

To: The CTYA Cancer CRG

From: Jeanette Hawkins (CCLG Chief Nurse) on behalf of ODN Lead Nurses, CCLG Chief Nurses and National CYP Oncology Nurse Educators Group

Date: October 2024

Ref: Recommended guidance for ODNs on interpreting the out-of-date Appendix 3 in the following documents:

Service_Spec_1746_ptc_Children'sODN_Nov_2021

Service_Spec_1746_POSCU_Nov_2021

Groups involved:

- CCLG CYP Cancer Nurses Group (Leadership team) including CCLG Chief Nurse (children's lead)
- CCLG CYP Oncology Nurse Educators Group,
- NHS ODN Lead Nurses' Group

Dear Colleagues

I am writing to you to share insights on issues linked to appendix 3 of the current children's cancer service specifications. I will outline why our members felt a review of, and guidance about, appendix 3 is needed. I will explain the process of our review, and end with our recommendations for the CRG and ODN network.

We are recommending a guidance document for interpreting the out-of-date appendix 3, that we have prepared (and attached.) We are conscious that the rigorous process around service specifications means we cannot request an update to the published document until it's next scheduled review, so have offered a guidance document as a workable interim solution.

Why a review of appendix 3 was needed

Identifying the issue

At the CCLG CYP Cancer Nurses Group Leadership meeting in September 2023, it was highlighted that the updated Service Specifications for children's cancer services Nov 2021, had been published with an out-of-date Appendix 3. It was noted that when the consultation on the Service Spec was issued, appendix 3 was referred to but not attached and therefore the community had no opportunity to flag items for updating. For your reference, appendix 3 outlines standards for children's cancer nurse training and some minimum workforce staffing requirements trained to the recommended level.

Changed nursing workforce

Compounding issues of an outdated appendix, the children's cancer nursing workforce has changed significantly in the past few years. Appendix 3 appears to only refer to registered nurses, whereas training and education is required for the broader nursing workforce including supportive and assistive nursing roles. As a result, services are finding it hard to interpret the appendix in a contemporary climate, to justify the workforce needs for their areas, and ensure allocated funds are used to meet service needs rather than a misunderstood interpretation of outdated standards.

Regional and Trust variation on funding restrictions and prioritising senior staff for courses ‘misses the boat’ for many.

The CCLG / ACCEnD Workforce Education report, 2022, which has previously been shared with you, highlighted significant gaps in a wide range of educational components which form the CYP cancer workforce with the range of skills needed to deliver safe minimum standards of care. This report also illustrated the problems services face to access funding and release staff for courses.

It has been noted that because appendix 3 is quite narrow in its recommendation under the banner of ‘External Training’ referring to “a course in children’s cancer care and / or chemotherapy”, some people holding the Trust training budgets can only interpret this literally. As a result,

- when funding and a place on ‘an external children’s cancer course’ comes up, it is frequently offered to more middle or higher-grade nurses who, on paper, to need to do an accredited external children’s cancer course to meet the service spec appendix 3.
- In reality, while waiting for funding and spaces, these nurses have already gained this learning from in-house courses and experiential learning and can evidence competencies using the Career and Education Framework (CEF).
- These nurses need a broader range of higher-level education such as palliative care, neuro-oncology, high dependencies / critical care, leadership and management, and psychology level 2 related courses.
- The nurses needing “a higher-level course in children’s cancer care” are those who are earlier in their career, who have completed foundation level in-house courses, and are moving into their first middle grade jobs. These nurses are rarely given the opportunity for funding and study leave.

Debate about how the need for accreditation is interpreted and accessible

There was notable variation around the country in being able to access what was listed as ‘External’ accredited training, and some services had developed ‘Internal’ courses meeting the content and competency standard but without the stated accreditation. This is frequently due to local HEI’s not being able to maintain accredited courses for low intake numbers.

It was also noted that since appendix 3 was first written, all qualified nurses now come through training with degree level credits. Accreditation has become less desirable and harder to access, than having a workforce with the right skills and knowledge and in some locations. We do, however, believe that the children’s cancer workforce does need funding for registered nurses to have knowledge at higher academic levels across a range of topic areas, and that accreditation remains important for some of these. We have referred to this Advanced Training.

Outdated references

All the documents referred to in appendix 3 as the evidence for the standards had been removed, replaced with different approaches, or updated by the time the Service Spec was published in Nov 2021. It makes it challenging when training and workforce requirements are being discussed with NHS managers and L&D departments if there is

no clear guidance on what the current benchmark is. That leads to a wide variation in how standards are being interpreted, which ultimately leads to inequity in the standard of service delivery experienced by families. Below is the list of appendix 3 referenced documents that no longer exist. We have recommended what the current equivalent is.

1. “Competencies: an education and training competency framework for administering medicines intravenously to children and young people, (2005)” (Royal College of Nursing; publication code 003 005 Domains 1-5).

Replaced with “Competences: an education and training competence framework for administering medicines intravenously to children and young people”, (2017) RCN publication code 006 302.

2. Competencies: an integrated competency framework for training programmes in the safe administration of chemotherapy to children and young people” (2013) (Royal College of Nursing; publication code 002 501). **Removed from circulation by RCN 2015.**

Replaced by two documents:

- a. Covering SACT

CCLG / UKONS Systemic Anti-Cancer Therapy (SACT) Passport: Oral, intravenous, intramuscular, subcutaneous SACT administration for Children and Young People. (2022)

<https://www.cclg.org.uk/professionals/cyp-sact-passport>

N.B. This is now the recommended UK national standard.

- b. **RCN / CCLG Career and Education Frameworks (CCLG CEF) for Children and Young People’s Cancer Nurses.**

Cover a much more comprehensive set of CYP cancer nursing competencies beyond SACT and aligned with the ACCEnD (Aspirant Cancer Careers Education Development Programme) competencies for adult cancer nursing (mentioned in the NHSE Long Term Workforce Plan, 2023, p. 66)

- i. Baseline CEF for all nurses on children’s cancer services: mapped to nursing levels and PTC, POSCU, community and general services:

<https://www.cclg.org.uk/professionals/cyp-cancer-framework>

- ii. Specialist CEF for nurses working in late effects and long-term follow-up at higher levels of practice:

<https://www.cclg.org.uk/professionals/long-term-follow-up-framework>

3. Royal College of Nurses document (RCN) 'Defining Staffing Levels for Children's and Young Adult's Services' (2003, sections 7 and 5). **Removed by RCN, date uncertain. Replaced with wider suite of safe staffing and workforce guidance documents.**

- a. <https://www.rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/Nursing-Workforce-Standards>

- b. <https://www.rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/Nursing-Workforce-Standards/Nursing-Workforce-Standards-Checklists>

- c. <https://www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/publications/rcn-workforce-standards-uk-pub-009681>
- d. <https://www.rcn.org.uk/-/media/Royal-College-Of-Nursing/Documents/Professional-Development/Nursing-Workforce-Standards/Nursing-Workforce-Standards-noticeboard-poster.pdf?la=en&hash=65AC9108E84EB0693DE28D7EF4E4DF18>
- e. <https://www.rcn.org.uk/-/media/Royal-College-Of-Nursing/Documents/Professional-Development/Nursing-Workforce-Standards/Nursing-Workforce-Standards-presentation-slides.pptx>
- f. <https://www.rcn.org.uk/employment-and-pay/safe-staffing>

The process of our review

A task and finish group was established from the CYP Oncology Nurse Educators group to review Appendix 3 and make recommendations that were more up-to-date, maintained minimum safe standards, were realistically achievable and fundable, and could guide ODNs on interpreting appendix 3 in the current climate.

The review included consideration of the TYA Cancer Service Specifications and equivalent statements but has restricted its remit to children's services as the TYA service spec does not have the same complex appendix.

The working party shared their recommendations with the CCLG CYP Cancer Nurses leadership group Chairs, and the NHS CYP ODN Lead Cancer Nurses Group (and their PTC LCNs), who were asked to advise on the Nursing Workforce Standards section as this was outside the remit of the educators group, and to review the training section. The guidance document therefore reflects a consensus opinion of the England senior nurses and UK wide educators.

Recommended guidance

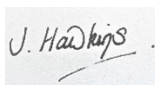
Based on the work described above we have attached a proposed guidance document for interpreting appendix 3.

Summary of recommendations

1. Utilise updated sources of evidence for training and workforce standards which includes the CCLG / UKONS SACT Passport, CCLG Career and Education Framework (CEF), and RCN Workforce Standards.
2. Remove terminology of 'internal and external' training and replace with improved guidance on foundation, SACT and advanced training.
3. Maintain commitment to absolute minimum workforce standard for training in PTCs and POSCUs.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to attend a CRG or ODN managers meeting to discuss this further and represent our members.

Yours sincerely



Jeanette Hawkins: Chief Nurse CCLG