

National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Healthcare Professionals Working in Police Custody Settings

Case Study

North Wales Police

In North Wales, the provision of healthcare in police custody is currently under review. The NOS were used to review current custody nursing practice and to support the development of a Forensic Nurse Practitioner role. It was proposed that in future, the NOS will provide a standard by which the quality of staff and operations could be measured.

The Situation

North Wales Police covers a wide geographical area. The healthcare in police custody is delivered by combination of employed nurses and on-call retained FMEs.

The model of service delivery is currently being reviewed with the aim of expanding the role of custody nurses. Initially, the development of all custody nurses to become Forensic Nurse Practitioners (FNPs) was explored. However, this was considered to be impractical and costly, raising questions such as how the FNPs would keep their skills up-dated. For example, there were concerns that this could lead to a need for constant refresher training, particularly as there may not be sufficient opportunities to put the full range of forensic skills to regular use.

Therefore, the current aim is to have 6 FNPs out of a total team of 16 custody nurses. The FNP role is seen as a career progression route for the custody nurses. It is also intended to combine the role of custody nurse with occupational health in order to provide sufficient breadth and interest (e.g. to help with retention of good quality staff and to make better use of the nurses' time).

These developments mean there is a clear need for measurable standards of performance so that the police, public and detained persons can be assured that practitioners have the right skills.

The Aim

The aim was to use the national occupational standards (NOS) to support the development of the Forensic Nurse Practitioner role, including the development of role descriptions, recruitment and selection, and performance management.

Competences are already being used for police officers and staff, in particular as part of their Performance Development Reviews (PDRs) based on the Integrated Competency Framework (ICF) software. Therefore it seemed a logical next step to use the NOS in the same way.

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The Action

The Senior Custody Nurse and one of the Custody Nurses systematically reviewed all the NOS in the Skills for Health Functional Map and matched them to existing in-house competences. This was found to be a useful process, and highlighted where there are gaps in the current competences, and also identified aspects of the NOS where amendments would be suggested.

The Results

Detailed feedback on the draft NOS and those imported from other Skills for Health frameworks was recorded. The content of the NOS for healthcare in police custody were found to be generally good. The NOS imported from other Skills for Health frameworks were also found to provide a useful description of the more generic aspects of healthcare, although it was noted that some may describe longer term health care interventions (which may not be applicable given the transient nature of the police custody setting).

The Future

Mike Wilson, Safety, Health & Welfare Services Manager reported that the NOS will help in defining roles and the development of job descriptions. This will then make it possible to be more explicit about requirements in the recruitment and selection process, planning of induction and identification of on-going training and development needs. The NOS will be particularly useful as part of the Performance Development Review (PDR) process and for planning career progression and promotion. A clear career path will be vital to attract and retain the best staff.

Mike reported that reviewing the competences has helped the process of exploring the future of the service e.g. to 'think outside the box'. In the future, "the NOS will define the standard by which we measure quality of staff and operations".

Contact Details

For further information on this case study, please contact:

Mike Wilson, Safety, Health & Welfare Services Manager

Email: mike.wilson2@nthwales.pnn.police.uk
