

## What I Wish I'd Had—And Why FEN Could Be Exactly What You Need

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If I could rewind 36 years and hand something to my younger self walking into an Emergency Department, it would be a resource like the Faculty of Emergency Nursing (FEN). Over three decades in emergency nursing—across both England and Wales as a Senior Sister, team lead, ED educator, and Consultant Nurse—have taught me that what we need most isn't more pressure, but more support. And that's exactly what FEN offers.

My connection with FEN goes back to its earliest roots in the mid-1990s. I've seen its journey up close—from supporter and contributor to holding roles including President, Director, Clinical Competencies Lead, and currently Director of Clinical Competence and Quality Assurance, Chair of the Internal Quality Assurance Board, and Professional Nurse Administrator for the FEN website. It's been a privilege to grow alongside a body so dedicated to advancing emergency nursing practice.

FEN's strength lies in the quality of its webinars, the rigour of its competency frameworks, and the relevance of its qualifications. Designed by emergency nurses, for emergency nurses, it reflects the realities we face and the standards we need. If you've ever struggled to find education that feels truly tailored to our context, FEN is the solution that's been quietly evolving to meet that exact need.

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### The Changing Landscape of Emergency Nursing

In the early days of my ED career, we had time—time to train, to learn, to gather in sessions that could last up to two hours. But today's departments are different.

Mandatory training has ballooned. The shift from delivering pure emergency care to providing ongoing care—driven by the bed crisis—has stretched roles beyond recognition. As emergency nurses, we've evolved from minor injury specialists to autonomous advanced practitioners and consultant nurses. But our development pathways haven't always kept pace.

We hear it again and again: it's difficult—sometimes impossible—to release nurses from clinical duties to attend joint training. Competency assessment at the bedside has become harder to deliver due to time constraints and rising demands. Many departments don't have a dedicated emergency nurse educator, or have too few to support workforce needs. Legacy emergency nursing programmes have been replaced by broader, more generic courses. Bespoke leadership pathways for emergency nurse managers and leaders are rare.

The result? Far too often, emergency nurses feel underprepared for the full scope and complexity of care now expected of them.

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### Where FEN Fits

This is where FEN quietly transforms the landscape.

If I were still in my consultant nurse post, here's exactly what I'd do:

- Ensure every registered nurse in the ED had a FEN subscription.
- Embed FEN webinar engagement into annual appraisals and personal development plans.
- Ensure ED educators were fluent in FEN's learning frameworks, using them to build bespoke, personalised development journeys.
- Use face-to-face time for hands-on teaching and practical assessment—not duplicating online content.
- Expect nurses to submit CPD certificates complete with reflective evaluations: key takeaways, changes in practice, and the NMC Code domains addressed in readiness for revalidation.

- Where possible, provide time back in lieu as recognition for off-duty learning.

It's more than CPD—it's continuity, credibility, and community. With FEN, the education is ready when your team is—flexible, modular, and grounded in real-world ED practice, delivered by expert emergency nurses currently working in Emergency Departments across the UK and Ireland.

And it's not just about individual development—it's about building robust, sustainable systems of growth. FEN offers a full **Assessor Education Programme** with ongoing supervision and support, equipping senior staff to assess others confidently and fairly.

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## The FEN Programmes

We currently offer five distinct programmes:

- **The Clinical Programme** – for all emergency nurses, providing a structured foundation across key areas of emergency care.
- **The Leader Programme** – for aspiring or consolidating emergency nurses managing sections or whole EDs.
- **The Fellow Programme** – for experienced nurses looking to consolidate and elevate their expert practice.
- **The Initial Acuity Assessment Programme** – created to support the NHSE initiative, with practical tools to improve early patient prioritisation.
- **The Assessor Education Programme** – designed to prepare assessors with training, mentorship, and oversight to ensure standards are upheld.

These programmes aren't off-the-shelf—they're built to reflect the complexity, nuance, and day-to-day challenges of emergency nursing. Whether you're stepping into the department for the first time or leading it from the front, FEN has a structured development path that grows with you.

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## Implementing FEN Qualifications in Practice

I've seen first-hand the power of well-supported vocational qualifications. When I led a pan-Wales emergency practitioner qualification, we trained, assessed, and validated Emergency Nurse Practitioners (ENPs) in their own workplaces. The result? Better care, less missed diagnoses, reduced risk, stronger clinical governance—and more confident, capable practitioners.

FEN builds on that same foundation.

I would be looking to put my emergency nurses through this programme because it delivers what's truly needed: a deep understanding of the specialism, focused emergency nursing knowledge, clinical competence, capability, and academic rigour. It's the full package—and it's built to support your team's growth, not overwhelm it.

But this isn't a case of "put everyone through it all at once." That approach risks overwhelming both learners and assessors. Instead, I would:

- Identify experienced staff to become assessors.
- Limit each assessor to 3 or 4 learners at a time for quality and consistency.
- Invite emergency nurses to apply—ensuring the process feels aspirational, not compulsory.

For the **Level 6 qualification**, I'd expect to see:

- Nurses new to emergency care,

- Those with moderate experience,
- And some who want to consolidate their practice with or without stepping into management roles.

For the **Level 7 qualification**, I'd prioritise:

- Individuals who can meet the assessment criteria as detailed in the Level 6 qualification
- All Band 6 sister, charge nurses and CNMs
- Band 7 sister, charge nurses and CNMs wanting to consolidate their practice, management and leadership

To enrol at Level 7, I would require candidates to complete a self-assessment against the Level 6 criteria. Their line manager would then verify whether they met at least 80% of the standard. If not, they would either:

1. Complete the Level 6 qualification first, or
2. Provide robust evidence of having watched and evaluated all the FEN webinars that map to Level 6, before being signed-off at Level 7.

This approach doesn't just maintain rigour—it empowers nurses to reflect, aspire, and grow within a supportive structure.

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So if you're an ED nurse, an educator, or a manager trying to build something better—it's worth asking:

**What kind of development would I want for myself? What would help me feel equipped, respected, and valued?**

Because somewhere out there, someone is walking into their first shift in the ED—just like I once did.

And FEN might be exactly what they (and you) need.

I know it's what I wish I'd had.