

Nursing Assistant Practitioner Scope of Practice Policy



Title:

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Executive Summary

This policy is for use across NHS Lothian. The aim of this policy is to provide a consistent set of requirements that support Assistant Practitioners which in turn will provide a platform for the organisation to deliver a sustainable and progressive approach to Assistant Practitioner roles. This policy seeks to provide clarity on the scope of role, workforce planning, governance arrangements, education, and training to support services to plan and individuals aspire to these roles. The implementation of the policy will help to:

- Ensure that there is a robust governance framework including clarity on the scope of role for Assistant Practitioners.
- Ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly described.
- Support a commitment to developing the role, supporting recruitment and improve workforce planning in relation to Assistant Practitioners.
- Ensure that Assistant Practitioners have the necessary educational requirements and underpinning theory and competence to fulfil their role.
- Ensure that the processes for developing and approving the clinical skills, including medicine administration are clearly set out.
- Evidence the contribution that Assistant Practitioner roles make to safe, effective, and person-centred care.

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1.0 Purpose

This document sets out NHS Lothian's Scope of Practice for the Assistant Practitioner (AP) role and is designed to inform and support clinical services, managers, and practitioners. The Assistant Practitioner is a Healthcare Support Worker (HCSW) who is trained and competent to work with people of all ages, and in a variety of health and social care settings, by undertaking delegated duties to support the wider clinical teams.

2.0 Policy statement

There is a requirement to provide clear demarcation of boundaries and scope for the Assistant Practitioner role within NHS Lothian. National Education for Scotland (NES) has recently published National Healthcare Support Worker Education and Development Framework (2022) which sets out the core knowledge, skills, and behaviours for Assistant Practitioners. This provides a baseline expectation of competence and knowledge, and NHS Lothian will set out additional competence and governance standards for the Assistant Practitioner role. These competencies and skills may differ depending on clinical service need and patient/client requirements.

The challenge when embedding this new role is to ensure that there is consistency of support and direction for services and individuals whilst recognising the role is still evolving. Assistant Practitioners must have the necessary underpinning theory and competence for safe practice to fulfil their role in supporting the Registered Nurse. It is likely that this policy document will require frequent updating as the role evolves both locally and nationally and whilst it is embedded within clinical teams.

Services and staff must ensure they have access and work to, the most up to date version of this policy. All relevant paperwork and documents to support the process, planning and ongoing development of the AP role will be on NHS Lothian Health Care Support Worker Hub

Throughout this document where reference is made to NHS Lothian Health Care Support Worker Hub, the access link is below:

[Healthcare Support Worker Hub \(scot.nhs.uk\)](https://scot.nhs.uk/Healthcare-Support-Worker-Hub)

3.0 Scope

This policy applies to:

- Assistant Practitioners
- Clinical teams and Registered Practitioners who work alongside Assistant Practitioners
- Line managers of Assistant Practitioner
- Clinical and service leads who employ Assistant Practitioners

Currently this policy does not apply to AHP Assistant practitioners, but this may evolve over time, with the key principles identified being applicable across all NMAHP professions. This

policy does not specifically apply to other non-registered nursing Healthcare Support Worker roles, although there may be cross over and similarities. Please refer to NHS Lothian Health Care Support Worker Hub for further guidance on the scope of practice for these roles.

The Assistant Practitioner role has been established within NHS Lothian (NHSL) since 2019, with the educational award at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 8 provided and delivered in collaboration with Edinburgh College. NHSL the Clinical Education Team (CET) work closely with services to develop competencies and skills training to support the Assistant Practitioner role which are relevant to service need. There are existing agreed processes for recruitment, medicine management and administration and clinical skills with oversight and direction supported by NHSL Assistant Practitioner Steering Group.

Nationally, governance guidelines have been developed to support consistency in the education, planning and implementation of the role within health boards such as the National Education for Scotland Development and Education framework for Levels 2-4 NMAHP Healthcare Support Workers (2022) and National Education for Scotland Framework for Administration of Medicines by Level 3 and Level 4 HCSWS (2023).

4.0 Definitions

Assistant Practitioner (AP) is a Healthcare Support Worker (HCSW) who work as part of the wider health and social care team and has direct contact with patients, service users or clients providing high quality and compassionate care.

Assistant Practitioners work at a level of practice above that of other Healthcare Support Workers and have a more in-depth understanding about factors that influence health and ill-health and have developed more specialised skills relevant to specific area of practice.

Within NHS Lothian, the Assistant Practitioner scope of role, education and level of practice aligns to National Education for Scotland (NES) Development and Education Framework for NMAHP Healthcare Support Workers. [Development and Education Framework for level 2-4 NMAHP Healthcare Support Workers](#).

The Assistant Practitioner can evidence previous experience and consolidation of practice as a Senior HCSW and / or has the appropriate skills and knowledge and demonstrates the depth of understanding and ability required to participate in the delegated planning and carrying out of holistic, protocol-based care under the direction and supervision of healthcare practitioners. They will assist and support the multidisciplinary team in the delivery of high-quality care. Within NHS Lothian, The Assistant Practitioner will possess or be supported to attain education at SCQF Level 8 (Professional Development Award L8) within an agreed timeframe. (Currently women and children's services undertake a Professional Development award at Level 7 with Theatres undertaking 2 units of a Professional Development Award in Perioperative Practice L8).

Delegation is the process by which a person (the delegator) allocates clinical or non-clinical treatment or care to a competent person (the delegatee). The delegator remains responsible for the overall management of the service user, and accountable for the decision to delegate. The delegator is not accountable for the decisions and actions of the delegatee.

More information on the process of delegation can be found in this document under Scope of Practice, in section 5.8 and in section 6.0 Associated Materials.

Scope of Practice: The Scope of Practice is defined as the range of roles, functions, responsibilities, and activities which the individual is educated and authorised to perform.

Assistant Practitioners can support delegated aspects of care, including delivery, monitoring, and evaluation.

Registered Practitioners will lead on assessment, planning and evaluation. Registered Practitioners will also lead on managing and coordinating care with contribution from the Assistant Practitioner within the clinical team. The registered practitioner is accountable for the decision to delegate and that it is appropriate and in the best interests of the service user. In most clinical areas it is expected that the registered practitioner delegating to the AP will be an NMC registrant. However, in some multi-disciplinary teams the delegation may be carried out by a different registered professional and any tasks or duties delegated by this person must be within their own scope of practice and competence.

The NMC Code (2018) states:

11 Be accountable for your decisions to delegate tasks and duties to other people

11.1 Only delegate tasks and duties that are within the others person's scope of competence, making sure they fully understand your instructions.

11.2 Make sure that everyone you delegate tasks to is adequately supervised and supported so they can provide safe and compassionate care.

11.3 Confirm that the outcome of any task you have delegated to someone else meets the required standard.

The HCSW (or Assistant Practitioner) must as part of the decision-making process:

- Undertake education, training and development relating to the task or duty. Confidence and competence are confirmed by the Registered Healthcare Practitioner
- Confirm acceptance of the task and agree competence.
- Communicate the outcome of the task.
- Understand the delegation decision making process.
- Report changes to the Registered Healthcare Practitioner that impact on safety or the outcome
- Maintain own competence.
- Adhere to their scope of practice, NHS Lothian policies, procedures and the HCSW code of conduct.

The scope of practice is that in which the Assistant Practitioner is educated, competent and authorised to perform. Assistant Practitioners can expand their skills and competence through further education and experience and will be determined and driven by service need. This will usually be after a period of consolidation following the initial training and successful completion of the Professional Development Award (Level 8).

Some proficiencies, skills or competencies which are out with the agreed scope of the Assistant Practitioner within NHS Lothian role may have been completed during alternative clinical placements and training, for example pre-registration programmes. Only competencies and skills that fall under the scope of the Assistant Practitioner role can be undertaken when employed as an Assistant Practitioner.

Some proficiencies, skills or competencies will require further education and competency assessment and will be identified and supported through service needs analysis. As there is no national or local definitive list, advice should be sought via the HCSW Skills Operational Group or HCSW Medicine Approval Group. Contact details for both groups can be found on the NHS Lothian Healthcare Support Worker Hub

Services must hold an up-to-date list of their Assistant Practitioners working within their clinical area and the skills and competence that they undertake. This may be in the form of a skills passport.

When moving Assistant Practitioners to other clinical areas, for example to cover staff shortages, or when working on the Staff Bank the Assistant Practitioner should only work within their scope of practice and competence and this may differ when working in an unfamiliar clinical environment.

Core clinical activities within the Assistant Practitioner scope of practice agreed within NHS Lothian can be found on NHS Lothian Health Care Support Worker Hub. These are live documents and will be updated as the role develops.

5.0 Implementation roles and responsibilities

5.1 Executive Nurse Director

The Executive Nurse Director is responsible for setting the organisational direction for the Assistant Practitioner role within NHS Lothian and is accountable for ensuring the scope of practice is reflective of workforce development, nursing strategy and clinical need.

5.2 Directors of Nursing

Directors of Nursing are responsible for supporting Associate Nurse Directors/Chief Nurses/Midwives in identifying areas where the Assistant Practitioner role could be included as part of workforce.

5.3 Assistant Practitioner Steering Group

The Assistant Practitioner Steering Group (overseen by Executive Nurse Director) is responsible for:

- Supporting the development or adjustment of policies and guidelines to support the scope of the Assistant Practitioner role.

- Ensuring the scope of practice is discussed and agreed as part of strategic and workforce planning, including governance arrangements, education and training that is clearly reflected in the job descriptions.
- Planning the ongoing vision and strategy for the Assistant Practitioner role to align with organisational needs and requirements.

5.4 Healthcare Support Worker Medicine Approval Group

The Healthcare Support Worker Medicine Approval Group is responsible for:

- To review, advise and approve HCSW medicine administration requests. Identify and escalate as appropriate, areas of risk associated with HCSW medicines to clinical area and Chief Nurse/AND.
- To provide assurance that medicines are appropriate and safe to be administered by HCSW in NHS Lothian.
- To ensure that services are following the authorised medicine framework and any associated governance processes fully before implementation, for example: training, risk assessment and protocols.
- To put in place an effective system for self-assessment audit by the services implementing HCSW administration.

5.5 Healthcare Support Worker Skills Operational Group

The Healthcare Support Worker Skills Operational Group is responsible for:

- To review skills requests from service for HCSWS and provide advice and information regarding these requests.
- To ensure that services are following the governance processes fully before implementation, for example: risk assessments, SOP's including approval from Chief nurse/ Associate Nurse Directors for the service before submission to the group.
- Any training required by Clinical Education Team (CET) will be provided once relevant signed governance documents are provided.

5.6 Associate Nurse Directors/ Chief Nurses /Midwives

Associate Nurse Directors/ Chief Nurses /Midwives, working with their Clinical Managers are responsible for:

- Agreeing and supporting implementation of the role of Assistant Practitioner where appropriate within their clinical areas.
- Supporting creative workforce plans to utilise the role to its full potential.
- Ensuring the clinical areas understand and work to the role boundaries and scope of practice for Assistant Practitioners. Responsible for oversight of, and agreement of any new skills or medicine administration pertinent to the AP role within their clinical services.

- Implementing governance and monitoring procedures for the effectiveness of the role.
- Supporting the development of the policies and guidelines that support scope of practice within their clinical areas.

5.7 Charge Nurse or clinical line manager

Charge Nurse or clinical line managers are responsible for:

- Supporting the Assistant Practitioner in their development and maintenance of competence and skills.
- Notifying the Clinical Education Team (CET) of the clinical skills their APs undertake. Keeping an up-to-date local record of skills and medicine approved for administration within their AP teams.
- Ensuring that the wider clinical team have access to relevant local protocols and agreements which describe the scope of practice and up to date competencies for the Assistant Practitioners working within the nursing team.
- Identifying areas where the role will complement the nursing workforce.
- Effective rostering and deployment of staff to ensure effective delegation of workload to the Assistant Practitioner.
- Ensuring relevant risk assessments and protocols are in place and reviewed to support the Assistant Practitioners scope of practice within their clinical areas, in line with and including relevant NHS Lothian guidelines and frameworks. Responsible for ensuring Clinical Nurse Managers and Chief Nurse/AND are aware and agree to any requests of new skills or medicine administration to the relevant approval group.
- Following the agreed recruitment process and training pathway for Assistant Practitioners within NHS Lothian.

5.8 Registered Nurses

Registered Nurses are responsible for:

- Supporting the Assistant Practitioner in their development and maintenance of competence and skills.
- Ensuring that all care carried out by the AP is planned, evaluated, and delivered in line with the plan of care.
- Accountable for the decision to delegate to the Assistant Practitioner.
- Delegation identifies that the delegator has decided:
 - It is appropriate and safe for the patient and Assistant Practitioner
 - Meets the needs of the patient
 - The authority to delegate the task
 - Competency relating to the task being delegated
 - Provided clear direction to the Assistant Practitioner

- Reviewed the competence of the Assistant Practitioner
- Risk assessment is undertaken as to whether the task is delegable for the named patient and mitigations are in place to ensure safety
- Regular and ongoing review and evaluation of care/ treatment is in place.

5.9 Assistant Practitioner

The Assistant Practitioner is responsible for:

- Working within their agreed scope of practice and competence and being accountable for their actions and omissions.
- Work within policies and procedures, recognising limit of competence and knowing when to escalate to Registered Healthcare professional.
- Supervise other HCSW where appropriate.

5.10 Clinical Education Team and Clinical Governance Lead

The Clinical Education Team and Clinical Governance Lead are responsible for:

- Providing the education, training, and assessment in partnership with Further Education College to support the development of the assistant practitioner.
- Creating and maintaining a central database of approved clinical skills undertaken and medicines administered by Assistant Practitioners within NHS Lothian.
- Supporting clinical services with governance and safe systems of practice.

5.11 Service planning

To support a competent, sustainable workforce, it is essential that all new Assistant Practitioner roles are developed in line with this policy and organisational strategy.

APs are embedded into the nursing and midwifery governance structure and there are clear lines of professional accountability.

New AP roles should be planned based on service need and requirements. A service needs analysis can support this planning process and can be found on NHS Lothian Health Care Support Worker Hub.

Identifying appropriate registered healthcare professional supervisors and assessors for trainees should form part of service planning for APs.

New AP services must be evaluated to assess impact on service. The expected outcomes and a plan to evaluate should be included in the service business case.

The Clinical Education Team will allocate training places and support the organisation with the planning of trainee numbers. This will support equity across all clinical services and will ensure that educational admission criteria for training posts is met.

5.12 Recruitment

Services should recruit into Assistant Practitioner posts (AfC Band 4) APs should be recruited into an Assistant Practitioner post using the appropriate and agreed generic job description and Annex 21 attached to support the training element of the role. Generic Assistant Practitioner job descriptions have been approved for use across NHS Lothian to reflect the role in acute, community and mental health. These can be found on Healthcare Support Worker Hub

There may be a small number of services where the generic job description does not adequately and accurately describe and define the scope of the AP role within the service. In these circumstances a new job description and attached annex 21 will need to be written, matched, and agreed as per organisational job evaluation process.

A checklist to support services when planning and recruiting to the AP role can be found in the relevant section on NHS Lothian Health Care Support Worker Hub.

Annex 21 has been attached to these posts to support that it is a training role, and a minimum educational level must be achieved via the agreed Professional Development Award. Staff will be recruited to training posts in accordance with the training principles of Annex 21 and will be classed as a trainee for the duration of the PDA level 8. On successful completion of the award, their training and Annex 21 status will be removed.

Salary arrangements under Annex 21 will not be used for existing NHS staff where someone would be financially disadvantaged as a result of taking on further training. External appointments who are not currently working in NHS should still be paid using the principles of Annex 21.

Further information on the process of applying Annex 21 salary to Assistant Practitioner posts can be found on Healthcare Support Worker Hub.

5.13 Medicine Management

The National Framework for the Administration of Medicines by level 3 and level 4 Healthcare Support workers in Scotland was published in June 2023 by National Education for Scotland.

<http://intranet.lothian.scot.nhs.uk/Directory/HCSW/Documents/National Framework for Administration of Medicines by HCSWs May 2023.pdf>

This national framework supports and standardises the HCSWs role and remit in medicines administration and set out the national standards and legal frameworks to be applied where Healthcare Support Workers are administering medicines. Healthcare support workers cannot supervise others in the administration of medicine.

Medicine management and administration is included in Professional Development Award Level 8 and may be part of the Assistant Practitioner role, depending on service need and delivery. NHS Lothian has an existing framework to support this *NHS Lothian Framework for Health Care Support Workers (Clinical) to support people with their medication*. Clinical services should refer to this framework to support the safe planning for administration of

medicines by HCSW. The NHS Lothian Framework aligns with the national guidelines and can be found on Healthcare Support Worker Hub.

Oversight of medicine administration for non-registered staff in NHS Lothian is provided by Health Care Support Worker Medicine Approval Group. When planning medicines for the Assistant Practitioner to administer, services must submit requests to HCSW Medicine Approval Group, with agreement from their chief nurse/ Associate Nurse Director and lead pharmacist prior to submission. All relevant documents to support this process can be found on the relevant page of the Healthcare Support Worker Hub. The Clinical Education Team and HCSW Medicine Approval Group will keep an up-to-date list of all medicines approved via this process.

APs must record medicine administration in line with organisational standards and the agreed medication administration record for that service. Medicines governance for Assistant Practitioners requires that permission to access HEMPA as an administrator must be sought via HCSW Medicine Approval Group. Contact details for HCSW Medicine Approval Group can be found on the NHS Lothian Healthcare Support Worker Hub.

5.14 Administration of Controlled Drugs by non-registered staff

Non-registered staff who work in community teams may administer Schedule 5 controlled drugs where they are pre-packed and labelled for an individual patient and where this task has been delegated by a registered practitioner.

Non-registered staff who work in hospital services cannot currently administer Controlled Drugs i.e., all Schedules. Individual area requests may be considered on a case-by-case basis submission to the HCSW Medicine Approval Group and in consultation with Controlled Drugs Governance Team.

5.15 Governance of the role

The following mechanisms will be used to provide assurance around the Assistant Practitioner role in NHS Lothian and will support the development of the role by identifying areas of good practice and highlighting areas for improvement.

Organisational oversight of the Assistant Practitioner role will be via the Assistant Practitioner Steering Group, which is chaired by the Executive Director of Nursing, Midwifery and AHPs. Membership of this group includes: -

- Executive Nurse Director
- Nurse Directors of Acute and Primary Care
- Employee Director
- Chief Nurses HSCP / Associate Nurse Directors Acute services
- Chief Nurse for Education
- Clinical Education Team
- Governance Lead Nurse for Advancing Roles

Medicine administration oversight of the Assistant Practitioner role will be via the Healthcare Support Worker Medicine Approval Group, which is chaired by Governance Lead Nurse for Advancing Roles. Membership of this group includes: -

- Governance Lead Nurse for Advancing Roles
- Clinical Educator Training and Development
- Associate Director of Pharmacy
- Lead Clinical Pharmacist, Acute,
- Lead Clinical Pharmacist, Community
- Medicine Management Nurse

A central database of medicines approved for administration and skills undertaken by Assistant practitioners in NHS Lothian will be maintained by Clinical Education Team.

An annual report will be submitted to Area Drugs and Therapeutic Committee and the Assistant Practitioner Steering Group from the HCSW Medicine Approval Group. This will include a summary of Datix/local reporting incidents.

An annual evaluation of the training programme and role will be undertaken by Clinical Education & Training and submitted to the Assistant Practitioner Steering Group.

The mechanisms listed below should be used by service as part of the governance process in supporting the Assistant Practitioner role.

- Medicine Management Audit schedule (this audit this can be found on HCSW Hub on the Intranet)
- 2 yearly competency updates for Assistant Practitioners
- Annual PDP review
- Database of skills undertaken by Assistant practitioners in NHS Lothian and names maintained, with a copy forwarded to Clinical Education & Training
- Learning from local incident/Datix reporting by service.

6.0 Associated materials

[Healthcare Support Workers CEL 23 \(2010\) – Mandatory induction standards and Code of Conduct for Healthcare Support Workers and mandatory Code of Practice for employers of Healthcare Support Workers](#), Scottish Government, June 2010

[Making delegation safe and effective: A learning resource for nurses, midwives, allied health professionals and health care support workers](#) (TURAS), NHS Education for Scotland, 2022

[Delegating and supporting HCSWs development](#), NHS Education for Scotland (accessed 04/12/2023)

[NHS Lothian Framework for HealthCare Support Workers \(Clinical\) to support people with their medication](#) (available on NHS Lothian intranet), approved by the Medicines Policy Committee, September 2023

[Delegation and accountability: supplementary information to the NMC Code](#), Nursing and Midwifery Council, (accessed 04/12/2023)

7.0 Evidence base

- [Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professionals \(NMAHP\) Development Framework](#), NHS Education for Scotland, accessed (04/12/2023)
- [Development and Education Framework for Levels 2-4 NMAHP Healthcare Support Workers](#), NHS Education for Scotland, 2022
- [Framework for the Administration of Medicines for Healthcare Support Workers, NHS Education for Scotland \(TURAS\)](#), NHS Education for Scotland, 2023
- [Standards of proficiency for registered nursing associates](#), Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2018

8.0 Stakeholder consultation

This policy has been developed and reviewed with input from a range of professional stakeholders and by the Assistant Practitioner Steering Group (for membership see 5.4). Additionally, Assistant Practitioners and Clinical Nurse Managers were consulted in the development of this policy.

9.0 Monitoring and review

Good practice requires regular and frequent review and audits of the Assistant Practitioner role in clinical practice. The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored and evaluated using outputs from:

- Staff experience feedback
- Patient Experience Feedback -Care Experience Improvement conversations, compliments, and complaints
- SAE Reviews
- DATIX investigations Complaint investigations/improvement plans

This policy will be reviewed, as a minimum, every three years, but may be subject to earlier review in the event of changes in best practice, guidance or legislation, results from performance reviews and audits, or any other factors that may render the policy in need of review.