

Chapter 1

A Strategic Overview and Vision of Simulation– Based Education in Healthcare in England: Enhancing Patient Safety and Learner Development

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ABSTRACT

Simulation-based education (SBE) is an important modality for training a competent and safe healthcare workforce. It is also an important component of core training and continuing professional development for healthcare workers in the National Health Service (NHS) of the United Kingdom. A comprehensive review of SBE provision, led by NHS Health Education England (HEE), discovered many areas of good practice, but also identified inequalities in the access to and delivery of simulation. A framework was developed to help improve the quality, provision, and access to SBE. Case studies are provided in this chapter showcasing the different types of simulation which contributed to the good practice, how they are used in healthcare education, and how they link to the SBE framework. The chapter sets out some of the current challenges with equitable and high-quality provision, detailing plans to further enhance the education and training of the healthcare workforce through SBE through the delivery of a framework, strategic overview, and vision to support these plans.

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INTRODUCTION

The National Health Service (NHS) in the United Kingdom (UK) is one of the largest employers in the world, directly employing more than 1.5 million employees with diverse roles ranging from medical and nursing staff to allied health professionals and healthcare scientists. The NHS recently celebrated its 70th anniversary, being founded on 5 July 1948 on the premise that good healthcare should be available to all, regardless of wealth, and services should be provided for free at the point of delivery for all UK residents (NHS, 2016). The NHS serves a population of approximately 64.6 million with treatments ranging from emergency medicine and lifesaving operations to routine procedures, screening and public health interventions. The service is paid for out of general taxation which amounts to approximately £116.4 billion (approximately \$148 billion dollars) annually.

The UK Department of Health and Social Care distributes the funding for the NHS to national and local commissioners such as NHS England, who then procure specific services from local bodies known as NHS Trusts, the voluntary sector and private providers who are responsible for the delivery of healthcare services as illustrated in Figure 1. These providers are regulated by the Care Quality Commission and NHS Improvement (Kings Fund, 2017). An NHS Trust is an organization serving either a specific function, or a targeted geographical area. Examples include:

- Hospital acute Trusts, providing secondary care services
- Mental health acute Trusts
- Ambulance service Trusts
- Community health Trusts, providing some primary care services.

To ensure the best possible care for patients, it is a requirement that the NHS workforce is sufficiently skilled and has the right abilities, attitudes and behaviors. In England, this task falls to Health Education England (HEE) which is an executive, non-departmental body of the UK Department of Health and Social Care, set up in 2012. It holds responsibility for the education and training of the entire healthcare workforce from undergraduate to postgraduate level and continuing professional development (CPD). The initial education of healthcare students is primarily provided through the funding of higher education placements within a healthcare setting. This involves healthcare students studying for extended periods of learning within a university, plus practical placements in a clinical environment, usually within an NHS Trust, working with patients and being mentored and supported by other healthcare professionals.

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