

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF NURSING OFFICER

Position Paper One

Values for Nurses and Midwives in Ireland, June 2016



Nursing and Midwifery Values in Ireland

This is the first in a series of position papers to be developed by the Office of the Chief Nursing Officer. This position paper, developed in collaboration with the HSE and the NMBI, describes the core values underpinning practice as determined by nurses and midwives in Ireland. These values will be reaffirmed and supported by all nurses and midwives. Processes will be put in place to ensure that all nurses and midwives reaffirm the values on a regular basis.





CHIEF NURSING OFFICER'S MESSAGE



I am delighted to publish the Chief Nursing Officer's first Position Paper - **Re-affirming Nursing and Midwifery Values**. I am particularly pleased that this initiative was prepared in partnership with the President of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland and the Office of the Nursing and Midwifery Services Director in the HSE.

The mission of the health system hasn't changed but the context within which we organise and deliver health services continues to evolve. The challenges we face requires a new way of thinking, one that looks beyond narrow sectoral interests and has the basic value of health at its heart.

What is important now is to accept our respective responsibilities and to lead. For a start, it is critical to ensure that values, not self-interest, drive our decisions and the way we behave, as individuals, but also as members of communities and organisations.

It is for this reason that collectively we engaged in a process of consultation with nurses and midwives to identify and agree the core values that underpin nursing and midwifery practice in Ireland. **Compassion, care** and **commitment** emerged as the key values that relate to nursing and midwifery. This position paper describes a suite of actions which over the coming years will help to continuously nurture these values in practice.

I would like to acknowledge the high level of interest by nurses and midwives in attending the consultation sessions; the recognition and support for the need to re-affirm the core nursing and midwifery values, and the very positive and constructive engagement and contributions from all those who attended.

People expect to receive nursing and midwifery care from compassionate, caring and committed professionals. This initiative is designed to enable nurses and midwives reconnect with and continuously affirm compassion, care, and commitment as their unique contribution to safe quality patient care.

Siobhán O' Halloran

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Chief Nursing Officer
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VALUES

Background

Values are the ingrained principles that guide the actions of nurses and midwives. Personal and professional values guide how professionals practice. Behaviours are determined by what one values. People are motivated to do whatever is valued.

Compassionate and competent nursing care of the sick and injured has a long tradition as a valued public service in Ireland. A number of reports (Leas Cross 2006, Lourdes Report 2006; UCHG 2013; Aras Attracta 2013; 2015; Portlaoise 2014, 2015) have challenged this concept of professional nursing and midwifery practice. The public expect and consider nurses and midwives as caring and compassionate in their dealings with patients. Leaders of nursing and midwifery in Ireland have collectively embraced the need for an initiative to address breaches of trust and create a culture for practice, management, regulation, and education that is set in re-affirming and committing to a set of core values.

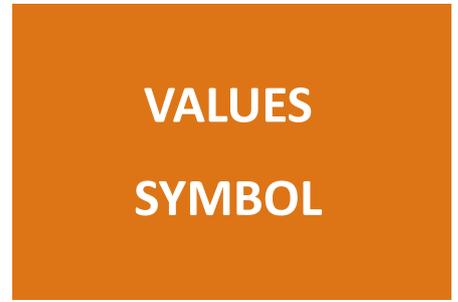
Purpose of the Paper

People like to work in organisations where values matter. This joint initiative to re-affirm nursing and midwifery core values, identified the values that serve as the cornerstones of nursing and midwifery practice in Ireland. The development of this position paper demonstrates the common and shared understanding of the importance of these values by the Department of Health in partnership with the main employer (HSE) and the regulator of nursing and midwifery (NMBI).

Values serve as the compass that sets the standards for making decisions and guiding an individual's behaviour. Shared visible values that are talked about affect how people behave. They energise people to go the extra mile and be proud of their work. Values need to be lived by all including the leadership of the nursing and midwifery professions and the broader health sector. The purpose of this initiative is to bring values to life and creating a culture where they can flourish and are supported across the health services for the benefit of the person.

This position paper identifies and endorses the core values of **Compassion, Care, and Commitment** at the heart of the nursing and midwifery professions. It also outlines a framework for supporting nurses and midwives to sustain and renew these values. The fact that nurses and midwives identified the core values as **Compassion, Care, and Commitment** in a time of change and development of complex healthcare delivery models, is both reassuring and challenging. Identifying the behaviours, some simple and some complex, associated with these values creates the expectation that nurses and midwives make choices on care options based on these values. These values and the associated behaviors therefore become the benchmark against which people, carers, healthcare practitioners, managers, employers, and other stakeholders may assess the professional practice of nurses and midwives.





Development of the Position Paper

This position paper sets out the core values and the behaviours that nurses and midwives in Ireland have identified. A national consultation process asked nurses and midwives to identify, agree and commit to core values that underpin practice in Ireland. Nurses and midwives, across all types of workplaces, were asked to reflect on the reasons why they became a nurse or midwife and to recommit to these values in practice. Reflecting on practice and agreeing core values gave nurses and midwives the opportunity to think about the small things that make a difference to the person with whom they engage, as well the opportunity to think about the behaviours and skills that demonstrate these values in practice.

The extensive national consultation identified and agreed **Compassion, Care, and Commitment** as the three core values that underpin nursing and midwifery practice in Ireland. The HSE and the NMBI are committed to supporting nurses and midwives to display and sustain these values in practice through employment and managerial processes, education programmes, standards of care and regulatory processes.

Re-affirming core nursing and midwifery values

A symbol has been created which denotes the values of nursing and midwifery in Ireland



The Celtic symbol of the Trinity knot represents the infinity and eternity of compassion, care and commitment as core values underpinning the professional practice of nursing and midwifery in Ireland. The symbol contains no beginning or end but the intertwined connection and dependence of the values to each other. Embraced within the Trinity knot is a heart that denotes health and care.



COMPASSION

Compassion means showing empathy and respect for the person to ensure that the dignity of the person is upheld at all times. The nurse and midwife upholds the trust of the person by providing care that is based on integrity, genuineness, kindness, comfort, and presence

Compassionate nursing and midwifery practice is characterised by an appreciation, sensitivity, gentleness, and deep concern that demonstrates an understanding of the person. Compassion compels nurses and midwives to support people by their presence, encouragement, and intervention. Excellence in practice is achieved by doing the right thing for people all of the time. This is demonstrated by using evidence to achieve the best outcome for the person. It is compassionate leadership in nursing/midwifery that never forgets that the most important part of the health service is the person. Nurses and midwives strive to provide high quality, compassionate care with an informed kindness to achieve excellent health and well-being outcomes.

Nursing and midwifery practice is rooted in the compassionate professional relationship that is provided to people where the nurse and midwife uses all of his/her knowledge and senses to achieve a quality health outcome. Part of being compassionate is ensuring that the nurse/midwife remains high-touch in a high-tech environment. Compassion is, therefore, a conscious activity of attending to and engaging with the person in a non-judgmental way respecting diversity and culture. The following behaviours have been identified to demonstrate compassion in practice:

- **Showing kindness and patience;**
- **Displaying interest and empathic concern;**
- **Understanding the person's perspective;**
- **Being non-judgmental;**
- **Being engaged and present with the person ;**
- **Prioritising the person's interest;**
- **Going the extra mile;**
- **Respecting cultural sensitivity and diversity;**
- **Promoting dignity and comfort ;**
- **Responding to anxiety and distress for the person and his/her family ;**
- **Developing trusting relationships ;**
- **Making and taking time for the person ;**
- **Being genuine in interactions with the person, families and colleagues.**

CARE

Care means having the required knowledge, skill and competence to connect with a person by genuinely listening to and communicating with the person, demonstrating safe evidence-based and collaborative practice

Care is an integral component of nursing and midwifery. Care is considered to be essence of nursing and midwifery practice. Care is a cluster of practices performed competently. Practicing caring nursing/midwifery is both a conscious thinking activity as well as a sensing process. The nurse/midwife uses his/her knowledge, skill and competencies to make a holistic assessment of a person. The nurse/midwife then uses this professional knowledge to make an evidenced-based decision on the appropriate action required, to make the interaction and to evaluate if it worked. The nurse/midwife uses his/her senses to see, hear, touch, and be present with the person.

There is a duty on each nurse and midwife to ensure they have the required knowledge and competence to perform their individual role in the healthcare team. A nurse's /midwife's ability to sustain their practice depends on having the appropriate knowledge and using this knowledge with confidence. Professional caring requires critical thinking. Critical thinking obliges a nurse or midwife to capture information, analyse this information, interpret it and act on it. In nursing and midwifery this involves using assessment skills, analytical skills and critically applying knowledge through logical reasoning to predict and make clinical judgments for care decisions. The ability to think critically, improve clinical systems, and decrease errors in clinical judgments are the core elements of quality and safe nursing practice.

The central focus of care relates to the sensitivity required in accepting and understanding the person's views of health through actively listening to the person. It also involves being sincere and open in regards to monitoring problems and to the choices available to people. The nurse/midwife interaction is characterised as unselfish care. One of the many things that nurses and midwives are really good at is providing comfort and maintaining their focus on people even in difficult situations. This assists in achieving the goal of nursing/midwifery which is to enable each person to achieve an optimum level of health and well-being and live out their lives in accordance with their own beliefs and values. Care is, therefore, attending to the needs of the person using an evidence-base in an unselfish attentive manner. The following behaviours have been identified to demonstrate care in practice:

- **Listening attentively;**
- **Being open (open communication);**
- **Understanding and responding to each person's holistic needs ;**
- **Assessing carefully and making precise clinical decisions;**
- **Ensuring evidence-based approaches to care;**
- **Getting to know the person as an individual;**
- **Advocating for the person;**
- **Knowing what to do and who to call;**
- **Being technically competent;**
- **Explaining procedures and options;**
- **Promoting health and wellbeing;**
- **Encouraging personal choice in decision-making**
- **Providing quality and safe care**

COMMITMENT

Commitment means having a person-centered approach to professional practice. This requires professional courage and a commitment to lifelong learning that is demonstrated by intellectual engagement. Commitment is further demonstrated by a work ethic that is underpinned by a passion and drive for professionalism to develop self and support teams with diligence and resilience

Commitment is about giving priority to the person requiring care rather than oneself. Commitment is associated with professional courage to do the right thing for people. It is having the capacity to be dedicated to the good of others and providing quality safe care. Nurses and midwives manifest this through a commitment to life-long learning and a curiosity associated with professional development and intellectual engagement. In self-reflecting on practice, nurses and midwives appreciate how they make a decision about care choices and how this commitment demonstrates leadership in their interaction with others.

Nurses and midwives display commitment through developing a therapeutic relationship with the person. They engage in effective communication through patient-centered care. This engagement supports the person's ability to interpret and self-manage the health and illness journey.

As professionals, nurses and midwives are required to respond to and take a stand against incompetent and insensitive nursing/midwifery practice. What is done, when it is done and how it is done affects not only those who are cared for directly, but also the wider family and the communities. The expression of nursing and midwifery commitment is reflected in a work ethic of diligence, attention to detail, and a passion and drive towards professionalism. Valuing commitment in the nursing/midwifery care team creates a supportive environment for professionals who share a passion around a common purpose, are open to embrace change and bring a resilience of spirit to the care team. Commitment embraces professional responsibility. The following behaviours have been identified to demonstrate commitment in practice:

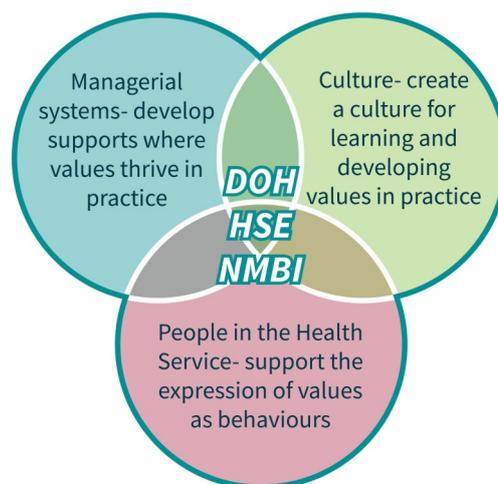
- **Being professional;**
- **Taking responsibility;**
- **Working within his/her scope of practice;**
- **Developing nurse-patient relationship;**
- **Providing individualised person-centred care;**
- **Giving hope;**
- **Engaging in effective communication ;**
- **Providing quality safe care;**
- **Pursuing learning as a lifelong endeavour;**
- **Displaying professional courage;**
- **Developing self as a reflective practitioner;**
- **Engaging in evidence-based practice;**
- **Being open to embracing change;**

Embedding the Values in Practice

Embedding the Values in Practice – Implementation and Review

Values need to be lived by those to whom they matter. In this initiative to foster a culture where the values are lived, there are **explicit strategies** and mechanisms for embedding these values throughout the health system. The strategies for achieving this goal are shared across the policy, education, practice, management, employment, and regulatory areas. Each of the partners to the initiative has committed to supporting the values in practice. A range of actions has been agreed. These include creating a culture for learning and developing the values in practice; developing managerial systems that support a culture where the values are fostered and create environments where they can flourish; and supporting people in the system to demonstrate the values in their practice.

The following partnership model is used to illustrate a mechanism for sustaining the Values in Practice



This values initiative will be driven through a number of actions including:

Creating a Culture

- The NMBI will include the values in documentation supporting the Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics and guidance standards for education and practice;
- The Department of Health supports a culture of safety, quality and kindness in the Code of Conduct for Health and Social Service Providers. The values being affirmed for nursing and midwifery will be included in the Code (currently in preparation by the DOH);
- The NMBI will develop an e-learning package on the values;
- The NMBI will embed the values in standard setting and the monitoring of education programmes.
- The education providers will include the values in programmes for undergraduates, in the Return to Practice programmes and the Adaptation and Induction programmes.

Embedding the Values in Practice

Developing Managerial Systems

- Nursing and Midwifery mission statements in the services will include the values;
- Directors of Nursing and Midwifery will commit to supporting a culture where these values will be fostered and create environments where the values can flourish;
- The HSE through the Nursing and Midwifery Planning and Development Units 's (NMPDU) will coordinate the distribution and discussion of the Position Paper with each Director of Nursing, Director of Midwifery and Director of Public Health Nursing (DPHN) for dissemination in their service areas.

Supporting People in the System

- The HSE will include the principles of values-based recruitment strategies in the recruitment of nurses and midwives;
- The Director of the Office of the Nursing and Midwifery Services in the HSE will support values champions across the care settings in the services;
- Directors of Nursing and Midwifery and DPHN's will review how best to provide care environments which reflect the values and support their practice;
- Options and approaches to including the values in future schemes for maintaining professional competence will be considered.

The HSE, the NMBI and the Department commit to sustaining the values in practice and to revisiting the implementation of the initiative on an ongoing basis.

Conclusion

People expect to receive nursing and midwifery care from compassionate, caring, and committed professionals who are attentive to the humanity of the other person. The quality of humanity is therefore demonstrated in behaviours that convey compassion, care and commitment. There is a justified expectation that professionals demonstrate these values to each other and society. Nurses and midwives need to constantly review and assess that they are doing the right thing for their patients all of the time. Each nurse and midwife is asked to reconnect and balance compassion, care, and commitment as their unique contribution to safe quality patient care.



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**Thank you to all the nurses and midwives who contributed to the consultation process,
the preparation of the values initiative and the development of the position paper.**

Further information is available on www.health.gov.ie/CNO

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