



# Emergency Care Practitioners

## Re-designing roles based on competence

Improving services and ensuring patient access to fast, responsive and effective emergency care services provided the basis for a review of existing practices by the NHS Changing Workforce Programme. This established that emergency care services were being delivered in a system-focused way which did not allow patients access to the most appropriate care in the most convenient location. Delivering service improvement would require new and more flexible ways of working to remove traditional boundaries and develop a new role by matching the competence requirements of staff to the care requirements of patients.

To ensure quality and consistency in defining the competences, Skills for Health worked closely with a number of pilot sites and developed a competence framework for Emergency, Urgent and Scheduled Care. This framework was used to define an Emergency Care Practitioner (ECP) role and devise a learning programme to support its development.

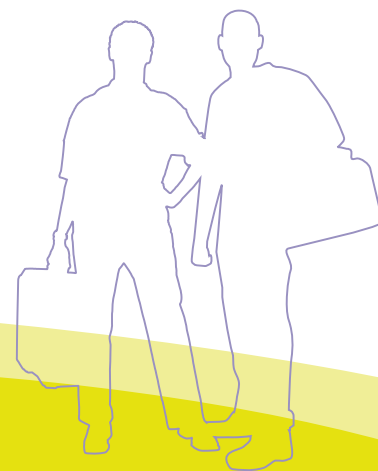
The ECP role was successfully trialled by over 15 health communities which showed that it was possible for registered healthcare professionals, such as nurses and paramedics, to develop their careers and work in a more flexible way to complement and support the work of other practitioners and services.

Within the over-arching framework of the competence requirements, ECP roles can be deployed in a variety of ways to support local services. Examples include working in GP surgeries, conducting home and community visits, providing care in minor injuries units, supporting prison healthcare workers and delivering out of hours services. Practitioners are also able to facilitate referral to other services which also improves the overall patient experience. Working in this way, an elderly patient suffering minor injuries from a fall can be assessed and treated in their own home with a follow-up referral made to the community nursing service.

ECP roles offer many benefits including the ability to increase workforce capacity, reduce admissions to Accident and Emergency units, reduce patient waiting times and improve levels of satisfaction.

“ The development of ECPs is one of the great innovations of the new NHS. ”

**Professor Sir George Alberti**  
National Director  
for Emergency Access



**A key aim of Skills for Health is to develop and manage a bank of national workforce competences which describe the performance criteria, knowledge and understanding required to carry out a work activity effectively. Because competences describe what individuals need to know and to do, regardless of who is performing the activity, they can be used in many different ways.**

## The Benefits

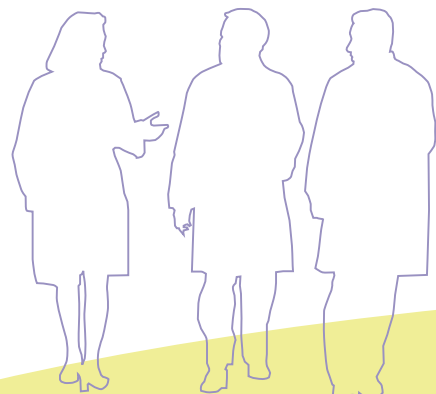
- Following assessment by an ECP, 86% of patients are prevented from needing 999 services
- 76% of patients are treated on scene by an ECP
- Up to 20% of patients are referred direct to other pathways of care such as occupational therapy and physiotherapy
- The roll-out of ECPs is expected to reduce Accident and Emergency attendance by 1 million patients each year

Skills for Health continues to support the development and regulation of the Emergency Care Practitioner role and to explore new ways of enabling flexible career opportunities through the development of the Career Framework for Health.

**Skills for Health** is the Sector Skills Council for the UK health sector (the National Health Services, independent healthcare providers and voluntary organisations). Our purpose is to help develop solutions that can deliver a skilled and flexible workforce to improve health and healthcare

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