

Children's nurses

Children's nurses care for children and young people, from birth to mid-to-late teens, in a wide range of healthcare and community settings. They care for those who are sick or injured and work with them to promote healthy behaviours and prevent ill health.

They also seek to protect them from abuse and neglect. Children's nurses offer education and support to parents, family members and others who are close to children and young people.

They work with different health and social care professionals and others who are involved in the care and education of children and young people.

They champion the rights of children and young people to be treated as equal members of society, to achieve their full potential and, wherever possible, to have their views and preferences taken into account.

Family centred care

Children's nurses see the best interests of children and young people as their first priority in all that they do.

The main philosophy of children's nursing is family centred care, recognising that, in most cases, children and young people are best cared for by their parents, or by other people they know well.

Children's nurses also recognise that, where possible, children and young people should be cared for in, or as close as possible to, their own homes.

They work in partnership with children and young people, and their families, to plan their care, negotiate who will give that care, and where it should be provided.

In some cases, particularly where children are newly diagnosed with an illness or are seriously unwell, much of their nursing care will be given by children's nurses in a hospital.

Education and support

However, in many cases, nursing care will be given by parents or carers, often in the child's or young person's own home. In such cases, the children's nurse will educate and support the parent or carer to deliver the care that is required and in some cases advice in relation to parenting.

Children's nurses will also, where appropriate, educate and support the child or young person to develop skills of self care, something which is particularly important in the care of those with long term health conditions.

Children's nurses have a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the biological, psychological and social variations that affect children and young people of different ages, cultures, abilities and stages of development.

Caring during transitions

They recognise the many changes and transitions that take place as children move from infancy to young adulthood.

They also have considerable insight into the wide range of physical and mental health concerns that can affect children and young people, as well as the particular risk of rapid deterioration in infants and young children.

This knowledge and understanding is central to their ability to provide care, to carry out competent and confident assessments, to communicate effectively, to make clinical judgements and to make decisions.

It also prepares them to deal with a wide range of complex, unpredictable and ethically challenging situations.

Children's nurses must also be able to use new technologies, safely and effectively, as this now plays a vital role in the nursing care of children and young people, especially those who are very sick or disabled.

Nurses specialising in this field have a key role to play in maximising the health and wellbeing of children and young people of all ages. They also have a primary responsibility for delivering knowledgeable and skilful nursing care.

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