

Navigating Living and Working Well


Lessons For International Nurses in the UK to Inform Policy and Practice

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Contents

Executive summary	4
Background and rationale	8
Study aim and methods	10
Outputs	13
References	14
Appendix	16
Summary of workshop 1	16
Summary of workshop 2	22
Summary of workshop 3	27
Summary of workshop 4	32
Summary of workshop 5	36

Executive summary

Background

The post-1945 increase in recruitment of IENs (Internationally Trained Nurses) to the NHS (National Health Service) to address labour shortages has brought with it substantial change to the profile of the workforce. Measures have been established which address clinical adaption and general language competence, but despite excellent local initiatives, however little has been done to systematise the adaptation process.

Project aim

The project was conceived by the PHAISE research group to attempt to bring together Internationally Educated Nurses and members of NHS Trusts who worked closely with IENs or were responsible for line management, policy or strategic direction regarding the recruitment, adaption and integration of IENs.

Methods

A series of five workshops were designed and led by a member of the team. Each workshop followed a KE framework and was designed to encourage and facilitate knowledge exchange and to build towards gaining insight into the IEN experience and that of their colleagues, and to suggest policy and other recommendations to aid workforce cohesion and wellbeing.

Participants

Lead nurses responsible for workforce, international nurse recruitment and Professional Nurse Advocate (PNA), inclusion and diversity (EDI), Organisational Development Practitioner supporting EDI; Professional nurse advocate; Manager who managed the Test of Competence for nurses and midwives (OSCE) and IEN recruitment; Practice Educators; Project Manager with a background in international healthcare recruitment; Assistant Director of nursing for a NHS Trust with extensive experience in recruiting and supporting international colleagues; Shared Governance Clinical Educator.

IENs trained overseas included colleagues from India, Philippines, Ghana, USA, Jamaica, Tobago, and Nigeria. Specialisms included those working in diabetes, forensics, cardiology, medicine, with refugees and vulnerable members of the community, mental health, a deaf unit, a role supporting IENs and midwifery.

Workshops

The workshops all followed the same structure and were facilitated by Daphne Laing and assisted by Dr Analisa Smythe who managed consent, data collection on participants and workshop contents and collected feedback. The sessions were clustered around the following

Key themes

- Walking in your shoes: reflective exercise visualising the experience of EITHER being IEN OR being a locally trained colleague. Shared insights and consideration of extant research.
- What helps adaptation
- What are the challenges?
- What can be done: recommendations and policy brainstorm
- Next steps and going forward.

Key points

Information training and support

- The need to develop comprehensive and accessible information resources and webpages, both internally and externally, to provide IENs with detailed guidance on practical matters like opening bank accounts, navigating the healthcare system, and understanding cultural norms.
- To implement a structured program of checkpoints and check-ins for IENs at regular intervals (e.g., 3 months, 6 months, 1 year, 2 years) to provide ongoing support and assess their progress and needs.
- Explore ways to standardise the onboarding and orientation process for international nurses across trusts.

Career development

- Explore ways to improve staff retention, such as managing expectations, providing cultural awareness, and fostering a more inclusive work environment.

- Develop a program to provide leadership and soft skills training specifically for international nurses to support their career progression.
- Analyse data on retention and reasons for turnover among international nurses and use the insights to inform future recruitment and support strategies.

Socio cultural

- Incorporate cultural communication and awareness training into the curriculum for all healthcare staff, both at the university level and as part of ongoing professional development, to better prepare them for working in a diverse, multicultural environment.
- Implement a mentorship program to pair new IEN hires with experienced local nurses to provide guidance and support.

The working environment

- Two-way learning between colleagues and levels of the organisation
- Cultural competency training for all staff. Promote more inclusive team building, open exchange and social activities that accommodate diverse cultural preferences.
- Drop in “café” to encourage exchange between IENs and locally trained nurses about the area, the context, the social environment.
- Provide more training and support for managers on effectively integrating and supporting international healthcare staff, including exploring the possibility of implementing a reciprocal exchange program to allow UK-based staff to experience working in different healthcare systems and cultures, fostering greater understanding and empathy.
- Create opportunities for international nurses to share their knowledge, skills, and experiences with the local team.
- Ensure BAME staff networks are available to also support IENs
- Facilitate more opportunities for cross-cultural exchange and relationship-building between international and local nurses to improve integration.

Economic

- Secure funding for similar events in different locations as well as generalised career guidance to help bridge gaps in career outcomes.

Policy recommendations

- Advocate for policy changes at the national level to address the challenges faced by IENs, such as the impact of immigration legislation and the need for more equitable recruitment and career progression opportunities.
- Consider changing the terminology used to refer to internationally educated nurses, moving away from labels like "international nurse".
- Develop a proficiency checklist or competency framework to track international nurses' progress and identify areas for further support.
- Dissemination activities: more workshops "international nurse".
- Develop a proficiency checklist or competency framework to track international nurses' progress and identify areas for further support.
- Dissemination activities: more workshops

Implications

The workshops clearly indicated a lack of shared knowledge as well as a desire to understand better both the IEN experience and how this impacts the workforce. They provided some insightful insights into possible solutions to issues identified in the research. Next steps include a detailed analysis of the data; write up of the findings and recommendations; reflection on the process of setting up and running a knowledge exchange project; and application for funding for dissemination activities and further knowledge exchange initiatives.

Background and rationale

In 2023 nearly half of new nursing registrants in England trained overseas. (Baines 2022) The July 2023 NHS Long-Term Workforce Plan commits to scale back international recruits, yet today the NHS lacks 112,000 nurses with a predicted shortfall of 260-300,000 by 2036-7. (NHS England 2025, Romei 2023) International nurse recruitment has served two main functions since the creation of the NHS in 1948, it has 'bought time' to fix levels of domestic nurse training and improve retention and 'saved money' because it has proven to be a cheaper 'quick fix'. (Dixon Woods et al 2024, Solano et al 2006, Mountford and Wadsworth 2023) For the NHS, the use of internationally educated nurses (IENs) has always been about three things: recruitment, retention, and labour productivity (i.e., increasing the outcome produced per worker input). For successive British governments IENs have been part of a wider strategy to increase foreign confidence in sterling (i.e., by helping to keep public sector costs and prices stable), prevent inflationary wage settlements, and capping public expenditure. (Burham 1990) In other words, to 'depoliticise' questions of NHS funding, equity, and resource allocation (i.e., to avoid increasing taxes to fully fund the service). This attempt has been complicated by a concurrent 'politicisation' of immigration since 1945. (Weisner 2021) There has never been a more important time to understand the issues around IENs and give them a voice.

Research identified that, although there is some data around the experiences of IENs on arrival and whilst they settle into their new environment, there was little data about what employers, nursing colleagues and patients think the issues are, problems IENs have, or the criteria for judging 'success' in this area. There is a wide range of different types of support, but these are largely implemented at local level. (Bond et al 2020) Beyond testing linguistic and clinical skills on arrival, there is no general or sector-wide agreement as to what this support should constitute and few guidelines about how to facilitate such support or measure its success.

Currently there is a reasonable understanding of the experiences of IENs in the UK through the literature and work of partners, yet there is

limited connection to link individual experiences, the experiences of those who IENs work with, and those who set relevant policy. In addition to the views of IENs themselves, it seemed important to understand what non-IEN nursing colleagues, managers and senior management considered to be the challenges and benefits of a multinational and multi ethnic workforce in NHS, or how issues presented by this diversity were being addressed. This Knowledge Exchange study provided a series of 5 knowledge exchange workshops designed to share knowledge from research and practical experience and move collaboratively towards identifying gaps in provision (Golden et al 2017) and ways of moving policy forward for this key sector of the workforce.

Study aim and methods

Aims

The study aimed to improve knowledge and understanding of the concrete and social needs of internationally educated nurses (IENs) and understand how best to facilitate integration within clinical teams.

Study objectives included:

- To identify shared understandings of the challenges that IENs, colleagues working with IENs and Trust managers face in a variety of settings and roles.
- To identify what works? What doesn't work? What intervention is needed now and what is needed mid or long-term to sustain, and retain this important NHS workforce?
- To identify and agree upon policy recommendations at a trust and national level.

Design

This study used Knowledge Exchange (KE) Research Methodology (Cruickshank et al 2013). The role of KE design in events such as workshops was to make the most of the knowledge, experience and creativity of participants, bringing together individuals from different backgrounds to look at a problem.

Methods

Recruitment

Workshops were conducted at 5 research sites The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation NHS Trust, Nottingham University Trust, Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust, and Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals NHS Trust.

A suitable individual was identified from each of these NHS organisations who identified potential research participants and sent out an "invitation email" inviting staff to participate in the study. Each workshop invited 10-20 participants and lasted 3 hours with a clear progression from knowledge exchange to policy recommendations.

Each participant was given 10-days to decide whether they wanted to take part to avoid untoward pressure or coercion. Non-response was followed by a weekly gentle invitation reminder for a maximum of one month after initial contact with the potential participant. Participation was on a first-come, first-served basis.

Participant Inclusion criteria

- NHS employees
- Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs)
- Senior staff, Managers and Clinical colleagues who work with IENS.

Participant exclusion criteria

- Staff undergoing disciplinary procedures.

Data collection

The workshops were facilitated by members of the research team with experience of KE methodology.

Personal data was collected for participants: Names, contact details, Trust and type of role (clinical, management, administration), seniority. We asked participants to optionally self-identify their ethnic identity.

Workshops were not recorded but notes and flipcharts were used to record observations and key points which were used to create workshop summaries and findings.

Data analysis

Data was extracted from the notes and flipcharts, anonymised and then analysed.

Regulatory issues

Permissions to conduct this study were obtained from Nottingham Trent University (sponsor), the Health Research Authority (HRA), and the relevant Research and Development (R&D) departments. The Health Research Authority (HRA) decision tool was completed (HRA, 2020).

Consent

Before each workshop commences participants were given the opportunity to ask any outstanding questions they had. Consent was

received by the researchers facilitating the workshops. Each participant was given a copy of their signed consent form.

Confidentiality

Participants were given assurances of confidentiality and anonymity of all data.

No individual is identifiable in any published findings. All email communications, and questionnaires have been safely stored on a password protected computer within the local organisation.

Hard copy documents were stored within a locked filing cabinet only accessible to the study team. All identifying personal data was destroyed at the end of the study. Data and all non-personal study documentation will be stored for a minimum of five years after the completion of the study. Demographic information about participants, their contact details and signed consent forms will be stored separately from the research data.

Withdrawal

No participants chose to withdraw after the workshop. Prior to participating, all invitees were made aware via the participant information sheet that the information they shared would be analysed alongside other participants who contributed to the discussion.

Outputs

The study aimed to improve knowledge and understanding of the concrete and social needs of incoming IENs and how best to facilitate their integration into clinical teams. The study offered opportunities to share knowledge and develop ways of moving policy forward for this key sector of the workforce. Outputs include an end of study report and publications in peer reviewed and professional journals. A copy of this report will also be shared on the Nottingham Trent University internet pages.

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Appendix

Summary of workshop 1

The meeting discussed the experiences and challenges faced by international nurses in the UK and shared personal struggles with adapting to a new environment and the lack of proper orientation. The need for better information and support for new recruits was highlighted, noting that some nurses lacked basic knowledge about the UK. The conversation also covered the importance of cultural sensitivity, the impact of financial pressures, and the need for better career progression opportunities. Retention rates were discussed, with a significant loss of IENS within 18-24 months. The transition program for new nurses was highlighted as effective, providing comprehensive information and practical training. The need for clear, accessible information and the reduction of labels for international nurses was emphasised. The meeting discussed the challenges and strategies for effective communication and cultural integration in healthcare settings. Further training needs identified included the importance of non-verbal cues, local language proficiency, and the impact of cultural differences on small talk. The conversation also touched on the complexities of working across trusts and the importance of shared responsibility and dissemination of best practices. The meeting concluded with a focus on improving integration, communication, and support systems to enhance the experience of international nurses.

Action Points

- Develop a program to provide leadership and soft skills training specifically for international nurses to support their career progression.
- Analyse data on retention and reasons for turnover among international nurses and use the insights to inform future recruitment and support strategies.
- Explore ways to standardise the onboarding and orientation process for international nurses across the trust.
- Facilitate more opportunities for cross-cultural exchange and relationship-building between international and local nurses to improve integration.

Participants

- 1 lead nurse workforce international nurse recruitment and PNA
- 1 Lead nurse for inclusion and diversity (EDI)
- 1 organisational development practitioner supporting EDI
- 1 IEN from India
- 1 manager who managed the OSCE and IEN recruitment.

Outline

Walking in Your Shoes: Challenges of Adapting to a New Environment

Participants were invited to reflect on how it is both for an IEN to arrive at the Trust; and the impact of high IEN recruitment on existing staff. The facilitator encourages the use of papers for note-taking and emphasises the opportunity presented during this workshop to reflect honestly and openly on personal experiences.

Participants discussed the emotional struggle of being away from family despite being in a comfortable environment; and the stress of adapting to a new job and the failure in the nursing assessment after many years of experience.

Those in management roles reflected on the support received to adapt to the new situation; but also the personal growth experienced despite the challenges.

Integration of International Nurses

- There is a question about the integration of international educated nurses into the workforce, with participants noting a significant improvement over time.
- The conversation highlights the importance of stable workforces in areas where international nurses are more integrated.
- Speakers discuss the challenges of finding and accessing information when needed, emphasising the need for effective information management systems.
- The reduction in referrals for international nurses to the education team is mentioned, indicating improved support and integration.

Labels and Perceptions

- A participant discusses the use of labels for international nurses and whether this impacts their integration and perception within the workforce.
- The conversation explores the shift in referral practices over the

past six to eight months, with a focus on support options before formal processes.

- The importance of addressing labels and perceptions is stressed, to ensure true integration and support for international nurses.
- The discussion includes examples of how labels can unintentionally hinder integration and the need for a more inclusive and supportive approach.

What helps?

Support Systems and Networks

- A participant shares personal experiences of the support received from neighbours and the importance of creating a supportive network.
- The group discusses the importance of creating support systems and networks for international nurses.
- Better support systems are needed to address the challenges faced by international nurses.
- A supportive environment should be created which ensures the success and well-being of international nurses.
- The conversation includes examples of support from colleagues and managers, such as childcare arrangements and flexible working hours.
- The discussion emphasises the importance of addressing personal challenges and providing practical support to ensure the success and well-being of international nurses.

Support and Trust in the workplace

- A participant expresses gratitude for the support received and the trust in the workplace.
- The positive impact on patients and relatives due to improved care practices is mentioned.
- Speaker x shares past experiences of working in an institution from arrival in UK and the pride in achieving accreditations. A second participant agrees, acknowledging the positive changes observed in the workplace and the importance of continuous improvement.

Transition Programs and Information Sharing

- The evolution of a transition program at their trust was noted and applauded, starting with ad-hoc sessions and growing into a specific Ward transition program.
- Participants praised the effectiveness of the transition program, noting how it helps new nurses by providing all necessary

- information upfront.
- The conversation includes examples of practical training methods to familiarise nurses with patient care.
- One of the participants shares an example of empowerment of internationally trained professionals, citing a doctor who unilaterally solved a problem by creating and disseminating a list of abbreviations and acronyms to improve communication within the trust.

Challenges

Personal Experiences and Challenges

- Adapting to night shifts and the challenges of balancing work and family life.
- The impact of childcare on career progression, noting the need for better support and policies to help working parents.
- The challenges of working in a new country, and especially including the lack of basic orientation and support.
- The need for better orientation and support for international nurses to ensure their success.
- The importance of creating a supportive environment for international nurses.
- The need for standardised welcome packs and orientation programs to ensure a better experience for new nurses.

Cultural Differences and Integration: working in a new country

- Cultural differences and the importance of understanding the new environment.
- Speaker x shares personal experiences of adapting to a new country and the support received from neighbours.
- The challenges of integrating into a new culture and the importance of personal relationships.

Financial and Emotional

- The financial and emotional challenges of living in a new country, including the impact on family and personal well-being.
- The importance of addressing financial pressures and providing support for international nurses.
- The need for better financial planning and support to ensure the well-being of international nurses.
- The importance of addressing the financial and emotional challenges to improve retention and satisfaction.
- Speaker x shares personal experiences of feeling undervalued and the impact on mental health.

Communication and Cultural Differences in Healthcare

- Speaker x discusses the challenges of communication, noting that only 30% of communication is verbal, with the rest being non-verbal cues and vocabulary.
- The conversation highlights the importance of understanding local languages and scientific terms in medical settings, with examples of nurses from different backgrounds.
- Speaker x emphasises the role of body language, tone, and cultural differences in interpreting emotions and opinions.
- The discussion includes the impact of wearing scrubs and masks on forming bonds with colleagues, making it harder to recognise and communicate effectively.
- Small Talk and Cultural Norms. Participants share experiences of how the content and function of small talk is perceived differently in different cultures. The conversation explores how small talk can be seen as invasive in some cultures and neutral in others, affecting how colleagues interact.
- One of the participants recommends a recent workshop on high-impact actions and the importance of using non-scientific language to communicate effectively with patients

Reflections on the OSCE Program

- Participants reflect on the evolution of the OSCE program based on feedback from previous cohorts and whether the programme meets the needs of IENs.
- IENs discuss the assumption that nurses would research the new environment before arrival and the lack of information provided by the organisation. In addition, a participant highlights the challenges faced by nurses from countries with limited access to information and resources and the assumption that everyone has access to the same technology.

Retention and Career Progression: facilitators and barriers

- The challenges of retaining international nurses are discussed along with the importance of career progression.
- Speaker x shares personal experiences of feeling stuck in a new country despite having significant experience which could be exploited.

What can be done?

Better, more integrated support

- The discussion reiterates the need for transition programs to help new nurses adapt to their roles, with examples of successful programs in place.

- The need for better support and information is emphasised in order for international nurses to ensure a smooth transition.
- Participants discuss the importance of cultural sensitivity and understanding in the workplace.
- The group agrees on the need for better communication and support to address cultural differences.
- The importance of leadership support and engagement in creating a welcoming environment for international nurses is emphasised.
- The group agrees that there need to be better opportunities for career advancement and professional development
- Trusts need to address the lack of IEN progression and provide support for career development.

Cultural Attitudes on Integration

- Speaker x shares personal experiences of cultural attitudes and the impact on integration

Next Steps

- Dedicated measures to foster integration for international nurses.
- Focus on continuous improvement and explicitly addressing the challenges faced by international nurses.
- Better policies and practices to ensure the success and well-being of international nurses.
- The facilitator outlines plans for future workshops and the importance of translating discussions into actionable steps.
- The conversation includes a discussion on the complexities of working across trusts and the need for shared responsibility and dissemination of information.
- Speaker x mentions ongoing research on career progression and the need for both quantitative and qualitative data to understand barriers and opportunities.
- The importance of sharing research findings and best practices to improve integration and support for international nurses.
- The discussion highlights the importance of continued collaboration and support for international nurses to ensure their successful integration and career development.

Final Thoughts

- The discussion concludes with a commitment to continue working together to address challenges and ensure the success and well-being of international nurses in the healthcare workforce.

Summary of workshop 2

The meeting discussed the NHS's international recruitment, focusing on the integration of internationally educated nurses (IENs) into the workforce. Key points included the need for knowledge exchange workshops to address non-clinical issues like well-being and work stress. The conversation highlighted cultural and communication barriers, such as accents and language differences, and the importance of mutual support and teamwork. Specific challenges mentioned included adapting to local customs, overcoming initial overwhelm, and the need for better English proficiency. The discussion emphasised the importance of creating a cohesive workforce and the potential for policy recommendations to improve integration and support for IENs. The discussion focused on the challenges faced by internationally educated nurses (IENs) in the UK, particularly in adapting to cultural and linguistic differences. Key points included the importance of cultural sensitivity, effective communication, and emotional support. Participants shared experiences of feeling unsupported and undervalued, despite significant experience in their home countries. Suggestions for improvement included mentorship programs, cultural integration activities, and better support systems for practical needs like accommodation and transportation. The conversation emphasised the need for ongoing training and individualised help to enhance IENs' integration and retention in the UK healthcare system.

Action Points

- Implement a mentorship program to pair new IEN hires with experienced local nurses to provide guidance and support.
- Provide cultural competency training for all staff to foster greater understanding and integration of IENs.
- Organise a "drop-in café" where IENs can informally connect with local staff to learn about the local culture and customs.
- Evaluate the current BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) staff network to ensure it is effectively supporting and advocating for the needs of IENs.
- Develop a comprehensive onboarding process that includes practical assistance like showing new IENs how to use public transportation, open bank accounts, etc.

Participants

- 2 IENs
- 3 Practice Educator Facilities (PEFS) from medicine, cardiology and diabetes (C16)

Walking in Your Shoes: Challenges of Adapting to a New Environment

The positive aspects of multicultural workforce

- Participants emphasise the positive aspects of a multicultural workforce, including teamwork and mutual support.
- The role of different generations of international nurses in bringing new ideas and work culture is highlighted.
- The conversation highlights the benefits of a diverse workforce in terms of innovation and improved equity and inclusion in patient care.
- A diverse workforce will benefit patient care

What helps?

Teamwork and Support in the workplace

The group shares personal experiences of adapting to new environments and overcoming cultural barriers. The conversation highlights the need for a supportive and inclusive workplace culture to help international nurses integrate successfully.

- Ongoing support and mentorship to help IENs integrate into the UK healthcare system.
- There is an emphasis on the role of teamwork and mutual support in overcoming challenges and improving patient care.
- Self-confidence and support from colleagues. The conversation highlights the importance of creating a supportive environment for international nurses to thrive. The conversation underscores the need for a supportive and inclusive workplace culture to help international nurses integrate successfully.
- The generational differences in cultural attitudes are mentioned, and the need for open communication to build trust and understanding.
- Participants emphasise the importance of teamwork and mutual support in the workplace, regardless of cultural background.
- An example is shared with the group of a room full of Nigerians who shifted their perception of leadership and friendship after receiving new insights into the cultural meanings behind common communication features.
- The group suggests that a sense of belonging, through social and professional networks, can improve retention and productivity among IENs.

Cultural Adaptation and Support to understand generational and cultural difference

- Cultural adaptation support and input, and support for

- internationally educated nurses (IENs) in the UK.
- Discussion about the generational differences in cultural attitudes
- Open communication to build trust and understanding.
- The importance of building self-confidence and support from colleagues.
- The conversation highlights the need for a supportive and inclusive workplace culture to help international nurses integrate successfully.

Language and Communication

- The role of constant conversation with colleagues
- Understanding cultural differences to improve team dynamics.
- An example is shared of a patient who provided advice on communication and the importance of asking questions to build confidence.
- A second example is shared of a manager's advice to think in English to improve communication skills.
- The group agrees about the importance of understanding and adapting to different communication styles to improve patient care.
- The conversation highlights the need for structured training programs to support international nurses in developing their language skills.

Challenges

- The importance of integrating international nurses into a cohesive workforce, focusing on quality, functionality, and well-being.
- The need to address non-clinical issues like well-being, work stress, and integration, which often translate into clinical challenges. Examples are shared of IENs who felt unsupported and undervalued, leading to demotivation and withdrawal.
- There is agreement that more emphasis should be put on the importance of empathy in patient care
- The presence of a supportive figure, such as a mentor or friend, to help IENs navigate the challenges of living and working in a new country.

Cultural and Communication Barriers

- Cultural Identity and Language Expression: a participant emphasises the importance of understanding the cultural and personal backgrounds that influence language use and misunderstandings and discusses the emotional aspects of language, particularly in professional settings like nursing, where

- cultural differences can impact communication.
- There is discussion about the challenges of communication and cultural differences, including accents and language barriers.
- The conversation touches on the importance of understanding and adapting to different communication styles to improve patient care. Examples are shared including an example of a patient with fluctuating deafness who relied on lip-reading, highlighting the importance of clear communication. Participants discussed the need to adjust speech pitch to accommodate hearing difficulties among colleagues and whether this is impacted by communication style of IENs.
- American or English? There is discussion on the use of American English in the Philippines, noting that it is more prevalent in academic curricula yet is not acknowledged on arrival in UK, being interpreted as a lack of linguistic competence. The historical context of English in the Philippines and the influence of American culture post-colonisation is discussed. Insights are shared by the group on the strictness of language usage in schools in different countries, with corrections for using "S" instead of "Z." In addition, 2 participants talk about personal experiences with spelling and dyslexia, highlighting the challenges of language learning.
- Taboo and safe topics: The group talks about the symbolic significance of certain topics, including weather; but also how some topics carry an element of taboo, such as body functions, and how this affects language and communication, especially regarding small talk, building rapport and the suitability of relationship building topics.
- The significance of para-language is discussed, including tone, intensity, and intonation, in conveying meaning beyond meaning, and discusses the cultural differences in the use of silence and laughter, noting that these can create distance or empathy. Facial expressions and gestures are also mentioned as forming part of adapting to different cultural norms in communication.
- Non-verbal cues and how to interpret them in professional settings, particularly in nursing where empathy and rapport are crucial.
- Proxemics and personal space and variations across

- different cultures. The impact of different perceptions of intimate space on patient care is discussed, noting that nurses often need to navigate personal space and navigate boundaries influencing perceptions of personal space while providing care in order to avoid misunderstandings and maintain professionalism.

Food and Cultural Symbolism

- There is discussion about the cultural role of food. An example is given about the cultural significance of food in the Philippines, noting that certain foods are associated with specific events and myths. The discussion progresses to elaborate on the symbolic meaning of food, suggesting that it often represents deeper cultural and emotional values. The group then discusses the importance of food in travel experiences, particularly for children, highlighting its role in shaping perceptions of different cultures.

Emotional Expression and Cultural Norms

- The group discuss cultural norms of emotional expression, particularly in professional settings like nursing. An example is shared of a Nigerian nurse who struggled to show emotion, leading to difficulties in patient care.
- The importance of empathy in patient care, noting that some nurses may lack the ability to empathise due to cultural or personal reasons.

Cultural Challenges in End-of-Life Care

- The discussion highlights the challenges of balancing professionalism with emotional expression, particularly in end-of-life care. The group discusses the challenges of providing end-of-life care, particularly for IENs who may struggle with the concept of palliative care.
- A participant shares feedback from IENs who felt that their training and experience in palliative care were not recognised or valued in the UK.
- The importance of building empathy and understanding in end-of-life care is highlighted, particularly for IENs who may have different cultural perspectives.
- A participant suggests that ongoing training and support in palliative care can help IENs adapt to the UK healthcare system and improve patient care.

Next Steps

- The importance of future research and policy recommendations to support international nurses.

- The discussion concludes with a focus on the importance of continuous learning and adaptation to create a more inclusive and effective healthcare system.
- Potential support interventions for IENs, including individualised help, mentorship, and concrete support with accommodation and childcare.
- Creating a sense of belonging through social and professional networks.
- Ongoing training and support can help IENs integrate into the UK healthcare system and improve patient care.
- The creation of a drop-in café for IENs to discuss local culture and build social connections.
- The need for better mentorship and training to avoid IENs feeling unsupported and undervalued.

Summary of workshop 3

The meeting focused on the challenges faced by internationally educated nurses (IENs) in the UK, particularly in the Midlands. Participants shared their experiences from various countries, highlighting differences in healthcare systems, work culture, and training. Key points included the lack of knowledge about IENs' experiences, the need for better integration, and the importance of cultural adaptation. Specific issues discussed were the differences in healthcare access, work hours, and pay, as well as the stigma and lack of resources in mental health care in some countries. The meeting emphasised the need for policy recommendations to improve the support and integration of IENs in the UK. The meeting discussed the challenges faced by international nurses in the UK, particularly in public health and mental health services. Key points included the need for better support and training for managers to understand cultural differences and qualifications. The importance of structured checklists and proficiency tools was emphasised to improve integration and retention. The conversation highlighted the impact of cultural nuances on communication and the need for more inclusive policies. Suggestions included specific training for managers, structured support programs, and the development of cultural awareness tools to enhance the lived experience of international nurses.

Action Points

- Provide training for managers to build understanding of

international nurses' cultural backgrounds, qualifications, and training

- Implement a structured onboarding and mentorship program for international nurses to support their transition and integration
- Create opportunities for international nurses to share their knowledge, skills, and experiences with the local team Develop a proficiency checklist or competency framework to track international nurses' progress and identify areas for further support
- Explore ways to improve staff retention, such as managing expectations, providing cultural awareness, and fostering a more inclusive work environment.

Participants

A project manager with a background in international healthcare recruitment; an experienced internationally educated nurse from Tobago, facing challenges in the UK; a nurse who outlines their journey from Jamaica to the UK, their work at the Juniper Centre, and their passion for research; an experienced mental health nurse working at Harper House and their interest in research and training in mental health; an internationally educated nurse in forensics and their interest in research and data collection; An IEN who discusses their transition from general nursing to mental health nursing in the UK, facing challenges in a Deaf unit.

Walking in Your Shoes: Challenges of Adapting to a New Environment

Focus on Workforce and Productivity in the NHS

- The group acknowledges the recent shift in focus from recruitment to productivity within the NHS.
- The need for internationally educated health professionals in the UK is highlighted, along with the transformation of the NHS.
- The importance of patient care and outcomes must not be deprioritised, despite the changes in the system.
- The project, "Navigating Living Well," aims to understand the lived experiences of internationally educated nurses in the UK.

Cultural Adaptation and Workforce Integration

- The importance of cultural adaptation and the need for a cohesive workforce in the NHS is emphasised.
- The discussion highlights the differences in healthcare systems, including access to treatment, working conditions, and cultural norms.

Challenges in Mental Health Care and Community Integration

- The mental health care system in Nigeria is described, including the lack of resources and the Mental Health Act.
- A participant shares their experience in Trinidad, highlighting the differences in mental health care, including the lack of rehabilitation and the stigma associated with mental illness.
- The discussion touches on the cultural differences in socialising and the impact of historical events on community interactions.
- Other participants discuss the challenges of acculturation and the importance of understanding the community's needs and beliefs.

Workforce Training and Development

- A participant talks about the training and development of nurses in Nigeria, including the fundamental nursing exam and the basic nursing education program.
- Differences in working conditions are discussed, including the 40-hour workweek and the lack of paid breaks in the UK compared to Nigeria.
- The discussion highlights the need for ongoing training and development to address the unique challenges faced by internationally educated nurses.
- The importance of policy recommendations and policy direction is emphasised, and the role of research in improving the integration and well-being of internationally educated nurses.

Community Engagement and Support

- Speakers discuss the community-based approach to mental health care in Nigeria, including the importance of mental health awareness and a reduction in associated stigma.
- An IEN shares their experience working in a rural community and the challenges of providing mental health care in a resource-limited setting.
- The discussion highlights the need for community engagement and support to address the mental health needs of diverse populations.
- The group emphasises the importance of a cohesive workforce and the role of research in improving the integration and well-being of internationally educated

nurses.

Challenges in Public Health in Nigeria

- Limited government support for public health in Nigeria, leading to dilapidated facilities.
- People still prefer public health services despite the challenges due to the expertise of public health workers.
- The importance of understanding the context and background of colleagues to avoid misinterpretation.
- The issue of negative messaging and the impact of social networks on perceptions.

Cultural Differences in Healthcare

- IENs stress the overwhelming feeling of information overload upon arrival in a new country.
- The similarities and differences in handling mental health compared to clinical care are discussed.
- Cultural differences in practices are mentioned and the impact on mental health.
- The group discuss the focus of funding on specific services and the lack of infrastructure for mental health nurses.

Impact of Cultural Differences on Healthcare

- The concept of culture as an iceberg, with surface-level differences and deeper, more impactful cultural differences.
- The importance of understanding non-verbal communication and cultural undertones in healthcare.
- Differences in communication styles and expectations of communication patterns.
- The challenges of adapting to new cultural norms and the importance of clear communication.

Personal Experiences and Challenges

- Participants share their personal experiences of acculturation and the challenges of adapting to a new culture and work environment. They discuss the impact of cultural differences on their professional and personal life, including the challenges of working in a multicultural setting.
- The discussion highlights the importance of personal resilience and the need for support and understanding in the workplace.
- The importance of a supportive work environment is emphasised
- The role of research in addressing the challenges faced by internationally educated nurses is acknowledged.

What helps?

Support and Training for International Nurses

- The need for specific training for managers to understand the cultural and training backgrounds of international nurses.
- The importance of proper communication and mentorship to support international nurses.
- The benefits of structured checklists.
- Measurable outcomes to demonstrate the impact of improved support for international nurses.

Challenges

Barriers and Solutions for Improving Support

- Lack of understanding and support from native British staff for international nurses.
- The residual effects of colonialism on perceptions of international nurses.
- The experience of international nurses may vary by region within the UK.
- The need for policy initiatives to promote equality and inclusivity for international nurses.

What can be done?

The participants discuss the potential for policy recommendations based on the findings of the project. They realise the importance of ongoing research and collaboration to address the challenges faced by internationally educated nurses is highlighted. Above all, the importance of a cohesive workforce is emphasised, and the role of research in improving the integration and well-being of internationally educated nurses.

Suggestions:

- Systemic changes are necessary to improve the integration and well-being of internationally educated nurses.
- The implementation of structured checklists and training for managers to improve support for international nurses.
- Proficiency checklists to ensure that international nurses have the necessary skills.
- Structured support at all stages
- Checklists to facilitate the integration and retention of

international nurses.

- Policy initiatives to promote equity and inclusivity for international nurses.

Summary of workshop 4

The discussion centred on the experiences of internationally educated nurses (IENs) in the UK, highlighting cultural and professional challenges. Participants shared their struggles with long working hours, cultural shock, and communication barriers. They emphasised the need for better training and support for managers to handle IENs effectively. The conversation also touched on the disparity in career progression between the UK and their home countries, the importance of recognising IENs' experience, and the need for policy changes to address these issues. The group agreed on the necessity of internal dissemination of the research findings to senior leaders in order to drive systemic change. The conversation included an analysis of employment results and the disparity in job outcomes between home trained and internationally trained nurses which often intersect with BAME and other social disparities. The key finding was that presentation skills, honed through elite education, significantly influenced career progression. IENs often lack the polish needed for interviews, despite equal academic achievements, indicating a need for career progression training to address these disparities

Participants

Participants included 1 manager, 2 IEN, and 1 colleague of an IEN

Action Points

- Consider changing the terminology used to refer to internationally educated nurses, moving away from labels like "international nurse"
- Provide more training and support for managers on effectively integrating and supporting international healthcare staff
- Create opportunities for newly arrived international staff to learn about the UK healthcare system and workplace norms
- Promote more inclusive team-building and social activities that accommodate diverse cultural preferences
- Encourage open discussions and reflective sessions to foster understanding and empathy among team members
- Securing funding for similar events in different locations as well as generalised career guidance to help bridge gaps in career outcomes.

Walking in Your Shoes: Challenges of Adapting to a New Environment

Professional Identity

- Participants were invited to imagine what it is like to arrive in a different country as an IEN, and what impact their arrival has.
- IENs experience their clinical knowledge and experience as their comfort zone, along with their professional identity as a comfort zone, especially when arriving or interacting with colleagues.
- An IEN shared experiences of education, highlighting the varied experiences in civil politics, government, and technology.
- The discussion is developed by other participants, mentioning over 10 years of experience in civil politics, government, and technology.
- The differences in patient care and family involvement in Nigeria are discussed, emphasising long working hours and culture shock.

Analysis of Employment Results and Class Disparities

- The group discusses the analysis of employment results, highlighting the significant findings that it was class-based, sometimes including BAME but not always.
- The disparity in job outcomes was attributed to presentation skills, with those from elite educational backgrounds having an advantage, and notes that even though students left university on equal footing, those without elite education faced challenges in job interviews. The conversation touches on the need for career progression training to help individuals improve their presentation skills.

Challenges Faced by Individuals Without Elite Education

- A participant mentions the difficulty faced by individuals without experience in the UK's interview system when competing with those accustomed to it and emphasises the importance of equal judgment in interviews to ensure fairness. The discussion identifies a need for training to help individuals from diverse backgrounds present themselves effectively in interviews.
- One participant shared a personal anecdote of being a woman taking over a white, middle-class position,

highlighting the challenges faced by individuals from under-represented groups.

Cultural Shock and Communication Barriers

- Differences in newly arrived people versus those who have been in UK for some time are observed amongst the IEN community, such as hats and other clothing, and social practices and greetings.
- The importance of not losing their training and cultural identity while adapting to new environments is discussed.
- Experiences are shared of limited resources of information, and differences in communication styles in the UK.
- Participants discuss the challenges of teaching newly arrived IENs who have no idea about the UK, emphasising the disorientation caused by cultural differences.
- 2 participants discuss the perception of IENs being lazy due to different working styles, such as how dynamic and active speakers in the professional context in China are perceived as unprofessional or “not serious”.

What helps?

- Cultural competence of all nurses
- Patient engagement in healthcare.
- The benefits and costs of multicultural and multi-ethnic workforces, including potential conflicts and increased confidence.
- Understanding different cultures will deliver better healthcare services.

Challenges

There is a discussion about the challenges of adapting to a multicultural workforce and the importance of understanding different perspectives.

- Feedback (receiving) from the international nurse perspective, highlighting feelings of being watched and discriminated against.
- The challenges of pronunciation and cultural shock upon arrival in the UK.
- The challenges of being handed over to by colleagues and the use of acronyms that are alien to newly arrived professionals.
- The differences between assimilation and integration, highlighting the challenges of maintaining one's cultural identity while adapting to a new environment.

- The importance of equitable treatment and job allocation; and the need for training for managers to better support internationally educated nurses.
- The challenges of career progression and the disparity between career progression in the UK and other countries.
- The importance of recognising experience and providing training for managers to better support internationally educated nurses.

Career Progression and Recognition

- Career progression and take up of career opportunities/ internal roles is consistently identified as a major challenge for internationally educated nurses, including the disparity between career progression in the UK and other countries.
- The group discusses the importance of recognising experience and providing training for managers to better support internationally educated nurses.
- The discussion moves on to discuss the need for training for managers to better support internationally educated nurses and provide equitable treatment.

What can be done?

- There is an urgent need for policy changes to recognise the experience of internationally educated nurses and provide better training for managers.
- Internal dissemination of research findings to senior leaders to drive change.
- The need for training for managers to better support internationally educated nurses and provide equitable treatment.
- Recognition of experience including providing training for managers to better support internationally educated nurses.
- The importance of internal dissemination of research findings to senior leaders to drive change.
- Policy changes which recognise the experience of internationally educated nurses and provide better training for managers.
- Internal dissemination of research findings to senior leaders to drive change.

- Training for managers to better support internationally educated nurses and provide equitable treatment.
- Recognizing experience and providing training for managers to better support internationally educated nurses.

Next Steps

- Participants reiterate the importance of internal dissemination of research findings to senior leaders to drive change.
- Policy changes must recognize the experience of internationally educated nurses and provide better training for managers.
- Participants called for funding to conduct similar events in different locations. The conversation includes a discussion about the logistics of organizing events, including the need to coordinate with managers and secure funding.
- The group expresses their appreciation for the knowledge shared by the participants and facilitator, noting the importance of self-awareness and understanding in the discussion.

Summary of workshop 5

The meeting discussed the challenges and benefits of integrating internationally educated nurses (IENs) into the UK healthcare system. Firstly, the meeting focused on the research and knowledge about the lived experience and challenges faced by internationally educated nurses. Participants shared their perspectives on the support that is offered to help IENs navigate the process of cultural adaptation, work stress; support and input to develop professionally and personally; and how to create a sense of belonging within their organisation and community.

Key points included non recognition of clinical skills among IENs, the lack of representation in managerial roles, and the specific cultural barriers faced by Filipino nurses. Specific challenges mentioned were navigating UK systems, dealing with cultural differences, and the impact of regional accents. Key issues included language barriers, lack of support upon arrival, and the need for better integration strategies. The importance of personal responsibility and the role of managers in supporting international nurses was emphasized. The discussion highlighted the need for more comprehensive onboarding and pastoral care to improve the experience and retention of internationally educated nurses. Some of the positive aspects highlighted were the

diverse knowledge and perspectives brought by a multicultural and multi ethnic workforce.

Suggestions for improvement included better information and support systems, government policy changes, and initiatives like shared governance and cultural communication courses. The need for clear policy recommendations and the importance of recognizing IENs' contributions were emphasized.

Action Points

- Develop comprehensive information resources and webpages, both internally and externally accessible, to provide IENs with detailed guidance on practical matters like opening bank accounts, navigating the healthcare system, and understanding cultural norms.
- Advocate for policy changes at the national level to address the challenges faced by IENs, such as the impact of immigration legislation and the need for more equitable recruitment and career progression opportunities.
- Incorporate cultural communication and awareness training into the curriculum for all healthcare staff, both at the university level and as part of ongoing professional development, to better prepare them for working in a diverse, multicultural environment.
- Implement a structured program of checkpoints and check-ins for IENs at regular intervals (e.g., 3 months, 6 months, 1 year, 2 years) to provide ongoing support and assess their progress and needs.
- Explore the possibility of implementing a reciprocal exchange program or "job swap" initiative to allow UK-based staff to experience working in different healthcare systems and cultures, fostering greater understanding and empathy.

Participants

In addition to the facilitators, those present included an assistant director of nursing with extensive experience in recruiting and supporting international colleagues; an IEN with 25 years' experience in UK and now supporting IENs; a USA-educated professional nurse advocate who has been in Uk less than 2 years, and is interested in professional advocacy; a

shared governance clinical educator with experience working closely with internationally educated nurses and an understanding of the importance of cultural adaptation; an IEN from the Philippines, who attended to share her journey of supporting international nurses and the challenges faced in the UK; and a nurse midwife with extensive experience in various clinical areas and a current role in international recruitment and pastoral support.

Walking in Your Shoes: Challenges of Adapting to a New Environment

Participants were invited to imagine the experience of cultural adaptation, including possible points of work stress by IENs and their colleagues, and how to foster a sense of belonging among internationally educated nurses.

- Arriving in the UK without proper guidance and the challenges faced in navigating the new environment.
- Excitement and challenges of moving to the UK, including the lack of support and the impact of social media.
- Initial challenges of settling in the UK, including practical tasks like opening a bank account and understanding cultural differences.
- Experience as a ward manager, highlighting the lack of cultural adjustments and the challenges faced by international nurses with limited English proficiency.

Personal Reflections and Experiences

- Reflection on the challenges of social interactions and the need for patience and understanding in navigating cultural differences.
- Generational and cultural gaps that contribute to the challenges faced by internationally educated nurses.
- The experience of feeling uncomfortable with personal questions from colleagues and the importance of respecting privacy.
- The importance of understanding and addressing the challenges faced by internationally educated nurses to improve their integration and the support they are offered.
- The importance of having a dedicated support team.
- The importance of communication and cultural understanding in supporting internationally educated nurses.
- The need for clear communication about the specific role and responsibilities of internationally educated nurses and reinforcement of this message.

What helps?

Support and Integration Initiatives

- The benefits of a multicultural workforce, including sharing knowledge, building relationships, and adapting to patient preferences.
- The resourcefulness and innovative approaches brought by international nurses, which are crucial for the healthcare system.
- The importance that a workforce reflects the community, enhancing patient care and community relation

What needs to change?

Office Culture and Social Dynamics

- The unique dynamics of working in the UK were discussed, where sharing personal details with colleagues is common but socializing outside of work is rare.
- The nosiness of colleagues and the potential for gossip, which can be challenging for outsiders.
- There was a feeling of being deskilled or having lost skills when transitioning from clinical settings to basic care, highlighting the difference in career growth for UK-born nurses versus international nurses.
- Speaker 2 discusses the challenges faced by international nurses in clinical settings, including the lack of orientation and the need for practical support.

Career Progression

- There is a noticeable lack of Filipino nurses in managerial roles and which could be attributed to cultural differences, language barriers, and fear of interviews.
- International nurses often stay in clinical roles for long periods due to cultural and language barriers, lack of confidence, and fear of interviews.
- Similar issues arise regarding access to and take up of opportunities in research and training, emphasizing the need for career guidance and development.

Cultural Barriers

- Differences in small talk and cultural norms were seen to highlight the intensity of experiences for international nurses. The interpretation and role of questions in conversation was discussed. For example, the perceived nosiness of colleagues asking personal questions was

seen as a cultural clash, suggesting it is a way to get to know each other and set boundaries but can be perceived as intrusive. Equally the idea of being left to get on with things and no-one ever asking how they are coping (professionally/socially) was discussed.

- Challenges of policy and practice, which often disadvantage international nurses due to language barriers and cultural differences.

Next Steps

Speaker 2 points out the threat perception towards international colleagues and the need for diversity of thought in decision-making.

- Shared governance councils
- Professional and photo introductions circulated on arrival in the new team to foster inclusion and support.
- Government policy changes to support international nurses and the importance of clear communication and understanding.
- Coaching, leadership courses, and cultural communication courses to improve integration and career progression.
- Treating international nurses similarly to those with disabilities in terms of addressing specific needs and support requirements at different times, such as providing additional support during the interview process.
- The importance of preceptorship and acute care skills courses for international nurses.
- A life swap system within clinical teams and managers to foster understanding and support between UK and international nurses.
- The need for reciprocal visa agreements and clear policy briefs to support international nurses and improve healthcare delivery.

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