PREFACE

‘Inclusion, Partnership & Innovation’ is a very apt title for this the third briefing paper to be produced in support of the Welsh Assembly Government’s Strategy for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting. The concepts from which the title derives are central to the way that Learning Disability Nurses in Wales fulfil their role as part of the team that supports people living with learning disability.

Since the publication, in 1983, of the Learning Disability Strategy for Wales, huge strides have been made towards improving the care of people within our country who live with a learning disability. I would like to take this opportunity to declare my recognition of the central role that Learning Disability Nurses have played in the success of that strategy. There is more work to be done before our task of modernising services for this client group is complete, and I have every confidence that Learning Disability Nurses will continue to play a crucial role in successfully completing that work.

I commend this document to all who have responsibility for delivering learning disability nursing services, and look forward to reviewing the progress that you make in achieving the vision it sets out.

Jane Hutt
Minister for Health and Social Services
Welsh Assembly Government
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It is with great pleasure that we add our personal endorsement to this Strategic Framework for Learning Disability Nursing in Wales. The document is fully supported by both the Office of the Chief Nursing Officer, Welsh Assembly Government and the Nurse Executives Wales Group.

This important ‘Realising the Potential’ Briefing Paper has been developed on our behalf by the All Wales Senior Nurse Advisory Group (Learning Disability). We thank them for an excellent piece of work, and one that will provide an essential vehicle for nursing leaders to ensure that we continue to appropriately develop the Learning Disability Nursing profession in Wales.

Learning Disability Nursing has evolved over the years in response to continuous changes in our clients’ needs and consequent service developments. We are proud of the way that this branch of our profession has adapted and diversified over time, in such a way that our clients’ interests are always at the centre of what we do. We are sure that the clear vision for Learning Disability Nursing that is set out in ‘Inclusion, Partnership & Innovation’ will provide guidance that ensures that this tradition continues in the years ahead.

Rosemary Kennedy
Chief Nursing Officer
Welsh Assembly Government

Susan Elworthy
Chair of Nurse Executives Wales Group
In July 1999 the National Assembly for Wales published "Realising the Potential", its Strategy for Nursing in Wales into the 21st century. The document states the Assembly’s aspiration for the Nursing profession in the Principality:

"To realise the full potential of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting in order to meet, in collaboration with others, the future health needs of the people of Wales."

The strategy sets out for the nursing profession in Wales five supporting Aims that need to be achieved in order to realise the strategy. These are:

1. Improving the Environment of Care
2. Ensuring High Quality Services for All
3. Encouraging Independent and Reflective Practice
4. Developing Existing and New Career Pathways
5. Demonstrating the Value of Nurses

Inclusion, Partnership and Innovation: A Framework for Realising the Potential of Learning Disability Nursing in Wales provides guidance for supporting and developing Learning Disability Nursing and nursing services in Wales.

The framework will support individual nurses, the teams in which they work, service managers and commissioners of services to develop patterns of working which represent best practice. The All Wales Senior Nurse Advisory Group (Learning Disabilities) will utilise this framework to promote and further develop the Learning Disabilities Nursing profession in Wales, within the context of the clinical governance agenda. This will lead to the development and promotion of quality, client centred services.

This document is informed by Caring for the Future: The Nursing Agenda - Learning Disability Nursing Action Plan (1997), which identifies that there is a clear need for a modern and flexible service for people with learning disabilities within Wales. It seeks to provide a framework which will bring together current Welsh Assembly Government policy initiatives which effect Learning Disability Nursing and nursing service delivery.

These initiatives include:
- Fulfilling the Promises (2001)
- Improving Health in Wales - Structural Change in the NHS in Wales (2001)
• Flexibilities for Joint Working between Health and Local Government (1999)
• NHS Wales Putting Patient First (1998)
• Better Health Better Wales (1998)

The framework is also intended to be an instrument through which individual nurses and the services in which they work can review existing practice and develop initiatives that will meet the changing needs of people with a learning disability.

The principles outlined within the All Wales Strategy for People with Learning Disabilities (1983) remain relevant to the provision of learning disability services. These principles include the rights of individuals living with learning disability to:

• ordinary patterns of life within the community,
• be treated as individuals,
• access additional help from the communities in which they live and from professional services in order to enable them to develop their maximum potential as individuals,

Inclusion, Partnership and Innovation is intended to provide a reference and a framework for nurses and their services, which should be used to enable practitioners to reflect on, and strengthen, their role. Through this process the Learning Disability Nursing role will have added value for clients and colleagues alike.

The education of Learning Disability Nurses has evolved in response to the needs of the client group and continuous service development. Learning Disability Nurses work in multi-disciplinary and multi-agency environments and have, during the past decade, played a lead role in the development of clinical practice and modernising learning disability services in Wales. Their ability to adapt and diversify is a strength which enables them to work effectively. This framework fully recognises the ability, contribution and potential of the Learning Disability Nurse. It also endorses the way that Learning Disability Nurses have created real opportunities to transfer their skills across an expanded spectrum of health and social care services. This has both increased the range of opportunities for career development for Learning Disability Nurses and enhanced their reputation as flexible and adaptable practitioners.

Whilst the Learning Disability Nurse’s role is grounded in clinical practice, they also have an expanding responsibility in the provision of training and development, promoting positive working relationships to a range of other health and social care providers. It is Welsh Assembly Government policy that services for this client
group continue to be rooted in an ethos of partnership and equity. Consequently, Learning Disability Nurses need to further develop their roles within primary care services to influence positive outcomes for service users.

**Inclusion, Partnership and Innovation** is a framework to enable Learning Disability Nurses in Wales to reflect on their practice. This will sustain a position whereby the expectations of clients and carers are met. Such expectation includes the need for clients and others to be satisfied that Learning Disability Nurses are skilled, competent and knowledgeable in the assessment and provision of care and support of people with learning disability.

The value base that underpins Learning Disability Nursing requires nurses and services to involve clients and carers at all levels of their practice. This inclusion, enables nurses and the services in which they practise to be more responsive to the needs of the client.

Learning Disability Nurses and their services should work in partnership with clients, carers, other professions and agencies to identify need and provide care and support that is founded on best practice. Such partnership and collaboration in care will result in a seamless service for the client.

Learning Disability Nurses work in a variety of roles across a spectrum of statutory, non-profit, or private health care provision. This has the potential of inhibiting nurses and other professionals sharing innovative practice. Thus Learning Disability Nurses must develop effective networking systems to disseminate innovation, research and examples of good practice. This, in turn, will ensure good quality services for clients and carers.
SECTION 2

THE CHALLENGE

There are a number of key debates that will affect the role of the Learning Disability Nurse in the coming decade. It is imperative that nurses participate and take a lead role in future discussions, particularly in relation to the following themes and developments:

1. Ongoing initiatives to ensure that user involvement is given priority within the learning disability service development agenda.
2. The closure of all long-stay hospitals by the year 2010.
3. The developing Health and Social Care “Flexibilities” agenda.
4. A requirement to deal with changing patterns of need, with clients who have more complex care requirements, as a consequence of extended life expectancy.
5. The changing role of the Learning Disability Nurse as a consequence of professional nursing policy development.
6. An expanding independent sector that provides a range of services.
7. Emerging commissioning strategies that may arise as a consequence of the re-structuring of the NHS in Wales.
8. The need to optimise clinical and professional networking opportunities, nationally and internationally.
9. The development of new information technology that will support Learning Disability Nursing.
Within the context of this supporting aim, Nurse Leaders will actively support nurses to:

- Use and promote the development of integrated care pathways.
- Provide high quality training, advice and support to other agencies to promote and facilitate quality service environments.
- Acknowledge the influence they have on environments of care and ensure their practice demonstrates the highest levels of self-awareness.
- Actively promote and facilitate change where poor environments of care exist.
- Work in collaboration with others to ensure resources are focused on the client.
- Develop and implement consistent risk management systems in Wales that recognise the need to balance risk against an individual’s aspirations and personal growth.
- Ensure that they are competent to practice in the environments within which they work.

The specific Aims of this Framework follow. They relate to the supporting Aims of The Realising the Potential Strategy for Nursing in Wales.
Ensuring High quality Services for All

**Aim Two**

In partnership, all Learning Disability Nurses will work effectively with their clients and their client’s families to provide high quality, inclusive and measurable care.

The quality of nursing services will be judged by the impact that they have on the lives of people with a learning disability in enabling them to utilise their own resources to shape their own lives.

**Within the context of this supporting aim, Nurse Leaders will actively support nurses to:**

- Seek the views of the client, their families and the wider community in planning high quality services.

- Enable clients to access primary health care services.

- Develop partnerships with clients.

- Work in partnership with primary and secondary health service providers.

- Build partnerships and share information with relevant people, agencies and organisations, to maximise opportunities for inclusion, learning and collaboration.

- Help and support carers to promote their own health and wellbeing.

- Participate in developing services that are flexible and responsive to the changing needs of the client.

- Promote positive images of people with learning disabilities.

- Recognise their role in advocating for the client.

- Influence the development of local and national policies.
Encourage Independent and Reflective Practice

Aim Three

All Learning Disability Nurses will develop their practice in a reflective and evidence based manner. Their practice will be founded upon a standard of education, which enables them to function as equal partners with other health care professions, supported by continuing professional development and clinical supervision.

Reflective practice is the cornerstone for developing safe, effective practitioners and appropriate nursing services. It is through regular and structured processes of evaluating and reflecting upon practice that a culture of continuing professional development and service improvement will emerge.

Within the context of this supporting aim, Nurse Leaders will actively support nurses to:

- Demonstrate life long learning through the maintenance of a personal professional profile.  
- Use clinical supervision as a tool to manage clinical development, service standards and risk.  
- Recognise their professional boundaries, in order to support effectively people with learning disability, their carers, families and other professions.  
- Initiate and maintain processes of clinical audit and performance, monitoring, that support reflective practice.
Developing new and existing career paths

Aim Four

Existing career paths for Learning Disability Nurses in Wales will be enhanced, and new ones developed. Such career paths should allow senior staff to remain clinically involved if they so wish. They should also break down unhelpful barriers between education, research and practice, as well as between learning disability nursing and the wider health and social care context.

Registered nurses for people with learning disabilities have played a lead role in meeting the changing health and social care agenda within multi disciplinary and multi agency collaborative frameworks.

Nurses need to have a clear understanding of their role and the opportunity to develop their careers within a clinical, educational, managerial or research focus. This creates opportunities to transfer skills across an expanding spectrum of health and social care services and increases the range of opportunities for career development.

Within the context of this supporting aim, Nurse Leaders will create environments and cultures that support and enable nursing to:

- Develop Nurse Consultant posts to support the strategic development of the profession and service organisations.
- Develop Lecturer Practitioner posts to promote evidence-based practice within higher education and service organisations.
- Develop and promote innovative career pathways to reflect and respond to the changing needs of clients and service providers.
- Influence the strategic agenda in areas of education, research and practice.
- Encourage creative learning and development opportunities that will be constructive and appropriate.
- Implement mentorship and preceptorship systems that promote competent practitioners.
- Identify potential leaders and support their development through proper succession planning.
- Actively promote research projects that focus on clinical practice and clinical outcomes.
- Operate within Performance Management Appraisal Systems that relate professional development to the needs of the nurse, client and organisation.
Valuing the Role of Learning Disability Nursing

**Aim Five**

The unique value of the Learning Disability Nurse will be recognised and appropriately utilised to meet the holistic needs of people with a learning disability.

Learning Disability Nursing is the only profession whose education and practice is focussed around the needs of people with a learning disability of all ages. This enables the practitioner to identify and address a broad spectrum of need. Facilitating access for, and with, people with a learning disability as well as working in partnership, are skills Learning Disability Nurses are widely recognised for, and is supported by other agencies.

Within the context of this supporting aim, Nurse Leaders will actively support nurses to:

- Recognise and appreciate the unique contribution, which learning disability nurses make in promoting and maintaining the health of people with learning disability.
- Work in partnership with other service providers within a multi-disciplinary and multi-agency collaborative framework.
- Empower clients to actively participate in developing appropriate packages of care.
- Participate in clinical research and encourage nurses to seek opportunities to share and publish their findings through effective networking systems.
- Celebrate their achievements and innovations.
SECTION 4

NEXT STEPS

The All Wales “Strategy for Learning Disability Services” (1983) is underpinned by sound principles that have stood the test of time. The Advisory Group to the Welsh Assembly Government that developed the consultation document, “Fulfilling the Promises,” (2001) has reaffirmed the relevance of these principles to inform the ongoing Learning Disability Services modernisation agenda. “Inclusion, Partnership & Innovation” is intended to compliment these key documents. The vision that it sets out is intended to ensure that Learning Disability Nurses continue to make an optimum contribution to the care of people living with Learning Disability.

The aspirations and aims contained within this Framework are supported by the Chief Nursing Officer, Welsh Assembly Government and the Nurse Executive Wales Group. They are committed to ensuring that the vision set out in the document is realised.

The Chief Nursing Officer and the Executive Nurses have tasked the All Wales Senior Nurse Advisory Group (Learning Disability) to work with managers within services to translate this vision into tangible, continuous and sustainable improvements in patient care.

Action Plans to facilitate the effective implementation and audit of these aims will be produced on an annual basis by the All Wales Senior Nurse Advisory Group, and evaluation reports will be presented to the Nurse Executive Wales Group and the Chief Nursing Officer at the end of each year.

An interim formal review of the framework will be undertaken in 2006/2007, with a final review and evaluation conducted in 2011/2012.

Nurse Leaders are confident that, given the appropriate resources, the aims outlined within this Framework document will be achieved over the period of the next decade and that this will benefit all stakeholders in the Learning Disability Nursing profession.
REFERENCES


Membership of the All Wales Senior Nurse Advisory Group (Learning Disabilities)

The All Wales Senior Nurse Advisory Group (Learning Disability) is constituted as a sub-committee of the Nurse Executive Wales Group. It supports the work of the Nurse Executives by providing them, and the Chief Nursing Officer to the Welsh Assembly Government, professional learning disability nursing comment and advice.

Current membership:
Andy Bell, North East Wales NHS Trust
David Coyle, University of Wales College of Medicine
Ian Ferris, Bro Morgannwg NHS Trust
Mick Fisher, Health Professionals Wales
Dave Hawkins, Pembrokeshire and Derwen NHS Trust
Andrew Hopkins, Gwent Healthcare NHS Trust
Paul Hosker, Conwy & Denbighshire NHS Trust
Stephen T. Hughes, North West Wales NHS Trust (Chairman)
Brian Jones, University of Wales Bangor
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Ian Mansell, University of Glamorgan
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The Contribution of the following former members of the Advisory Group is acknowledged:

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