have developed their knowledge and understanding of practice development methodologies and the impact this can have on developing person-centred cultures.

Aims Use creative practice development methodologies to bring about culture change where current staff engage with possible recruits and feedback into the recruitment process.

To ensure that potential new recruits fully understand the role on which they were embarking and experience these methods in practice during interview.

To improve retention of new staff to this role.

Methods The methods used were based on the Practice Development Workbook (Dewing, McCormack, & Titchen, 2014). The interview was conducted in three parts; the first two exercises are group activities. Using creativity to understand their journey to here; a values exercise to explore their values as well as Marie Curie's and then a short individual interview.

Results It has been challenging at times as the interview process is around three hours rather than the traditional style of interview of at least one hour. Feedback received from individuals who have completed this process have been highly evaluated.

Conclusion To build authentic and meaningful relationships and cultures it is important to identify individual values and beliefs (Wilson, 2011). Establishing person-centred cultures requires a sustained commitment from individuals and organisations. The focus on staff and service users is vital to ensuring compassionate care and a flourishing culture.

P-280 TAPPING INTO THE BENEFITS OF THE ASSISTANT PRACTITIONER

Hannah Ives. *ellenor Gravesend, UK*

10.1136/bmjspcare-2017-hospice.305

Background Nationally, the current shortage of nurses is likely to increase, in part due to the cessation of student nurse and other healthcare student bursaries (Imison & Dayan, 2016). To address this workforce gap, organisations have re-evaluated the role of health care assistants (HCAs) and their potential to develop in the work place (Skills for Health, 2015). Assistant Practitioners work at Band 4, with increased knowledge and skills developed to enable them to assess, analyse and support care needs beyond the traditional role of healthcare assistants (Skills for Health, 2015). Yet little is known if, and how, the Assistant Practitioners would aid the staffing shortfall.

Aims • To identify benefits of Assistant Practitioner role in a hospice setting.

- To successfully embed an Assistant Practitioner within the team.

Methods • A combined approach was used to capture relevant information, including:

- Case studies around Assistant Practitioners
- Current career development pathways and guidelines for Assistant practitioners
- Job descriptions compared
- Questionnaire generated and conducted within a hospice
- Clear job description and pathways created.

Results Benefits of an Assistant Practitioner were widely recognised particularly: greater ability to support and assist care ; significance in increased work responsibilities; staff retention and career progression. Organisations adopted different ways

to implement the Assistant Practitioner role demonstrating the diversity possible, including specialising in one area of work. Previous pitfalls centred on lack of communication about the role and responsibilities, acting as a barrier for staff acceptance. Our decision was to appoint a new Assistant Practitioner with clear remit and responsibilities. Early benefits we are experiencing include:

- Supporting HCAs specifically with training and competencies
- Freeing specialist nurse time
- Bridging gap between staff grades.

Conclusion Assistant Practitioners can integrate into hospice teams, improving skill mix. Whilst the role continues to evolve, this generates exciting opportunities to develop and adapt work streams; early days but positive signs.

P-281 DEVELOPING THE ROLE OF THE LYMPHOEDEMA ASSISTANT PRACTITIONER AT ST CATHERINE'S HOSPICE

Ann McFarlane, Debbie Murphy. *St Catherine's Hospice, Lancashire, UK*

10.1136/bmjspcare-2017-hospice.306

Background St Catherine's Hospice has supported the development of an assistant practitioner within its lymphoedema service as part of a workforce development strategy.

Aims To develop the role of the current support worker to address the skills shortage and recruitment difficulties within the specialty of lymphoedema

To free the specialist nurses to focus on more advanced work.

Methods To ensure the continued provision of high quality patient care, the retention and development of their workforce and taking into account the impact of current financial pressures, a workforce development analysis was done to identify where changes needed to be made. It was identified that the development of the current support worker into an assistant practitioner role was critical. Funding for the project was sought from the apprenticeship scheme and agreement with the senior management team. The education department facilitated the enrolment process with University of Central Lancashire.

Results The evaluation process has not been fully developed at this stage as the training is still in progress.

The following benefits have been identified:

- A clear well defined career pathway
- Specific set core competencies have been developed in line with Skills for Health; this has enhanced multi-disciplinary team working based on clarity of role responsibilities and levels of accountability
- Creating investment in staff training and development increases the recruitment and retention of staff therefore gives job satisfaction
- Individual personal development through increasing knowledge and confidence.

Conclusion The impact on the service has been evident in terms of staff absence for protected learning time as we are such a small team and backfill has proved to be difficult. A reduction in patient treatments as the support worker carries out the low-level interventions. Protected time for clinical learning has also been difficult at times and has been a strain on an already busy department.