

# **Advanced practice in the Allied Health Professions (AHPs)**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Chief Allied Health Professions Officers in each of the four UK countries have collaborated to produce this statement in order to provide clarity for leaders and decision makers about how advanced practice for allied health professions is defined, regulated and governed.

## **2. Statement on Advanced Practice**

**Whatever the specific profession, role and context, all advanced practice AHPs will have the necessary advanced-level capabilities across all four pillars of practice needed to provide safe, high quality, holistic care with people, their families and carers.**

**All AHPs, including those working in advanced practice roles, are statutorily regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) or General Osteopathic Council (GOsC).<sup>1</sup>**

**Robust employer governance is central to the safe and effective employment, utilisation and deployment of advanced practice AHPs.**

## **3. Defining advanced practice for AHPs**

The following provides a high-level, common definition agreed across the four UK countries.

- 3.1 Advanced Practice in allied health professions involves complex decision-making, underpinned by a post-registration master's level award or equivalent undertaken by an experienced practitioner that encompasses all four pillars of practice: clinical practice, leadership and management, education, and research. It is delivered by skilled and experienced registered health and care professionals who exercise significant autonomy, judgement and responsibility in their roles.
- 3.2 Advanced practitioners manage complex care in partnership with individuals, families and carers, analysing and synthesising complex problems, often as part of multi-professional teams. They handle clinical risk and uncertainty across significant areas of work, in various settings, developing innovative solutions to expedite access to care, optimise peoples' experiences, drive population health and prevention and improve outcomes

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<sup>1</sup> Osteopaths are considered AHPs in England only

#### **4. Regulation of AHP advanced practice**

- 4.1 All AHPs, including those working in advanced practice roles, are statutorily regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) or General Osteopathic Council (GOsC).<sup>2</sup> AHPs must hold registration with the appropriate regulator and meet the regulatory standards applicable to their registration and practice.
- 4.2 The regulators for allied health professionals have assessed the risks of advanced practice and consider that existing regulatory arrangements are in place to manage any risks which arise from advanced practice.

#### **5. Advanced practice governance**

- 5.1 Robust employer governance is central to the safe, effective employment and utilisation of advanced practice AHPs. Specific governance requirements and arrangements will vary between the four countries of the UK, but there should always be clear lines of leadership oversight and accountability for the advanced practice AHP workforce. This should include leadership oversight from an Executive Director of AHP / Chief AHP, or equivalent.

#### **6. More information**

- 6.1 See Annex A for more information about advanced practice in the AHP workforce across the four countries of the UK.

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## **Annex A**

### **Advanced practice in the Allied Health Professions (AHPs) – more information**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Chief Allied Health Professions Officers in each of the four UK countries have collaborated to produce a statement in order to provide clarity for AHP leaders and decision makers about how advanced practice for allied health professions is defined, regulated and governed.
- 1.2 This document is an annex to that statement and provides more information about advanced practice in the AHP workforce across the four UK countries.

#### **2. Approaches to AHP advanced practice in the four UK countries**

- 2.1 The AHP workforce is a large multi-professional workforce. This comprises a range of different professions, each with their own unique contribution to health and care. Whilst there is a high degree of alignment, the specific professions which are considered to part of the AHP workforce varies to some extent between the four UK countries.
- 2.2 Each country has different policy documents, governance and funding mechanisms for advanced education, training and practice in the AHP workforce. There are professional practice frameworks in each country which address advanced practice. Some frameworks are specific to the AHP workforce, whilst others apply to a wider multi-professional workforce. However, overall our approaches, including our descriptors for advanced practice, are closely aligned.

#### **3. Defining advanced practice for AHPs**

- 3.1 The definition of AHP advanced practice in the four UK country statement uses 'post-registration master's level award or equivalent' to indicate that advanced practice education and training has developed over time and as a result there will be AHPs in the existing workforce who have followed a variety of different education, training and development routes into advanced practice roles.
- 3.2 Advanced level capability across all pillars (not just capability in the clinical pillar) is essential to driving the fundamental shifts in care pathways needed to meet population health and service needs now and in the future.

#### 4. Advanced practice in the AHP workforce

- 4.1 Each AHP profession is unique, working across different specialties and sectors. Advanced practice in each AHP profession will therefore look very different. AHP advanced practice roles have developed over time and will continue to develop to respond to population health and service needs.
- 4.2 Many AHP advanced practice roles will be in specialist but narrow fields of expert knowledge and skill; others will have a much broader scope of practice. Most roles will be within the primary scope of practice of each AHP profession – the care pathways and areas of practice typically associated with each AHP profession. Other roles will cut across pathways and professional boundaries and utilise the knowledge and skills of practitioners from a range of different professional backgrounds.
- 4.3 The following describes the characteristics which underpin what advanced practice looks like in the AHP workforce:
- AHPs are trained at entry to the workforce to be autonomous, accountable health and care professionals who are able to practise safely and effectively within their professional scope of practice.
  - Advanced practice education and training builds on pre and post-registration education, training and experience to develop and synthesise high-level knowledge and skills across all four pillars of practice. This equips advanced practice AHPs with the ability to manage and handle increasing levels of complexity, uncertainty and risk in caring for people, their families and carers.
  - Advanced practice education and training is undertaken by AHPs who have acquired post-registration experience. Some AHPs will enter the workforce through completing a pre-registration master's level award. However, they will need to build their capability and experience whilst delivering professional care over time before undertaking further recognised post-registration education and training which addresses all four pillars at advanced level.
  - AHPs undertaking education and training in advanced practice will demonstrate their capabilities at advanced level across all four pillars, but will do so in relation to their profession, role and specific area of practice.
  - The specific requirements and job content of advanced practice roles will vary based on factors including profession, area of practice and population health and service need. The ability to prescribe, for example, is not an integral requirement of AHP advanced practice, but may be integral to some AHP advanced practice roles and to maximising the benefit of advanced practice to some care pathways
  - All advanced practice AHPs are able to combine expert knowledge and skills in their profession and area of practice with the ability to lead and

manage episodes of care, holistically, and in the context of complexity, uncertainty and risk. They are able to apply their advanced level capabilities to meet the needs of people, their families and carers in their area of practice, driving population health and prevention and improving peoples' outcomes and experience.

- Advanced practice AHPs work in multi-professional teams. Where optimally trained and deployed, these practitioners can increase capacity and capability within health and care teams by enabling the skills of individual multi-professional team members to be utilised to best effect.

## 5. Career development framework

- 5.1 Advanced practice is part of a career development framework which spans all levels of practice, including enhanced/specialist, advanced and consultant level practice.
- 5.2 Enhanced/specialist, advanced and consultant level practice are steps on a career and workforce development trajectory. This starts from qualification as a health and care professional, as practitioners progressively gain the education, training and experience required to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in roles which have a significant, positive impact on population health and services.
- 5.3 The professional frameworks in place in each of the four countries of the UK sometimes use different language, but are closely aligned. For example, in Scotland and Northern Ireland, 'specialist' is the terminology used, but in England and Wales, 'enhanced' is used to describe the same level of practice.

## 6. Regulation of AHP advanced practice

- 6.1 As outlined in the four UK country statement, **all AHPs, including those working in advanced practice roles, are statutorily regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) or General Osteopathic Council (GOsC).**<sup>1</sup>
- 6.2 All AHPs must:
  - hold registration in their profession with the appropriate regulator;
  - meet the professional standards of their regulator;
  - have in place a professional indemnity arrangement for their practice which meets the regulator's requirements; and
  - undertake continuing professional development relevant to their scope of practice, participating in periodic audits when required.

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- 6.3 The regulators set professional standards but do not set or limit their registrants' scope of practice. All AHPs, including those working in advanced practice roles, are required by the regulators to make sure they only work within their scope of practice – the area or areas in which they have the education, training, skills and experience to practise safely and effectively.
- 6.4 The regulators are able to investigate concerns about the fitness to practise of registrants and take action where required to protect the public. In serious cases this can include removing a registrant from practice.

## **7. Advanced practice governance**

- 7.1 Advanced practice is a partnership between AHPs, employers and regulators – each has an important role to play in ensuring high quality, safe care for people, their families and carers.
- 7.2 **Robust employer governance is central to the safe, effective employment and utilisation of advanced practice AHPs.** Specific governance requirements and arrangements will vary between the four countries of the UK, but the following should always be in place:
- Clear lines of leadership oversight and accountability for the advanced practice AHP workforce, including oversight from an Executive Director of AHP / Chief AHP, or equivalent.
  - Consistent understanding of AHP advanced practice at all operational levels.
  - Robust workforce planning and recruitment processes for AHP advanced practice roles.
  - Consistent training, assessment and supervision for all trainees and, once qualified, on-going CPD support.
  - Job descriptions and job plans / job role designs that map against the four pillars of practice.
  - Defined scopes of practice, underpinned by appropriate education, training, competencies and capabilities that are reviewed at regular intervals.

## **Key resources**

### **England**

Centre for Advancing Practice

<https://advanced-practice.hee.nhs.uk>

Multi-professional framework for advanced clinical practice in England

<https://www.hee.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/multi-professionalframeworkforadvancedclinicalpracticeinengland.pdf>

The principles of enhanced level practice

<https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/enhanced-practice-0>

Multi-professional consultant-level practice capability and impact framework

<https://advanced-practice.hee.nhs.uk/resources/consultant-resources/>

### **Scotland**

Advanced practice toolkit

<https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/63343>

Career framework for health

[https://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Career\\_framework\\_key\\_elements.pdf](https://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Career_framework_key_elements.pdf)

Nursing, midwifery and allied health professionals (NMAHP) development framework - post-registration framework

<https://www.nmahpdevelopmentframework.nes.scot.nhs.uk/post-reg-framework/>

### **Wales**

Professional framework for enhanced, advanced and consultant clinical practice

<https://heiw.nhs.wales/workforce/workforce-development/professional-framework-for-enhanced-advanced-and-consultant-clinical-practice/>

### **Northern Ireland**

Advanced AHP practice framework

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/advanced-ahp-practice-framework>

### **Professional regulators' standards**

General Osteopathic Council

<https://www.osteopathy.org.uk/standards/>

Health and Care Professions Council

<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/standards/>