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Working in partnership

Ian Peate FRCN OBE, Editor in Chief, *British Journal of Nursing*



If the NHS is to aspire to a health and care service offering people personalised care, care that is tailored to the needs of every individual and care that works for everyone, then working with people and communities is essential. Working in partnership with people and communities is a fundamental principle that underpins the *Code* (Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2018).

The concept of working in partnership has emerged as a foundation for delivering high-quality and patient-centered care. Collaboration and teamwork among health professionals, particularly in the realm of nursing, have proven time and again to be key in driving optimal patient outcomes.

In England, the Health and Care Act 2022 was devised to facilitate a more joined up, collaborative health and care system. The Act makes certain that every part of England is covered by an integrated care system, bringing together NHS, local government and wider system partners, so that collaboration and partnership are at the core of planning. If systems are to have impact, they have to build partnerships across traditional boundaries and work with people and communities, as well as those representing them, to engender real change.

The aim is to bring disparate parts of health and social care together to provide the public with co-ordinated and comprehensive access to skilled nursing support and delivery in the primary, secondary, social and independent care sectors (Sines, 2022).

One of the principal benefits of working in partnership is the ability to exchange knowledge and experience. Health and care professionals, each equipped with their specialised skills, all contribute to a comprehensive understanding of patients' needs. A nurse's clinical insight, a doctor's diagnostic expertise and a therapist's rehabilitative proficiency combine, providing a multifaceted approach to care that goes

beyond the potential of any single individual. When experts pool their insights, innovative solutions begin to emerge, leading to improved diagnosis, treatment and an overall positive patient experience.

Furthermore, effective partnerships between health professionals promote better co-ordination of interventions, a reduction in errors and enhanced patient safety. In a collective and collaborative environment, nurses can voice concerns, they can clarify doubts and offer suggestions, ensuring that the care provided is not only evidence-based, but also aligned to the unique needs of each patient.

Encouraging patients by offering them insight and knowledge about their condition(s), treatment options and self-care measures enables them to be seen as partners as opposed to passive recipients of care. Nurses, in their pivotal role, act as educators and facilitators, ensuring patients are well-informed supporters for their own wellbeing.

When effective collaboration between healthcare institutions and local communities occurs, this can lead to the identification of health disparities, targeted interventions and the promotion of preventive measures. It also builds trust.

Building and sustaining effective partnerships is not without challenges. Hierarchical structures, communication barriers and time constraints can impact the smooth flow of collaboration. NHS England (2022) provides guidance on working with people and communities. Obstacles can be overcome by promoting a culture of respect, open communication and mutual understanding.

By transcending professional boundaries and embracing collaboration, health and care professionals can create a synergy that enhances the quality of care delivered. It is important that health and care organisations and policy makers support effective partnerships and invest in creating environments that facilitate such collaboration. Every patient should experience the best possible care regardless of setting. When registered nurses listen to and work in partnership with the people to whom they offer care and support, they make this a reality. **BJN**

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