Training and education framework for fertility nursing

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A training and education framework for fertility nursing: grant usage feedback report

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Introduction

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) accepted a sponsorship opportunity from Higher Education Academy (HEA) in May 2012 to enable progression of an ongoing project to develop an RCN training and education framework for fertility nursing (hereafter referred to as ‘the framework’).

This report provides an overview of the project outcome and the utility of the grant fund provided by HEA.

HEA support came in two separate packages:

1. A grant to support workshop attendance and publication costs to develop a national framework for fertility nursing;
2. A grant to support dissemination of the product via joint RCN and higher education institution (HEI) networks across the UK (see RCN/HEA seminars on p. 4).

Background

The original project was developed as part of the strategic planning of the RCN Midwifery & Fertility Nursing Forum (hereafter, ‘the forum’). Developing a career framework for fertility nurses has been a key objective of the forum since it was established. The project is also a direct result of ongoing work by the forum around developing specialist competences and identifying the education and training needs of specialist nurses and midwives working in fertility services, in the NHS, higher education and the independent/private sector care providers across the UK.

In 2009-10, the forum secured an educational grant to commission a survey with RCN members to ascertain the priorities for specialist nurses and midwives working in fertility services. The results of the survey identified the need to develop a pathway and framework for nationally recognised education and training. A paper describing the findings of the survey was submitted to the professional journal Human Fertility for peer review, and accepted for publication in September 2011.

Development of the framework and launch

Following on from the questionnaire results, a project team was established to look at the needs of this particular group. The team established that the best way forward was to develop a framework, with principles for developing specialist and advanced nursing practice, and would need to include consideration of the educational needs of these nurses in relation to sonography training.

Engagement of key stakeholders was a principal intention of the team, as was the audience for dissemination. The framework was aimed at nurses and midwives who wish to enhance their knowledge and skills to support best practice in fertility nursing. The wider strategic dissemination would include fertility service nurse managers, commissioners in the context of workforce planning, practice educators and HEIs to develop education programmes to meet the needs of fertility nursing practice.

Engagement with the HEA was timely and the support and advice from the HEA Discipline Lead (Nursing & Midwifery), as well as the grant, contributed positively to the development of the framework. The funding by HEA enabled key stakeholders to work together, to enhance the product and develop a product worthy of national distribution. It also provided funds towards covering some of the publication costs of the main report to enable distribution as described below.
Reporting and governance of the project was within usual RCN processes, and engagement with HEA representation was conducted regularly, in line with the agreed contract.

The output from the project was the publication of an ‘education and training framework for fertility nurses’, to be used to enhance nursing practice and continuing professional development for nurses working in fertility services both in the NHS and the independent sector across the four countries of the UK. The report was produced in hardcopy and is also available in pdf form which can be downloaded from the RCN web site.

Communication and dissemination strategy

The RCN has promoted the framework through its membership communications bulletins and forum newsletters (see Figure 1.1 below). Informal feedback to date has been positive, and that the framework work is proving popular, as well as a useful tool for considering career progression.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publicity</th>
<th>Reach/readership</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09-Mar-13</td>
<td>RCN Fertility Conference and publication launch</td>
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<tr>
<td>15-Mar-13</td>
<td>RCN web news story: launch of RCN framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>20-Mar013</td>
<td>Nursing Times news story</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar-13</td>
<td>March edition of RCN Bulletin: article promoting the framework (pg. 14)</td>
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The framework was launched at the Fertility Nursing Forum National Annual Conference in March 2013, with paper copies distributed to all attendees (120), and the Fertility Nursing Forum Committee.

RCN also distributed 2 copies to each Fertility Clinic (112 units) across the UK.

The Framework is signposted on RCN website and the following sites:

https://www.zotero.org/groups/siped/items/KSMFQEDP

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority and Health Education Authority have also offered to provide a link from their webpages (currently being actioned).

An online assessment of downloads will be conducted at six months and 12 months after the launch of the product, to ascertain usage, which will be followed by a questionnaire to relevant members to gather feedback on utility of the product. Interim feedback for March 2013 (475 downloads) and April 2013 (523 downloads) is encouraging.

A number of the Fertility Nursing Forum Committee will be attending the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology Conference being held in London in July 2013, and plan to use opportunities to distribute copies of the framework to European nursing colleagues.
One of the project team has been invited to the INSIGHTS Conference to be held in the UK in October 2013, providing a further opportunity for further dissemination.

**RCN/HEA seminars**

Following the successful launch of the framework, the RCN events team engaged with HEA to facilitate three seminars. These interactive networking workshops were designed to integrate the new framework into the practice arena, and were aimed at nurses, managers, educationalists and sonographers involved in fertility services across the UK. They were to be facilitated by the RCN and sponsored by the HEA. Figure 1.2 outlines the main activities associated with promotion of the event. However, despite extensive marketing, uptake was poor and a decision was taken to cancel the events and return the grant to HEA.

<table>
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<th>Figure 1.2: Marketing activities for RCN/HEA fertility nursing framework seminars</th>
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<tr>
<td>• mini flyer into all (120) delegates packs at RCN Fertility Conference (9 March 2013);</td>
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<td>• launch of framework at Fertility Conference – workshops were mentioned during the presentation (9 March 2013) and copies distributed;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• forum newsletter, distributed to forum members;</td>
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<td>• microsites on RCN webpage advertising the events and on the front page of RCN website;</td>
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<td>• letter and copies of the framework sent to the major fertility centres across the UK;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• email campaign sent to 1,116 recipients (members of RCN Fertility Forum, past delegates from 2013, 2012 and 2011 RCN Fertility Conference with appropriate jobs titles).</td>
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**Impact analysis**

The reach of the publication will be measured by monitoring the number of downloads on the website and hard copy dissemination. The RCN will also explore a longer-term evaluation to assess the impact of the framework on career development for fertility nurses. This will begin with the distribution of a questionnaire to relevant members 12 months from launch.

**Conclusion**

The enhancement of continuing professional development for nurses working in specialist areas of healthcare continues to be an imperative towards enhancing the quality of UK healthcare in the future, a goal to which the RCN is fully committed.

We warmly welcomed the engagement with HEA on this project, the support and expertise shared with the project team, as well as the grant towards the workshops and publication which made a significant contribution to the successful completion of this project.