



(W07) MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS COMPETENCIES A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

Multiple Sclerosis Specialist Nurses (MSSN) were first appointed within the NHS in 1992. Funding largely depended on partnership working between the NHS, commercial, and charitable organisations. While the benefits of MS nurses were widely recognised there was no formal support or education package to facilitate professional and service development.

In April 2001 “Specialist nursing in MS – the way forward” was launched in the House of Commons. This document provided guidance for the development of MS specialist nursing posts, and has become accepted as the key reference for developing MS specialist nurse services in the UK.

In July 2003, competencies for MS nurses were launched to provide a valuable, guided learning tool to facilitate the individual and the post, as well as promoting the wider provision of MS services across the UK.

In October 2004 The NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework (NHS KSF) was introduced to use in development review. One of the main principles which the NHS KSF has been based on is being able to use and link with current and emerging competence framework. The aim of this project was to demonstrate the benefits and challenges we experienced utilising the MS competency framework.

In our experience the benefits provided a structured framework, which facilitated:
clinical supervision, clinical governance, driver for change, benchmarker and evidence based practice.

Although we recognised the challenges would be unique to each individual we identified management support, time / travel, identifying a clinical supervisor and long-term commitment to be individual to our experience.

Nationally there is a wide variation in how MS nurses’ deliver a service within their organisation, i.e centre of excellence for MS, teaching hospitals, district generals and primary care trusts. Therefore each area of practice would have to utilise their available resources accordingly to maximise the benefits of implementing this tool.

Audrey Butterfield, MSSN¹

Gale Stephens, MSSN²

¹Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Trust
St. Lukes Hospital
Blackmoorfoot Road
Huddersfield, West Yorkshire HD4 5RQ
United Kingdom

²Leeds Teaching Hospital (Leeds, United Kingdom)