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The work of nurses in top management positions is becoming increasingly complex. This is a result of the rapidly changing healthcare context in which nurses work, together with the changes which are taking place in nursing including those from the recommendations of the Commission on Nursing.

Specifically in relation to senior nursing and midwifery management the Commission on Nursing recommends that responsibilities should include the following.

- › providing strategic and clinical leadership and direction for nursing and midwifery and related services which results in the delivery of effective, efficient, quality-assured and patient-centred nursing and midwifery care
- › developing a shared sense of commitment and participation among staff in the management of change, the development of nursing and midwifery services and in responding to the health needs of patients
- › developing the concept of care planning in collaboration with other professionals
- › participating in the overall financial planning of the health services provided, including the assessment of priorities in pay and non-pay expenditure
- › ensuring that the appropriate in-service programmes and ongoing learning needs are met for all assigned staff
- › ensuring that modern standards of clinical nursing and midwifery care are in operation and that regular monitoring of nursing and midwifery care is undertaken. (7.20, page 15)

The **primary purpose of the role** in top management is to assume responsibility for the nursing service and to provide strategic leadership for this activity.

### Scope of the role

The role involves

- › developing and maintaining a network of co-operative relationships at local, national and international level and amongst individuals, groups and organisations
- › anticipating and interacting with key stakeholders from multiple clinical and administrative services in developing mission, strategic plans, budgets, policies and structures
- › fostering multi-disciplinary working relations and strengthening the interface between different locations of care – hospitals, community etc
- › establishing and communicating a vision for nursing, setting direction and creating commitment, innovation and entrepreneurship
- › understanding rapidly changing environmental trends, strengths and weaknesses of the organisation and future opportunities
- › creating an environment where individuals with diverse backgrounds and needs work harmoniously and co-operate together, establishing objectives and role clarity
- › allocating appropriate authority and autonomy, encouraging mentorship, coaching and rewarding excellence
- › changing nursing management structures and processes when and if required
- › encouraging a commitment to lifelong learning and a developmental approach to staff
- › promoting and commissioning research towards health and social gain.

### Timescale of impact

Long-term impact of decisions: up to five years.

### Critical success factors

- › timely and appropriate communication
- › maintaining high visibility and personal commitment
- › showing persistence in a changing environment
- › articulation of a shared vision
- › recognition and development of staff potential
- › using analytical ability
- › thinking strategically and seeing multiple relationships between factors
- › ability to lead and empower individuals and groups.

## Change trends and challenges

### *The trends*

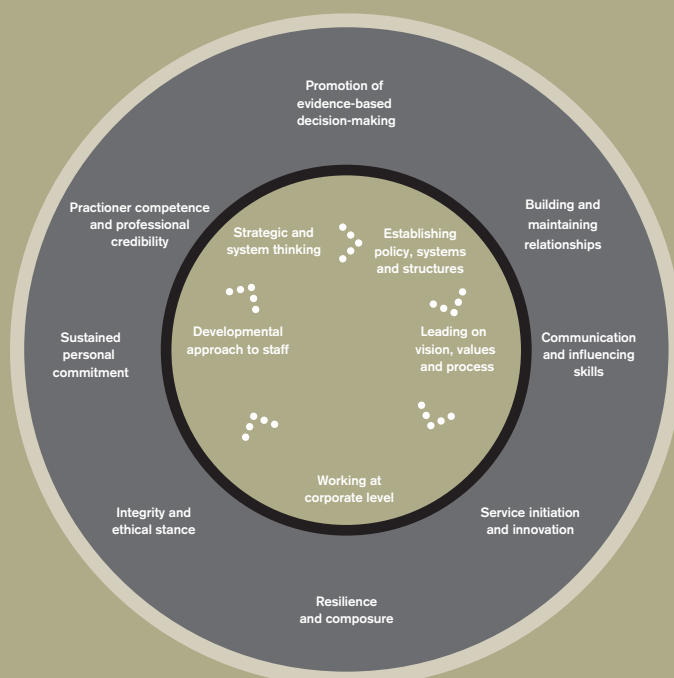
- › greater emphasis on service planning
- › need to measure and manage outcomes – development of clinical audit and evidence-based practice
- › focus on continuous quality assurance and risk management
- › new management models – moving from tribalism to partnership
- › increased use of technology and rapid technological advances
- › devolved accountability
- › emphasis on value for money
- › consumerism and associated litigation
- › move towards a corporate culture
- › transition to primary health model of care
- › increasing threats/violence in the workplace and attendant concern for staff welfare and health and safety issues
- › move towards multi-skilled, multi-disciplinary and integrated working teams

### *The challenges*

There is a need for

- › high-level team building skills to develop effective teams at all levels of the service
- › frequent and effective communication
- › high visibility and leading by influence
- › inspiring a shared vision in a professional group with diverse needs
- › initiation of policies for the introduction of clinical career paths, skill mix, staff retention strategies
- › active promotion of the optimal use of technology for nursing purposes
- › negotiating for and delegation of resources for the nursing service
- › ensuring that systems and policies are in place to meet demands of the service
- › promoting organisational change and devolution of responsibility
- › ensuring that all nursing systems comply with the requirement for freedom of information and informed patient choice
- › development of research skills and funded nursing research
- › advancing a systematic approach to training, development and career planning.

To respond to the scope of the role and the trends and challenges in the health service and in nursing, the following generic and core competencies are specifically required for those holding top nurse management positions in the health service. We have identified five critical competencies for this level of nursing management.



## Definition

Sees the bigger picture of service delivery and appreciates the interconnectedness of issues. Looks ahead and anticipates substantive issues. Adopts a proactive forward planning approach to service delivery.

## AREAS OF APPLICATION

- › Anticipation of health trends and developments and sees the service implications
- › Seeing the need to develop new services across traditional function and sector boundaries
- › Anticipation of staff resource shortages and attendant service consequences
- › Ensuring a systematic approach to succession planning

# 1



## Strategic and system thinking

### Indicators of MORE effective performance

- Scans the environment and uses a wide range of 'sensing' methods to identify and anticipate trends and keeps abreast of wider national and international and health service trends and taps into research sources
- Regularly reviews population profiles and other needs analyses data and adjusts plans accordingly
- Makes a link between apparently separate service issues and devises a coherent strategy in response
- Deals with concept and complexity confidently; described by others as far seeing, intellectually sharp
- Identifies patterns and trends in complex data
- Can draw up credible pictures and visions of service probabilities for the future
- Puts together a convincing strategic plan for the development of the service and adopts anticipatory strategies to deal with future probabilities
- Can see past short-term solutions to the possibility of unintended consequences
- Anticipates and systematically provides for management succession and talent development at all levels
- Is comfortable thinking across traditional service concepts and boundaries; challenges the assumptions.

### Indicators of LESS effective performance

- Reactive to trends and changes
- Confines attention to local and single profession, or service-specific issues and reacts to identified needs or confines analysis to an annual planning cycle only
- Fails to see the underlying or dominant issues in trends and developments
- Tackles issues on a single item agenda basis and misses the connections
- Takes a lot of time to absorb the full picture; more comfortable dealing with concrete issues
- More comfortable dealing with the here and now
- Doesn't present a coherent future view
- More comfortable making tactical organisational plans
- Puts in place short-term solutions to issues but these cause further problems later on
- Approaches management succession on a reactive or 'ad hoc' basis, does not address the wider talent development issues
- Take the current service concepts and boundaries as the given and works within these.

## Definition

Designs and implements structured policies and systems for the management of service delivery which ensure clear role accountability for service levels, quality and decision making discretion.

### AREAS OF APPLICATION

- › Ensuring that responsibility and accountability for service delivery is delegated down to the lowest level possible
- › Initiating and designing policies and systems for management
- › Initiating and negotiating new services and new models of service
- › Ensuring that each management level carries clear accountability and responsibility
- › Ensuring that resources are planned and managed efficiently, including reorganising services to achieve efficiencies



# 2



## Establishing policy, systems and structures

### Indicators of MORE effective performance

- Puts in place policies and systems to allocate and monitor resources effectively (including resource priorities)
- Plans financial budgets using high levels of business management expertise
- Can marshal resources effectively to get things done and achieve results (finding people, materials, etc) and ensures that new service programmes are accurately specified and well structured
- Puts in place policies, systems, structures and practices which enable managing from a distance
- Sets clear objectives and measures for the service
- Puts in place and acts on processes for monitoring progress and results. Ensures that there are feedback loops for all main service elements
- Clearly assigns responsibility for areas of service to the appropriate management levels, including responsibility for critical tasks and decisions
- Is clear and confident in delegating both routine and important tasks to one's staff and management team
- Is generally comfortable letting the management system run without intervening and can work through others without directly intervening

### Indicators of MORE effective performance

- Assigns enough authority for people to make their own decisions and lets them finish their work without intervening unless asked or absolutely needed
- Can orchestrate multiple activities at once to accomplish a goal
- Allocates resources (staff, financial, material, services) effectively in emergency or crises situations.

## 2



## Establishing policy, systems and structures

### Indicators of LESS effective performance

- › Allocates resources in an incremental or historical way; is reactive to individual pressures and lobbies
- › Lacks confidence in financial and resource planning, over reliant on financial department view
- › Doesn't know how to access key resources effectively, wastes time or lacks initiative in this regard and allows proposals to go forward which haven't been fully worked up or evaluated
- › Doesn't think or manage in terms of policies, practices and systems and prefers a hands-on management style and has to be physically available for things to go well
- › Doesn't use goals and measures to manage the service and doesn't set standards and ways for staff to measure their own performance
- › Doesn't systematically track system performance and doesn't provide feedback on work in progress
- › Acts as though people cannot perform without close supervision. Isn't clear who is responsible for what, just throws tasks at people
- › May delegate but then 'micro-manages' and intervenes inappropriately without letting staff finish their work

### Indicators of LESS effective performance

- › Lacks a plan or systematic approach for working through others
- › Delegates without passing on the authority, does not communicate the 'bigger picture'; afraid to trust the judgement of others and intervenes too frequently, cutting off valuable learning opportunities
- › May not anticipate or see how multiple activities come together. Own performance decreases as the number of task activities increases
- › Responds in an incoherent or disorganised way in a crisis.



## Definition

Articulates a compelling vision for the role and contribution of nursing to the service. Presents a positive view of future possibilities. Creates an enthusiastic and committed work climate.

### AREAS OF APPLICATION

- › Taking the lead in transforming the nursing service. Leading by articulation of core values and beliefs
- › Contributing positive views on the future direction and contribution of nursing at both local and national levels
- › Building a strong team ethos for the nursing service
- › Taking the lead on standards setting and implementation
- › Leading and managing change in services

## 3



## Leading on vision, values and process

### Indicators of MORE effective performance

- Articulates a strong vision of the core nursing contribution and purpose and creates positive and optimistic views about the future contributions of nursing
- Charts the way ahead, establishes, milestones and stages on the journey to the vision, celebrates progress
- Communicates the vision and purpose in a way that is meaningful at all service levels
- Creates a climate in which people want to do their best, shares ownership, visibility and successes. Pushes these values and behaviours down the management system
- Acts in a manner consistent with the compelling vision and values (e.g. empowering, changing own behaviour in line with the vision, etc)
- Is comfortable taking a strong position on core service issues but will encourage direct and tough debate at service levels
- Builds strong team ethos; usually operates in a team format; talks 'us', 'we' and the team versus 'I'; runs participative meetings and processes to get the team motivated and enthused. Ensures that credit for success is shared

### Indicators of MORE effective performance

- Makes each individual feel his/her work is important. Knows how to motivate different individuals. Invites input from others and empowers others (pushes down tasks and decisions)
- Displays a consistent and appropriate set of core values and beliefs on the job and during all circumstances. Leads on these standards by own behaviour and rewards these values in other. Intervenes decisively where standards of behaviour, performance or attitude contravene the espoused positive climate.

## 3



## Leading on vision, values and process

### Indicators of LESS effective performance

- › Lacks conviction or passion in communicating the core purpose and contribution of nursing. Also more comfortable in the 'here and now', not clear about future possibilities
- › Doesn't think through on an operational level how the change needs to happen and does not highlight progress
- › Can't simplify communication enough to help staff at all levels understand the vision or strategy
- › Less concerned about the working atmosphere, more of a driver just interested in work outputs, doesn't see that success is shared and celebrated
- › Doesn't act as though he/she really believes the vision or holds the values strongly at a personal level
- › More comfortable following or avoiding conflict. Too concerned to be liked or about what others might say and lacks the confidence to confront service issues at senior management level
- › Fails to create a common mind set, rejects team processes in favour of too much 'one-to-one' management and individual rewards. Doesn't create team synergies
- › Has more of a 'one size fits all' mentality, doesn't know what motivates individuals

### Indicators of LESS effective performance

- › Displays personal values that aren't fully consistent with either the organisation or the needs of the particular service. May not reflect enough on own values and their behavioural impact. May not respond to the values of others. Lets malcontent and negative behaviours fester
- › Not confident enough to address conflicting views or values.

## Definition

Makes a full contribution to the executive management of the services by taking an inter-professional perspective and adopting a corporate overview.

### AREAS OF APPLICATION

- › Actively engaging with the broader health and social gain agenda
- › Making a full contribution to the executive management team
- › Acting or deputising for the senior manager in their absence
- › Fronting for the organisation with external agencies
- › Making a full contribution to wider organisation and service strategies

# 4



## Working at corporate level

### Indicators of MORE effective performance

- Shows a broad knowledge and strong understanding of the overall service system and the environment it operates within (sees the wider context)
- Is knowledgeable about and proactive in contributing to the development of current and future organisational policies and practices
- Understands and can articulate the origins and reasoning behind key policies, practices and procedures. Knows how the organisation works and understands the culture of the service
- Works skilfully across organisational service and professional boundaries. Keeps lines of communication open and knows how to get things done through both formal and informal structures and channels
- Builds coalitions of interest and works for 'win win' solutions in complex interdisciplinary or service conflict areas. Able to adopt a service overview rather than a profession specific perspective
- Confident and committed in representing the organisation's perspective, policies and position with external agencies
- Is sensitive to and skilful in handling complex political situations. Sees corporate politics as a necessary part of the role and works the process well. Shows anticipation and judgement in politically sensitive areas

### Indicators of MORE effective performance

- Understands how senior managers think and can talk their language and develop appropriately positive approaches. Is comfortable dealing with more senior managers, external bodies and government departments.

## 4



## Working at corporate level

### Indicators of LESS effective performance

- Shows a limited knowledge about the overall service system and the wider environment that it operates within. Looks inwards too much
- Limits personal input to profession or service specific policies and practices. Doesn't see the wider context or contribute to the broader agenda
- Rejects or misunderstands the complexity of large organisations with multiple stakeholder views. Shows a limited understanding of how and why things work the way they do in the organisation. Too accepting or passive in this area
- Doesn't get things done or have an influence outside own area. May not negotiate well within the organisation
- May lack the interpersonal skills or organisational intelligence to build platforms of common interest. May be seen as overly protective of own professional or service areas. Doesn't operate with the greater good in mind
- Uncomfortable when asked to represent the wider organisation in public settings
- Could be seen as excessively political and not being trustworthy. Shows a naiveté in either ignoring or contravening political sensitivities
- May be too direct and not consider impact on others or anticipate responses

### Indicators of LESS effective performance

- Lacks confidence when working with more senior managers and may not perform at personal best. May not understand the senior executive view nor know how to influence them effectively. Says and does things that don't fit the situation.

## Definition

Has a strong focus on developing the contribution of staff at all levels. Is a good judge of capability and promotes talent. Creates a positive climate for the development of performance and contributions at all levels of the services.

### AREAS OF APPLICATION

- › Recruitment and promotion of staff into key positions
- › Performance appraisal and review, including management development planning
- › Developmental tasking and stretching of staff
- › Promoting a continuous improvement culture
- › Actively championing and promoting learning throughout the system
- › Putting in place systems to capture and disseminate learning



## 5



## Developmental approach to staff

### Indicators of MORE effective performance

- › Judges capabilities and talent well, generally succeeds in promoting the more capable performers appropriately
- › Defines the strengths and limitations of individuals accurately after reasonable exposure, accurately forecasts future potential
- › Provides challenging or stretching tasks deliberately for able subordinates. Encourages able subordinates to take on new roles or accept developmental moves
- › Takes a deliberate interest in the career development of able staff and promotes development and training activities/ opportunities
- › Puts in place a systematic approach to training and development
- › Strongly promotes continuous professional development, champions and resources this effectively
- › Encourages middle managers to systematically develop front-line managers capability and regularly reviews the effectiveness of this effort
- › Encourages an ethos of staff initiative and promotes service related project work to channel improvement and innovation contributions

### Indicators of MORE effective performance

- › Promotes an emphasis on research-led practice at all levels of the service
- › Actively encourages staff contribution to professional conferences and other dissemination channels
- › Promotes an emphasis on quality improvement and continuous improvement in staff performance at all levels. Looks for feedback on own performance from staff at all levels
- › Promotes formal performance evaluation and review systems at all levels
- › Promotes a learning culture within service
- › Develops structures and systems to systematically capture and disseminate learning and best practices at all levels of the service
- › Encourages debriefing and discussion on service improvements at all levels
- › Contributes actively to the development of knowledge and learning within the nursing profession; encourages and promotes activities for professional development.

## 5



## Developmental approach to staff

## Indicators of LESS effective performance

- › Is less objective and analytical in judging staff capability, swayed by impression management and 'once off' views of staff. Promotes staff beyond their capabilities. Is non-specific and overly general in identifying staff strengths
- › Too focused on getting the job done 'here and now'. Keeps staff performing well but in static roles. Retains high performers too long, lacks ambition for own staff
- › Leaves training and development to the formal education system or delegates without sufficient personal tracking
- › Allows training and development to operate on an 'as demanded' basis
- › Leaves development of front-line managers to mid-level manager's discretion. Selectively 'champions' development for preferred staff
- › Sees new initiatives as coming from outside the system. Loathe to divert staff from routine operations
- › Sees service development as the prerogative of senior nurses only and favours a 'top down' initiative model, comments on poor performance only, mainly suspicious of new initiatives

## Indicators of LESS effective performance

- › Sees performance evaluation as a 'by exception' management activity. Lacks structure in reviewing performance. Sees performance review as a one-way process only
- › Allows learning and best practice in one area to go unrecognised in other areas; neglects to put in place systems or structures that will facilitate learning transfer
- › Tends to be too focused on 'here and now' operations to actively encourage systems for learning or continuous improvement
- › Doesn't encourage or allow staff to put time aside to debrief or discuss improvement areas
- › Fails to make a contribution to the development of professional knowledge and practice at local or national levels; is a passive recipient of new professional knowledge without making a reciprocal contribution.







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