
Life transitions involve moving from one set of circumstances to another and are invariably challenging. Students, towards the end of their initial pre-registration education, will have satisfied their professional body of their competence in their chosen field of nursing or midwifery, but they must also satisfy a potential employer of their suitability for their first job as a registered nurse or midwife. The cover of Launching Your Career in Nursing and Midwifery symbolizes a leap from student to qualified practitioner. That ‘leap’ is significant, as Annabel Smoker’s book will facilitate students on completion of their training to make that transition as swiftly and painlessly as possible.

About the Author

Annabel Smoker is a Lecturer in Nursing and the Lead for Employability at the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Southampton, UK. She manages the Faculty’s flagship employability week that prepares final year students for employment as qualified professionals and she has considerable experience of student/employer engagement.

Description

This book offers practical guidance to the student nurse or midwife on the entire process of preparing for, seeking and gaining employment, but offers more than this in placing each stage in the context of relevant evidence. The reader using this book to launch their career can have confidence that the advice is grounded in relevant psychological, policy and philosophical theory, an understanding of which will engender confidence.

Audience

Although written predominantly for students preparing for their first post its focus is also on launching a nursing or midwifery career. The advice, therefore, is equally suitable for career development and seeking employment beyond this first post as Chapter 6 attests. Far from being limited to an audience of final year students, any nurse or midwife seeking a change in direction or who has been in their current post for a length of time and is anxious about the prospect of applying for a job or preparing for interview, will benefit from Launching Your Career in Nursing and Midwifery. Although the policy context is written for a UK readership most of the practical advice could be more universally applied.

Features and Content

The book is organized chronologically into six chapters which replicate the process of gaining a first post as a newly qualified nurse or midwife and beyond. Each of these indicate the key words for its focus, provide relevant underpinning theory, and offer activities aimed at promoting critical self-awareness to guide decision-making or in developing useful skills.

The first chapter opens with an introduction to employability. The author persuades that an understanding of wider employability issues including the context and drivers that shape services is essential. She offers suggestions for gaining help with career advice and counselling and outlines career-planning theories that aim to help the reader with the first stage — the career decision-making process. Chapter 2 is comprehensively devoted to career planning and is divided into five steps. Drawing upon psychological theories the activities in the first step help the reader to align their personality type with potential career options. Step 2 includes a rich catalogue of sources to explore these options further and the third step assists the reader in honing these. Step 4 prompts the reader to reflect upon their broader experiences in readiness for applying for a first post which is briefly addressed in this chapter, but which forms the subject for Chapter 3.
‘Job Applications’ (Chapter 3) is packed with a wealth of useful tips and has at its core the strap line ‘presentation, presentation, presentation’. The Curriculum Vitae (CV) is often the first opportunity for presentation and is covered comprehensively here; the reader is offered guidance to make their CV noticeable for all the best of reasons. Activities include the opportunity to analyse a CV, which demonstrates many of the common mistakes made by applicants; comparison with an improved version follows. Writing professional profiles and personal statements often worry applicants, but these aspects are addressed in detail. A particular item of note is the section on integrity in applications and case examples have been illustrated where applicants have issues of concern that they believe may have a negative impact upon their employment opportunities; the advice for managing these situations is presented sensitively and helpfully.

Selection and recruitment, written from the employer’s perspective, is the subject of the next chapter and is therefore more informative and less interactive. It identifies how the job description and person specification are developed which in turn guides the reader in aligning their application accordingly. An important section on values-based recruitment emphasises an employer’s responsibility to ensure that the best standards are upheld and employees’ values align with theirs. A number of selection methods are outlined and top tips are identified.

Chapter 5 focuses specifically on the interview from preparation to conduct within it. There are good suggestions for constructing answers and some examples of common interview questions both generic and field specific are supplied. Case examples are also included to help prospective interviewees prepare for and manage success or rejection. Employment beyond first post in the subject of the final chapter and guides the reader through the preceptorship process, continuing professional development and preparation for further career advancement. The content of this chapter could lend itself to further expansion for a companion book with advice for career promotion.

**Scholarship**

The author has researched widely and drawn upon an impressive range of relevant sources and writes in a style which is engaging and easy to follow. The nature of the book is a practical guide rather than an academic article and true to that format she has presented the material in a straightforward and relevant manner. As an educator she offers the reader the opportunity to apply the underpinning theory and knowledge to their own situation following a chronological process. The activities are well thought out, structured and designed and will result in meaningful outcomes.

Compared with other books available on the topic her unique selling point is writing for the newly qualified nurse or midwife whereas other similar titles are more concerned with deciding to become a nurse or midwife and gaining a place on a course. The book’s contemporary nature including reference to policy and current pay scales, for example, will mean that it will require fairly frequent revisions or further editions to remain up to date, but this will be of little consequence to the reader as it is a guide which will be of considerable value for a very important yet defined period as they launch their career.

**Author**

Diane Carpenter,
Lecturer (Mental Health Nursing),
University of Southampton.