

Improving standards of care in the NHS



NOCN has been working in partnership with York Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust since 2015 to develop the NOCN Level 2 Diploma in Fundamental Care Delivery in Acute Settings. Now that the first cohort of learners has progressed successfully, we are able to review how effective the diploma course has been.

This important project has two main objectives: to ensure best practice in acute care, such as for short-term medical treatment for acute illnesses or injury, or to help patients recover from surgery; and then to further improve care by attracting and retaining the best staff as skilled Health Care Assistants (HCA).

A number of learners on this programme have now completed their Diploma and have been able to improve their skills and the quality of their caring practice. Here are two personal case studies which exemplify the process and outcomes of the training and demonstrate the value of the NOCN diploma in career progression.

Rebecca Smart

Rebecca Smart works as an HCA in Selby Hospital Out-Patients Department. Prior to commencing in post, she worked as an administrator in the physiotherapy department. Rebecca decided that she wanted a challenge and applied for the role in out-patients directly when it was advertised. Due to her lack of experience, she did not think that she would even get an interview, but she did and was successful. Rebecca completed her NOCN Level 2 Diploma in Fundamental Care delivery in Acute settings on the out-patient pathway in less than 12 months.

Rebecca describes her experience:

“I absolutely love working as an HCA in this department! I love working with a wide variety of different patients every day and I have learned so much and so many new skills since I started. We run 21 different

clinics per month, so there are differences every day. The biggest challenge so far has been learning how to take a manual BP successfully to achieve one of my OSCEs, but I got there in the end.

The NOCN qualification was quite challenging, but I learned a lot about myself. I learned how motivated I could be to get things done. It gives you an understanding of the different roles of others around you and you get a glimpse of what it is like to be a Staff Nurse and the decisions you have to make. I thought the qualification was quite difficult for people like me with no healthcare background. I particularly found the wording hard to understand at times. I have also never done any reflective accounts before and I found these really challenging. However, I have had excellent support from Karen, my assessor and I couldn't have done it without her and the rest of the team here.

I would like to go on to do a Level 3 qualification and maybe progress even further. I would also consider moving to a different department to gain more experience."

Matt Webb

Matt Webb is a Band 2 HCA, who works on AMU (Acute Medical Unit) at Scarborough Hospital. He joined the Trust in September 2014, having been recruited via the Generic HCA Interview process. Matt initially worked on CCU (Coronary Care) for eight weeks and was then transferred to Graham ward, which was the winter escalation ward. When Graham ward closed in early 2015, he was again transferred, this time to AMU.

Matt completed his Care Certificate during his time on Graham ward and commenced his Level 2 qualification in April 2015. He has now undertaken and completed the NOCN Level 2 Diploma in Fundamental Care Delivery in Acute Settings, following the in-patient pathway.

Matt explains:

"Prior to starting with the Trust I did not have any care experience and was working as a doorman. My mother-in-law is a nurse and she encouraged me to apply, as she thought I had the right temperament to work in care. I was successful at interview and started on Coronary Care, followed by Graham ward, before finally transferring here to AMU in 2015. I enjoy working on AMU and I like the fast pace of work on here and learning about all the acutely ill patients. I like the way you can really see the difference you make, you can come on duty and a poorly patient is admitted and by the time you leave your shift, the patient is stable and ready for transfer to the wards. I have learned so much on this ward, particularly how to prioritise and not get flustered when the workload seems overwhelming.

I completed the Level 2 NOCN award last month. It has opened my eyes about how many laws and policies and procedures we have to follow to keep our patients safe and how complicated it is to care for patients in the acute environment.

The award is an excellent stepping stone to help you progress further and it has encouraged me to look further into education in health care. I am currently applying for an OU place to complete my nurse training and have also considered a Band 3 or 4 post if the opportunity arises."

The learners on this programme found the Diploma useful and the NHS employer benefitted from HCAs with improved care standards. NOCN continues to work with the NHS to develop essential healthcare products including apprenticeships.

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