Graph showing percentage attrition for BSc and PgDip courses from 2011-12 to 2013-14]
2011 – 2014 yearly mean attrition across four universities according to year on BSc course
Students who have ‘left’ and ‘stayed’ a pre-registration children's nursing course

BSc and PG Dip Course Directors from each HEI identified and contacted:

• Former students
• Students who have stayed despite difficult circumstances

If agreeable then contacted by research team arrange an interview:

• Written informed consent
• Semi-structured interviews
• Data recorded, transcribed
• Themed (Creswell 2009) in NVivo
Recruitment

**Left**
Total contacted
n = 176

- No response
  n = 156

- Refused
  n = 7

- Stopped responding or difficult communication
  n = 8

- Interviewed
  n = 5

**Stayed**
Total contacted
n = 38

- No response
  n = 18

- Refused
  n = 1

- Stopped responding or difficult communication
  n = 6

- Interviewed
  n = 13
# Demographics

<table>
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<tr>
<th>University (n)</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Status (n)</th>
<th>Reason (n)</th>
<th>Course (n)</th>
<th>Age at start: median [IQR]</th>
<th>Language at home (n)</th>
<th>Clearing (n)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Herts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Left</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>BSc</td>
<td>22 [19.25, 25.75]</td>
<td>English 14 (3 + Luganda, Bengali, Tamil)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSBU</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Stayed</td>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>PgDip</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

The table above provides a summary of demographic data from a survey. It includes information on the number of students from different universities, their city of residence, whether they left or stayed, reasons for leaving or staying, the type of course they took, their age at start, the language they speak at home, and whether they cleared admission.
Interview questions (left)

Pre children’s nursing course

Thinking back to before you started the course:
- Prior to commencing your children’s nursing studies what work or volunteer experience did you do?
- How this did influence your decision to be a children's nurse?
- What expectations did you have of the children's nursing course?
- What other preparation did you do for the children’s nursing course?

During children’s nursing course

Thinking to when you were on the children’s nursing course:
- What aspects of the course did you find easy?
- What did you struggle with?
- At what point did you leave the course?
- Describe your reasons for leaving course?
- Are there other issues that contributed to you leaving?
- What support services or systems did you access, such as university, externally or family?
- What might have helped you stay?
- What changes do you think need to be made to the children’s nursing course?

Post children’s nursing course

What current employment do you have?
What aspirations do you have for the future?
What advice would you have for someone considering a career in children’s nursing?
Do you have anything else you would like to add?
Broad themes

Expectations of pre-registration children’s nursing

Realities of a pre-registration children’s nursing course

Decision to stay or leave course

Factors that influence students leaving or staying the course

Messages for future students
Expectations of pre-registration children’s nursing
- Prior work or volunteer experience
- Factors influencing desire to be a children’s nurse
- Expectations of the children’s nursing course
- Preparation for a children’s nursing course

Realities of a pre-registration children’s nursing course
- Placements
- Skills teaching
- Taught content
- Assessments / assignments
- Practicalities of living, studying and working in London
- University organisation
- Personal health and caring responsibilities

Decision to stay or leave course

Factors that influence students leaving or staying the course
- Personal tutor
- Placement Link lecturer
- Lecturers and senior academic staff
- Additional student support services
- Occupational Health
- Mental health issues
- General practitioners
- Family, friends and relationships
- Hiding
- Self-determination resilience

Messages for future students
- Researching what is involved
- Gain experience
- Being organised
- Working patterns
Expectations of pre-registration children’s nursing

Expectations
“I knew it would be hard work. I think I didn't envisage just how tough the study would be” (Gina, Stayed)

“I didn’t go in there having any expectations. It was a whole new world and I didn’t really know what I was getting myself into. I just thought it would be such a happy and caring career. I love children so much” (Olive, Stayed)

Preparation
“The Access Course was ... distance learning. They just give us the material and I have to fish for the information over the Internet and books, all by myself, but in a way, it kind of prepared me towards uni studies as well” (Ivy, Stayed)

“I just thought I will handle it when it comes, but as preparation wise, not really no, not really before coming on the course. I didn’t really do any preparation at all” (Holly, Stayed)

“I hadn't honestly contemplated the academic side of it as much as the physical side” (Gina, Stayed)
Realities of a pre-registration children’s nursing course

Placements
“it was easy because you’re doing. I learn by doing better than I do by writing, and listening and watching” (Julie, Stayed)

“‘Oh I don’t want a student. I don’t want to be a mentor.’ They don’t want you, and you’re standing there while they’re having this argument about you, and you just feel so uncomfortable you don’t want to be there” (Nicola, Stayed)

Skills teaching
“It was interactive or us participating, for me, they were the best classes. I think most classes should have been like that, more hands-on understanding” (Carley, Left)

“I knew what I was doing, I just couldn’t deal with the pressure, and I was doing some of those skills in practice every single day, yet put in that situation I just couldn’t deal with the pressure of people looking at me” (Sandy, Stayed)
Realities of a pre-registration children’s nursing course

Taught content
“Biology, I really struggled with that. Our course sort of taught it in a biology way, not related to nursing, which a lot of people and myself, we struggled because not all of us, I didn’t do biology at college so to me that was difficult” (Sandy, Stayed)

“I don't know whether I'd feel as comfortable about putting my hand up in a group of over 100, you know what I mean, in one of these lecture theatres” (Regina, Left)

Assessments/assignments
“I didn’t know what was expected from me on some of them. It wasn’t very clear what was expected of me. I’d give it my all, but I wouldn’t understand why I failed” (Olive, Stayed)

“Being in placement and having three assignments to do-, no, two assignments to do and then after coming out of placement you’ve got another assignment that’s coming up. It’s going to be due on the same day as well that was tough, like, juggling everything” (Freya, Stayed)
Realities of a pre-registration children’s nursing course

Practicalities of living, studying and working in London

“I was in halls ... [location 30 mins travel from university], and my flatmates, one of them, I think he was 30, he didn’t speak any English, he was doing his PhD. They were all post-grads a lot older than me, didn’t want [to socialise], they’d done that, so I didn’t make my friendship group there” (Sandy, Stayed)

“I was getting panic attacks on the tube, and what really got me down was that I had to get the tube every day to university, there was no other way. I mean, I could have got the over ground, I got the over ground once and I had a panic attack, and I had panic attacks in shops” (Holly, Stayed)

University organisation
Related to administration, admission and information technology systems

Personal health and caring responsibilities
Participants suffered from physical or mental illness
Caring for relatives or partners
Decision to stay or leave course

Some had little control over staying or leaving

Particularly related to episodes of physical or mental illness

Caring responsibilities or outside relationships
‘We only functioned on day by day for the whole year, just due to what was going on, and as I say, it got to that point, but at the time, things were starting to fall apart. A lot happened in very fast succession’ (Debbie, Left)

Academic failure
‘It’s quite mathematical, and the science involved is, is to a high level that-, in that sense, I mean, hard, because that’s what I struggle with, and that’s the reason essentially why I was-, had to withdraw, was because of my struggle there’ (Amy, Left)
Factors that influence students leaving or staying on the course

**Personal tutor**
“it just felt good to talk to [Personal Tutor], for [Personal Tutor] to know how I was feeling, and [Personal Tutor] has been ever so supportive to me” (Ivy, Stayed)

“[Personal tutor] had loads of nursing students ... as a personal tutor, it wasn’t really that personal, because [personal tutor] had loads of us to deal with” (Amy, Left)

**Placement Link lecturer**
“My link lecturer is really good, because I had some issues on the placement and she sorted them out, she’s quite good. I’ll go to her if I’ve got problems mainly” (Julie, Stayed)
Factors that influence students leaving or staying on the course

**Lecturers and senior academic staff**

“Lecturers here, they’re so amazing because they get to know you on a personal level as well. They know your weakness and your strength” (Freya, Stayed)

“I remember going to my programme leader when I decided to leave placement, and [programme leader] just reduced me to tears and made me feel quite ashamed of what I was doing” (Olive, Stayed)

**Additional student support services**

Awareness of services

*Occupational Health, Mental health issues, General practitioners*

**Family, friends and relationships**

“Family support, there has been huge family and friends’ support. I think that is what’s really got me through the course” (Penny, Stayed)

“No one knew. I gave a different perspective. My first placement, I missed a few days, I said I had ringworm. I didn’t have ringworm” (Lisa, Left)
Factors that influence students leaving or staying on the course

**Hiding**
“I just kept quiet. I thought, because, all I’m seeing, everyone is having it easy and I’m struggling so I thought, ‘You know what? Keep quiet and hope for the best’” (Freya, Stayed)

“I'm getting older, and I didn't want to put it back, you know, another six months, and I thought to myself, 'I'm quite a doer anyway.' I thought, 'I can manage this’” (Regina, Left)

**Self-determination resilience**
“I think it was just that I like to prove that I could do it, and it is all I want to do” (Sandy, Stayed)

“wouldn’t say my drive is my university, I’d say my drive is my personal” (Elaine, Stayed)
Messages for future nurses

“When someone tried to tell me it was hard I didn’t listen, because you’re just so excited to think that-, because I’d just left school. You’re like, ‘It’s something different, I’m going to university, I’m going to meet new people, I’m going to be able to do the course,’ and you don’t actually think about the work involved, so it is hard trying to tell someone” (Julie, Stayed)

Researching what is involved

“Do your research before. If you know that working with children is what you wanted to do then that’s great. There is a lot more to nursing than meets the eye” (Elaine, Stayed)

Gain experience

“If you can, have the opportunity to either shadow or have the opportunity to expose yourself to the hospital environment. Go have a visit at the hospital. See what it’s like to be a nurse” (Freya, Stayed)

Being organised

“Good time management. Don't leave it to the last minute. Expect the unexpected” (Regina, Left)

Working patterns

“I would say is if you think that child nursing is a typical degree you’re very much mistaken. I would effectively call child nursing a full time job that you don’t get paid for, and you have to do a degree on the side” (Elaine, Stayed)
Key recommendations

Realistic representation of children’s nursing through media

Combining personal tutor and link lecturer roles

Smaller class sizes for camaraderie and connectedness.

Avoid assessment deadlines during placement

Accommodation proximity, cost, billeting

Buddy system with second year students for first year
Limitations

Sample size
Students who left
Representativeness of universities
London-Centric

Future research

Impact of combining Personal Tutor and Link Lecturer
On going examination of Portal collected data
Wider range of exploration
Conclusion

Understanding attrition is an important aspect of HEI provision

Students who have left important insights but are difficult to contact

Key areas of possible development

Ongoing changes will need to be evaluated
References


Hamshire, C., Willgoss, T. G. & Wibberley, C. 2012. ‘The placement was probably the tipping point’ – The narratives of recently discontinued students. *Nurse Education in Practice*, 12, 182-186.


Royal College of Nursing 2008. Nursing our future: An RCN study into the challenges facing today’s nursing students in the UK. London: Royal College of Nursing.

Royal College of Nursing 2013. Safe staffing levels – a national imperative: The UK nursing labour market review. London: Royal College of Nursing.
Questions
Exit interview data

3/4 exit data was minimal

One HEI
  1 to 5 lines of text after an exit interview
  Anonymised
  Themed in NVivo
2011-2013 exit interview data word map