

I would like to share with the panel my observations and subsequent questions asked at one of the recruitment drives held at the nurse education department.

In the late spring of 2017 I accompanied my daughter to one of two evening recruitment presentations at the general hospital. On reflection I would estimate there were around 15 individuals attended the session with an expressed interest in potential application for nurse training.

The presentation was delivered by one of the nurse tutors from the department. The course was explained with clarity, however I would suggest that there were significant discrepancies and discriminatory factors to the provisions for the training of State registered adult nurse training (SRN) to that of Registered Mental Health Nurse training (RMN).

At the very early stage of the presentation it was noted that students wishing to apply for RMN training the course fees at Chester University would be that of £9,500 per year plus living and travel expenses all of which would be payable by the individual student. In complete contrast the presenter advised that the RGN training would be paid by the health department adding that this training is based on Island.

For those wishing to take up training it was also identified that RGN students would have the opportunity to enrol on the hospital bank system which would allow them to have some paid work alongside gaining experience of ward/ departmental areas of the health department.

Again, in complete contrast it was noted that RMN training would be off Island which would not in my opinion give ease or opportunity for these students to work on a bank system, to have some additional financial income or indeed experience other than when returning to the island for the practical placements identified within the course requirements.

Application forms had been left on the tables for attendees to express an interest in accessing either of the 3year degree training courses. The forms were differentiated by colour in relation to either RMN or RGN training , my observations were that those who had initially attended the evening with an interest in Mental Health pushed aside the application forms accompanied with ripples of conversation discussing how financially they wouldn't be able to afford the training others commented that leaving the island would not be an option for various reasons one being that of family commitments.

To summarise it is apparent that there are significant inequalities to the present training needs within health. The concept and drive to " grow our own" is Definitely an unfair and un balanced system at present, I would suggest little if no growth will come about to address the mental health needs of islanders should the situation remain . I do However applaud the drive for general health nurses and believe that the present intake and training programme for general health nurses will flourish which can only be a Positive outcome for the Islands health service but there is a need to recognise that as individuals we are all entitled to the equal delivery of physical and mental health care.

Over recent years there has been financial input for psychological initiatives which is also a positive, but this has not addressed the recruitment and training in respect of the profession of mental health nurses.

I would also like to refer to the health Ministers comments published in the JEP 7th July 2016 when he refers to "insufficient applicants to run Mental Health Nurse Training " He is quoted in the article as saying

" We have insufficient numbers at the current time to run a course in Jersey “. It is my opinion that from the first point of enquiry either by attending a recruitment drive or simply a phone call to the nurse education department the potential students are advised of the financial implications and geographic constraints it is my belief that these issues hold a huge impact on recruitment within mental health nurse training. Perhaps there is no evidential recorded numbers of such initial enquiries and that the minister’s comments are based on actual formal applications.

There is presently the debate surrounding the funding of university for island students which may be an outcome of supporting student nurse training, however my understanding that mature students wishing to do the nursing degrees are not within the remit of these discussions.

On a personal level I have worked within mental health as a mental health nurse for 42 years having worked in Jersey mental health services for 37yrs (recently retired). I can reflect on positive changes within the mental health arena, of significance is the shift to openly discuss educate and raise the awareness of mental health issues. Such has been frequently sanctioned publicly by ministers, however there remains a void in funding and training options for local students many of whom already work within the service as Health Care Assistants and hugely compliment the work force many are mature experienced individuals that in my opinion if given the opportunity would take up the degree training on Island.

With reference to the positive outcomes and recommendations of the Independent Care Inquiry,

I am aware of nurse vacancies within the Child and Adolescent Mental Health services which are currently being advertised and whilst this is a specialist area the requirements are, “relevant qualifications and experience in mental health “. Whilst the department may be relying on applicants from the UK in relation to the specialism, there needs to be a recognition of development in mental Health nurse training of island students taking into consideration not only the adult world of mental health but the future mental health needs of children and young people in Jersey. The CAMHS team work collaboratively with the children’s services including the looked after Children with the focus of the child's mental health.

My question would be, why the nurse education department cannot open the doors for students to train locally within the Mental Health Degree programme?

I find it difficult to accept the rationale of insufficient applications as I have outlined above. Perhaps there is a need for more accuracy in collating interest.

It is my understanding that there are tutors within the nurse education department who hold qualifications within mental health who support students undertaking a master’s degree in (MH) Should this be the case then I would assume they would be In a position to support the training for the degree programme on island for eligible mental health students . It may be the panel wish to explore the accuracy of this.

In relation to the notion of "growing our own" then there is a need to start with sowing the seed and investing in a Mental Health degree training programme on Island as a priority.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for taking time to read my letter with the hope that you will give some consideration to my comments.

With Regards

Janet Clark