

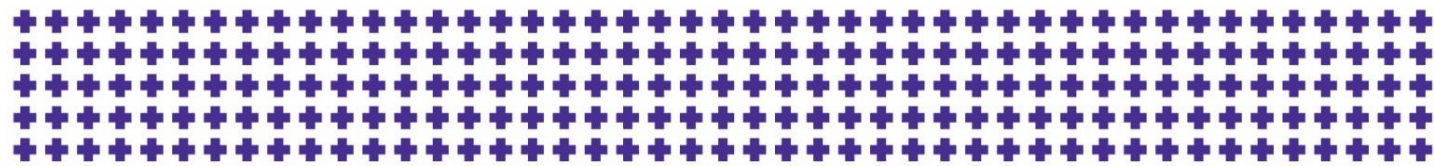
Community Nursing, Advanced Practice and Primary Care in the UK

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7th July 2026

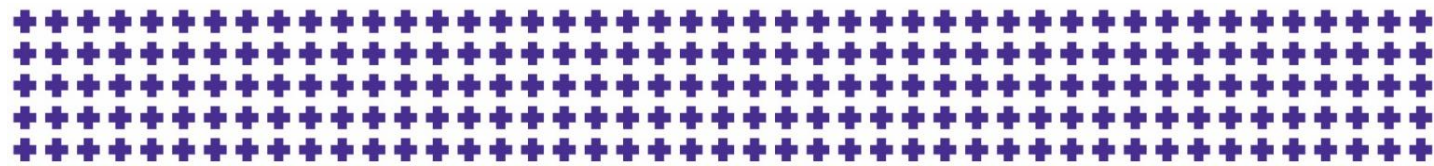




The Queens Institute of Community Nursing

- The Queen's Institute of Community Nursing is the oldest nursing charity in the world.
- It was established in 1887 to train District Nurses in England.
- Today, it supports nurses working across community and primary care settings to deliver high-quality, autonomous nursing care.
- Its work includes professional standards, education, leadership policy influence and support for nurses working close to people's homes and communities.

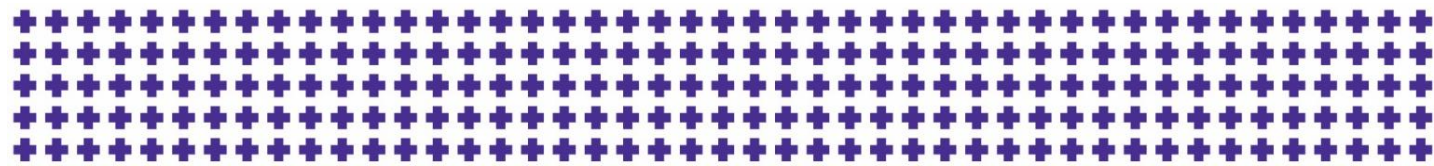




Why community nursing matters in the UK

- More care is now delivered outside hospitals, in people's homes, general practice, care homes, hospices, schools, prisons and other community settings.
- People are living longer, often with multiple long-term conditions and complex health and social care needs.
- Community nurses are central to prevention, early intervention, long-term condition management, palliative and end of life care, and reducing avoidable hospital admissions.
- The role requires clinical expertise, independent decision-making, leadership, partnership working and the ability to manage risk in less controlled environments than hospital care.

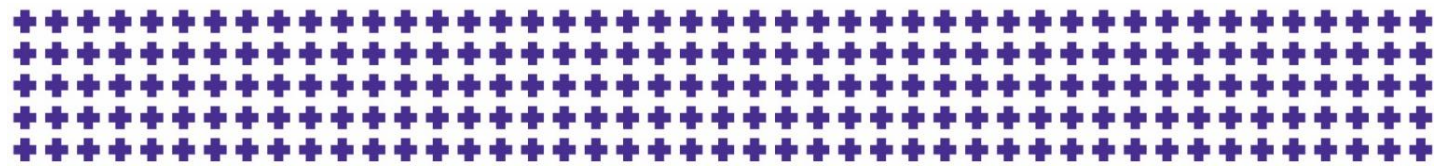




Education and training pathways for community nurses

- In the UK, registered nurses can undertake further post-registration education to develop specialist community expertise.
- Specialist Practice Qualifications prepare nurses to practise autonomously in defined fields of community nursing.
- The nine fields are District Nursing, General Practice Nursing, Community Children's Nursing, Community Mental Health Nursing, Community Learning Disability Nursing, Adult Social Care Nursing, Palliative and End of Life Care Nursing, Health and Justice Nursing, and Homeless and Health Inclusion Nursing.
- These programmes build on professional registration and include advanced assessment, clinical decision-making, leadership, care coordination and prescribing capabilities.
- The Nursing and Midwifery Council's updated standards for community nursing Specialist Practice Qualifications were approved in 2022 and set out the knowledge, skills and attributes required for specialist community practice.

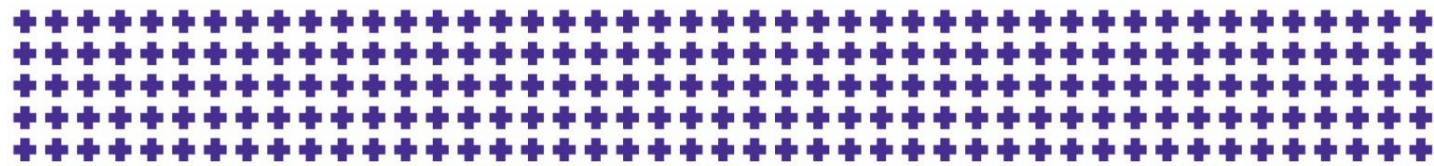




Expansion of nurses' responsibilities in primary and community care

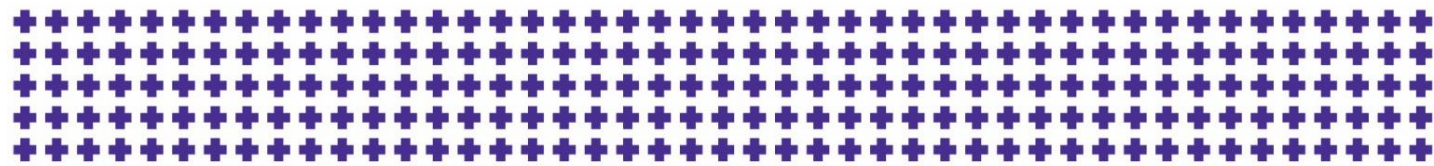
- Nursing roles in primary and community care have expanded over time in response to changing population needs, workforce pressures and the policy direction to provide more care closer to home.
- Community nurses now routinely manage complex caseloads, lead teams, coordinate care across organisations and make independent clinical decisions.
- Many specialist community nurses are independent prescribers.
- This expansion was intended to improve access, continuity, prevention, care coordination and timely management of people with complex needs.





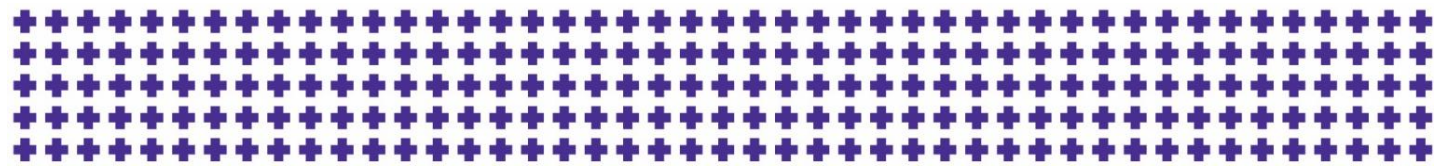
What changed and what problems were addressed?

- Before the expansion of specialist and advanced roles, care could be more fragmented, with greater reliance on medical review and hospital-based services.
- Patients with complex needs often required multiple appointments or referrals, creating delays and duplication.
- The development of autonomous community nursing roles helped services respond more quickly and holistically.
- Nurses are now better placed to assess needs, plan care, prescribe, escalate concerns and coordinate multidisciplinary support.



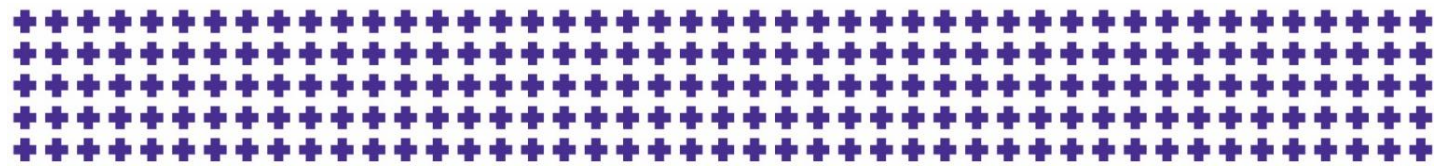
Benefits for nurses and patient care

- **For patients:** better continuity, earlier intervention, care closer to home, improved access and more personalised support.
- **For families and carers:** clearer coordination, practical advice and support in the home or community setting.
- **For nurses:** stronger professional identity, clearer specialist pathways, greater autonomy and opportunities for leadership.
- **For health systems:** improved use of professional skills, support for hospital avoidance, safer discharge and integrated community-based care.
- Specialist standards also support employers and educators by clarifying the skills and knowledge expected in different fields of community nursing.



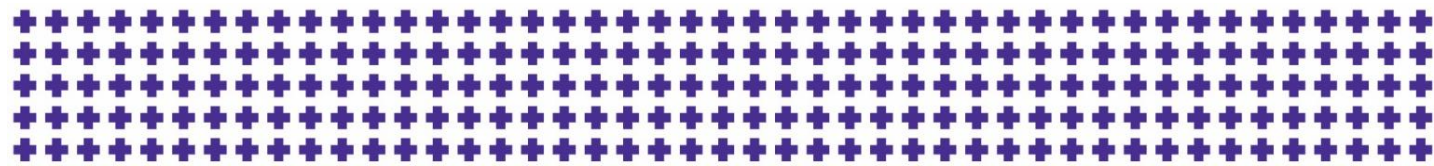
Collaboration with physicians and multidisciplinary teams

- Community nurses work closely with general practitioners, hospital specialists, pharmacists, allied health professionals, social care teams, voluntary organisations and carers.
- Collaboration is often organised around multidisciplinary team meetings, shared care plans, referral pathways and integrated neighbourhood or primary care teams.
- The nurse's role is not a substitute for medical practice; it is a complementary autonomous role focused on holistic assessment, care coordination, prevention and ongoing support.
- Effective collaboration depends on mutual trust, shared information, clear escalation routes and respect for each professional contribution.



Digitalisation in UK community and primary care

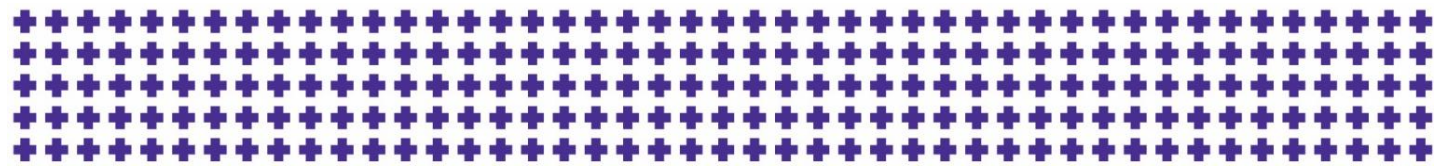
- Digital health care in the UK is advanced in some areas but remains variable across organisations and settings.
- Primary care has long used digital records, electronic prescribing and online access for appointments, repeat prescriptions and patient records.
- The NHS App, remote consultations, electronic patient records and data sharing are increasingly important parts of the health and care system.
- For community nursing, digital tools can support mobile working, safer documentation, communication across teams and more proactive care planning.
- However, challenges remain around interoperability, digital exclusion, staff confidence, connectivity and reducing documentation burden.



Remaining challenges and future priorities

- Workforce shortages and recruitment pressures remain significant across community services.
- There is a need for greater visibility and recognition of community nursing as a specialist and advanced area of practice.
- Education pathways must be funded, accessible and consistently implemented across regions and fields of practice.
- Services need better digital infrastructure, shared records and more time released from administration into direct care.
- Future development should focus on prevention, health inequalities, integrated neighbourhood care, leadership and support for nurses working autonomously in complex settings.





Closing message

- Community nursing is essential to safe, personalised and sustainable care closer to home.
- Specialist and advanced community nursing roles enable nurses to respond to complexity, lead care and improve outcomes.
- The UK experience shows the importance of national standards, education pathways, professional leadership and collaboration across health and care systems.

