

Nail Care, a new career choice at Level 2

The creation of the role of Nail Carer in South Birmingham, and a regulated qualification, the Level 2 Award in Nail Cutting and Care, is bringing benefits to a range of people, from those wanting to start their own business to those already working in a care role.



The background

Qualified Nail Carers provide a finger and toe nail cutting service for those who can't cut their own nails and do not have feet (or hands) with high risk clinical conditions that require a specialist treatment. This can include providing a service for older people, those with physical or learning disabilities and people with diabetes who have been assessed by a GP or other specialist clinical professional as being low risk.

South Birmingham NHS saw the potential to create the new independent role of Nail Carer when, in a bid to direct its resources and expertise where they were most needed, its podiatry services discharged more than 4,000 patients who only required routine nail cutting.

It was important to find a way to help these discharged patients to obtain affordable and safe routine nail care, because good foot and nail health brings a number of benefits, including improved mobility and a reduced risk of falls.

The outcomes

- nail care brings immediate and tangible benefits to patients. It can raise their self-esteem, and give them a sense of well-being. It may enable them to put on properly fitting footwear and become more mobile, even allowing those previously housebound to get out and about. It can also be an important social occasion for the client, and is a good opportunity for the Nail Carer to pass on useful safety information.
- patients book and pay for the service independently, at a place that suits them, such as their own home, day centre or a local pharmacy
- people working in areas such as social care, beauty, pharmacy and nursing support can add the new qualification to their skills and gain added recognition in their jobs and satisfaction from their work.
- the role of the Nail Carer also offers individuals the opportunity to set up their own independent business concentrating solely on nail cutting and care. It allows them to make a modest income, and offers flexibility since they can take on as many clients as they wish, and work the hours that suit them.
- the new role and nationally recognised qualification has brought economic and social benefits to both clients and Nail Carers, freeing up NHS resources while enabling small independent businesses to thrive, and providing a safe affordable, high-quality service to those who need it.

How they did it

The Trust identified the scope of the role as falling between that of a beautician or pedicurist, who would not be able to cut the nails of patients with, for example, low-risk diabetes or fungal infections, and that of a footcare or podiatry assistant.

South Birmingham NHS worked with Birmingham Metropolitan College to set up a training course, with the goal of creating accredited independent Nail Carers who could be recommended to patients by the NHS.

Across Birmingham, the course opened to anyone interested in providing a nail care service. It particularly appealed to those from a health and social care background.



“Skills for Health’s work in bringing the project together and facilitating it has really made a difference, because it persuaded the Awarding Organisations that it was worth investing time in the role.”

Amanda Cadge
Podiatry Clinical and Professional Lead,
Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Trust

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The course proved successful, and South Birmingham NHS approached Skills for Health to help them achieve national recognition for the Nail Carer role. The new regulated qualification was accredited to the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) as a Level 2 Award in Nail Cutting and Care, and is now available to learners in England and Wales*.

During the course the trainees learn to properly assess their clients, to know when to refer them to a more specialist service, and how to cut and care for their nails. The service can include a light foot and hand massage and applying varnish. The role also offers added value, with Nail Carers being taught how to give health and safety advice appropriately.

*Note: as of the date of publication, three Awarding Organisations (Agored, CIBTAC and ITEC) are offering the qualification and all enquiries relating to availability of the course should be directed to them.



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