Improving retention for student and early career nurses

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Credit: City University London

Researchers from City, University of London are working in partnership with Barts Health NHS Trust to develop a new intervention which aims to improve nurse retention for students and early career nurses.

The three year project, which is supported by a grant from The Burdett Trust for Nursing and involves Professor Debra Salmon, Judy Brook and Dr Julie MacLaren from the School of Health Sciences at City, also hopes to empower students and early career nurses to build professional networks, work effectively within them and embed their sense of connectedness to their employing organisation.

As part of this, the research team aim to identify new and early career nurses at risk of leaving the profession through assessment of social

capital and access to professional networks, and then work with them to co-produce appropriate interventions.

These interventions will then be implemented and evaluated to determine feasibility and effectiveness from the perspective of those taking part. The project will start in September this year.

In particular the project will explore nurse retention in Barts Health, which provides care in five hospitals in east London and community services in Tower Hamlets. This inner city context offers an opportunity to explore interventions to support nurse retention in an area with above average annual turnover of 15.9% for nursing and midwifery staff.

The diverse nature of the Barts Health nursing workforce allows exploration of the impact of culture on turnover. Barts Health support 378 City, University of London student nurses in 945 placements each year, many of whom go on to work in the organisation.

Barts Health have recognised the retention issues among newly qualified nurses and have taken initial steps to limit turnover such as listening events, acting on feedback from staff surveys, an extended preceptorship programme and the implementation of a buddying scheme between students and qualified nurses. This project aims to build on these positive innovations.

Professor Debra Salmon, project lead and Deputy Dean of the School of Health Sciences at City, said:

"The project aims to empower the next generation of nurses to meet their potential through raising the profile of professional networks within the Trust. This innovative project will be led by a project group of student nurses, early career nurses, experienced nurse clinicians and nurse researchers. The co-productive nature of this work emphasises that

people are not passive subjects of research, and have assets and expertise which can help improve both process and outcome of the project.

"We hope that the project can ultimately empower early career nurses to capitalise on career development opportunities through co-production of, and participation in, the project. Increased skills and resilience of the participants will be sustainable through connections within the participating organisations and have the potential for generational impact. This project draws on strong partnerships in education and nurse leadership between Barts Health and City, University of London and will develop interventions that may be transferrable to wider settings throughout nursing."

Caroline Alexander, Chief Nurse at Barts Health NHS Trust, said:

"We are delighted to be working with City, University of London, a key strategic partner, on this really important project. Being able to really understand the needs of new and early career nurses to maximise opportunities to support them at a critical time in their career is very important for us as an organisation as we want to be the employer of choice for nurses in London. We can only do this by adapting and responding to the needs of our staff in this way. The coproduction approach to this research is important for us as we develop our approach as an organisation to staff engagement and empowerment to effect sustainable improvements. We are already seeing the impact of our current strategies playing out in our 2016 staff survey results."

Provided by City University London