Pathway to Excellence®

EMPOWERED NURSES. STRONGER TEAMS. BETTER CARE.

A proven framework for positive practice environments where nurses and midwives thrive.

ANCC International

Contact: **ancc.international-europe@ana.org**

WHAT IS PATHWAY TO EXCELLENCE®?

The Pathway to Excellence® Program, developed by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), is a globally recognized designation for healthcare organizations committed to creating **positive practice environments where nurses and midwives thrive.**

The program focuses on strengthening workplace culture, empowering nurses and midwives, and ensuring that frontline clinical teams are engaged in improving care delivery. Organizations that achieve Pathway designation demonstrate a sustained commitment to supporting nurses and midwives, strengthening teamwork, and delivering high-quality patient care.

Pathway-designated organizations show that nurses and midwives:

- Have a **voice in decision-making**
- Work in **safe and supportive environments**
- Have opportunities for **professional growth**
- Are empowered to influence **patient care outcomes**

By embedding these principles into everyday practice, Pathway organizations create the foundation for sustainable excellence in nursing and patient care.

WHY PATHWAY MATTERS FOR HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATIONS

Healthcare systems in Europe and worldwide face growing challenges:

- Nurse burnout and workforce shortages
- Rising turnover and recruitment pressures
- Increasing complexity of patient care
- Growing demand for employee well-being and engagement

Pathway to Excellence provides an **evidence-based framework to address these challenges by strengthening the nursing work environment.**

Organizations that implement the Pathway framework report improvements in:

- Nurse engagement and retention
- Patient safety and satisfaction
- Organizational culture and collaboration
- Operational and financial performance

When nurses and midwives feel supported and empowered, the entire healthcare system benefits.

THE PATHWAY FRAMEWORK: SIX STANDARDS FOR POSITIVE PRACTICE ENVIRONMENTS

The program is built around **six standards** that define healthy nursing workplaces. These standards form the foundation of the Pathway model.

1. Shared decision-making
Nurses and midwives actively participate in organizational and clinical decision processes.

2. Leadership
Nursing leaders foster a culture of collaboration, trust, and professional empowerment.

3. Safety
Organizations protect the physical and psychological safety of staff and patients.

4. Quality
Care improvement initiatives are evidence-based and focused on measurable patient outcomes.

5. Well-being
Workforce well-being is embedded in organizational strategy and daily operations.

6. Professional development
Organizations invest in continuous learning, mentoring, and career advancement opportunities.

Together, these elements create a positive practice environment where nurses and midwives are empowered to deliver high-quality care.

BENEFITS FOR HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATIONS IN EUROPE

- **Stronger Workforce Stability:** Pathway organizations demonstrate improved nurse engagement, satisfaction, and retention.
- **Better Patient Outcomes:** Hospitals implementing the framework report measurable improvements in patient experience and quality indicators.
- **Stronger Organizational Culture:** The framework fosters collaboration, shared governance, and professional accountability across teams.
- **Competitive Advantage**: Pathway designation signals a commitment to workforce well-being and quality care, strengthening reputation and recruitment.

BENEFITS FOR NURSES AND MIDWIVES

Pathway creates workplaces where nurses and midwives:

- Feel **heard, valued, and respected**
- Participate in **decision-making and governance**
- Experience **strong leadership support**
- Access career **development opportunities**
- Work in **safe and collaborative environments**

> ***Nursing Attrition reduced from 14% in 2022 to 7% in 2025. SJH held its first ever staff survey in Oct 2025 which allowed us to review nurse satisfaction in their workplace against global benchmarks which we met and exceeded, particularly in areas such as Teamwork, Collaboration, Leadership and Professional Development.***
>
> *Marian Broderick CNM3, St. James's Hospital, Ireland*



BENEFITS FOR PATIENTS

Patients benefit from the culture created by the Pathway framework:

- Higher quality and safer care
- Better coordination among healthcare professionals
- More engaged clinical teams
- Improved patient satisfaction

Evidence shows that organizations implementing the Pathway model demonstrate improved patient experience and outcomes.

THE PATHWAY JOURNEY

Achieving Pathway designation involves a structured process that validates the presence of a positive nursing practice environment.

Typical steps include:

1. Organizational self-assessment and eligibility confirmation
2. Applicant registration and preparation of documentation
3. Submission of the **Pathway Standards Document** demonstrating compliance with the six standards
4. Independent appraisal review
5. **Confidential nurse survey** validating the work environment
6. Designation decision by the Commission on Pathway to Excellence

PROGRAM TIMELINE

Organizations typically complete the Pathway journey in approximately two years, depending on readiness and preparation.

The two years process includes:



Designation is granted for four years, after which organizations are encouraged to apply for redesignation to ensure sustainment and continue to strengthen culture and work environment.

SUPPORT FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations pursuing Pathway designation have access to resources including:

- Pre-Intent Membership Program providing structured and personalized guidance
- Access to Pathway program experts and analysts
- Pathway Learning Community® for knowledge exchange
- Educational workshops and webinars
- Tools for self-assessment and gap analysis
- Ability to use the Pathway to Excellence On the Journey logo

GLOBAL GROWTH AND IMPACT

The Pathway to Excellence® Program continues to expand internationally as healthcare organizations recognize the importance of healthy work environments.

The framework is designed to be scalable and adaptable across healthcare systems, cultures, and organization sizes, making it suitable for hospitals and care facilities in Europe and worldwide.

The Pathway to Excellence® journey has improved communication among front-line staff and leadership. We feel empowered to be the voice for our Veterans and peers, and it is meaningful to know our voices are actually being heard.

IS YOUR ORGANIZATION READY FOR PATHWAY TO EXCELLENCE®?

European healthcare organizations pursuing Pathway designation are committed to:

- ☑ Empowering nurses and midwives through shared decision-making
- ☑ Building a culture of safety, respect, and collaboration
- ☑ Strengthening workforce well-being
- ☑ Investing in professional development
- ☑ Demonstrating measurable improvements in care delivery

To Review the Eligibility Criteria and Upload the Pathway Standards Documents, visit: **anccinternational.org**

Pathway to Excellence® has provided University Hospitals of Leicester with a clear, internationally recognised framework to sustain positive practice environments across Glenfield Hospital and Leicester General Hospital. Our focus on wellbeing, recognition, shared decision-making, and professional development has strengthened staff engagement and workforce stability, with registered nurse vacancy rates reducing from 9.5% to 1.4% and unregistered vacancies falling from 13.5% to 2.4%. The designation of both sites reflects our commitment to compassionate leadership, continuous improvement, and high-quality patient care.

Sue Burton, Deputy Chief Nurse (Quality Excellence), Leicester Hospitals. University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust, United Kingdom



> **The main benefits are knowing that every nurse has a voice and the ability to have that voice heard through our councils and various pathways within our hospital. The Pathway to Excellence journey has also helped support us to put a spotlight on staff wellbeing and develop meaningful supports for our staff. Ultimately, we believe that our nurses feel like they belong in an organisation that values and recognises them and their contribution to our overall mission and strategy and this is in turn has a positive effect on our patients and their outcomes**
>
> *Áine Davern, Deputy Director of Nursing, Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Ireland*

Start your Pathway to Excellence® journey by assessing your program readiness and reviewing application requirements.
Visit: **anccinternational.org**



To begin your Pathway to Excellence® journey or request information, contact:
ancc.international-europe@ana.org

All official Pathway to Excellence® program materials and required documentation are provided in English and must be submitted in English.

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