

Using apprenticeships to support nursing careers in social care

Ros Heath – Director of Landermeads Nursing Home.

About Landermeads Nursing Home

We support people on the journey of dementia and have different households designed to match people depending on where they are on that journey. Each household supports people balance emotional and clinical wellbeing with the aim to deliver a quality of life.

We also have a household for younger adults living with a learning disability and one for younger adults with complex needs including mental health and neurological conditions. We're one of a handful of homes in the UK accredited specifically with the Huntingdon's Association.



How and why did you develop the nursing associate (NA) apprenticeship opportunity?

We've always been passionate about social care nursing and the importance of giving it the credibility it deserves. We knew we had support staff who would make excellent registered nurses (RN) but couldn't apply for a traditional approach for various reason, some being:

- they couldn't give up a salary or had a young family
- they hadn't been in academic learning since school which wasn't a good experience
- they lacked confidence in their ability to succeed.

We wanted to create clinical career progression, so this was the ideal opportunity. Once qualified our NAs could balance emotional and physical health using their knowledge off an individual and because their roots were in care, they had a relationship with all the staff making a reality out of bridging that gap.

Several years on, we have a team of 17 qualified NAs and a further five student nursing associates (SNAs). Our nursing retention is excellent and means we have continuity and a strong and effective clinical team.

How have you embedded the role in practice?

We support family members (residents) with long term conditions, which means there's an element of stability in the role. NAs can monitor family members (residents) clinical situations and contribute to discussions about support needs whilst having the oversight of our RNs who lead, co-ordinate, assess and plan. This set up allows NAs to have autonomy in their role giving them the space to develop their skills.

The beauty of growing our own NAs is that they understand and believe in our ethos of support and embed this in their clinical approach, they understand that quality of life is a priority, and this comes from balancing emotional and clinical needs.

What impact has this had on the care you provide??

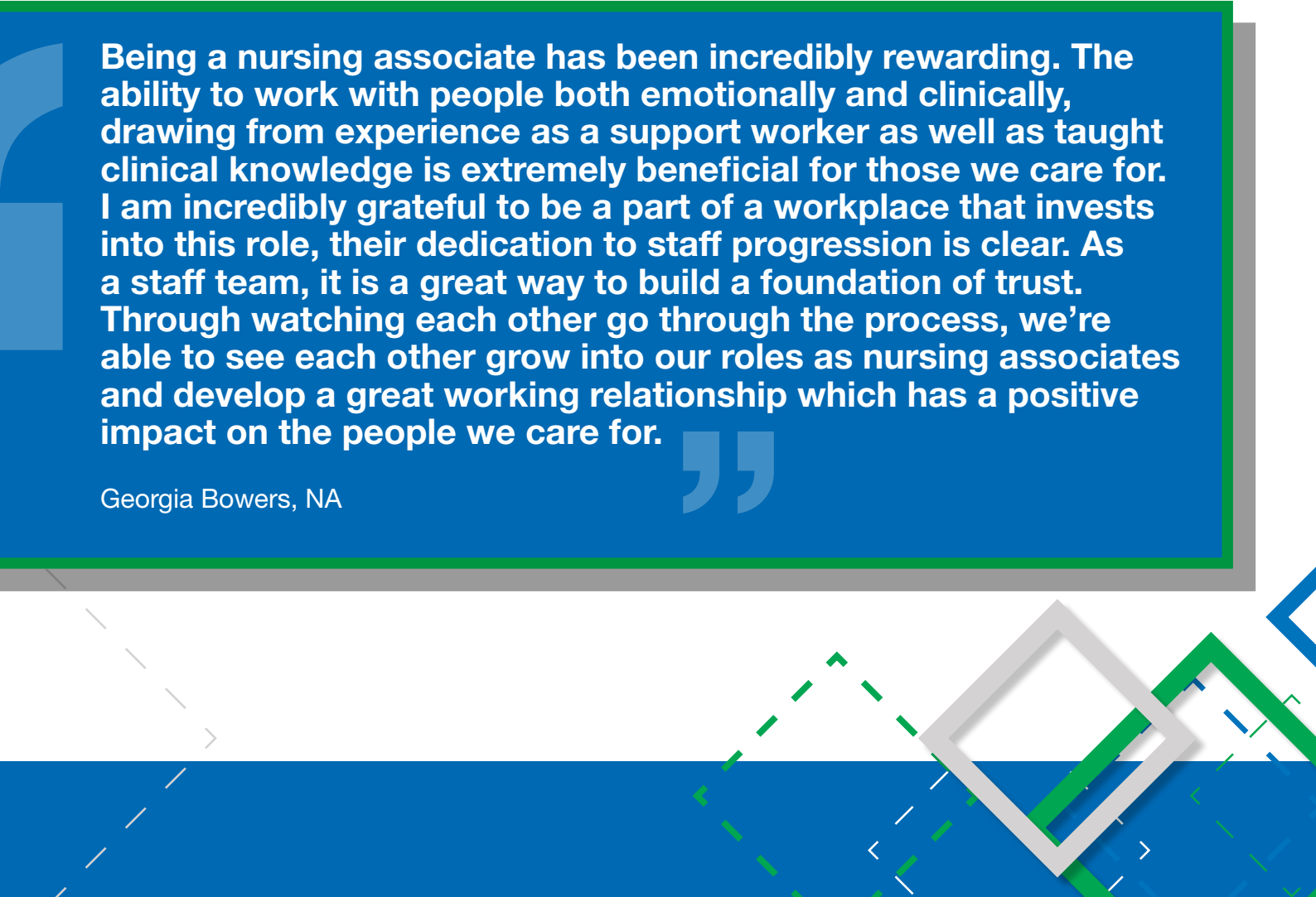
The effect on our nursing workforce has been immense and the NAs are role models to other staff, it's has made nursing a desirable career progression.

We have staff queuing up for the next opportunity and the quality of our nursing care has significantly improved because we have the time to make and action decisions that enhances the quality of life for our family members (residents). Admissions to hospital are minimal and early discharges always prioritised – quite simply, family members (residents) live and die well because we understand their needs therefore, we can tailor their support.

The NAs are also able to articulate this impact, hear from a mother and daughter who have both been inspired to complete the NA qualification at different stages in their lives:

Being a nursing associate has been incredibly rewarding. The ability to work with people both emotionally and clinically, drawing from experience as a support worker as well as taught clinical knowledge is extremely beneficial for those we care for. I am incredibly grateful to be a part of a workplace that invests into this role, their dedication to staff progression is clear. As a staff team, it is a great way to build a foundation of trust. Through watching each other go through the process, we're able to see each other grow into our roles as nursing associates and develop a great working relationship which has a positive impact on the people we care for.

Georgia Bowers, NA



The nursing associate apprenticeship is a great investment for both me and my employer. It's equipped me with the essential skills and knowledge needed to provide high quality care and allows me to grow both professionally and personally. One of the most rewarding aspects of my role is being able to support our family members (residents) holistically, meeting both their emotional and clinical needs. Knowing that I can make a real difference in their wellbeing and quality of life gives me a sense of fulfilment. For my employer, it has meant building a skilled and compassionate workforce that enhances the care we deliver and strengthens our team's capabilities for the future.

Caroline Bowers, NA

How do you continue to offer career development to the nursing associate workforce?

Career progression from NA to RN has always been a challenge as the route has meant that, if this is to happen, we lose a NA for two years while they qualify as a RN and this is an expensive investment although a valuable one.

We have done this and moving forward we're going to work with the Open University as they offer an apprenticeship which requires only a day a week release and means that we keep them as part of the clinical team. In addition, two of our NAs have opted to follow a degree apprenticeship in leadership and this too uses a model which is only a day a week.

What do social care employers need to know about funding?

There is funding currently available from NHS England which doesn't cover the whole cost but makes a significant contribution. As we have a house for learning disabilities, we're able to access funding at a higher rate. Current support from NHS England is:

- For each SNA, an employer will be eligible for a total funding sum of £8000 over two years (£4000 per year)
- For SNA working at least 50% of their practice time with people who have a learning disability and/or autism, an employer will be eligible for a total funding sum of £15800.00 over two years (£7900.00 per year)

In addition to this the university fees can be paid through the levy scheme.



What are your future nursing workforce plans?

We'll continue to invest. We have a further four staff who are waiting to start the NA apprenticeship in January 2025. This means that we have a robust approach to progression planning which takes into consideration we have some RN who are approaching retirement. If we continue to offer the RN degree apprenticeship (RDNA) our existing NAs can become RNs and fill this gap and support new NAs in their role.

In addition, we are committed to promoting the value of this career progression, we have one NA on an advisory committee with the RCN and several who've spoken about their journey at both local and national level.

We have student nurses and SNAs on placement and our NAs and RNs take a practice supervisor role – this promotes social care nursing and gives us a chance to share the passion for what we do.