

Children's Nursing Factsheet

What does a Children's Nurse do?

Children's Nurses provide care for patients from birth to adolescence, which is usually around 18 years old, but in some cases requiring specialist care, this can be up to 20+ years old. As well as providing care to children and young people, you will be working very closely and collaboratively with parents or carers, and the wider family by listening to their concerns and involving them in their child's care. Children's Nurses work with a variety of other health care professionals and in a wide and diverse multidisciplinary team. As children might be too young to comprehend information and communicate, Children's Nurses are strong advocates for their patients.

Since children have very specific health needs based on their age, you will need a good understanding of a child's developmental milestones at each stage of their younger years to help minimise the impact of illness in their development. Therefore, building up strong professional relationships with the child's parents/carers and the family is so important.

Children's Nurses need to ensure the care they carry out is done with patience; any negative experience of healthcare for a child or young person can lead to significant issues later on in their healthcare journey, so patience and excellent interpersonal skills are key.

What attributes do I need to work as a children's nurse?

Good communication skills: Working with young patients and their families requires excellent communication skills. Children and young people may be unable to communicate their feelings such as pain accurately, so as a children's nurse, you need to be able to interpret the child's behaviours and reactions recognising a deteriorating child, which can happen rapidly.

Empathetic and compassionate: Showing empathy and compassion whilst speaking with distressed family members, parents or carers is very important as having an ill child can be a very distressing experience.

Critical thinking: You need to be highly observant, have good assessment skills, and awareness of when and how to escalate concerns to the right member of staff without delay. A child's condition can take a turn for the worse rapidly.

Resilience: You will encounter emotionally challenging situations and your ability to maintain focus on your role and the patient's needs is vital.

Endurance, flexibility, and creativity: You will be caring for a range of patients (different ages and condition) at one time, and often at a fast pace. Shifts can be long requiring a certain level of physical and mental endurance. At times, what you may perceive as a simple nursing activity, may need to be creatively carried out in various different ways to ensure you gain the trust and cooperation of the children and their families.

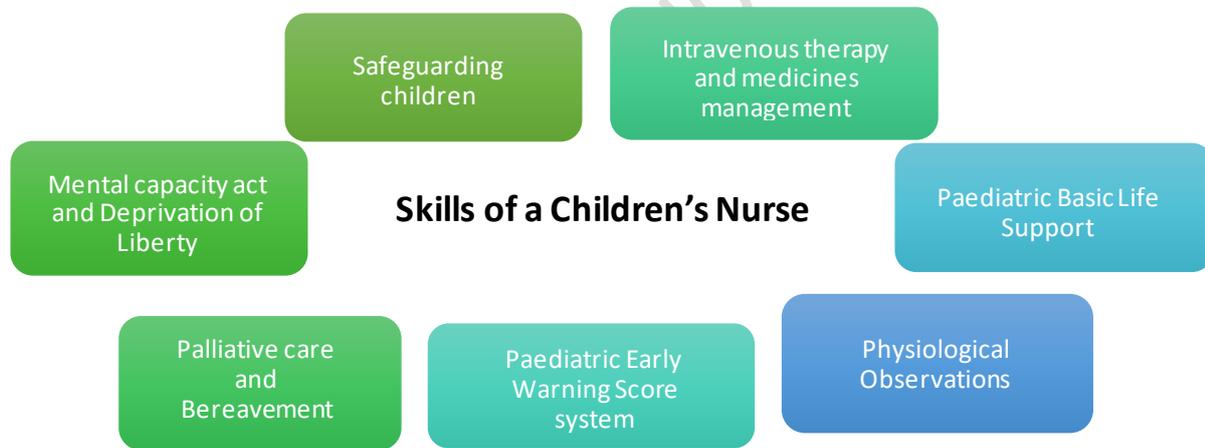
What are some of the responsibilities of a children's nurse?

- Recognise, respond and manage to changes in a child's condition, and escalating in emergencies
- Explaining treatments and procedures to enable parents/carers to consent to treatment
- Supporting and educating patients and family/carers

- Actively participate in multidisciplinary teams. Coordinating a team of healthcare professionals that includes but not limited to doctors, hospital play staff, healthcare assistants, dietitians, physiotherapists, psychologists, and social workers
- Administration of oral and intravenous medications
- Assessing children’s pain using appropriate tool and manage appropriately
- Identify signs and symptoms of child abuse and act promptly
- Provide supportive care to dying children and their families
- Preparing patients for invasive and non-invasive procedures
- Assisting with medical and nursing tests and evaluations of treatment

What areas in the hospital or community can a children’s nurse work?

- Children’s inpatient and outpatient units
- Specialist children’s units (tertiary/quaternary hospitals)
- Intensive care units (Neonatal ICU/Paediatric ICU/Children’s Cardiac ICU)
- Accident and Emergency
- Theatres and radiology departments
- Home care/community
- Schools
- Children’s Mental Health Units



Case studies comparing Children’s Nursing in the UK to the Philippines

All nurses in the Philippines are trained in all areas of nursing (i.e. Mental health, Community, Adult, and Children’s). Generally, a newly qualified nurse in the Philippines is expected to be able to administer oral/IV medications competently as well as insert IV cannulas to paediatric patients. Parents are more involved here in the UK, they are a central part of planning the care for their child, and this is heavily encouraged.

Lene, Dona

Case studies comparing Children’s Nursing in the UK to the Middle East (UAE, Saudi Arabia)

The nursing practise is similar. In the Middle East, when a child is hospitalised, the care is often fully handed over to the nurses/healthcare team until the child is discharged, and the parents and family are not directly involved with any part of their care. In the UK, there is a shared responsibility for a child or young person in hospital. Both the family and the healthcare team play a huge role in the child’s plan of care, and they make joint decisions in the child’s best interest.

Lyra, Kim, Jovi