For the first time, the Queen’s Nursing Institute’s (QNI’s) annual conference in 2016 was a two-day event, with a range of speakers on the twin themes of inspiring quality and success in nursing and on shaping the future of the nursing workforce. The speakers — from England, Wales and Northern Ireland — spoke about the various challenges facing the nursing workforce and some of the new initiatives that are being introduced to address them.

**DAY 1: INSPIRING QUALITY AND SUCCESS**

The first of our keynote speakers was Jean White, chief nursing officer of Wales, who started by summarising the demographic profile of the country. Wales has a larger proportion of over 65s than in the UK as a whole, at some 19% of the population, many of them retirees who have chosen to live in rural parts of the country. In addition, pockets of severe deprivation require different kinds of healthcare intervention. She said that a partnership approach between healthcare services and individuals was at the heart of Wales’ Primary Care Delivery Plan and referred to the Caerphilly study (http://medicine.cf.ac.uk/news/benefit-healthy-lifestyle) that evidences five key indicators for longer, healthier lives. She also encouraged delegates to embrace the huge potential of new technology in helping people to take care of their own health.

Charlotte Mc Ardle, chief nursing officer of Northern Ireland, spoke next and paid tribute to the role of the QNI in helping to develop the ‘District Nurse Framework for Northern Ireland 2015–25’. I was particularly struck by Charlotte’s acknowledgement of district nurses’ expertise in managing risk, of which she had become increasingly aware in her current role. She also spoke about the importance of nursing home staff and raising the profile of those nurses caring for older people who work in the independent and social care sectors.

Ruth May, executive director of nursing at NHS Improvement, then gave an English perspective and focused on the drive to safeguard quality and inspire nursing leaders to deliver the best care, with a growing emphasis on care closer to people’s homes. Ruth emphasised her very positive personal experience of nurses working in general practice.

We were delighted to welcome Sir Sam Everington, a GP and advisor on new models of care to the Department of Health (DH), who has also just been appointed a vice-president of the QNI. He spoke about the range of innovations that have been introduced at Bromley-by-Bow Centre, where he is a partner, focusing on staff development and ways of improving the health of patients in a deprived part of East London. From his perspective, staff members and patients form one single community that work together and support each other to deliver improved health outcomes.

Sir Sam is a leading proponent of social prescribing — the giving of prescriptions for social and physical activities rather than (or in addition to) medical prescribing. One example of this is gardening and he spoke about the work he has done with the National Gardens Scheme over the past year. Gardening is prescribed by an increasing number of innovative practitioners as a way of combating social isolation, depression, anxiety and some types of poor physical health.

This theme was taken up again later in the day by George Plumptre, chief executive of the National Gardens Scheme. George is a regular speaker at QNI events and is an articulate advocate of the evidence that connects gardening and garden visiting with improved mental, emotional and physical health outcomes for people of all ages. He referred to the influential King’s Fund research on this subject published earlier this year. The report (www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/gardens-and-health) will be of particular interest to nurses working in general practice.

We were also privileged to hear patient advocate and accomplished public speaker Iain Upton, who gave a moving and informative speech about the patient perspective and his
experiences of living with a severe chronic condition. His statements included the unforgettable: ‘I am too busy “staying alive” to complete the multiplicity of feedback forms on the quality of care I have received’ (with ‘staying alive’ sung by Iain in the style of the Bee Gees single of the same name).

**DAY 2: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF NURSING**

Simon Stevens, chief executive of NHS England, gave an overview of the pressures facing the NHS and introduced the upcoming sustainability and transformation plans. He gave a historical overview of the divisions between different parts of the NHS and described what he called the ‘triple fragmentation’ between hospital and community, between mental and physical health, and between health and social care. He acknowledged the demographic and financial pressures we face, but also argued that services can become more efficient and effective.

Mr Stevens also spoke about the challenge of ‘delayed transfers of care’ and the 5000 people who are in hospital on any day, who do not need to be. He recognised that lack of capacity or delays in access to community services or social care play a part in this. He also said that the division between physical and mental health contributed to the fact that people with a severe mental health condition typically die 15–20 years younger than the general population.

Delegates were glad to hear him acknowledge that community nurses had a pivotal role to play in delivering enhanced care for patients and he encouraged us all to contribute to the debate about what the future NHS should look like. He also said that more resource would be put towards staff wellbeing and that he wanted to have an honest conversation about the pressure that staff are under.

Professor Dame Jessica Corner of the Council of Deans of Health (CoDH) announced the launch of the council’s new report, ‘A False Economy’, which calls for increased funding for continued professional development in nursing, midwifery and allied health professions (www.councilofdeans.org.uk/). She spoke about the acute need to recruit and train more nurses to avert a future crisis in the nursing workforce, stating that we must expand the number of training places and promote nursing as a career — something which the QNI strongly endorses.

On a related subject, Mary Saunders, project manager at the QNI, spoke about her current work — funded by Health Education England — on identifying and promoting excellent student placements in the community and primary care. We hope to be able to announce publication of her report shortly. Also on a workforce theme, Professor Dame Donna Kinnair announced a new advanced practice credentialing project — an initiative that is intended to provide assurances to patients and employers.

Concluding the conference, it was my pleasure to announce the appointment of Sharon Aldridge-Bent to manage a new leadership programme for Queen’s Nurses at the QNI. I was also able to announce three years of new funding for our Homeless Health programme, which supports practice of over 1,200 community nurses working with the most vulnerable in society.

Our next annual conference will be held in London on 25–26 September, 2017.

**If you work with people who experience homelessness and would like to join the QNI network, visit:**

www.qni.org.uk/for_nurses/homeless_health

**or email:** david.parker-radford@qni.org.uk
JOIN US IN PROVIDING FREE EDUCATION TO NURSES WORKING IN PRIMARY CARE THROUGHOUT THE UK. ATTENDANCE CONTRIBUTES TO REVALIDATION.

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- Primary care trusts • Healthcare assistants

To register for the JCN event of your choice and see the full day's programme, go to:

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WHAT OUR 2016 DELEGATES THINK

I've been coming for many years to the JCN study days and year-on-year they keep getting better. The content is very relevant to my practice and best of all the event is free. The education is at just the right level for my job — and I love learning about all the new products in the exhibition, as it helps me to keep up to date. The JCN study days are well worth a visit.

Jenny Jamal, community staff nurse

Good to attend for revalidation purposes and the wound care information all being available in one day was really helpful — a real one-stop shop!

Naomi King, Newcastle

I have been attending the JCN study days since 2009, from my nurse training days to now when I am doing advanced practitioner training. I have worked for six years in the community. I love the sessions, the exhibition and the website; they are all helpful. I recommend the study days to all my colleagues; there are 19 of us visiting in May.

Sue Hawksley, community nurse, South Warwickshire

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2017 EVENTS CALENDAR