

## Case Study: Praxis



The organisation **Praxis** has been operating for over 20 years with the main aim of supporting new residents to integrate in the UK, both to their benefit and that of their new community. These new residents often come to the UK as economic migrants or as refugees. Praxis helps people cope with the requirements of daily life in the UK and find a job. One of the many projects it carries out is for Overseas Qualified Nurses, which is called 'Preparation Course for Supervised Practice (PCSP)

### **The Project: Preparation Course for Supervised Practice (PCSP)**

The programme offers a twelve-week course to prepare Overseas Qualified Nurses (OQN) for Supervised Practice Programme at hospitals and nursing homes, which is a necessary for them to get their PIN number. The Workforce Development Co-ordinator at Praxis explains: “the PIN number is an registration number given by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) for nurses to be able to practise in this country.”

The Preparation for Supervised Practice Programme at Praxis provides:

- Language and communication skills for nurses
- Orientation to Nursing in the UK
- Employment preparation and Equalities.

The programme started in 2000 and so far Praxis has run twelve courses with 141 participants altogether. Over this period the course had several sources of funding. For the first course, Praxis had to secure money from different sources. Funding for the next four courses came from the Health Action Team, a local regeneration project made up of local employers, including the Barts and London Hospital Trust and the Tower Hamlets Primary Care Trust. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funded six courses with ESF co-financing. Praxis managed to fund the last course from London City Fringe funding and other regeneration funds.

The course was discontinued in 2006 because there is currently no serious shortage of nurses in the NHS Trusts and hence funding for this particular project has now ceased. Praxis has transferred the model of the PCSP and has run courses for midwives and allied health care professionals.

Target Group(s) for the PCSP Project are refugees and overseas nurses. At the start of the project, the students were almost exclusively refugees. In the very first group, there were eight refugees and two migrants who were not refugees, but since then, as asylum seeking has decreased and immigration increased, the situation has reversed. HW, the Lead on Workforce Development at Praxis, explains, "the majority of the students we find are not refugees, they are varying descriptions of migrants. But I think that ... government policy, patterns of refugees and asylum seekers coming into the country, with a dispersal policy of asylum seekers, they're not coming to London. And it also mirrors the growth in migration and the overall reduction in refugee and asylum seekers." Although the number of refugees has decreased, the number of other migrants is going up. Praxis' networks for recruiting participants have broadened as a result of working with a wider group of migrant nurses. The qualification level of nurses at recruitment varies, and nurses from abroad come with different lengths of experience and qualifications.

### **What makes the Preparation Course for Supervised Practice at Praxis successful?**

According to Praxis, in the twelve courses, 141 nurses participated. Of them, 70-80% of nurses who went through the preparation courses were offered employment and are now working in nursing in the UK. Praxis was successful in placing most of its nurses in paid-placements and getting them out of the benefit system. But sometimes, HW says, it takes a long time for somebody to get into employment, because of delays in resolving their immigration status. In their last course, for example, there were eleven participants. Three have already finished their Supervised Practice Programme (SPP) and got their PIN number; four are doing their (SPP) at Thames Valley University and another in Leeds, and the ninth is still trying to get into SPP. There were only two who dropped out and in each case this was attributed to personal reasons. Overall, HW says that this is

a high level of success with outcomes at near eighty percent. In addition, “we continue to track people and make sure they get into employment.”

### **What explains this successful outcome to Praxis's projects?**

#### **1. Full preparation of participants for the Supervised Practice Programme**

Praxis found, through research, that overseas nurses need to develop language and general communication skills when they go for supervised practice in hospitals and nursing homes. So Praxis adapted the course to give participants the communication skills they need as well as intensive training about ‘how nursing is done in the UK’.

The innovative aspect of the PCSP derives from the fact that Praxis designed the programme by looking at the needs of the participants and the final outcomes that were required by employers. This, HW says, “is innovative, because we designed a customised programme that directly responds to those needs and those outcomes. Personally I just see it as common sense, actually. But it’s innovative, in that nobody else is doing it, or very few people are doing it.” Praxis courses enhanced participants' skills by directly tackling barriers.

| <b>Barriers</b>                   | <b>What Praxis does to remedy</b>   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Communication skills.             | The element of the course that deals with Language & Communication Skills helps to improve communications skills in English. It is deals with the culture of working in a ward in the UK.   |
| Orientation to Nursing in the UK. | The element of the course, ‘Orientation to Nursing in the UK’, is an orientation to nursing in this country and is taught by a practising nurse. It includes the practical skills needed for the SPP in hospitals & nursing homes. “Nurses tell us that our courses show them how nursing is done in this country and this in turn improves their chances to get into supervised practice and eventually get their pin number” (Workforce Development Co-ordinator) |

#### **2. Guidance**

Praxis provides comprehensive job search skills including help with completing job applications, writing CVs and covering letters. Guidance is also given on using websites that offer job vacancies. Participants are taught about interview preparation on the course and also go to external mock interview sessions with local employers. This way, HW says, they get very detailed support around what type of questions are likely to come up in real jobs interviews and what further practice is required. She says: “many nurses have come back to us and said ‘Oh you know the questions they asked me in the interview, they were exactly the ones that we practised in the class. I was so confident in my answers.’”

### **3. Additional support after nurses leave the course**

Praxis continues to offer ongoing support to course participants after they finish their programme. This includes giving tutorials, writing references for people, HW explains, “it’s quite a large part of the work actually, writing references for our students. And particularly for refugees but also for migrants, getting a reference is a really difficult thing to do. And without a reference you can’t get a job. It’s very valuable... and occasionally a nurse needs some financial assistance because of some aspect of the employment process. And we have had and still do have some access to small pots of money to support people financially.”

### **4. Evaluation as a way to improve project delivery**

All the participants on the course complete an evaluation of their experience of the project. They have a session on the course where they have to fill in an evaluation form. They also have a meeting with tutors and staff on the course to evaluate the programme. Funders also play a part, as in addition to monitoring, they give feedback of a more evaluative nature. Praxis had various external evaluations, which enable the organisation to reflect on “what we’re doing, and whether we have achieved or not achieved, and why, what is happening there.. how a certain outcome has been achieved.” As a result of evaluation Praxis has increased the IT component on the course, has introduced a qualification (English Speaking Board) and has developed its outreach activities.

### **5. Link to employers and work experience**

Another innovative step that Praxis has taken is to involve employers in their projects, through participating in teaching of the courses and in mock interview sessions. A distinct benefit of this is that it provides the platform for employers to get to know Praxis and its students very well. And nurses get to meet employers and potential interviewers in advance. For example, in the courses, when the Health Action Team were the primary funders, Praxis was working in partnership with Tower Hamlets Primary Care Trust. “So Praxis dovetailed their courses to feed into their vacancies. So there was a direct link from our students into employment in the health service. And the employers were involved, not only in delivering aspects of the course, but also in part of the assessment process, the recruitment process on to our course.” “But when Praxis moved on to a different form of funding, the organisation started to build up a relationship with more employers, like trusts in East London, and others in south east London.”

**Example of an Employer's experience with the Praxis's project:**

Mr. MU is a Nurse Manager at Tower Hamlets Primary Care Trust (THPCT) at Mile End Hospital.

Reasons for working with Praxis: Mr. MU indicates that one of his main aspirations is that local communities are given the opportunity to join their local NHS services. He summed this up as local people providing services to their local population.' Therefore his Trust's engagement with Praxis focused on bringing a cultural mix to their wards and in doing so being able to represent the different mix of minorities in London. He also points out that different people from different backgrounds bring different skills.

**His views on Praxis's project:**

'From my perspective as an employer,' says MU, "the course at Praxis helps a lot of people in the pre-supervised training programme, which prepares them for the supervised practice... I have helped Praxis by going there and doing sessions in which I talked to participants about careers in the NHS; the various opportunities available for them; and talked about equality and diversity in the NHS, so that they are aware of these... I also participated in teaching interview techniques."

He points out that he particularly likes the Praxis's course focus on providing participants with a sense of belonging. New people meet in class with other people in similar situations; he welcomes the content of training that teaches participants about the culture of nursing in this country, and teaching them about how to do interviews, which is good for students to compete in the labour market. He says, 'the course teaches them interview skills, which is not a necessary skill in the countries where these nurses come from. For example, in Africa and Asian countries jobs could be handed out not through interviews but nepotism. So Praxis prepares them in that aspect.'

**His views on Praxis's trainees:**

Mr. MU points out that 'I noticed that people who join us from Praxis are more assertive at the beginning of the supervised practice programme than others who didn't come from Praxis.'

People from Praxis might lack administrative skills, but we teach them about these during the programme. They are quick learners. They have good communication skills and customer relations. He likes their dedication and commitment. 'Overall Praxis people are one of the best. When they get the placement with us, it is like a dream for them, so they work hard and know that to get their registration pin number they have to do so. They don't give us any problems.'

Benefit to trainees on work placements at the Mile End Hospital: The main benefit he mentions is that participants are provided with a place to do their

adaptation, which will, after successful completion, mean they will get their pin number and can practise nursing in this country. He states that many of Praxis's people are successful in that they finish their placements. He gives the example of J. who came from Praxis into their supervised practice and after her completion of the supervised practice, she worked at their hospital and was promoted.

**Future collaborations with Praxis:**

Mr. MU points out that 'at the moment, the NHS is undergoing serious overhaul and because of lack of funding we stopped doing our supervised practice programme. The last supervised practice we did was in September 2006. That's because the government is saying we have too many nurses. And they are withdrawing permits from nurses on band 5, which is the starting grade for overseas nurses.'

This issue with lack of permits for overseas nurses will lead to huge disadvantages for overseas nurses he thinks because 'if you want to continue to employ overseas nurses, you have to provide the Home Office with reasons why you couldn't find British nurses. And employers don't want to go through the hassle of doing this. Therefore we stopped the supervised practice for overseas nurses.' Although he would be happy for their relationship with Praxis to continue it has become impossible due to the NHS restructuring and Home Office regulations.

**Helping other disadvantaged groups:**

This employer suggests that, in his opinion, there is a large pool of disadvantaged local people to recruit from for nursing. He says, for example, he has seen very few Somalis working in hospitals. This, he says, is incomprehensible given that there is a large Somali population in Tower Hamlets. 'I know there are so many Somalis in Tower Hamlets,' he explains, 'In this borough, Somalis are classified as a different ethnic group from other Africans because of their size, and they are thought of as a special group in Tower Hamlets.'

He also points out that there are disadvantaged groups in Tower Hamlets who he'd seen poorly represented amongst staff in hospitals, for example Bangladeshis, who form 30% of the population in the borough, or disabled people. When asked why there are only a few of these disadvantaged groups working in the profession, MU mentions three reasons: they are not encouraged, they are not given the opportunity, and they are not told of the opportunities available.

## **The Project's Beneficiaries**

Two nurses were interviewed for this case study:

Nurse1, 'Chichi', has just finished her supervised practice and got her PIN number as a UK-registered nurse. She is now applying for a job as a qualified nurse. She saw the course on the internet and joined the twelve-week PCSP at Praxis in January 2005. She has worked as professional nurse in Nigeria for three years prior to coming to the UK.

She said that overall the course was very well organised and that as well as building up her IT skills from scratch and "how English is practiced here, because back home, back home we do it differently", she learned about communication skills in the workplace and how to communicate in the nursing profession in this country. In Nigeria, she says, they have the British-based knowledge about nursing but different terminologies. So the course taught her about nursing terminologies in the UK. 'In Praxis, they put me through all the medical terms used in the UK. They prepared me very well so that when I went to do my supervised practice, I didn't find it difficult in the ward.'

She also says that she was given guidance towards getting jobs. She learnt how to write her CV and covering letter according to the format required in this country, about general interview skills and the appropriate dress code for interviews. She says, "A lady teacher came to help us how to do interviews like making eye contact. Where we come from we don't do eye contact. So I felt confident afterwards when I have to do real interviews"

Other skills/assistance she gained from Praxis: Using job search skills she learnt at Praxis, she found a vacancy at a hospital in Mile End. Praxis helped her with completing the application form, preparing for the interview and provided her with references. She managed to get a three-months paid placement, which set her on course to achieving her PIN and subsequently being able to practise nursing in the UK.

Overall, she says, the course was great, but she wished that the nursing aspect of the course was taught by professional teachers from Nursing Colleges as opposed to nurses from hospitals, because "teaching is a skill, not everyone can teach."

Nurse 2, 'Elsie', has just finished her supervised practice programme at Mile End hospital. It was a-four-months paid placement. She has her PIN now and is currently applying for jobs. She hopes to be interviewed for at least one of those she is going for. But she fears that this may be difficult to achieve given that the Home Office removed nursing from the short list for automatic work permits. She practised nursing for 20 years, and upon her arrival she learnt that The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) requires that overseas nurses must have

supervised practice. So she applied for the Preparation for Supervised Practice Programme at Praxis in April 2005. She says that the course has helped in more than one way, and that when she did her supervised practice, she was "ahead of every nurse in the programme because I already knew things." She particularly draws attention to the following skills she gained from the course in Praxis: With respect to IT Skills she says that, "I never knew how to type one word, but now I am a computer expert." With respect to the Orientation to Nursing in the UK course she indicates that she has learnt about machines, equipments, medication, and most importantly, terminologies used in this country. She explains that the different nurses brought in by Praxis to help with this aspect of the course, showed them how nursing is practised in the UK and highlighted for them the difference between nursing overseas and the UK. "They made us understand the NMC code properly. They taught us how to operate in a multicultural London." As an example for difference in language used in wards between here and Nigeria, she points out, "back home, a patient would say, 'I want to do number one', but in this country a patient would say, 'I want to urinate.' Knowing about this is important so that when we are on the ward we don't frustrate patients, already stressed through lack of language understanding."

Jobs guidance: besides learning how to write CV and her covering letter, she learned how to conduct interviews. "In this country, the way they talk is different. In Africa, we shout when we talk, but at Praxis we learnt how to talk in a low tone, and how to improve our body language... it is like they adapt you to the culture here and to be a better nurse. These skills helped me when I went for the interview. When I did my interview at Mile End, the head of the interviewer panel called Praxis and said, 'the people who did your course are so good, especially Elsie.'"

What she likes most about Praxis is "things in Praxis come like a package. You get your training, they guide you to get a job, and keep in touch with you to check whether you have found a job." Although she says Praxis helps with child care costs, she suggests students should have been paid to do the course. This is because "some students were working night time to afford to pay their rents and still come to the classes."

## **The Future**

At the moment, because the Health Authority and the Department of Health stopped funding, Praxis is not running the Preparation course for Supervised Practice. HW identified a few reasons as to why the funding stopped: The employment situation in healthcare has changed dramatically. Where there were a lot of vacancies, there are now almost none. And in fact some N.H.S. Trusts are making people redundant. There has been an increase in nursing undergraduates from within the UK. And this has created almost like a hierarchy for recruitment that goes first to the UK newly graduated nurses, and then to overseas nurses.

The effects of lack of funding on nurses are, as illustrated by HW, as follows: Professional and highly qualified nurses are going to lower level posts. But by doing so, HW explains, they are keeping somebody out of that lower level post who would only be able to do lower level vacancies. Some nurses are doing, or thinking about doing some alternative or transferable career. HW indicates that this is “one thing that we are working on with people. Okay there is not a job in your original profession, what about looking at a transferable employment role. Stay within health, but something that is transferable. So that’s a possibility. That’s a positive impact.”

Although Praxis is hoping that “the market in nurse recruitment picks up in 2007”, the organisation is helping to recycle its programme by helping other organisations in North England make use of its programme. For example, it is partly involved in other similar projects created by other institutions outside London. Thus a course is now taught at the University of Central England, which isn’t the same as at Praxis’s, but it has drawn on some aspects of this course. HW says, “We didn’t set up the course at the University of Central England. The University of Central England has set it up. But we have advised them. And for example, I went on a University Approval Panel, a validation of the course.” Praxis is now offering a similar type programme to other disadvantaged groups. It has also been involved “in some research work around pre-employment programmes and entering health and social care. We’re actually running a course called ‘ESOL and Care’, which is about entry level employment. So these are lessons, that can be remapped onto different sectors.”

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