

# An evidence-based strategic approach to developing the specialist HIV nursing workforce

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## Background

The changing needs of HIV care and increasing financial constraints highlight the need to maximise the contribution of HIV specialist nurses to service delivery. Achieving this will depend on developing a sustainable HIV specialist nursing workforce.

## Identifying the problem

The *Advanced Nursing Contribution to HIV Services* (ANCHIVS<sup>1,2</sup>) study was completed in 2014. It was a three part multi-method qualitative study comprising: 1) 19 stakeholders representing professional or service user groups; 2) 42 nurse/physician pairs from 21 purposely selected HIV services; 3) HIV teams during site visits to five services.

### The study identified:

- ▶ Substantial challenges in developing a sustainable workforce to meet the expanding need for specialist nurse-led care.
- ▶ The lack of a clearly defined career pathway and recognised professional qualification in HIV care which impacted adversely on role development.
- ▶ The need for a strategic approach to workforce development supported by HIV specific educational opportunities and a clear career pathway.

## A strategic response

**The National HIV Nursing Association (NHIVNA) has led the development of two connected initiatives in response to the evidence:**

**1** The development of a national validated qualification in HIV care. The NHIVNA core and advanced level competency and work-based assessment programme has been developed in collaboration with the medical British Association of Sexual Health and HIV (BASSH) as part of an established training framework. The core competency programme is designed for nurses and midwives working in HIV across primary and secondary care settings. The advanced competency programme is designed to support advanced level practice in the specialist HIV nursing workforce.

**2** The competency programme has been incorporated into a unique document providing national guidance on advanced practice in HIV nursing for clinical and managerial staff, provider organisations and commissioners<sup>3</sup>. The guidance situates advanced HIV nursing practice within the wider HIV care context and is structured around four key elements. These collectively offer a framework within which to develop and deliver high quality advanced HIV nursing practice across acute and community sectors.



## Conclusion

We expect that this evidence-based approach will support a sustainable HIV specialist nursing workforce and provide a framework for other disease specialties.

<sup>1</sup> Funded by an educational grant from Viiv Healthcare <https://www.viivhealthcare.com/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nhivna.org/documents/Competencies-Guidelines/advanced-practice/Advanced-Nursing-contribution-to-HIV-services-short-report-Nov-2015.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Funded by M-A-C AIDS Fund <https://www.macaidsfund.org/>