Allied Health Professions' Support Worker Competency, Education, and Career Development Framework

Realising potential to deliver confident, capable care for the future

Contents

Foreword

Support workers play a crucial and growing role delivering safe and effective care across the allied health professions (AHPs). They work across the NHS, social care, the independent sector, housing, education, and the voluntary sectors, playing an integral role supporting people's health and wellbeing.

Ensuring clear and consistent access to high-quality learning and career progression for these staff members will deliver benefits for services and their users, such as high-quality care, continuity of care, improved retention, and reduced waiting lists. Moreover, defining clear pathways into and through support worker roles not only increases job satisfaction and opportunities for support workers, but also builds workforce capacity, creates a more diverse workforce, and helps secure future workforce supply.

However, too often support workers in both health and social care face barriers to their development, deployment, and career progression. These can include variation in roles, inconsistent delegation of tasks, poorly defined development routes, and lack of access to training and education.

There is a need to ensure that support workers have the right knowledge and skills to work at the top of their scope of practice, supported by high-quality education, and can progress their careers and aspirations. This Framework seeks to support this across England.

Suzanne Rastrick OBE
Chief Allied Health Professions Officer for England

AHPs have been at the forefront of developing support worker roles, particularly in the NHS. However, from our work with support workers and services across the country we know there is wide variation in their education and training, and how they are deployed.

We have developed this Framework, working closely with a wide range of partners, and would like to thank everyone who has supported us throughout this process. The Framework, alongside a suite of improvement and implementation resources from HEE, demonstrates our recognition of and commitment to this vital workforce.

Beverley Harden
National Allied Health Professions Lead,
Health Education England
Deputy Chief Allied Health Professions Officer

Part One:
Background and context
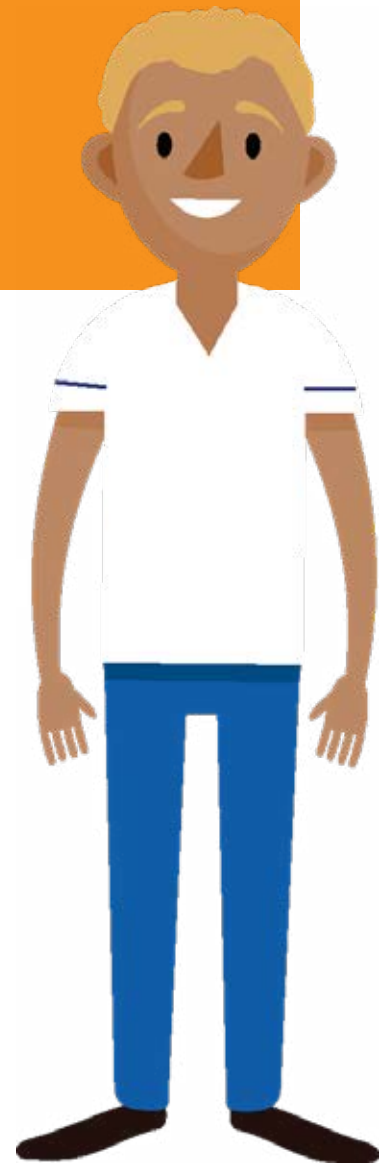
Background

Health Education England (HEE) has published this AHP Support Worker Competency, Education and Career Development Framework to maximise the contribution of the AHP support workforce to delivering safe and effective care.

This work will ensure that:

- Patients and service users have access to skilled and consistently well-trained support workers who have a defined role within their team, service, and organisation;

- Current and prospective AHP support workers have access to accurate and up to date role descriptions and standardised career/development structures that provide opportunities to follow a richer and more rewarding career pathway;

- Support worker roles can be at the heart of improvements in service delivery and transformation, including new models of care;

- Services can address current unwarranted variation in support worker roles, banding and progression.

This will support joint approaches to the commissioning and delivery of apprenticeships, ensuring support staff are deployed consistently across integrated care systems.

Information on all HEE's work to recognise and develop the AHP support workforce can be found on the **HEE website**.

> **The allied health professions are art therapists, dramatherapists, music therapists, chiropodists/podiatrists, dietitians, occupational therapists, operating department practitioners, orthoptists, osteopaths, prosthetists and orthotists, paramedics, physiotherapists, diagnostic radiographers, therapeutic radiographers, and speech and language therapists.**

Overview of the Framework

This Framework allows employers, networks and integrated care systems (ICSs) to effectively plan, develop, and deploy support workers in AHP services.

The Framework provides guidance on training, education and competencies for AHP support workers employed in NHS services and NHS funded services. It supports education providers to plan and deliver accredited education, and ICSs to take a coordinated approach. It will also be of relevance and interest to other public sector employers, including local authorities, as well as the private, independent and voluntary sectors. The Framework also incorporates the four pillars of practice across the domains, enabling whole workforce planning: clinical practice, leadership and management, education, and research.

The Framework supports three linked workforce strategies that are aimed at:

1. Recruiting local people directly into AHP entry-level roles, where vacancies exist;
2. Developing existing support staff so they can perform at the top of their scope of practice;
3. Creating clear end-to-end progression routes linked to formal education programmes, including access into AHP degrees.

The Framework demonstrates a clear pathway for recruitment and progression, with accompanying common and transferrable skills across **eight domains**:

Formal knowledge and experience	Supporting service users	Clinical, technical and scientific roles and responsibilities	Communication and information
Safe and inclusive environments	Research and service improvement	Leadership	Personal and professional values and behaviours

AHP support workers

The Framework can be used for uni-professional and blended support roles.

How the Framework was developed

The Framework was developed by King's College London, working with HEE and the AHP professional bodies. Support worker job descriptions and person specifications from across the professions were gathered via the NHS Jobs website. In total, 127 were identified and systematically reviewed to identify: detailed qualification and experience requirements across occupations and bands, general skills, behavioural requirements (such as "communications", "personal skills" and "delivering safe care"), and specific roles and responsibilities unique to individual professions. Job descriptions and personal specifications were identified as the starting point for developing the Framework because they reflect current deployment and service needs.

Alongside this, existing AHP and other education, competency and qualification Frameworks, codes and standards were also reviewed. These included: relevant apprenticeship standards, Health Technical Levels, individual professional body standards, the Core Competences of Healthcare Assistants in the European Union project outputs, the NCFE CACHE Level 3 Diploma, Care Certificate, Skills for Health Career Framework, and NHS National Job Profiles and careers information.

How to use this Framework

Systems, employers, and staff can use the Framework in the following ways.

By support workers

1. Identify your current and future development needs.
2. Support continuing professional development and career progression.
3. Use the framework as part of supervision, appraisal, and professional development meetings.

Registered professional and clinical staff

1. Ensure all team members are clear about role boundaries and scope of practice, and support the safe and appropriate delegation of tasks and responsibilities.
2. Facilitate better team working through competency-based approaches to skill mix.
3. Support supervision, personal development planning and appraisals for AHP support staff.
4. Fully support the learning and development of support worker colleagues.

Employers

1. Work with other employers in the local ICS to support consistency of roles and job descriptions.
2. Review existing organisational job descriptions and personal specifications to ensure they are up to date and consistent, including qualification requirements, and that they enable the full utilisation of support worker skills and capabilities.
3. Review existing grade, skill mix, and deployment to determine the need for new, extended, or enhanced support worker roles.

Integrated care systems (ICSs)

1. Support the standardisation of job descriptions and personal specifications across systems and networks.
2. Assess the relevance of current local training and education programmes, and work with employers and education providers to develop additional provision across the system.
3. Develop skills passports to support transferable training and education.

Education providers

1. Support the design and delivery of occupationally specific education programmes, including apprenticeships.
2. Allow common learning across AHP support roles to be identified.
3. To support progression through support worker careers, including into pre-registration.
4. Enhance partnership working at system and individual employer level.

The Framework should also be used alongside and supplemented by specific professional body standards, codes and frameworks where they exist.

Further information is available from the **HEE website**.

Part Two:
AHP support worker roles

The country's 170,000 staff employed in the 14 AHPs, across health and social care improve people's health and wellbeing, deliver public health interventions, and reduce the demand for primary, emergency, and urgent care. AHPs work across agencies and boundaries, often in multi-disciplinary teams and in new service models.

The AHP support workforce works with registered staff to deliver service user and client care, working under a range of supervisory arrangements within agreed guidelines and protocols. They often work as part of multi-disciplinary teams developing treatment plans under supervision but can also work with individual practitioners or autonomously within the scope of their role and under guidance and following training.

AHP support worker responsibilities can range from performing routine tasks, such as welcoming and preparing service users for treatment, to direct clinical and support tasks such as applying dressings and treatments or helping service users meet their care plans.

Support workers are employed in the majority of AHP services, working with registered professionals and providing care and treatment, for example:

Helping dietitians assess, diagnose, and treat service users' dietary and nutritional problems	Assisting occupational therapists in supporting people to carry out everyday tasks	Helping people who need orthotics to support their limbs	Assisting physiotherapists in improving people's mobility
Working with podiatrists to help care for service users with foot or ankle conditions	Using prosthetists' designs to make artificial limbs	Assist diagnostic and therapeutic radiographers to support people through diagnosis and treatment	Helping speech and language therapists monitor swallowing difficulties and carry out therapy interventions to support communication

Examples of AHP support worker activities

Podiatry assistant

- Applying dressings and treatments,
- Booking appointments,
- Taking insole templates,
- Advising service users and their carers on foot health and footwear.

Dietetic assistant

- Assisting service users with therapeutic dietary choices,
- Recording and analysing service users' food and fluid intake,
- Helping with care of service users who are fed via a tube,
- Taking and recording body measurements,
- Supporting service users in achieving their personal dietary goals,
- Delivering individual and group education in acute and community settings.

Orthoptic assistant

- Visual field testing,
- OCT scans of the retina and optic nerve,
- Vision testing on adults,
- Focimetry (measuring glasses),
- Photography,
- Dilation,
- Intraocular pressures,
- Biometry (pre-op cataract measurements),
- Colour vision testing and history taking.

Occupational therapy assistant

- Helping service users adapt to life after major surgeries such as hip replacement,
- Supporting children with disabilities taking part in school and play activities,
- Helping people living with dementia to develop strategies,
- Helping people living with mental illness get back into everyday activities such as work or volunteering,
- Supporting older people to stay in their homes by assessing and providing minor adaptions and equipment.

Speech and language therapy assistant

- Booking appointments and managing caseloads,
- Preparing communication therapy services,
- Providing therapy for service users after assessment by a registered SLT,
- Providing swallowing care plans,
- Providing dysphagia training to relatives, carers and ward staff,
- Supporting service users to talk after a head or neck injury,
- Modelling play and language activities.

Differences between professions

The distinct nature of each AHP and the populations they support, along with the historic evolution of roles, means that the deployment, grading, and skill mix of AHP support workers vary. Support workers in different AHP occupations are therefore likely to start at different points of the Framework, some at entry level, some at intermediate, and some at assistant practitioner.

The framework should be used alongside appropriate profession specific guidance and standards, many of which have been curated via the **HEE website**.

Individuals entering the Framework would be expected to possess all the competencies associated with the previous stage – or be able to acquire them within a reasonable timeframe, perhaps by completing an apprenticeship.

Delegation and supervision

The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and individual professional bodies provide guidance and standards on delegation that should be consulted when planning the development of AHP support worker roles, including the implementation of this Framework.

The HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics Standard 4, for example, states that:

4.1   You must only delegate work to someone who has the knowledge, skills and experience needed to carry it out safely and effectively.

4.2   You must continue to provide appropriate supervision and support to those you delegate work to.

Individual organisations will also have their own policies and procedures that must be followed to ensure support workers are able to carry out appropriate tasks competently and safely.

The Framework sets out the common education and experience requirements, and the knowledge, skills and behaviours expected at each stage. Until support workers can demonstrate that they are able to perform tasks and responsibilities competently and safely for each stage, they should be closely supervised by an appropriately qualified and registered member of staff.

Improving equality, diversity and inclusion

One of the aims of the Framework is to support greater recruitment from local communities and underrepresented groups into AHP support roles and to support their career progression.

Successful approaches to this include:

1. Working with community groups and organisations, such as places of worship or youth groups, local schools and colleges, careers fairs, employment agencies such as Job Centre Plus, and the voluntary sector, to promote AHP careers and employment.
2. Working with agencies that explicitly support groups furthest from the labour market into employment, such as adults with disabilities, young people with special education needs, care leavers or ex-offenders. Working with local authorities and supported employment agencies such as Mencap, the Prince's Trust and the Shaw Trust will assist this.
3. Working in partnership with existing staff and representatives, such as those from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds or who have disabilities, who experience additional barriers to accessing training or development opportunities, so that their needs can be understood and addressed.

In implementing this Framework, employers should ensure they are acting on findings from the **Workforce Race Equality Standard: 2020 Data Analysis Report for NHS Trusts and Clinical Commissioning Groups**:

- White applicants were 1.61 times more likely to be appointed from shortlisting compared to BME applicants.
- BME staff were 1.16 times more likely to enter the formal disciplinary process compared to white staff.
- Just 40.7 per cent of BME staff believed that their organisation provided equal opportunities for career progression or promotion compared to 88.3 per cent for white staff.

It is important that these specific barriers to recruitment and progression are addressed at both organisational and ICS level, and in partnership with existing multiprofessional workstreams on equality, diversity and inclusion.

Further guidance and resources can also be found here:

- **The Equality and Health Inequalities Hub**
- **Talent for care (HEE)**

Part Three:
Framework Stages
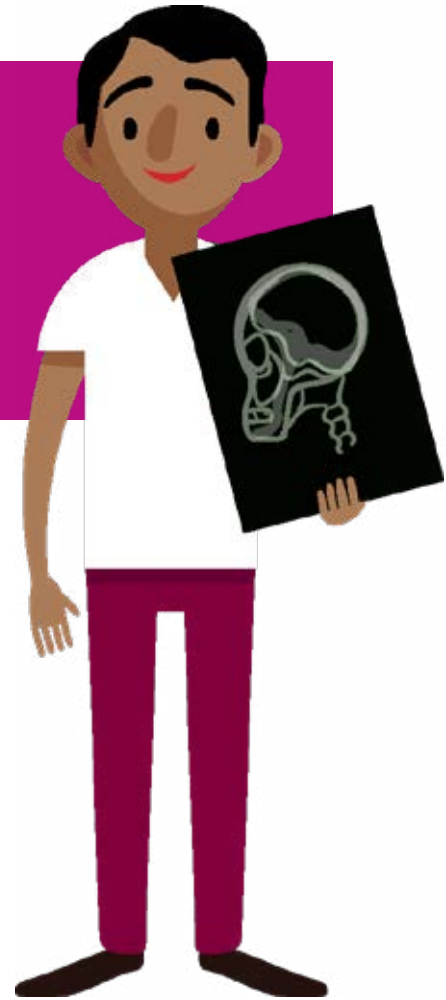
The Framework focuses on three main stages of AHP support worker competency, education and career development:

• **Support worker**
• **Senior support worker**
• **Assistant practitioner**

This section describes the three stages, and the distinction between each, in terms of role demand and complexity. Associated training and education requirements are provided in section 4.

The framework is not a guide to equivalent job banding, nor an exhaustive list of roles and responsibilities. NHS employers should therefore refer to **national job evaluation guidance** and relevant **national job profiles**.

Entry: support worker

This is the entry level for many clinical support workers into the NHS and therefore describes the minimum education and competency requirements for all support workers working in AHP services.

At this stage in the framework, support workers will use general skills and work under the close supervision of registered staff. They will carry out straightforward clinical, technical, scientific, and/or administrative tasks, for example performing housekeeping tasks, stock control or delegated clinical tasks.

Support workers working at this stage of the framework are typically working at NHS pay scale band 2 or equivalent.

Intermediate: senior support worker

Senior support workers will use more advanced skills under the supervision of registered staff and may also work alone, with access to a registered member of staff on site or via the telephone. Responsibilities include the direct delivery of clinical, technical, or scientific activities following training. They may demonstrate own duties to other support workers, students, or less experienced staff. They will also

carry out administration tasks related to patient care and the wider service. At this stage, senior support workers will contribute to service improvement and be able to make fact-based judgements.

It is possible for support staff with relevant qualifications and wider experience to enter at this stage of the framework. It is also the first point from which existing support staff, with sufficient qualifications, can apply for pre-registration degrees. At this stage of the framework staff should be encouraged and supported to acquire an occupationally specific level 3 qualification, such as the Senior Healthcare Support Worker apprenticeship.

Support workers working at this stage of the framework are typically working at NHS pay scale band 3 or equivalent.

Assistant practitioner

Assistant practitioners work at a level above that of healthcare support workers and have more in-depth education and understanding about factors that influence health and ill-health, for example anatomy and physiology. Support workers at this level will possess enhanced skills in their area of work, which may be a specialist clinical area. They will provide routine and non-routine care and support, including to service users with more complex needs and making assessment of progress. They can demonstrate own activities to new or less experienced employees and provide training to others.

The specialist nature of assistant practitioner roles and levels of responsibility mean that direct entry at this level is unlikely. Support workers working at this stage of the framework are typically working at NHS pay scale band 4 or equivalent.

Summary of Framework stages

The table below gives an indication of the different levels of complexity at the entry level, intermediate and assistant practitioner stages (this incorporates **Skills for Health Career Framework levels**).

Entry: support worker	Support workers at this stage require a basic factual knowledge and understanding of their field of work. They may carry out straightforward clinical, technical, scientific or administrative tasks according to established protocols, procedures or systems of work with close guidance and supervision. They might, for example, perform routine administration or housekeeping tasks and if providing support to a service user would do so under close supervision. They will begin to identify areas for self-development and will participate in service improvement programmes.
Intermediate: Senior support worker	Support workers at this stage require knowledge and understanding of facts, principles, processes and general concepts in their field of work. They may carry out a wider range of delegated duties than the person working at entry level, and will have more responsibility, with supervision and guidance available when needed. They contribute to service development and are responsible for their own development. Support workers at this level might carry their own caseloads that have already been seen by a registered professional, prioritise their own workload, and work with service users under a range of supervisory arrangements while undertaking routine processes.
Assistant practitioner	At this stage there is a requirement for factual and theoretical knowledge of principles, procedures, processes, and concepts in broad contexts within a field of work. Work is guided by standard operating procedures, protocols or systems of work, but people must make judgements, plan activities, contribute to service development and demonstrate self-development. They will provide practical training to less experienced staff, including students.

Part Four:
Education levels for AHP support workers

This section describes the key formal education programmes associated with each stage of the Framework.

Since 2015, all formal education qualifications in England and Wales have been placed within an overarching Framework called the **Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)**. The RQF distinguishes between different levels of understanding and expertise, with each level being progressively more challenging than the last. The RQF continues up to Level 8 (which includes doctorates). Bachelor degrees are placed at Level 6.

Credits are the means of formally recognising learning achievement. Broadly speaking, one learning credit is equivalent to 10 hours of study and teaching. Together with the RQF levels, credits allow comparisons with other equivalent qualifications:

- Awards are between 1 and 12 credits,
- Certificates are between 13 and 36 credits,
- Diplomas are 37 credits or above.

Full information about the range of qualifications associated with each level of the RQF can be found on the **government website**, and information about how qualifications convert to tariff points for university can be found on the **UCAS website**.

Additional guidance on **education, qualifications and development** is also available via the HEE website.

Functional skills

Functional skills are an underpinning requirement of formal qualifications as well as safe and effective care. It is therefore essential that staff attain the appropriate level of Functional Skills in English and mathematics. There are three **Functional Skills levels of attainment** (they are not equivalent to the corresponding apprenticeship level):

- Entry 1, Entry 2 and Entry 3.
- Level 1 (equivalent to GCSE grades 1-3).
- Level 2 (equivalent to GCSE grade 4).

Most formal education programmes and qualifications relevant to health and social care include the requirement to achieve a Level 2 Functional Skills competence. For example, employees on an apprenticeship at levels 3 – 7 need to hold Functional Skills level 2 by completion. Learners with an education, health and care plan or a legacy statement need to hold Functional Skills entry level 3 by completion.

While many NHS employers will often specify or imply a minimum level of Functional Skills (normally Level 2) when recruiting new staff, these are not mandated. This Framework recommends that people entering AHP support roles should possess, or can obtain within a reasonable period, Functional Skills at Level 2 in English and mathematics.

There are many qualifications that satisfy the criteria of being equivalent to level 2 Functional Skills. Information on these and other resources to support skills for life and Functional Skills attainment, including international equivalents, are available from the **Healthcare Apprenticeships Standards Online website**. Most Functional Skills provision is free of charge if the learner meets the required eligibility criteria.

Digital skills

AHP support workers need to be digitally confident and competent, including understanding the potential of digital to improve care. Qualifications such as Technical Levels include a digital element that not only addresses general application (for example in the use of spreadsheets) but also the application of digital skills in specific occupations. There are also specific RQF qualifications that teach digital skills.

HEE has also designed a **Digital Literacy Capability Framework**, which includes a self-assessment tool and a **Digital competency framework for Allied Health Professionals** for all allied health professions from band 3 to band 9.

Skills passports

One of the challenges and frustrations that AHP support workers face is that their learning is not always transferrable. One way to address this is to create skills passports, which allow support workers to record their learning, including trust-specific training packages to support local requirements of their roles. If developed at systems or network level, passports can be applied across organisations and boundaries (for example between NHS and social care service providers in an ICS locality), supporting transferability and reducing transaction costs, such as repeating learning (because employers recognise each other's learning). This will also assist co-delivery of apprenticeships and support consistency through a common approach to job design. Skills passports also help clarify the boundaries of roles and allow space for recording informal learning.

Recruitment and progression pathways

This Framework sets out recommended qualifications for AHP support workers, and the subsequent training and education they should be able to access once employed. This approach allows flexibility for those with existing qualifications and Grow Your Own approaches. Individuals who do not possess the recommended qualifications on recruitment should be supported to start an appropriate occupation specific qualification, such as an apprenticeship, within 6 months of starting in post.

	Qualifications on recruitment or started within first 6 months	Training and education once in post (and for existing staff)
Support worker	5 GCSEs (grades 9-4 or A*, A, B, C) **or** equivalent level 2 qualification(s) **and** Functional Skills (level 2) **Or -** as a level 2 apprenticeship, such as the Healthcare Support Worker apprenticeship	Care Certificate Level 2 or 3 occupation specific qualification(s), such as an apprenticeship Competency based development and other role specific local training Nationally available online learning
Senior support worker	3 A-Levels **or** Health and Science T-Level **or** equivalent level 3 qualification(s) **and** Functional Skills (level 2) **Or -** as a level 3 apprenticeship, such as the Senior Healthcare Support Worker apprenticeship (or other level 3 qualification pathway)	Care Certificate Level 3 or 4 occupation specific qualification(s) – such as the Senior Healthcare Support Worker apprenticeship Competency based development and other role specific local training Nationally available online learning
Assistant practitioner	Foundation degree Health and Social Care, **or** equivalent level 5 qualification; **plus**, A-levels and GCSEs or equivalent(s), including Functional Skills (level 2) **Or -** as a level 5 apprenticeship, such as the Assistant Practitioner apprenticeship Care Certificate	Competency based development and other role specific local training Nationally available online learning Ongoing professional development

Current employees are likely to possess a range of **equivalent qualifications**, such as NVQs, foundation degrees and diplomas. There is therefore no need for such staff to achieve further qualifications at that level. The **Care Certificate** and **mandatory training** are essential for all AHP support workers.

Learning and development for existing healthcare support workers should be discussed with individuals and personalised in the context of regular appraisals, personal development plans, and career development conversations.

Care certificate

The **Care Certificate** is an agreed set of standards that health and care professionals adhere to in their daily working life. Designed with the non-registered workforce in mind, the Care Certificate gives everyone the confidence that health and care professionals have the same introductory skills, knowledge, and behaviours to provide compassionate, safe, and high-quality care and support in their own particular workplace setting.

The Care Certificate is based on 15 standards, which individuals need to complete in full before they can be awarded their certificate.

If the employee has completed an accredited education programme, the content of their previous programme of study will determine whether the care certificate needs to be completed.

Online learning

There is a breadth of freely available and nationally recognised occupation and specific online learning available for the AHP support workforce. This includes **e-Learning for Health** and the **Personalised Care Institute**.

Recognition of qualifications

To support the diversity of the workforce in terms of age, education pathways, and work experience, current and future support workers who do not have GCSE and or A-level qualifications are able to have **equivalent qualifications** recognised. Information on international qualifications is available from the **UK National Information Centre** for the recognition and evaluation of international qualifications and skills (UK ENIC).

It is also important that progression routes offer sufficient flexibility, including options for part-time study, and that preparation for academic study is offered.

Part Five:
The Framework: domains, competencies, and indicators

The AHP Support Worker Competency, Education and Career Development Framework is grouped under eight domains:

Formal knowledge and experience	**Supporting service users**	**Clinical, technical and scientific roles and responsibilities**	**Communication and information**
Safe and inclusive environments	**Research and service improvement**	**Leadership**	**Personal and professional values and behaviours**

AHP support workers

Each domain sets out requirements for support workers, senior support workers, and assistant practitioners in terms of the level of responsibility and, where appropriate, includes examples of duties. There is a progression in complexity and demand from one stage to the next.

For example, this means that an individual at the intermediate stage should already have acquired or be able to acquire, in reasonable time, all the knowledge, skills, and attitudes (through experience, education and practice) set out for the entry-level stage, as well as those required at the intermediate stage.

Knowledge, skills and behaviours combined are described as competencies. To be competent as an AHP support worker requires all three. For example, the ability to communicate effectively taking account of an individual's circumstances, but also in a compassionate and caring manner. Competencies, aligned to service need, should be the basis of job design, a prerequisite upon recruitment, and determine access to education programmes. They should also allow support workers to consider how they might develop within their teams and progress their careers.

Given the breadth of practice across the 14 AHPs, the AHP Support Worker Education and Competency Framework provides broad indications of requirements and includes some examples to help guide support workers and their managers in planning their training needs, roles, and responsibilities. The Framework should be used alongside and supplemented by specific professional body standards, codes and frameworks where they exist.

Overview of the Framework domains

Domain	Description
1. Formal knowledge and experience	Formal qualifications and experience expected of a new candidate (including Functional Skills) on recruitment.
2. Supporting service users	Supporting service users and their families and providing care throughout their care and care pathways.
3. Clinical, technical and scientific roles and responsibilities	The underpinning knowledge and practice, support and interventions required of support workers to safely assist service users in meeting their optimum potential.
4. Communication and information	The ability to communicate clearly, respectfully, and effectively using a range of methods – written, verbal and non-verbal. Maintaining confidentiality and protection of data and overcoming physical, sensory, cognitive and language barriers to understanding.
5. Safe and inclusive environments	The principles of equality, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, protection, personal wellbeing and safety, along with the importance of duty of care and candour.
6. Research and service improvement	Participation in research, audit, evaluation and service improvement projects.
7. Leadership	The importance of being a role model, identifying areas for self-improvement and supervising others, and leading on service user safety, improvements and support for others.
8. Personal and professional values and behaviours	Understanding and demonstration of the **values in the NHS Constitution** and **NHS People Promise**, as well as self-development and personal wellbeing.

Framework domains

Domain 1: formal knowledge and experience The minimum essential formal qualifications and experience required for AHP support workers entering each stage. Some roles may in addition have specific role requirements such as a driving license.			
	Entry level	**Intermediate**	**Assistant practitioner**
1.1 Education requirements (see page 16 for full overview)	RQF Level 2 Qualification(s) (for example GCSE grade 4/C or above). Level 2 Functional Skills. **Or** - as a level 2 apprenticeship, such as the Healthcare Support Worker apprenticeship	RQF Level 3 qualifications or demonstrated ability and commitment to achieve a relevant level 3 qualification. Level 2 Functional Skills. **Or** - as a level 3 apprenticeship, such as the Senior Healthcare Support Worker apprenticeship (or other level 3 qualification pathway	Foundation degree Health and Social Care, or equivalent level 5 qualification; plus, A-levels and GCSEs or equivalent(s), including Functional Skills (level 2) **Or** - as a level 5 apprenticeship, such as the Assistant Practitioner apprenticeship Care Certificate.
1.2 Experience	It is not essential to have experience in health or social care settings at this stage, but candidates should be able to demonstrate experience of working with the public, for example customer care skills in retail or through employment, work experience or volunteering.	Experience in health and/or social care settings, such as employment, work experience, volunteering or placement(s)	Able to demonstrate substantial experience in health and care settings, including in the relevant field of work.
1.3 Values	Demonstrates the **values of the NHS** and commitment to personal and professional development.		

Domain 2: supporting service users Supporting service users and their families throughout their care, promoting health and wellbeing, and understanding the wider health and social care system.			
Competence	**Entry level**	**Intermediate**	**Assistant practitioner**
2.1 Positive relationships	Develops, manages, and maintains positive, appropriate relationships with service users, families and carers, demonstrating respect, kindness, compassion and empathy at all times.		
2.2 Person-centred care	Provides **person-centred care** and support.	Understands and demonstrates what it means to provide **person-centred care**, by providing education and resources to support informed decision making, and of respecting individual's decisions. May provide information to service users.	Consistently deploys care, treatment and support strategies to promote and provide person-centred care, including providing information, advice and guidance to service users, carers, families, health professionals and others.
2.3 Prevention	Understands the social, cultural, and economic influences, individual circumstances, behaviours, and lifestyle choices that impact on health outcomes for service users and their families, including health inequalities.		
2.4 Health promotion	Understands the aims and principles of health promotion, protection and improvement and importance of relevant interventions for individual service users and their families, including **making every contact count**.		
2.5 Supporting behaviour change	Seeks support from a registered practitioner when a service user signals a desire to change their health behaviour.	Understands principles of behaviour change and interventions to prevent ill health and effectively applies these to practice, recognising the individual's right to privacy and choice.	Applies principles of behaviour change within individualised contexts to enable personalised discussion, sensitively communicating complex and/or potentially challenging information to service users if appropriate to facilitate change including through social prescribing.
2.6 Privacy and dignity	Able to identify ways to promote dignity and is aware of individuals' environments and factors that might cause discomfort.		

Domain 2: supporting service users Supporting service users and their families throughout their care, promoting health and wellbeing, and understanding the wider health and social care system.			
Competence	**Entry level**	**Intermediate**	**Assistant practitioner**
2.7 Health and social care system	Aware of the main organisations in the health and social care system and services provided.	Understands a range of organisations in the health and social care system and services provided and can signpost people effectively in liaison with multi-disciplinary team colleagues.	Understands a range of organisations in the health and social care system and services provided, referring service users to services appropriately.
2.8 Legal, and ethical responsibilities	Aware of the main legislation, legal and ethical responsibilities that shape provision of social care services for service users.	Understands and can explain the main legislation, legal and ethical responsibilities that shape provision of health and social care for service users.	Understands and can explain the main legislation, legal and ethical responsibilities that shape health and social care and the role of agencies such as the Care Quality Commission.
2.9 Practice frameworks	Understands the importance of adhering to codes of practice, clinical procedures, and professional standards.		
2.10 Team and partnership working	Able to work collaboratively with a variety of health staff, social care staff, professional staff and others. Understands and demonstrates the principles of team and partnership working.		
2.11 Role awareness	Recognises the importance of support workers in service delivery, including the diverse roles undertaken by AHP support workers. Is able to define own role, for example by describing their duties and the roles of others.		
2.12 Service awareness	Understands the services and programmes of care provided by their employer and team.	Has a thorough understanding of the function and role of their service.	Has a thorough understanding of the function and role of their service and can actively advocate for this to other teams and services.

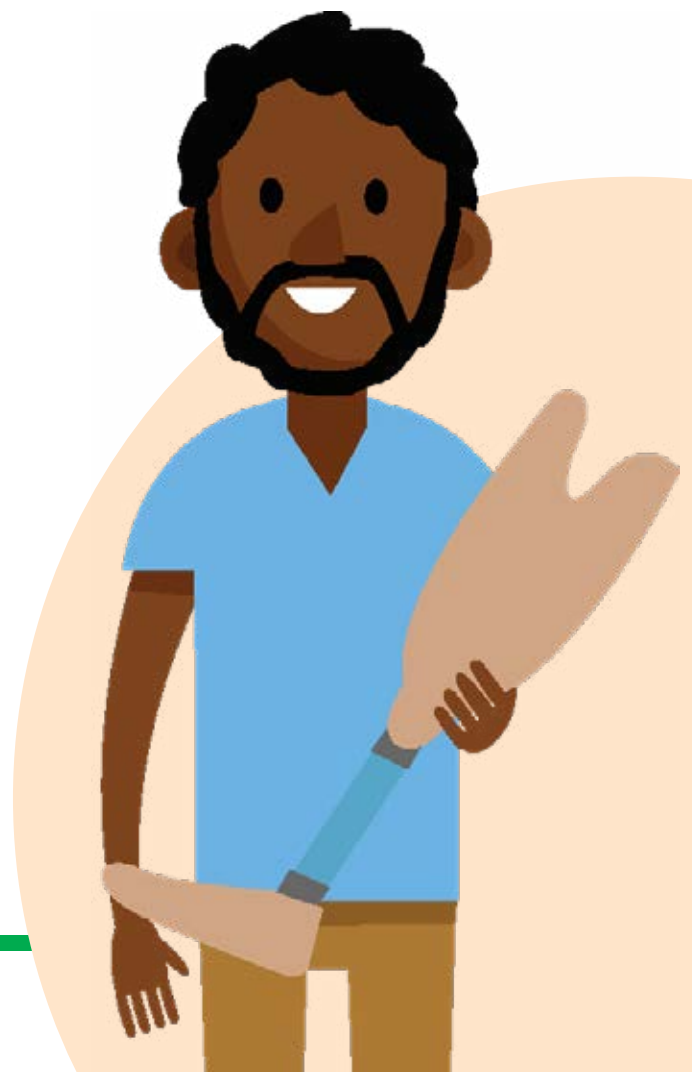| Domain 3: clinical, technical and scientific roles and responsibilities Knowledge and practice, support and interventions required to safely assist service-users meet their optimum potential.			
Competence	**Entry level**	**Intermediate stage**	**Assistant practitioner stage**
3.1 Underpinning knowledge	Basic understanding of routine clinical, technical and/or scientific roles and responsibilities.	Core knowledge of clinical, technical and/ or scientific roles and responsibilities, including clinical risk assessment.	Developed knowledge of clinical, technical and/or scientific theory and practice, within their immediate field of practice. Understands the importance of evidence-based practice.
3.2 Role boundaries	Understanding of role boundaries and the importance of supervision and carrying out appropriately delegated tasks. Able to understand and follow procedures, protocols and plans.		
3.3 Autonomy	Works under close supervision.	May work alone within scope of role, for example in the community, and have their own caseload of service users with non-complex needs previously seen by a registered member of staff.	Able to work independently with service users within the scope of the role and operational policies, protocols and procedures.
3.4 Time management	Organises own day to day tasks to ensure timely completion.	Manages own workload and time, for example maintaining own diary.	Manages own workload and time, including prioritising tasks and resources, taking account of changing circumstances.
3.5 Consent	Understands and gains valid consent prior to action or providing care, and records this appropriately.		

Domain 3: clinical, technical and scientific roles and responsibilities Knowledge and practice, support and interventions required to safely assist service-users meet their optimum potential.			
Competence	**Entry level**	**Intermediate stage**	**Assistant practitioner stage**
3.6 Tasks and responsibilities	Performs straightforward, routine and specific delegated care tasks, for which they have achieved competencies, and working within procedures, policies and plans.	Performs straightforward, routine and specific delegated care tasks, for which they have received training, working within procedures, policies and plans. Able to adapt practice to situations.	Within scope of role and working to operating procedure, protocols and procedures plans, implements and monitors own treatment and care plan interventions, including adapting to circumstances.
3.7 Prioritising care	Demonstrates the ability to respond flexibly to the needs of the working environment.	Can prioritise activities to meet the holistic needs of service users, including adjusting normal routines where levels of complexity exist.	Understands the impact of complex care needs and other factors when prioritising care activities within their own or the team's defined workload.
3.8 Planning and evaluating care	Assists in effective care planning assisting with service user flow and evaluation by sharing relevant information in a timely manner with members of the multi-disciplinary team.	Provides feedback on service-user progress and condition, recognises the impact of support and interventions, and suggests ideas for improvement when developing, reviewing and evaluating care plans based on objective evidence and experience.	Actively participates in the planning, development and evaluation of personalised care plans by offering objective clinical and evidence-based information to inform planned activities.

Domain 3: clinical, technical and scientific roles and responsibilities
Knowledge and practice, support and interventions required to safely assist service-users meet their optimum potential.

Competence	Entry level	Intermediate stage	Assistant practitioner stage
3.9 Reporting, referring and escalating concerns	Able to recognise signs of discomfort, anxiety or concerns and promptly report them to a registered practitioner. This includes recognising discomfort in other members of staff, families and carers, as well as service users.	Uses knowledge and understanding of common physical, mental and behavioural health conditions to recognise deterioration in service users. Responds by promptly escalating concerns to a registered practitioner.	Gathers and interprets relevant information working under protocols and forms a judgement on the improvement or deterioration in the physical, mental or behavioural condition of service users and responds by referring or escalating concerns to a registered practitioner.
3.10 Signposting	Directs queries in respect of signposting to appropriate multi-disciplinary team colleagues.	Maintains a working knowledge of local support available for service users and signposts people effectively in liaison with multi-disciplinary team colleagues.	Arranges access to services to support personalised care plans, referring service users to agencies and services appropriately.
3.11 Equipment	Maintains service user equipment, including stock control, delivery and setting up.	Ensures safe and effective use of equipment by service users, carers and family members, including fitting, demonstration, and teaching of safe and appropriate use. Ensures equipment is safe.	Ensures safe and effective use of equipment, including fitting, demonstration and teaching of safe and appropriate use. Adapts equipment where appropriate and monitors individual's progress. Carries out basic risk assessment and able to document in care records. Ensures equipment is safe.
3.12 Emergency care	Recognises an emergency, summons assistance and acts as a member of the multi-disciplinary team within parameters of own competence and defined role. In settings where a registered practitioner is not present, initiates immediate first aid whilst awaiting the arrival of appropriately qualified practitioners.		

Domain 4: communication and information management Communicate clearly and accurately using a range of written, verbal and non-verbal methods, maintaining confidentiality and protection of data, and overcoming physical, sensory, cognitive and language barriers to understanding. Barriers to understanding can include emotional and social barriers.			
Competence	**Entry stage**	**Intermediate stage**	**Assistant practitioner stage**
4.1 Confidentiality and data protection	Understands role requirement and the importance of accessing, maintaining and storing documentation relating to care, in accordance with local guidance and legal requirements for maintaining confidentiality and data protection.		
4.2 Record keeping	Keeps complete, clear, accurate and timely records, utilising digital platforms as required.		
4.3 Methods of communication	Communicates through a variety of methods, including the use of interpersonal, written and verbal and non-verbal skills. Exchanges information with service user and families using active listening, compassion, empathy, and coproduction techniques with the service user.		
4.4 Effective communication	Provides and receives routine and straightforward information in a timely and effective manner to and from service users, carers, members of staff and others. Actively listens and receives information, gives and acts on feedback. Understands the communication needs of others and adapts communication style accordingly.	Communicates to service users, carers, staff, teams and others in a way that is understandable and accessible, addressing any barriers to understanding. This requires the selection of the most appropriate method of communication. Actively listens and receives information, gives and acts on feedback. Understands the communication needs of others and adapts communication style accordingly.	Demonstrates the ability to provide and receive complex and sensitive information, including relating to service users. Judges the appropriate method of communication, ensuring information is provided in an accessible way. Actively listens and receives information, gives and acts on feedback. Understands the communication needs of others and adapts communication style accordingly.

Domain 5: safe and inclusive environments
Working within organisational policies and procedures to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, protection and personal wellbeing, and safety, along with the importance of infection control, duty of care and candour.

Competence	Entry stage	Intermediate stage	Assistant practitioner stage
5.1 Health and safety	Contributes to the maintenance of healthy and safe working environments through appropriate practice, use of resources, techniques and behaviours and understanding of relevant legislation.		
5.2 Policies and procedures	Understands the importance of adhering to organisational policies, protocols, procedures, and standards.	Understands the importance of adhering to organisational policies, protocols, procedures, and standards.	Contributes to the development, application and evaluation of organisational procedures and protocols.
5.3 Risk management	Identifies and manages risks, including assessment of moving and handling, using local policies and procedures. Is aware of the environment in which they work and how to maintain safety for themselves and others.		
5.4 Incidents and complaints	Reports any incidents, accidents or complaints in a timely manner, taking appropriate action where necessary.		
5.5 Safeguarding	Understands and follows the principles of safeguarding and protection. Follows local procedures and escalates concerns in a timely manner, complying with legal requirements.	Is vigilant for cues indicating safeguarding issues. Escalates safeguarding concerns and reports to the multi-disciplinary team in a robust, timely manner; complying with legal requirements.	Takes responsibility for risk identification and assessing activity within scope of role and adhering to local and national safeguarding procedures and policies.
5.6 Infection prevention and control	Understands the principles and practices of infection control, adhering to these consistently within own scope of practice.	Understands the principles and practices of infection control, adhering to these consistently within own sphere of practice.	Supports others to understand the principles and practices that underpin infection control principles.

Domain 5: safe and inclusive environments
Working within organisational policies and procedures to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, protection and personal wellbeing, and safety, along with the importance of infection control, duty of care and candour.

Competence	Entry stage	Intermediate stage	Assistant practitioner stage
5.7 Duty of care and candour	Acts with integrity and honesty, ensuring individuals do not experience harm by reporting situations, behaviours or errors that might lead to adverse outcomes for service users.		
5.8 Respects diversity	Understands, promotes, and advocates for equality and diversity and demonstrates inclusion through interaction with individuals.		
5.9 Awareness of subconscious bias	Aware of your own values, culture and position, and the impact of your work and actions on others.		
5.10 Recognises and reacts to discrimination	Promotes equality and challenges discriminatory behaviour, particularly relating to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation. Provides support without prejudice.		
5.11 Widens access to care	Understands and applies the principles and processes to support access to care and making reasonable adjustments.		

Domain 6: research and service improvement Participation and undertaking of research, audit, evaluation and service-improvement projects.			
Competence	**Entry stage**	**Intermediate stage**	**Assistant practitioner stage**
6.1 Service improvement	Participates in service evaluation and quality improvement activities relevant to own work.	Contributes to audit, service evaluation and quality improvement activities, such as service user feedback and benchmarking.	Participates in, contributes to, and may lead, audits, service evaluation and quality improvement projects relevant to own work.
6.2 Research activity	Able to understand and comply with research governance, ethics, protocols and guidelines.	Understands and complies with research governance, ethics, protocols and research, and may carry out routine research activities under guidance of more experienced staff. Disseminates research findings.	Applies research governance, ethics, protocols and guidelines and may undertake more complex research activities including data collection and analysis. Disseminates research findings.

Domain 7: leadership and management
Understanding the importance of being a role model, time management, identifying areas for self-improvement, and supervising others.

Competence	Entry stage	Intermediate stage	Assistant practitioner stage
7.1 Professionalism	Acts in a professional manner, demonstrating NHS Constitution values.		
7.2 Role modelling	Acts as a role model (for example by being welcoming).	Understands the importance of role models, for example to assist the development of others.	Demonstrates role modelling, including advocating for other support staff.
7.3 Leadership	Takes appropriate action when the performance and practice of others should be positively recognised or requires improvement. Identifies and develops own leadership skills, for example by volunteering for broader opportunities within their organisation. Advocates for service users, families and carers.	Takes appropriate action when the performance and practice of others should be positively recognised or requires improvement. Identifies and develops own leadership skills, for example by volunteering for broader opportunities within their organisation. Advocates for service users, families and carers.	Takes appropriate action when the performance and practice of others should be positively recognised or requires improvement. Takes and demonstrates management and leadership for own work within scope of practice. Advocates for service users, their families and carers. Identifies and develops own leadership skills, for example by volunteering for broader opportunities within their organisation.
7.4 Supervising others	May help induct and instruct new support staff.	Inducts new team members. Participates in training and mentoring of less experienced support staff and students (including apprentices) in respect of tasks and responsibilities within scope of practice.	May manage staff and mentor less experienced staff and students, including apprentices.

Domain 7: leadership and management Understanding the importance of being a role model, time management, identifying areas for self-improvement, and supervising others.			
Competence	**Entry stage**	**Intermediate stage**	**Assistant practitioner stage**
7.5 Developing others	Participates in team learning.	Contributes to colleague's learning, for example by giving and receiving feedback and contributing to learning resources for others, such as students.	Contributes to the learning of the organisation, colleagues and team, for example by giving and receiving constructive feedback and contributing to learning resources for others. Supports students on placement.

Domain 8: personal and professional values and behaviours The values required to work in health and social care, and personal learning and self-development.			
Competence	**Entry stage**	**Intermediate stage**	**Assistant practitioner stage**
8.1 Ways of working	Demonstrates, through interactions with others, the **core values of the NHS** and **Our NHS People Promise**.		
8.2 Health and wellbeing	Understands and acts on own safety and health and wellbeing needs and supports the health and wellbeing of wider team members.		
8.3 Role of learning and development	Understands why learning is important and how it improves performance, practice and quality of care.		
8.4 Self-development and learning	Participates in learning (including mandatory training) to ensure up-to-date knowledge, skills and behaviours to safely perform role. Actively seeks feedback.	Actively participates in learning opportunities to maintain knowledge and inform practice. Actively seeks feedback.	Actively participates in learning opportunities and demonstrates self-improvement, for example by actively seeking feedback.
8.5 Appraisals	Prepares for and participates in appraisals and agrees a Personal Development Plan.		
8.6 Personal development plans	Records learning and personal development and is supported to identify areas for improvement. Undertakes reflective practice.	Records own learning and personal development. Identifies and articulates areas for self-improvement, including through self-reflection and evaluation of practice.	Records own learning and personal development. Identifies areas for self-improvement and actively participates in learning opportunities to maintain and extend knowledge and performance.

Glossary
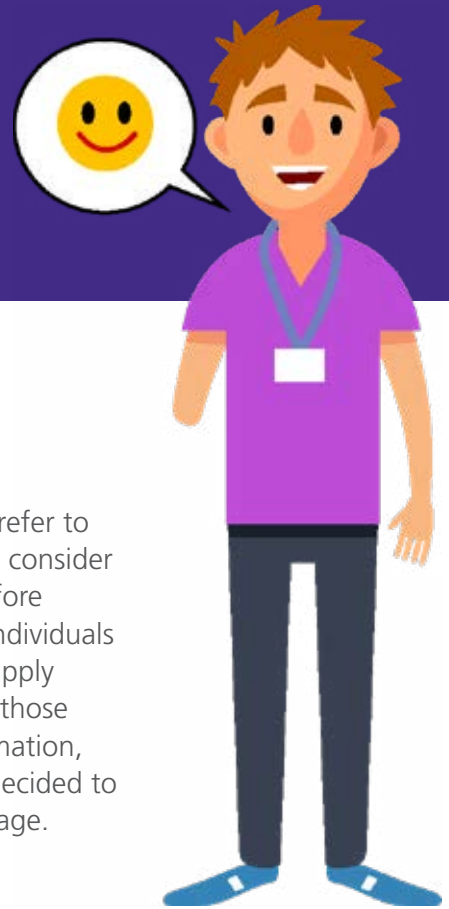
Career stages

Career stages, sometimes also called career or employment lifecycles, refer to key points and transitions in people's careers. They are a useful way to consider career development and the factors that might enable or inhibit it. Before deciding to apply for a job, particularly a vocational one like an AHP, individuals need to be aware the role exists, what it involves, what they need to apply and what the process is. There are a number of things that can shape those decisions, including family, friends and media, as well as careers information, advice and guidance, as well as work experience. Once a person has decided to apply and has been successful, they progress to the support worker stage.

Competence

The necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to perform tasks and responsibilities safely and proficiently.

End-to-end workforce strategies

An end-to-end workforce strategy refers to interventions that address all career stages in a joined-up and holistic way. This avoids silo approaches that focus on a single activity (such as introducing an apprenticeship) without considering wider factors (such as Functional Skills and learning environments). Such strategies are based on clear data about the current workforce, including skills gaps, and also take a long-term perspective, seeking to secure the workforce of the future.

Functional skills

Functional skills relate to numeracy and literacy attainment (mathematics and English). Functional skills attainment is a core element of all healthcare apprenticeship standards. Digital skills are also increasingly being seen as an essential skill. Related to Functional Skills are English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programmes that help, for example, staff employed through international recruitment to become more proficient in the English language.

Grow Your Own (GYO)

GYO refers to workforce strategies that seek to attract and recruit more local people into health and social care employment. This is achieved, for example, by engaging with local schools and colleges, working with job centres, local work and health programmes, and also adults who may be considering a career change or others who might be economically disadvantaged. Once in employment, a GYO strategy will look to support individuals and develop their careers whether they remain in a particular post or progress upwards.

Knowledge and skills

Knowledge is the outcome of acquiring and assimilating information and data by learning a body of facts, principles, theories and practice. This can be achieved through study and practice. A skill is the ability to apply knowledge to complete a task, activity or solve a problem. Skills can be cognitive or practical (manual dexterity, for example).

Scope of practice

The boundaries of a post's roles and responsibilities, including the tasks the role holder may and may not perform.

Acknowledgements

NHS
Health Education England

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www.hee.nhs.uk

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🐦 **@NHS_HealthEdEng**
f **www.facebook.com/nhshee**

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