



Developing the Facilitation Skills of Professional Nurse Advocates across the UKHSA: Evaluation of a Five-day Workshop Programme

Final Report

March 2025

Foreward

As Chief Nurse and Deputy Director of HIMS at UKHSA, I am proud to introduce this final report evaluating the Professional Nurse Advocate (PNA) Facilitation Skills Workshop Programme. This initiative represents a significant step forward in our commitment to supporting the professional development and wellbeing of our workforce.

The PNA role is a vital component in fostering a compassionate, resilient, and reflective culture across UKHSA. It enables nurses to provide restorative clinical supervision, advocate for colleagues, and contribute meaningfully to quality improvement. However, we recognised early on that for this role to be truly impactful, our PNAs needed more than theoretical knowledge and that they needed the confidence, skills, and support to facilitate change in a large category one responder organisation.

This bespoke programme, delivered in partnership with the Foundation of Nursing Studies (FoNS), was designed to meet that need. Through a dynamic blend of face-to-face and online workshops, our PNAs engaged in creative, reflective, and evidence-informed learning. The outcomes speak for themselves: increased confidence, deeper self-awareness, and a growing community of practice that will continue to support the implementation of the PNA role across the agency.

I am particularly encouraged by the participants' feedback, which highlights not only the value of the learning experience but also the importance of ongoing support and organisational commitment. As we move forward, it is essential that we continue to invest in our PNAs, ensuring they have the time, space, and recognition to thrive in their roles.

My sincere thanks go to the expert Foundation of Nursing Studies and to all who participated in and supported this programme. Your dedication and insight are helping to shape a supportive and person-centred culture within UKHSA.

Sarah Gigg Chief Nursing Officer and Deputy Director of HIMS UK Health Security Agency

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1. Evaluation summary

FoNS were commissioned by UKHSA to deliver a bespoke programme of workshops to support the development of the facilitation skills of PNAs. Five full-day workshops were delivered over a four-month period for 18 PNAs using a blended approach to learning.

The workshops focussed on three areas of development:

- Understanding and developing the PNA role across UKHSA
- Knowing self as a facilitator
- Strategies for facilitation within the PNA role

Evaluation evidence suggests that PNA colleagues valued the creation of a community to support the implementation of the role across UKHSA. Communities of practice are a well-established way to support and guide professional reflection and enhance evidence-informed practice (De Wall and Khumisi, 2016). This may be especially important in a national organisation such as UKHSA, where PNAs are based in wider multidisciplinary teams across the country.

The PNAs appreciated the variety of approaches to learning that were used across the five days, recognising the value of creativity, reflection and open and honest dialogue. Similarly, the participants welcomed the theories and models that were introduced and the opportunities that were created to explore their use with colleagues. Feedback suggests that over the five workshops, participants were able to enhance their facilitation knowledge and skills and consequently, confidence in their roles as facilitators increased. Whilst there was hope about the contribution of the PNA role across UKHSA, there were also residual concerns about its implementation and wider commitment to its success.

2. Introduction

The Professional Standards and Development team within the Nursing Midwifery and Allied Health Professionals (NMAHP) division of UKHSA recently embarked upon Professional Nurse Advocate (PNA) training, to embed the PNA role into the organisation. A critical element of being a PNA is for Registered Nurses (RNs) to have well developed supervisory and facilitation skills. Feedback from those attending the PNA level 7 module identified that these skills needed to be augmented and developed further across the UKHSA cohort. Academic studies focused on the theory and not so much the practice.

To address this development need, the Foundation of Nursing Studies (FoNS) were commissioned to deliver a bespoke programme of workshops to support the development of the facilitation skills of up to 30 PNAs within UKHSA. FoNS were selected due to their:

- Experience of supporting the implementation of the PNA role at a local and national level
- Facilitation skills to support the success of PNA
- Experience in evaluating clinical supervision models

3. About the workshop programme

The programme was based on the understanding that facilitation is a relational and enabling approach to learning in and from practice, with and from others, through critical reflection and dialogue.

The aim of the programme was to support the development of the knowledge, skills and confidence of the PNAs to enable them to facilitate the A-EQUIP model (NHS England, 2023) across UKHSA.

Theoretically, the programme was underpinned by principles drawn from:

- Person-centredness, which includes people, processes and systems, to facilitate experiences
 of care (for care recipients and staff) that are healthful (McCance and McCormack, 2021)
- Practice development as a methodology for the development of person-centred cultures, which draws upon critical social theory (Manley, McCormack and Wilson, 2013)

• Critical companionship as an empirical model for facilitation (Titchen, 2001)

Practically, the programme was developed around the Critical Ally model (Hardiman and Dewing, 2019) as a relational framework for facilitating learning in practice. It focused on the:

- Creation of safe, critical and creative learning environments
- Development of a greater understanding of self as a facilitator of learning
- Development of facilitative relationships prerequisites (authentic presence, shared values, mutual respect, preparedness)
- Exploration of facilitation strategies (values and beliefs, credibility through honesty and consistency, use of critical questions, active listening, role modelling, gentle language)
- Use of outcomes (active learning, understanding of self, others and context, critical reflection and shared vision) as a means of evaluation

Across the 5 workshop days, the programme delivery was designed to be:

- Dynamic, to ensure that it can be responsive to the needs of participants and the contexts that they are working in
- Drew on participants' experiences of work and their workplaces as the main resources for learning and development
- Used interactive and creative approaches
- Promoted networking and sharing, helping participants to learn with and from each other
- Action orientated
- Used a variety of approaches to evaluate the outcomes/impact

18 UKHSA nursing staff members participated in some or all of the programme. 15 of these had completed the PNA level 7 module, 3 were waiting to start. Attendance ranged from three to five days.

Whether face-to-face or online, participants worked individually and in a mixture of groups (small and large) to enable learning through creativity, reflection and dialogue.

A blended approach to delivery was used and is detailed below:

- The face-to-face full day workshops involved the whole group with up to eleven participants in the room, and a further four joining online to enable participation
- For online workshops, the whole group was split into two groups one group of eight, one group of ten participants) with two facilitators per group to enable small group discussion. At the end of workshop four, all participants joined together to plan the final face to face session

The timing and attendance of the workshops is outlined in the Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: Workshop delivery

Workshop	Mode	Location	Day/Date
1	Face-to-face	Solihull	Thursday 24/10/24
2	Face-to-face	Solihull	Friday 25/10/24
3	On-line	MS Teams	Thursday 05/12/24
4	On-line	MS Teams	Thursday 16/01/25
5	Face-to-face	Solihull	Thursday 27/02/25

Table 2: Workshop attendance

Workshop	1	2	3	4	5
Face-to-face	10	11	N/A	N/A	10
Online	4	4	18	16	4
Total	14	15	18	16	14

The aims of the workshops are outline in Table 3. These were informed by the theoretical underpinnings outlined above and FoNS's practical expertise. Additionally, participant's hopes, fears and expectations for the programme and the overall aim of developing the PNA role across UKHSA contributed to their development. As such, the programme focussed on three areas of development:

- Understanding and developing the PNA role across UKHSA
- Knowing self as a facilitator
- Strategies for facilitation within the PNA role

Further information about the workshop content relating to each of these areas is provided in Appendix 1. Participants all received this information as a reminder and a summary of their learning at the start of Workshop 5.

Table 3: Workshop aims

Workshop	Aims						
	То:						
1	Collaboratively engage in creating a psychologically safe space						
	 Develop and/or refine awareness of self – both personally and professionally as a PNA 						
	• Explore approaches to learning that facilitate growth and development (self, others, practice, cultures)						
2	Collaboratively create a shared purpose/vision for the PNA role within UKHSA						
	Develop and awareness and understanding of the Critical Allies model to support the facilitation of workplace learning						
	Create action plans that support the transfer of learning into practice						
3	Explore ways of working with stakeholders to support the effective implementation of the PNA role						
	Develop underpinning knowledge about the theory and process of Resilience-based Clinical Supervision (a model of restorative clinical supervision)						
4	Develop skills in facilitating Resilience-based Clinical Supervision						
	Develop skills in facilitating challenging conversations						
5	Consolidate learning from workshops 1-4						
	Further develop knowledge of self as a facilitator						
	Further enhance facilitation strategies						

4. Programme evaluation

At the start of the programme, participants were invited to read information about the evaluation process so that they could make an informed decision about contributing (see Appendix 2). Written consent was sought and received from all participants.

Approaches to evaluation included:

• Identifying participant's hopes, fears and expectations (HFEs) for the programme

- A confidence line relating to facilitation across the A-EQUIP model
- End of workshop evaluations

4.1 Baseline for evaluation

At the start of the programme, participants were invited to share their hopes for the programme, their fears about the programme and their expectations of the programme. These were revisited during the final workshop.

The initial HFEs of participants are summarised here as a starting point for the programme and the evaluation. Participants hoped and expected to develop a better understanding of the PNA role, from an individual perspective, but also across the UKHSA. They hoped to be able to develop knowledge, skills and confidence with facilitation to enable them to fulfil this role effectively. Several participants hoped that the role would be embraced across UKHSA but there were fears about the extent to which the role will be prioritised and time allocated to it when there are workforce capacity issues. There was also a desire to develop a supportive network as a community of PNAs.

Additionally, participants were asked to consider the following question:

'Within your role as a PNA, how confident do you feel as a facilitator across the A-EQUIP model?'

They were then asked to place themselves on a confidence line, scored from 0-10, with 0 representing 'no confidence at all' and 10 representing extreme confidence' (see Figure 1). This activity was repeated at the end of Workshop 5 (see Figure 2).

Each column represents the level of confidence of one of the participants. The range of responses was 1-6 with a mean confidence score of 4.7 at the outset of the programme.

Figure 1: Levels of confidence at Workshop 1 or 2

N=15 Mean = 4.7

10															
9															
8															
7															
6															
5															
4															
3															
2															
1															
0															
N	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15

4.2 Themes emerging from evaluation information

The evaluation information that was collected is presented in Appendices 3-6. This information has been reviewed and themed by two FoNS Person-centre Practice Facilitators. The following themes emerged and will be briefly discussed:

- Creating a community of PNA colleagues
- Variety of approaches to learning
- Learning about relevant theories and how to apply them in practice
- Developing knowledge, skills and confidence
- Implementing the PNA role across UKHSA

4.2.1 Creating a community of PNA colleagues

As identified in the HFEs, participants were keen to develop a supportive network as a community of PNAs. Throughout the programme, the evaluation information indicated that this was developing and participants were appreciating this process and the new connections with PNA colleagues:

'I am grateful for building a community with shared goals'

'Meeting new team members to learn and support'

'We have built a strong community – thank you'

For some, these new relationships were welcomed as connections with 'like-minded' people, and also 'trusted' or 'critical friends'.

The opportunity to network with others was also really valued. There was however some disappointment that more PNA colleagues had not been able to participate in the programme.

4.2.2 Variety of approaches to learning

The participants appreciated the variety of approaches to learning that were used across the workshops, commenting particularly about how they facilitated engagement:

'Great way to allow everyone to engage... Not death by powerpoint'

There was also recognition that the variety was 'suited to different learning styles'.

Several participants commented on the use of creativity, appreciating that they were using 'different parts of the brain' and that it was a helpful way to reflect on 'who I am as a person', helping to develop greater 'self-awareness'.

Several participants commented on the value of 'time and space to think'; to work 'collaboratively' to explore aspects such as stakeholder analysis and to 'start a worthwhile conversation about progressing PNA'; and to engage in 'open and honest dialogue'. The value of both 'support' and 'challenge' was also recognised.

Participants were also very positive about the hybrid approach to learning. For those who participated online during the face-to-face workshops, they commented that:

'it worked really well and felt inclusive'

'the quality of sound/vision and ability to participate online has been great and feels inclusive'

4.2.3 Learning about relevant theories and how to apply them in practice

As the programme progressed, participants began to appreciate the theories and models that were introduced, but also the opportunity to work with them in the groups to help them explore their use in practice, for example:

'I have learnt how stakeholders can influence change and how this can help with planning and some of the tools that can be used to support this process'

'Doing the 1-1 discussion was really helpful in working through the model both from a learning point of view but also discussing my personal threats/experiences... were helpful'

'The having challenging conversations template and process, role playing, although difficult I did find really helpful'

For some, there was a clear indication of learning:

'More understanding of the structure of a PNA session with direction on how to develop the skills of facilitating each element'

"I think that it has highlighted that there is a lot of self responsibility in challenging relationships"

For others, there was a sense that they just needed to get going:

'You can continue to talk about how you will be a PNA, but we just need to experience and do it'

'Experience and confidence comes with practice'

Additionally, participants were welcoming of the resources provided:

'The slides and other resources were brill again – the discussion helped me to explore this further'

'Lots of reading and homework'

4.2.4 Developing knowledge, skills and confidence

Across the workshops and in the revisiting of the HFEs at the end of Workshop 5, evidence of participants increasing their knowledge, skills and confidence as facilitators emerged. It appears that this has been achieved through:

• Developing a better understanding of the role:

'Definitely feel I understand PNA better'

• Developing knowledge about self as a facilitator:

'Self discovery'

'Time to think about self. Self-awareness'

Expanding knowledge and skills:

'Course has given me more skills that makes me feel more able to deliver this'

'Good range of approaches learnt'

'Looking more in-depth at the resilience based supervision, allows me to consider how I could facilitate this'

Participants reported an increase in their confidence:

'It's been 'a lot' but the pieces are slotting together'

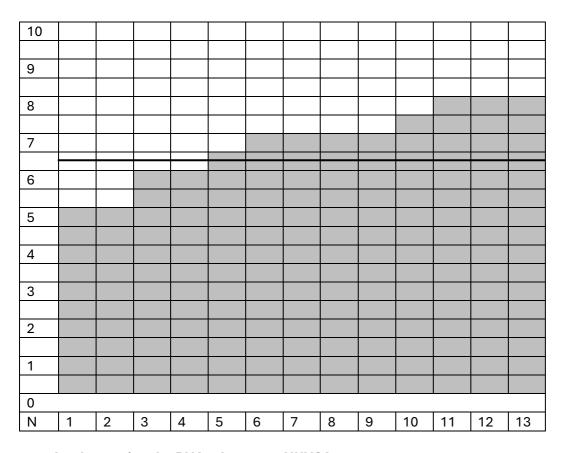
'I feel more confident, if not totally yet'

This evidence is further supported by the increased confidence measure when revisiting the confidence line at the end of Workshop 5 – see Figure 2. This shows that the mean score for confidence rose from 4.7 at Workshop 1 to 6.8 at Workshop 5. As highlighted in section 3.2.3 above, what seems important now is the opportunity to build confidence through the experience of practicing the PNA role:

'Be more confident, get on with it and continue to reflect on the way'

Figure 2: Levels of confidence at Workshop 5

N=13 Mean = 6.8



4.2.5 Implementing the PNA role across UKHSA

At the start of the programme (HFEs) and during conversations, some concerns about the success of implementing the PNA role across UKHSA were expressed:

'UKHSA culture will not allow role to progress'

'I feel that it will fall by the wayside as wellbeing seems to be the last priority when capacity is an issue'

Whilst this issue was explored in some detail during Workshops 2 and 3, using a values clarification approach to co-create shared purpose statements to support the implementation of the PNA role – see Appendix 7, and using stakeholder analysis to consider engagement and buy-in at all levels from across the organisation, some concerns remain.

Whilst participants can see the benefits of the role:

'I hope UKHSA will implement the role soon and continue to enrol more staff on the PNA programmes to continue to grow support within the workplace'

'PNA should be prioritised because of the associated benefit and incorporated into practice as a non-negotiable'

Concerns about how it will actually work in practice remained:

'I fear it will take too long to implement and that all the initial PNAs will lose confidence and support systems quickly'

5. Recommendations

To maximise the contribution of the PNA role across UKHSA, several recommendations arise from this evaluation:

- Current PNA workforce will require ongoing support and training to enable their well-being as advocates and therefore successful implementation of the service
- UKHSA SLT support for the PNA service will harness wider commitment and will support better outcomes for colleagues who access the PNA service
- UKHSA as a large organisation should note the guide from NHS England on the recommended ratio of PNAs to the workforce. Training opportunities for the future PNA workforce should therefore be considered
- Opportunities for training to support wider professional advocacy and restorative clinical supervision should be explored

6. References

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Appendix 1: Summary of learning

Understanding and developing the PNA role across UKHSA	Knowing self as a facilitator	Strategies for facilitation within the PNA role			
 Creating the Utopian PNA role across UKHSA: Creating vision of Utopia – W1 Values clarification to create shared purpose – W2 	Knowing self – W1	Check-ins – at start of each session			
Stakeholder analysis – W3	Knowing self as facilitator – W1 and W5	 Creating safe space agreements: At start – W1 Critical Allies prerequisites – W2 Using psychological safety and vulnerability videos – W3 In RBCS – W4 			
Evidencing success – W3	Exploring learning styles – W1	 Critical Allies model – facilitation of learning W2: Prerequisites Strategies Outcomes 			
	Healthful relationships – W4	RBCS process – W3/W4: Safe space agreement Grounding Check-in Reflective discussion Ending Challenging conversations framework – W4			
		 Tips for facilitating groups – W5 Positive reframing – W5 			
		 Using triads to practice facilitating reflective conversations – W5 			

Appendix 2: Programme evaluation

The Foundation of Nursing Studies (FoNS) is committed to the ongoing evaluation of our programmes. This enables us to continuously review and refine the programmes to ensure that they meet the learning needs of participants. Participation in the evaluation process is not a requirement of participation in the programme and therefore you can choose to opt out at any time.

The aim of the programme is to support PNAs within UKHSA to develop their knowledge, skills and confidence in facilitation across the A-EQUIP model.

The evaluation questions for this programme are therefore:

- 1. How effectively do the methods and approaches used in the workshops support the self-awareness development of knowledge, skills and confidence in facilitation?
- 2. What do participants experience as the most useful programme content and learning processes?
- 3. How do participants make sense of their learning and use this to inform actions?
- 4. What learning and recommendations might there be for future programmes?

A number of approaches to evaluation will be used across the 5 workshop days. These include:

- Identifying your **Hopes, Fears and Expectations** for the programme
- A Confidence Line relating to facilitation across the A-EQUIP model

We will ask you to revisit these at the end of the programme.

Additionally, we will evaluate each workshop to see what was good, could be different/better, and to capture other thoughts and ideas. Other approaches may also be used as the programme progresses.

All the above will contribute to the overall programme evaluation report which will be shared:

- With UKHSA
- Internally, with the FoNS Board of Trustees
- Externally, on the FoNS website

Any information within the evaluation will be anonymised and so individual responses or contributions will not be identifiable.

Throughout the week, with your permission, we will take photographs of learning activities. With your consent, these may be used in the evaluation report, on FoNS social media channels, or occasionally for marketing purchases e.g. programme brochures.

If you have any questions or concerns about the evaluation or the use of evaluation information, the facilitators would be happy to discuss and ensure any concerns are addressed.

Kate, Michele, Giselle and Grace

Appendix 3: End of Workshop 1 Evaluation

Reflective pool - What am I grateful for?

- I am grateful for building a community with a shared goal
- The support, ideas and team building from colleagues
- Time away to really give space to the information and the workshop
- My amazing colleagues and super supportive line manager
- Like minded shared drive to succeed. Time and encouragement to think
- Opportunity
- Grateful for my fellow nurses here today
- Meeting new team members to learn and support
- Being able to attend remotely and participate
- Supportive colleagues
- Meeting colleagues as new trusted friends in person
- Grateful for the time to reflect and create a 'who I am as a person'
- Networking

Appendix 4: End of Workshop 2 Evaluation

What was good about the workshops?	What could have been better/different?	What other thoughts, comments, ideas would you like to share?			
 All the participation and the online collaboration. Really like the cards and the parts re reflecting on ourselves and our selves at work (online) The ability to facilitate the course in a hybrid model. It has worked really well and felt inclusive (online) Having access to do this virtually - the way it was presented, i felt included in every way (online) The variety of the workshops covered across the two days has offered a variety of learning (online) Virtual round table, great to get to know other PNAs and be part of discussion (online) Tools and tips (online) Resources - reading list (online) Quality of sound/vision and ability to participate online has been great and feels inclusive (online) Meeting new critical friends! Networking + sharing of ideas. Self discovery It was good to network with others Meeting other PNAs in person Great way to allow everyone to engage. Not always about presenting info. Not death by powerpoint Suited to different learning styles Very engaging 	 I am sure I would have got more out of it had I attending in person but the fact I didn't is down to my personal life and not the course. I can see those in the room really engaged and am thankful for their inclusive attitude to hybrid (online) Can't think of anything - felt this was organised (online) I think the Critical Allis/Friend model is fab however it would have been useful for this to be linked directed to A-EQUIP and PNA when considering the purpose of the course (online) I need to read more about the critical allies outcomes as I am unsure how this links into PNA without quiet reading and reflection. The inner and (online) Better: difficult to say! Nothing. Different S/A Doing Weds + Thursday sessions (late to travel on Fri) Session split Wed pm - Fri am Avoiding Fridays Not a Friday Maybe not a Friday as travel worse Would have been good if all PNAs could attend 	 No other thoughts (online) Could this be offered to more PNAs as a 2nd session as we all need to have the same starting place and resources/support (online) I think a more structured timetable would have enabled individuals who couldn't attend the whole programme to have attended for parts of the programme and further helped to build that community (online) Considering the number of individuals who have done PNA and not attended. I think the virtual offer should have been offered to anyone who couldn't attend in person (online) Recordings of certain sessions that colleagues missed but appreciate that is difficult with group work (online) Great to get packs sent to home before session as it was unexpected and made me feel part of the group (online) Food was good Loved the crafting – could increase types / variety of material ie could be textiles, yarn 			

Excellent facilitation, engaging. Great use of crafts to use different parts of brain • Loved the work around self awareness and strategies to help performing PNA Arts + crafts Relaxed, not strict with times Very useful thought provoking and interactive Challenge & support Face to face. The expert facilitation. High support high challenge. Good supportive yet challenging facilitation • Open honest dialogue Time & space to think Blue skies thinking about the PNA role Facilitators experience Really helped to start a worthwhile conversation about progressing PNA • I feel like I had a PNA session + feel recharged

• Time to think about self. Self awareness +

creative activities

Appendix 5: End of Workshop 3 Evaluation

What is your learning from the morning and afternoon workshops?

Group 1

Morning	Afternoon
 Enjoyed stakeholder discussion Enjoyed the collaborative work and discussions about stakeholders and how we can all influence change Stakeholder influence very helpful The importance of a grounding exercise, 	 Learning the use of new words and meaning vulnerability =not weak but willingness to show up Enjoyed learning more about relating the theories to practice, doing the 1-1 discussion was really helpful in working through the
 stakeholder exercise I have learnt about how stakeholders can influence change and how this can help with planning and some of the tools that can be used to support this process How we could engage all our stakeholders and who are stakeholders are Stakeholder engagement was very useful Another great day both am and pm - lots of thinking needed now to process all the great resources 	 model both from a learning point of view but also discussing my personal threats/experiences and discussing these were helpful Exploration of feelings and emotions and research behind this Model of resilience based restorative clinical supervision and how this translates in practice to inform a session Loving the concept of resilience-based clinical supervision, and the uses of the emotional systems, and how by using emotions instead of bringing narrative to a session can be helpful Looking more in-depth at the resilience-based supervision, allows me to consider how I could facilitate it Compassion focused therapy was thought
	provoking

Appendix 6: End of Workshop 4 Evaluation

What learning are you taking away from today's session that will support your development as a facilitator?	What challenges did today's session raise and how will you work through these?	What action(s) will you take as a result of today's session?
1	 I think that it has highlighted that there is a lot of self responsibility in challenging relationships Difficult conversations – how to approach when you have little influence You can continue to talk about how you will be a PNA, but we just need to experience and do it Accepting differences in approach, I will be present in the session for the group to achieve Experience and confidence comes with practice Knowing how to work through conflict, its is something I know that I shy away from Worry about getting it wrong Challenging conversation but really good to work through The difficulty of moving people when they are 'stuck' in ways of thinking None really, would just like to get started Staying on track when facilitating a session and not trying to 'fix' 	 I think the slides will be really helpful to use and discuss in practice Look through resources shared by my group and FoNS Be more confident, get on with it and continue to reflect on the way Build the bank of resources for use I am going to (time permitting) watch some videos of session in action – good and bad examples I want to read more about this area Look for opportunities to practice in a safe way Lots of reading and homework, lots of reflection Review each element of the facilitation process to become more confident in holding space for others in a healthful way Thinking how I could implement group sessions in my team. Also to ensure we continue to support each other with this process Further work on facilitating sessions in order to be ready and helpful

Appendix 7: Creating purpose statements for the PNA role

Group 1

We believe the ultimate purpose of the PNA role within UKHSA is:

- · Supporting each other
- Wellbeing
- Resilient culture
- Quality improvement
- Debrief

This can be achieved by

- · Standard operating procedures
- Prioritisation of PNA service
- Strong PNA community
- Creating an emerging revolution
- A collective that will succeed

The factors that will enable this are:

- Collating and sharing evidence to support the service
- Increasing awareness/communication
- Making it a high priority
- Exco support

Group 2

We believe the **ultimate purpose** of the PNA role within UKHSA is to support staff wellbeing, reduce absence and provide clinical supervision and quality improvement.

This can be achieved by:

- Well trained and supported network of PNAs
- Time and resources appropriate for the task

The factors that will enable this are:

- Organisational 'buy in'
- · Education and awareness
- Commitment to embed PNA process into practice