

## **BACCN Conference 2024 Grant Report**

**Joanna Mann**

I was fortunate to receive a BACCN grant this year to attend conference on 'Building Environments to Thrive – Celebrating Personal and Professional Diversity in Critical Care Nursing.' This was only my second time attending BACCN Conference, having thoroughly enjoyed my first experience in Nottingham.

In 2023, at last year's conference, I won the True Colours Well-Being Award from BACCN to support restoration and well-being in my critical care unit and this year I had the privilege of presenting my project work on Day 1 at Conference to a break-out room. It was wonderful having this opportunity to share my project with like-minded Professional Nurse Advocates and delegates interested in supporting their teams. It personally also provided a platform to network further.

I also had the opportunity be on a panel discussion with American author Sarah DiGregorio on 'Taking Care' and her perceptions on the nursing profession. As a panel we were able to discuss the themes running throughout the book, but particularly focus on one of the chapters in her book - 'Nursing Identity' - which was very linked to this year's conference theme of celebrating diversity. This was received well by the conference delegates attending the key-note session and personally I found the experience reflective and impactful on the view we have of ourselves as nurses.

The other sessions I attended on Day 1 that were of particular relevance to me, were as follows: The 'Nursing Now Challenge' about supporting early careers nurses, of which we have many on our critical care unit post pandemic and has made me think that my organisation should sign up to this scheme to support nurses further in their career development by providing wider opportunities outside work. I particularly liked the session on 'Enhanced Recovery after Critical Care' as this links in with another of my roles as a Follow Up Critical Care Nurse and made me reflect on what more I could offer in my department to support patients post intensive care. However, this linked in nicely with a session about communication boards for non-English speaking patients, of which my Trust has many patients, due to the geographical location within Birmingham in which I work. This session discussed enhancing the quality of care during admission and this would also improve rehabilitation of patients by reducing Delirium and feeling 'out of control' due to a language barrier.

Closing the first day I attended 'Call for Concern- The Royal Berkshire Experience'. This was particularly of relevance as our Trust is one of the nominated pilot sites to roll out this scheme. In my role as Professional Development Sister in Critical Care, I work closely with the Critical Care Outreach Team, so I found this information invaluable to be able to take the knowledge gained from Berkshire, back to my Trust as they prepare for this scheme across our Trust sites and have understanding of their current experiences.

Day 2 covered a lot of important topics linked to my role and the Trust I work within. The first key-note speech was about the struggle of safely maintaining paediatric services with the pressure on beds. Birmingham was on the statistics about being under 100% pressure, therefore the likelihood of having to take paediatrics into adult services would likely increase during surge times. We have already looked after children on our units, and this made me reflect on the support that we will need to provide to our intensive care staff when managing paediatrics going forwards.

The first breakout rooms supported my follow up role as there was research into the effect an intensive care admission has on families. I will look forward to the final published research next year. The community of practice session then allowed those with interest in rehabilitation to share ideas and practice around service provision, discussing both challenges and new ideas with like-minded nurses. I found this discussion session a lovely opportunity to network with follow up nurses and seek guidance and advice as our support in my department is very limited at present.

The final sessions I attended on this day were surrounding workforce needs. As a professional development sister, I was keen to learn from Addenbrookes hospital about retaining senior staff through a development Band 6 programme. We lose a lot of staff for promotions elsewhere, but they have come up with a programme to retain their staff and keep the experience on the unit through their programme which was so insightful and ideas I will take back to my unit to increase staff staying on the unit, once they have the critical care course and progress to a Band 6.

The final session I attended was the other winner of the True Colours Well-being Award. It was interesting to see how their unit had used their funding for the benefit of staff and allowed me to talk to the PNA leading on this to share ideas from both of our projects and to see how we could share ideas to further develop our own services.

Overall, this year's conference was both a confidence boost in being able to present to nurses nationally on two sessions and a valuable learning opportunity to further grow and develop in my own knowledge and ideas

to take back to my own unit. I feel I can now further grow the PNA service that I lead on and further develop the critical care follow up service, despite the limited resources, to find ways of further advocating for the patients and their families, post discharge from hospital after an intensive care unit stay. The well-being of staff is so important and to develop services that the staff can get behind to see the impact of their care on patients. The Professional Development side of my role can help to further develop skills and knowledge in our units and I am further motivated to support nurses to have the confidence to attend the next BACCN conference in Blackpool, so they themselves can engage in the wider critical care unit community at a national level.