**Respiratory Support Units: Guidance for development and implementation**

**On behalf of BTS/Intensive Care Society**

**Role of the Respiratory Nurse in the Respiratory Support unit**

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The Respiratory support unit (RSU) is an area where the Respiratory nurse’s role is paramount in ensuring that patients receive a high level of monitoring and respiratory intervention. The complexity of respiratory disease, means that nurses may be caring for patients, with pulmonary hypertension, pneumothoraces, pneumonia, Asthma, COPD, sleep and ventilation disorders, cystic fibrosis, interstitial lung disease, lung cancer, tuberculosis and COVID amongst other respiratory diseases and co-morbidities. Respiratory nurses provide a wide range of caring interventions from ventilation to palliative care, yet the role of the respiratory nurse has not been clearly delineated (Alonso et al, 2020) .

Despite the banding of the nursing staff there should be a basic competence level in respiratory nursing and a pathway to direct development. The BTS document ‘A professional developmental framework for respiratory nursing’ (BTS, 2020), sets out a potential career path for Respiratory nurses within the four pillars

* Clinical expertise
* Leadership
* Research
* Education and training

Lawlor (2019), document ‘Fit to Care’ although focusing on primary and community care emphasises the essential skills, knowledge and training for healthcare professionals providing respiratory care and can be used in conjunction with the BTS (2020) framework. In using this framework to enable the professional development and identify the scope of the respiratory nurses role in the RSU, patients may be provided with optimum care. However, the nature of an RSU will be subtly different across the many NHS providers, and the way that units are designed and managed will impact on the level and provision of care. In view of the challenging and broad scope of an RSU, aspects of the role of the respiratory nurse, level of care provision for patients, and staffing elements of expertise can be gained from the critical care field. The BACCN (2010) Standards for nurse staffing in critical care and the Intensive care Society and Faculty of intensive care medicine (2019) Guidelines for the provision of intensive care services considers many of these factors and should be used in conjunction with the BTS RSU document.

Ref:

Prigmore et al (2020) *A Professional development framework for respiratory nursing.* British Thoracic Society.

Alonso SA et al (2020) Do we need tailored training and development plans for European Union respiratory nurses? *Breath*: 16: 20010

Bray K, Wren I, Baldwin A, St Ledger U, Gibson V, Goodman S, Walsh D. (2010) Standards for nurse staffing in critical care units determined by: The British Association of Critical Care Nurses, The Critical Care Networks National Nurse Leads, Royal College of Nursing Critical Care and In-flight Forum. *Nursing in Critical Care*. May-Jun;15(3):109-11.

Intensive care society and Faculty of intensive care medicine (2019) Guidelines for the Provision of Intensive Care Services - Edition 2 .

Lawlor R (2019) Fit to Care. PCRS-UK/FTC/JUN2019/V2