

2013

# Developing student nurse retention using action research

Williamson, G

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University of Plymouth

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# Teaching Fellowship Award Scheme

## final report

**Name of key contact (project leader)** Graham Williamson

**Department** SNAM

**E-mail** [gwilliamson@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:gwilliamson@plymouth.ac.uk)

**Names of other staff involved** Val Heath, Tracey Proctor-Childs

**Title of project** Developing student nurse retention using action research.

**Type of project** Action Research

**Information/letter on ethics approval** see appendix 1

**Aims of project** to understand students' and staff concerns about this pre-registration nurse education programme and placements as part of developing our retention strategies.

**Background to project** There is international concern about retention of student nurses on undergraduate programmes. United Kingdom Higher Education Institutions are monitored on their attrition statistics and can be penalised financially, so they have an incentive to help students remain on their programmes. Moreover, it is incumbent on healthcare education providers to ensure that students receive the best possible educational experience whilst they are studying for their professional qualifications. It is in this context that we designed our study to investigate the issues facing our students, how we could better foster a sense of belonging and suggest what we could do to alleviate their concerns and help them to stay.

**Methods used** We used an action research approach, informed by the principles of Appreciative Inquiry [AI] to guide study design, and collected qualitative data in actual

focus groups, face-to-face and telephone interviews and virtual focus groups. This was subject to thematic content analysis to give us key themes from our stakeholders (staff, current third year students and students who had left our programme early but not for academic or practice failure).

**Results** Four themes concerning reasons for staying or leaving emerged from the data: Academic support, Placements and mentors, Stresses and the reality of nursing life, and Dreams for a better programme. Based on these themes and a project steering group, a detailed action plan was constructed and the implementation of this is on-going

**Associated publications** A paper from this work has been accepted by the Open Nursing Journal and is available as an uncorrected proof on-line at

<http://benthamscience.com/open/fulltext/pdf/tonursj/TONURSJ-E130925-07.pdf>

Graham R. Williamson, Val Health and Tracey Proctor-Childs (2013). Vocation, Friendship and Resilience: A Study Exploring Nursing Student and Staff Views on Retention and Attrition. The Open Nursing Journal, 7, 149-156.

**Research funding bid** A further funding bid was submitted to the General Nursing Council trust in conjunction with colleagues at Manchester Metropolitan University, but was rejected.

**External conference presentations** NET 2013 International Conference, Cambridge 3-6 Sept 2013. Core paper.

**Keywords** Student nurse, retention, qualitative research, action research.

## APPENDIX 1 ETHICAL APPROVAL

16<sup>th</sup> January 2012

### **CONFIDENTIAL**

Dr Graham Williamson  
Faculty of Health, Education and Society  
Plymouth University  
Room 103, 3 Portland Villas  
Drake Circus  
Plymouth  
PL4 8AA

**Dear Graham**

### **Application for Approval by Faculty Research Ethics Committee**

***Application Title: Developing student nurse retention using action research.***

Following receipt of your resubmission of the above application, I am pleased to inform you that the Committee has granted approval to you to conduct this research.

Please note that this approval is for three years, after which you will be required to seek extension of existing approval.

Please note that should any MAJOR changes to your research design occur which effect the ethics of procedures involved you must inform the Committee. Please contact Claire Butcher on (01752) 585337 or by email [claire.butcher@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:claire.butcher@plymouth.ac.uk)

Yours sincerely

Professor Michael Sheppard, PhD, AcSS,  
Chair, Health Research Ethics Committee  
Faculty of Health, Education and Society  
Plymouth University