

**Submission from the National Council for the  
Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery  
to the  
European Commission on the Green Paper on Workforce for Health**

The National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery is the statutory body responsible for the development and monitoring of the clinical career pathway for nurses and midwives in Ireland, and specifically for establishing frameworks for the development of Clinical Nurse and Midwife Specialist and Advanced Nurse and Midwife Practitioner roles in Ireland. The National Council sets the standards for the development of these roles and the educational and professional requirements of those who will be employed in them. The National Council also has a role in monitoring the development of these roles in relation to service requirements. It is in this context that the National Council making this submission to European Commission on the Green Paper on Workforce for Health.

The potential of nurses and midwives who comprise almost 40% of the healthcare workforce in Ireland to influence positively quality patient/client care and patient/client outcomes is large. Nurses and midwives are the first point of contact for many to the health system and nursing care is provided over a 24 hour period 7 days per week. Nurse's roles and scope of practice have evolved over time in Ireland in response to many imperatives most importantly the health service needs of the patient/client including those mentioned in the Green Paper such as changing demographics, developments in technology, migrant populations and emerging health needs. The contribution of nurses and midwives, through expansion of roles, in enabling the implementation of the European Working Time Directive cannot be underestimated. Both nationally and internationally the professions of nursing and midwifery have sought to avoid fragmentation of nursing roles and to develop practice through expansion of role rather than taking on "tasks" with subsequent certification of competence. Expansion of practice involves a broader holistic process both in relation to patient/client needs and the individual nurse. In 1998 the Commission on Nursing (Government of Ireland) set out a framework for the expansion of nursing and midwifery roles in Ireland through development of a clinical career pathway. In Ireland the clinical career pathway for nurses and midwives is staff nurse or midwife, clinical nurse or midwife specialist and advanced nurse or midwife practitioner (see table 1 for differentiation of roles).

Table 1. Clarifications of job titles, made to ensure consistency of terminology	
Title	Clarification
Staff nurse or midwife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Staff nurses or midwives work in clinical practice environments assessing, planning, delivering and evaluating direct care. They deliver care that is within their scope of practice and that they are educated, competent and have the authority to perform</li> </ul>
Clinical nurse or midwife specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The area of specialty is a defined area of nursing or midwifery practice that requires application of specially focused knowledge and skills that are both in demand and required to improve the quality of patient or client care</li> <li>■ This specialist practice encompasses a major clinical focus, which comprises assessment, planning, delivery and evaluation of care given to patients or clients and their families in hospital, the community and outpatient settings</li> <li>■ Specialist nurses and midwives work closely with medical and paramedical colleagues and can alter prescribed clinical options along agreed, protocol driven guidelines</li> <li>■ They participate in and disseminate nursing and midwifery research, and audit and provide consultancy in education and clinical practice to nursing and midwife colleagues and other members of the wider multidisciplinary team</li> <li>■ Specialist nurses and midwives in clinical practice have undertaken formal, recognised post-registration education at higher diploma level or above that is relevant to their areas of specialist practice</li> </ul>
Advanced nurse or midwife practitioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Advanced nursing and midwifery practice is carried out by autonomous, experienced practitioners who are competent, accountable and responsible for their own practice</li> <li>■ Advanced nurse or midwife practitioners are highly experienced in clinical practice and are educated to master's degree level</li> <li>■ They promote wellness, offer healthcare interventions and advocate healthy lifestyle choices for patients and clients, as well as their families and carers, in various settings in collaboration with other healthcare professionals, according to agreed scope of practice guidelines</li> <li>■ They use advanced clinical nursing or midwifery knowledge and critical thinking skills to provide best patient or client care independently through caseload management of acute and chronic illness</li> </ul>

### **Clinical Nurse and Midwife Specialist roles in health care in Ireland**

A clinical nurse specialist is a specialist in clinical practice who has undertaken formal recognised post-registration education relevant to his/her area of specialist practice at higher diploma level. Such formal education is underpinned by extensive experience and clinical expertise in the relevant specialist area. The area of specialty is a defined area of nursing or practice that requires application of specially focused knowledge and skills, which are both in demand and required to improve the quality of client/patient care. This specialist practice will encompass a major clinical focus, which comprises assessment, planning, delivery and evaluation of care given to patients/clients and their families in hospital, community and outpatient settings. The specialist nurse will work closely with medical and para-medical colleagues and may make alterations in prescribed clinical options along agreed protocol driven guidelines. The specialist nurse will participate in nursing research and audit and act as a consultant in education and clinical practice to nursing/midwifery colleagues and the wider multidisciplinary team (National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery, 2008)

Therefore the main core parts of the clinical nurse specialist role are:

- Clinical Focus
  - Patient Advocacy
  - Education & Training
  - Audit & Research
  - Consultancy.

To date there are 2,069 Clinical Nurse and Midwife Specialist posts in Ireland,

## Advanced Nurse and Midwife Practitioners in health care in Ireland

Advanced nursing/midwifery practice is carried out by autonomous, experienced practitioners who are competent, accountable and responsible for their own practice. They are highly experienced in clinical practice and educated to masters degree level (or higher). They promote wellness, offer healthcare interventions and advocate healthy lifestyle choices for patients/clients, their families and carers in a wide variety of settings in collaboration with other healthcare professionals, according to agreed scope of practice guidelines. They utilise sophisticated clinical nursing/midwifery knowledge and critical thinking skills to independently provide optimum patient/client care through caseload management of acute and/or chronic illness. Advanced nursing/midwifery practice is grounded in the theory and practice of nursing/midwifery and incorporates other related research, management and leadership theories and skills in order to encourage a collegiate, multidisciplinary approach to quality patient/client care. ANP/AMP roles are developed in response to patient/client need and healthcare service requirements at local, national and international level. ANPs/AMPs must have a vision of areas of nursing/midwifery practice that can be developed beyond the current scope of practice and a commitment to the development of these areas (National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery, 2000).

The four core parts of the role are:

- Autonomy in practice
- Pioneering professional & clinical leadership
- Expert practitioner
- Researcher

To date there are 120 Advanced Nurse and Advanced Midwife Practitioner posts approved by the national Council in Ireland.

See table 2 for core competencies of CNS/CMS and ANP/AMP roles.

Table 2. Core competencies	
Clinical specialist competencies	Advanced practitioner competencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Articulate and demonstrate the concept of nursing or midwifery specialist practice within the framework of relevant legislation, such as the <i>Scope of Nursing and Midwifery Practice Framework</i> (An Bord Altranais 2000b), <i>Requirements and Standards for Nurse Registration Education Programmes</i> (An Bord Altranais 2000a) and <i>Guidelines for Midwives</i> (An Bord Altranais 2001)</li> <li>■ Possess specially focused knowledge and skills in defined areas of nursing or midwifery practice at a higher level than that of a staff nurse or midwife</li> <li>■ Perform nursing or midwifery assessments, and plan, initiate and evaluate care and treatment modalities within agreed multidisciplinary protocols to achieve patient or client centred outcomes</li> <li>■ Identify health promotion priorities in their areas of specialist practice</li> <li>■ Implement health promotion strategies for patient or client groups in accordance with the public health agenda</li> <li>■ Accept accountability and responsibility for clinical decision making at advanced practice level through caseload management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Articulate and demonstrate the concept of nursing or midwifery advanced practice within the framework of relevant legislation, such as the <i>Scope of Nursing and Midwifery Practice Framework</i> (An Bord Altranais 2000b), <i>Requirements and Standards for Nurse Registration Education Programmes</i> (An Bord Altranais 2000a) and <i>Guidelines for Midwives</i> (An Bord Altranais 2001)</li> <li>■ Demonstrate advanced clinical decision making skills to manage patient or client caseloads</li> <li>■ Perform comprehensive health assessments, plan, initiate and evaluate care and treatment modalities to achieve patient or client centred outcomes, and initiate and terminate care episodes</li> <li>■ Identify health promotion priorities in their areas of specialist practice</li> <li>■ Implement health promotion strategies for patient or client groups in accordance with the public health agenda</li> <li>■ Use professional judgment to refer patients or clients to nurses, midwives and other healthcare professionals, and to healthcare agencies</li> </ul>

The National Council approves the qualifying standard in terms of educational and competency attainment required for specialist and advanced practice posts and adjudicates on whether individuals meet these requirements (National Council 2008) The post-registration educational standards for clinical specialist and advanced practice posts have been set at levels 8 and 9 respectively on the National Qualification Authority of Ireland Framework for Qualification equating to an honours Bachelors Degree/Postgraduate Diploma or equivalent and a Masters Degree or equivalent respectively .

These posts have been developed in line with service needs and in the interest of quality, integrated patient/client care. A multi-disciplinary approach to role development based on service needs analysis was utilised. These roles have received strong medical, multi-disciplinary and management support which has been essential in their successful development and implementation. Experienced and highly qualified nurses and midwives now have the opportunity to remain in clinical practice providing expert care which has provided such nurses and midwives with a clinical career pathway. This means that nursing and midwifery skills and competencies are being used appropriately within the health care system to provide high quality, patient focused care.

The National Council supports the development and expansion of nursing and midwifery roles to enhance patient/client care and meet emerging health needs. A key part of the processes for the development of these roles is that the service is required to justify the development of the post in the context of healthcare need. The National Council therefore supports the development of Clinical Nurse and Midwife Specialist and Advanced Nursing and Midwifery Practice roles in the health services on the basis of needs assessment of the population and contemporary evidence based approaches.

## **Implications for EU**

While Ireland has established frameworks and standards for expansion of nursing and midwifery roles in Ireland, the lack of standardisation of scopes of practice, functions, titling, remuneration and educational preparation across the EU militates against movement of nurses and midwives within the EU and the subsequent benefit of cross fertilisation of skills. The development of EU wide standards for specialist and advanced nursing and midwifery practice roles is an important development in developing the healthcare workforce.

A key part of the development of all nursing roles in response to health service need has been the broadening of nursing and midwifery scopes of practice to include prescribing of medication and requesting of diagnostic radiation. This is supported by legislative change in Ireland and is an important consideration for any region in the EU requiring development of their healthcare workforce to meet emerging needs.

The development of nursing and midwifery roles is central the creation of a workforce prepared to met the challenges of modern healthcare and to the creation and maintenance

of a quality health service and needs to be supported administratively at local, national and EU levels.

### **Bibliography and References**

Government of Ireland (1998) *Report of the Commission on Nursing. A Blueprint for the Future*. Stationery Office, Dublin.

National Council (2008) *Clinical Nurse/Midwife Specialists Intermediate Pathway*. Dublin: National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery.

National Council (2008) *Framework for the Establishment of Advanced Nurse and Advanced Midwife Practitioner Posts*. Dublin: National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery

National Council (2008) *Framework for the Establishment of Advanced Nurse and Advanced Midwife Practitioner Posts*. Dublin: National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery

This paper represents the views of its author on the subject. These views have not been adopted or in any way approved by the Commission and should not be relied upon as a statement of the Commission's or Health & Consumers DG's views. The European Commission does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this paper, nor does it accept responsibility for any use made thereof.