

# National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Healthcare Professionals Working in Police Custody Settings

## Case Study

### Kent Police

*Kent Police used the NOS to support the Performance Development Review (PDR) process for Forensic Nurse Practitioners. The detailed description of required performance within the NOS was found to enhance the PDR process and will also be used in future to provide an objective assessment of new staff during their probationary period.*

#### The Situation

Kent Police was the original pilot site for nurse-led healthcare in police custody. The pilot started in 2000 with a team of 7 nurses. The service is now well established with 4 teams of nurses to cover the 10 custody suites across Kent.

Each team of Forensic Nurse Practitioners (FNPs) has a base at one of the larger custody suites and provide a mobile service between the other custody suites. The FNPs provide the majority of healthcare services (approximately 98% of all examinations of DPs). Retained FMEs are still available on-call when required (e.g. for cases involving sexual assault).

Kent Police already has a competency framework comprising behavioural competencies (e.g. leadership, team working, problem solving etc) and technical competences (e.g. nursing functions). This is currently used as part of the Performance Development Review (PDR) process and applies across all roles in the Kent Force.

#### The Aim

The aim was to review and test the draft national occupational standards (NOS) by using them to support the PDR process for Forensic Nurse Practitioners.

#### The Action

Karen Swinson, the Forensic Medical Services Manager, reviewed the NOS with the nursing team leaders.

It was found that the NOS appeared to cover the functions currently described by Kent's nursing technical competences. It was therefore decided to use the national occupational standards (NOS) for the PDR process in place of the existing nursing technical competences.

#### The Results

The team leaders reported that the NOS provide a more detailed description of the standards of performance required for each function than Kent's own technical competences. This made it easier to provide specific and detailed feedback on

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performance. In particular, it was felt that this would be helpful in performance management as it would help to accurately identify any staff training and development needs.

Other benefits identified were that it would be easier to justify assessments of staff performance when they were based on the objective standards provided by the NOS – and the fact that the NOS are national standards would give them more credibility.

One of the key differences between the NOS and Kent's technical competences was that each technical competence is defined at 7 levels, whereas the NOS provide a description of the standard required from a competent practitioner. However, this could be addressed by using the performance standards already adopted in the PDR to guide assessors when measuring performance against the NOS. These performance standards are on a scale of 1 to 5:

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. Exceptional       | Performs well in excess of the requirement                              |
| 2. Competent         | Performs to a high standard   |
| 3. Competent         | Performs to a satisfactory standard                                     |
| 4. Not yet competent | Performs to a standard below the requirement. Development plan in place |
| 5. Not yet competent | Performs to an unsatisfactory standard despite development support.     |

## The Future

In the future, it is anticipated that Kent Police will be placing increased emphasis on the PDR process, and the healthcare staff are increasingly recognising the significance of PDRs for managing their own careers and planning relevant training and development. The incorporation of the NOS within the PDR would support this process.

The team leaders who reviewed the draft NOS also felt that the NOS would be particularly useful to improve the assessment of new staff during their probation period. Currently the performance of new staff in their probationary period relies heavily on the opinions expressed by their line managers. The NOS will now provide a useful way to explicitly state the standards required for new staff and then to measure performance during subsequent performance reviews.

## Contact Details

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