



Measuring what matters

2025 REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The Foundation of
Nursing Studies supports
nurses and health and
care professionals to
develop person-centred
cultures of care.

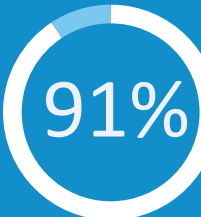
IN SUMMARY

FoNS’ team of **12** staff reached nearly **900** nurses in 2025, with over **17,000** hours of facilitation support.

We asked participants and facilitators for their thoughts and insights:



of respondents to our survey felt better able to lead and facilitate change within their organisation as a result of the FoNS programme.



of programme participants in 2025 said FoNS had helped them through ‘participatory, experiential learning.’



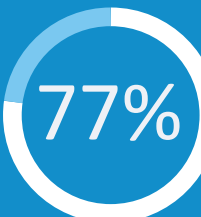
of respondents to our survey agreed that FoNS programmes had resulted in positive impact on the people who receive care and their families.



of Resilience-based Clinical Supervision (RBCS) programme participants would recommend the programme to a friend.



of programme participants in 2025 agreed that they were creating a ‘safe, positive learning environment for staff.’



of respondents said the RBCS programme had impacted the culture of their workplace.

“I continually use the learning that I took from the FoNS programme in my daily practice.”



“I dreamt of being a manager who could inspire teams to be self-sufficient and work towards a shared purpose and we are currently on our way to that.”

“FONS walk their talk [...] It is inspiring to work with them.”

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“I know my leadership has positively influenced staff recruitment because [since the FoNS programme] we have seen increased interest in vacancies, stronger engagement from applicants during the recruitment process and consistent feedback that the culture I promote is a key reason people want to join our services.”



FoNS IN 2025

The Foundation of Nursing Studies supports nurses and health and care professionals to develop person-centred cultures of care.



DEBORAH STURDY CBE
Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care DHSC

I am delighted to see The Foundation of Nursing Studies’ first impact report in 2026. For over 40 years, FoNS has delivered progressively important work - making an outstanding contribution to the profession, to services, and, most importantly, to our patients, residents and carers.

A small team with an impressive reach, FoNS shows what is possible when change is truly supported and caring cultures are meaningfully nurtured.

But its impact goes further. As a trusted critical friend to many and providing a safe space for reflection, FoNS enables exploration of the art of nursing’s possibility, whilst shaping important debate and discussion.

I am particularly pleased to see social care nursing at the heart of this work. Through Resilience-based Clinical Supervision in social care settings, and its support for developments in Learning Disability and Autism nursing, FoNS has stepped in to fill a long-standing gap across the nursing community.

JO PRITCHARD OBE
FoNS Chair of Trustees

The nursing and midwifery professions in the UK are facing unprecedented challenges, with NHS Staff survey statistics demonstrating the strain on nurses and midwives in the face of intense capacity and resource struggles across health and social care. The government has set out ambitious plans to improve resource allocation and outcomes – but there are major barriers in the form of culture and practice which inhibit potential. FoNS plays a vital role in addressing this. We worked with nearly 900 nurses in 2025, supporting them through programmes designed based on evidence, co-production and deep knowledge to help them embed reflective and person-centred practice in their own professional delivery – and for the teams they manage and are part of. The feedback our team receive is exceptional. FoNS programmes are intentional and in-depth – this is no tick-box exercise. And we see the results of that in terms of changes to confidence, skills, attitudes and behaviours that FoNS participants take back to work. Reflective, person-centred behaviours can’t shift cultures of whole hospitals and trusts overnight. But it can show the way to change and help the spread of that process. I’m proud to be part of achieving this.

Innovation, because independence allows experimentation, reflection and learning before scale.



JOANNE BOSANQUET MBE
FoNS Chief Executive

The Foundation of Nursing Studies occupies a distinctive space. We are independent and have public benefit at our core. We are grounded in the everyday realities of care delivery across health and social care and invest our resources directly into supporting the nursing and midwifery-led workforce, enabling them to create cultures where people can flourish.

Our work sits alongside the NHS and social care system. And it matters now more than ever.

2025 was a pivotal and challenging year across health and social care. Stress-related ill-health at over 42%, one in three feels burnt out, and fewer than 55% say their organisation takes positive action on their wellbeing - the lowest figure on record.

Workforce pressures remain significant. Around one in three nurses and midwives are considering leaving their organisation and up to one in ten are considering leaving the profession altogether. This represents a profound risk to the sustainability, safety and quality of care.

FoNS programmes directly address the root causes of this intent to leave, supporting wellbeing, strengthening team cultures and enabling nurses to rediscover meaning and fulfilment in their work.

This year the team have embraced working with lived experience staff, adding a new dimension in terms of expertise and perspectives.

We pride ourselves on listening to nurses and midwives and keeping pace with their needs

We know it’s not easy to release staff from frontline work at the moment - yet absence and dropout rates on FoNS programmes are very low. We work with organisations and commissioners to ensure that those who attend our programmes are supported to do so. This not only secures their participation but helps them take their learning back to work.

Investing time working at a policy level takes FoNS expertise to key stakeholders – The NMC, NHS England, four country Chief Nursing Officers, The RCN, and the Care Quality Commission to name a few. FoNS operates bottom up and top down to ensure that working life for nurses, midwives and those they care for continually improves.



OUR PEOPLE AND VALUES

We are a small team with big reach – we have 12 members of staff, equivalent to 8.3 full time employees.

We are governed and guided by our Board of Trustees led by Jo Pritchard OBE. They bring invaluable experience and insight from a wide range of sectors and are here because they share our values.

We work with associate facilitators who bring a range of skills, expertise and experience from a variety of nursing backgrounds.

They enable FoNS to flex, to meet demand and they share and learn with the core team, bringing new insights and approaches.

For the first time in 2025, FoNS employed two experts by experience to co-design, co-deliver and co-evaluate our Ward Manager Leadership Development Programme, part of NHS England’s Mental Health, Learning Disability and Autism Inpatient Quality

Transformation Programme. This enabled us to explore what it means to integrate lived experience and co-production into the fabric of FoNS. We are committed to further embed co-production into our work. More to come in 2026.

“FONS walk their talk, they are person-centred in everything they do, and model this with their associate facilitators. It is inspiring to work with them. They bring up-to-date evidence and research into their approaches alongside innovation and creativity. They offer development that goes way beyond PowerPoints, their approach enables transformation of the participants and I believe this translates into transformation in health and care.”

Associate facilitator

“As a facilitator FoNS offers a truly person-centred approach allowing facilitators to adapt and respond to the needs of the group, which enables and empowers nurses and midwives to grow and develop their own strategies in a safe and supportive environment.”

Associate facilitator



We strive for authenticity



We respect, value and work with the skills, knowledge and expertise of facilitators partners and participants



We are responsive to the needs of learners and those who commission our programmes



We recognise the importance of wellbeing for staff, facilitators, associate facilitators and participants on our programmes. All facilitators are allocated (paid) time for supervision

FoNS PROGRAMMES

In 2025: Five main programmes, over 17,000 hours of facilitated support, welcoming individuals from the UK and beyond.

The FoNS Residential Programme

Resilience-based Clinical Supervision (RBCS)

The Person-centred Cultures Development Programme funded by the Burdett Trust for Nursing

The FoNS MHLDA Ward Manager Leadership Development Programme, commissioned of NHS England’s Mental Health, Learning Disability and Autism (MHLDA) Inpatient Quality Transformation Programme

UK Health Security Agency Facilitation Programme for Professional Nursing Advocates

We co-produce, design and deliver our flexible, bespoke programmes with nurses, not just for nurses.

Programmes are underpinned by research and delivered by experienced facilitators.

CO-PRODUCED Ensuring a positive experience for care givers and care receivers.

Co-production is a way of delivering improved health and care services, it brings people together to share power and work in equal partnership to create services which work for them all. Those who use a service are best placed to co-design it.



BESPOKE

Answering the needs of the sector.

We know that time is precious. Our programmes are responsive to the changing context in health and care. We flex, we are agile and can pivot.



FoNS PROGRAMMES



SKILLED FACILITATION

Key to ensuring learning is embedded.

Our facilitators are registered nurses, knowledgeable and experienced with practical skills to deliver training that translates back into workplace realities.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Providing clear and solid foundations.

Theoretical principles underpin our work. These principles support planning and evaluating programmes. They enable positive, collaborative relationships and shared decision-making to transform cultures of care.



At FoNS, our work on person-centred practice continues to demonstrate that workforce wellbeing is not an abstract concept. It is a practical approach to improving outcomes, experience, and safety across health and social care.

Supporting nurses and their teams also has financial benefits. Based on updated cost estimates, the financial impact of supporting nurse wellbeing continues to grow. In 2026, we estimate that reducing sickness absence saves approximately **£3,265** per nurse per year, while retaining a nurse who might otherwise leave due to burnout saves around **£80,800**. This reflects both rising workforce costs and the increasing value of retaining experienced staff within the system.

These are not marginal gains. They demonstrate return on investment in culture and wellbeing. Even small-scale programme impact (e.g. 20-50 nurses) translates into six figure system savings.

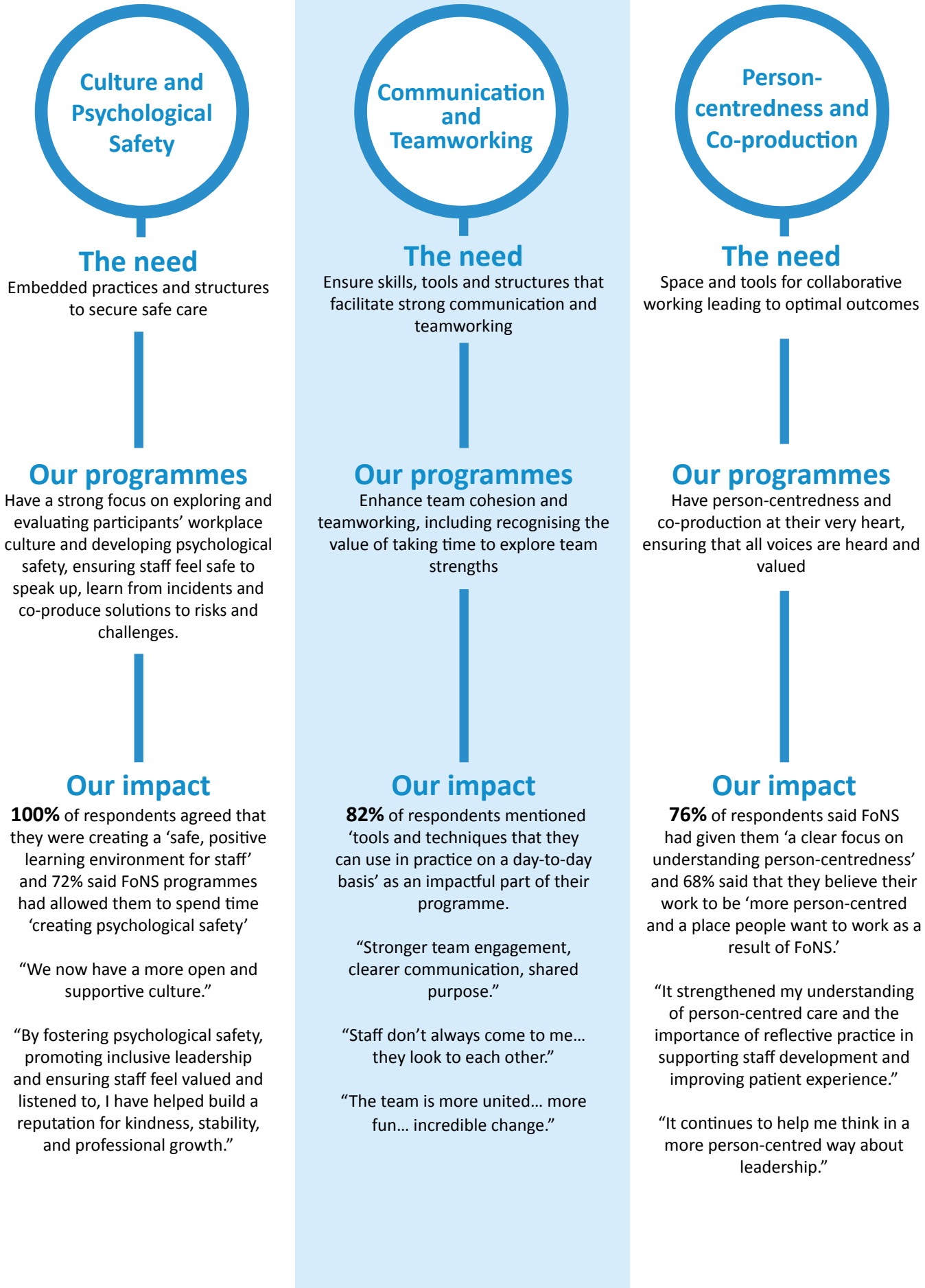
THE IMPACT OF OUR PROGRAMMES

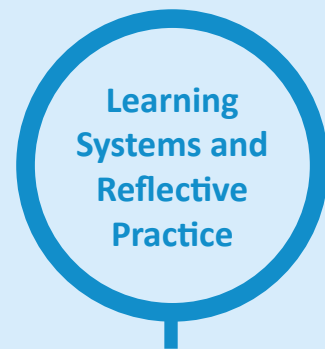
Our programmes have demonstrable impact on participants, their teams and the care that is delivered. We support the development of workplaces where people want to work.

Our programmes address the root causes of quality and safety risks¹, facilitating changes to culture, leadership and workforce experience — the conditions that determine whether safe care is possible.



¹ Sharing Intelligence for Health and Care Group Memorandum of Understanding. SIHCG Partner Organisations. 2020.





The need

Facilitating continual improvement, innovation and safe care

Our programmes

Embed reflective capability, enabling safer practice as 'business as usual'

Our impact

84% of respondents said FoNS had helped them through 'participatory, experiential learning'

"Feedback I have received year on year suggest that I actively listen to my colleagues and adopt more of a coaching than fixing response to their challenges helping to build resilience within the team."



Person-centred Cultures Development Programme participants with Clare Cable, Burdett Trust Chief Executive



The need

Improving recruitment, retention and in-work wellbeing

Our programmes

Take a deeper view of what wellbeing means, looking at the whole person, rather than temporary interventions.

Our impact

75% of FoNS programme participants between 2019 and 2024 said that their FoNS programme had made them more likely to stay in the profession: 83% said the changes in the way they lead mean colleagues are more likely to stay in the profession. ²

"The visibility of strong leadership, opportunities for reflective learning, and a nurturing environment also support better staff retention, which further enhances recruitment by signalling that people choose to stay. As a result, we are increasingly recognised as a service where staff thrive, feel proud of their work, and are supported to deliver high quality, person-centred care."

² 22 people responded to the survey of 2025 programme participants and 52 took part in the survey of past participants. Data in this table are from both surveys, aggregated where questions were identical. This is a small sample relative to participants numbers. FoNS is exploring ways to improve and streamline feedback and other data collection on programme impact.

QUALITY AND SAFETY THROUGH FoNS



Growing leadership capability, capacity and confidence

FoNS programmes help participants:

- ▶ Understand themselves as leaders
- ▶ Explore workplace culture and their role in culture change
- ▶ Experience and develop skilled facilitation
- ▶ Co-produce learning and build a tool kit to take back to their workplaces

Feedback from participants shows that programmes provide practical tools and processes for nursing leaders to take back to their workplaces, equipping them with skills, headspace and confidence to improve cultures and practice.

82%

82% of survey respondents felt better able to lead and facilitate change within their organisation as a result of the FoNS programme.

"The manager role can be very lonely, and it was invaluable to share with and learn from other ward managers. I've used activities we did in the programme on our away day. I feel the team is more united and more fun. And I feel there has been an incredible change on the ward. Co-production has been a big emphasis for us."

MHLDA Ward Manager Programme Participant

Participants tell us they have increased in confidence. On the Person-centred Cultures Development Programme, confidence in facilitating the development of person-centred cultures in their services increased by **74%** from the start to end of the programme.

"I've now taken a massive leap to a job as a unit manager in a rehab unit where I am the manager of around 50 people! I have more scope and hopefully will be able to implement these ideas in terms of facilitating person-centred care; doing with not doing to!"

I wouldn't have gone for it if I hadn't done the programme..."

Person-centred Cultures Development Programme participant

On the MHLDA Ward Manager Programme, confidence in leading the development of a culture of care increased by **18%**. And the UK Health Security Agency Professional Nurse Advocate programme - within their role as a PNA - their confidence as facilitators across the A-EQUI P model increased by **45%**.

"For the first time in four years, we have a supportive, reflective and person-centred team. I dreamt of being a manager who could inspire teams to be self-sufficient and work towards a shared purpose and we are currently on our way to that."

MHLDA Ward Manager Programme Participant



As a leader, I have become more intentional in modelling compassionate, inclusive, and values-driven behaviours. I now approach challenges through a lens of curiosity and co-production, ensuring that staff feel heard and psychologically safe to raise concerns, share learning, and contribute ideas for improvement. This has helped to foster stronger team engagement, clearer communication, and a shared sense of purpose aligned to patient-centred care.

Within my teams, I have used my learning to embed more structured reflection, encouraging staff to understand not only what we do but why we do it. By linking daily practice back to patient stories and feedback, we have strengthened our collective focus on dignity, respect, and personalised care. This has supported improvements in both staff morale and the consistency of high-quality care delivery.

At an organisational level, my involvement [...] has enabled me to champion

patient-centred culture across different workstreams and professional groups. I have contributed to shaping conversations around improvement, advocated for practices that prioritise patient and family involvement, and worked to influence systems and processes so they better reflect the lived experience of those we serve. Through collaboration with colleagues, leaders, and partners, I have helped promote a culture where compassion, relational leadership, and continuous learning are embedded as core expectations.

Overall, [the Richard Tompkins Nurse Development Scholarship] has enhanced my leadership capability and strengthened my ability to inspire and influence others in creating conditions where patient-centred care can truly thrive. It has reaffirmed my belief that meaningful cultural change begins with how we lead, how we listen, and how we connect our teams to a shared purpose rooted in empathy, quality, and kindness.

Richard Tompkins Scholar and Residential Programme Participant



Enabling leaders to create safe, person-centred learning environments

FoNS programmes support participants to:

- Develop solutions backed by theoretical underpinnings to improve workplace culture and develop person-centred leadership
- Understand what safe, person-centred learning means in practice, with tools to bring colleagues and teams onboard

Across programmes, participants develop stronger psychological safety, improved communication, and more person-centred care. These changes translate into tangible outcomes including :

- ▶ **reduced incidents**
- ▶ **improved patient flow**
- ▶ **better staff retention**
- ▶ **enhanced patient experience**

evidenced through positive feedback, recognition and awards, and enhanced relational practice.

By building reflective capacity, strengthening relationships and supporting compassionate leadership, FoNS enables teams to create workplaces where staff and patients are safer and happier.

"I provide a safe, positive learning environment by fostering psychological safety, being visible and approachable, and encouraging open, blame-free reflection. I support staff through compassionate leadership, tailored learning opportunities, and regular check-ins that help them feel valued and confident. By celebrating strengths, promoting kindness and inclusion, and creating space for honest conversations, I enable individuals and teams to grow, learn from experience, and deliver the highest standards of patient-centred care."

Richard Tompkins Scholar

100% of programme participants believed they were creating safe, positive learning environments for staff. 87% agreed that the programme had resulted in positive impact on the people who receive care and their families. **68%** believe their workplace is more person-centred and a place where people want to work as a result of the FoNS programme.

In March 2026, we met with a group of MHLDA inpatient ward managers to deep dive into the impact of the programme. These are just some of the insights we discovered:

"Our team was a shortlisted finalist for the Patient Safety Awards in our Trust due to the improvements. Patient flow has really improved, same as patient care and engagement. Family involvement has improved.

Patients are in involved in their recovery."

"The number of incidents, for example, nasogastric tube (NGT) feeding, self-harm and supportive holds on the ward have reduced to unprecedented low levels."

"Since finishing the programme, our patient flow is the best it's ever been and failed discharges are the lowest they've ever been. We're also the only ward in our locality where every shift is filled and that's really down to the shift in culture. We still have some staff turnover, but nothing like what it was 18 months ago."

"And, something I'm really proud of - I was awarded Leader of the Year 2025 for [my] Trust which would not have been possible without the help from this course!"

"A big change has been empowering staff to take leadership. Staff are taking responsibility and are accountable for these areas, and so staff members don't always come to me to solve problems, they look to each other.

Students on placements are telling us they want to come and work on the ward! And recently we advertised for two new members of staff and had 150 applications for the two vacancies! Staff are happy coming to work and I personally feel more rested."

MHLDA Ward Manager Programme Participant



Developing facilitators of restorative clinical supervision

FoNS supports nurses by delivering a 'champion and cascade' restorative clinical supervision programme, enabling participants to deliver this invaluable support in their own workplaces. Resilience based Clinical Supervision (RBCS is a form of restorative clinical supervision) is proven to support individuals in their work. Clinical supervision has a positive influence on participants' person-centred attributes³, and leads to a culture of support within a team/organisation⁴.

Anxiety/stress/depression/other mental health issues are the most reported reasons for sickness, according to NHS Workforce data⁵. Restorative clinical supervision can reduce stress, anxiety and burnout, which results in greater staff retention and greater job satisfaction.

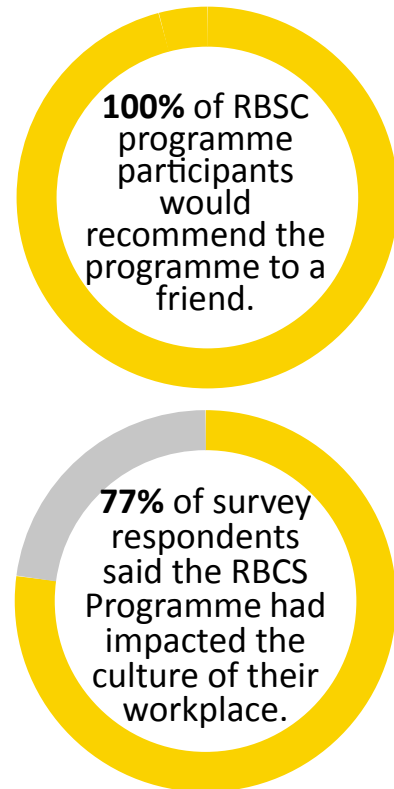
³ <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.16232>

⁴ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jocn.16232>

⁵ <https://nhsproviders.org/resources/nhs-digital-workforce-statistics-december-2025>

“RBCS offers a whole-self approach to supportive conversations in a safe non-judgemental and psychologically minded environment.”

Professional Nurse Advocate



In 2025, 363 nurses and nurse associates in adult social care in England were given fully funded places on FoNS's RBCS Programme. 90% said they felt equipped to share and deliver to others after the programme.

FoNS delivered 51 health care cohorts totalling 336 additional nurses including hospice nurses, PNAs and practice educators. At the end of the programme, participants scored their confidence about facilitating RBCS with individuals at 4.3 out of 5, and with groups at 4.1 out of 5.

PNAs found the FoNS programme enhanced their facilitation skills and are now cascading to fellow PNAs who have not been on the programme, thereby increasing internal capability and capacity.

“This course enabled me to structure my sessions with a focus on RBCS. This course filled in the gaps that the PNA course did not provide, relating to facilitating restorative clinical supervision. Additionally I can share the model with my PNA colleagues.”

Social care nurses said:

“The programme is a life-changing tool to support other healthcare workers to delve into themselves to develop the needed resilience to be able to cope with everyday life in healthcare.”

“I would absolutely recommend the RBCS programme to a colleague, especially those in emotionally demanding roles. It creates a safe, structured space to reflect, process challenges, and build emotional resilience, which we often don't prioritise in busy clinical environments. It normalised the emotional impact of our work, offering practical ways to manage stress and avoid burnout. Looking after our own wellbeing isn't optional, it's essential to providing safe, compassionate care to others.”

Other nurses commented:

“I wholeheartedly recommend this programme to anyone wishing to develop their supervision skills and reflective practice. The course was empowering and practical, providing lots of tools for reflection and supervision which you can start using right away. It demystified the process of supervision, making it very accessible. The course helped communication at work and has supported me in my personal life.”

“RBCS helped shape a more open and supportive culture where staff feel encouraged to reflect on their experiences, share learning, and support one another. This approach has strengthened teamwork and has helped keep the focus on delivering high-quality care for patients while also recognising the wellbeing and development of staff.”



Learning that lasts

FoNS programmes are experiential and the learning is participatory, which means that learning is implemented in practice and continues to be impactful long after the programme has finished. This long-term impact is enhanced by the post-programme support that is available to participants through our alumni and the RBCS networks. Participants say that learning stays with them, they continue to go back to resources used in the programme years later, and continue to draw on the confidence the programme gave them.

92%

91%

92% of FoNS programme respondents between 2019 and 2024 agreed or strongly agreed that learning continued to be useful in their work life in 2025 (none disagreed), 91% for RBCS programmes

“The learning stays with you. I continue to use both the resources and the knowledge to influence my day-to-day practice. It was an inspirational course which continues to positively impact on my professional journey.”
Residential Programme 2024

“I stayed because of the programme. My practice was recognised, the learning was part validation and in the main giving me the tools to effectively communicate with others.”
Teaching and Learning Care Homes programme 2020

“The programme provided practical frameworks and tools that I continue to draw upon when facilitating learning, supporting teams and promoting compassionate, evidence-based care.”
RBCS Participant 2023

“I continually use the learning that I took from the FoNS programme in my daily practice. I feel that the learning has contributed to my progression within my health board.”
Residential Programme 2020

“I use this learning in the pastoral elements of my role on a weekly - sometimes daily basis.”
PRBCS Participant



Advocating for change beyond programmes

FoNS works closely with a wide range of partners, senior stakeholders and system leaders to ensure that the learning and our expertise reaches the widest influence possible. This is important because whilst FoNS programmes work – they aren't a silver bullet.

Participants said that whilst making progress, change can still feel difficult and challenges include getting others onboard with new approaches, capacity to apply new processes within very stretched systems, and inability to address all factors impacting on culture, wellbeing and safety.

FoNS continues to influence at a national, UK and global level by:

- Co-chairing the Breadth of Practice Group, which is core component of the Nursing and Midwifery Council's (NMC) review of the Professional Code of Conduct and Revalidation for Registered Nurses, Registered Midwives (and Registered Nursing Associates in England).
- Being an active member of various national and UK-wide policy groups such as the England 15 year strategy for nursing and midwifery; NMC Advanced Practice steering group and Professional Strategic Advisory group; Corridor Care and Care Not Done Coalitions.
- Sitting on the Board for The Person-centred Practice International Community of Practice CIC (PCP-ICoP).

OUR PROGRAMMES

We co-produce, design and deliver flexible, bespoke programmes shaped with nurses, not just for nurses. In 2025, FoNS provided over 17,000 hours of facilitation support across five major programmes and we welcomed individuals from across the UK and beyond.

What's the programme?	Who completed in 2025?	Aims to:
The MHLDA Ward Manager Leadership Development Programme, commissioned	130 ward managers from inpatient mental health, learning disability and Autism wards in England	Enable inpatient MHLDA Ward Managers to develop their leadership practices to ensure that they can work collaboratively with others towards realising the Culture of Care Standards
The FoNS Residential Programme, an annual programme	18 nurses, nurse leaders and AHPs from across the UK	Develop knowledge, skills and confidence in facilitating the development of person-centred cultures
Resilience-based Clinical Supervision, available all year round	51 health care cohorts totalling 336 additional nurses including hospice nurses, Profession Nurse Advocates and 363 nurses and nurse associates in adult social care in England were given fully funded places	Enable organisations to develop workforce capability and capacity to deliver this form of restorative clinical supervision
Person-centred Cultures: A development programme, an annual programme	8 matron/ nurse leaders were awarded places after a competitive entry process	Develop skills as facilitative leaders of culture change, explore and enable the use of effective strategies for creating person-centred workplace cultures and promote continuous improvement
UKHSA PNA Facilitation Programme, commissioned	20 PNAs from UK Health Protection Agency	Support the development of the facilitation skills of up to 30 PNAs within UKHSA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

FoNS would like to thank every individual who has trusted the process over the last year and to all our alumni and current programme participants who took part in our surveys and interviews for this report. We thank everybody who continues to advocate for person-centredness within health and care and for supporting our work.

As we move into our 40th year in 2027, we will continue to work tirelessly to support nurses, midwives and their teams wherever they are practising and whatever level of the system they are leading.

We will continue to partner with organisations and individuals who share our values and ways of working to influence care provision across health and social care.

Thank you to all our commissioners and those influencing policy in the UK and globally. Without you, we wouldn't be where we are.

Last but by no means least, we thank our team and Trustees for their unwavering commitment to FoNS.

Please email admin@fons.org if you would like to discuss anything in the report or to discuss any of our programmes.

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