

Context and Background

Minor illness, sometimes referred to as acute on day presentations, often described as self-limiting or short-term health conditions that typically do not require specialist intervention.

This accounts for a significant proportion of primary care presentations. Conditions such as coughs, colds, sore throats, ear infections, mild gastrointestinal issues, and skin complaints are among the most common reasons people seek primary care support.

An estimated **20–40% of GP consultations** are related to minor illness. Many of these conditions are self-limiting and could be safely managed at home with appropriate self-care advice. However, minor illness still contributes to unnecessary demand on general practice and emergency departments, with **millions of potentially avoidable appointments** each year.

The **Self Care Forum** and other national organisations advocate for improved self-care education to empower patients and reduce avoidable primary care visits. With the expansion of self-care initiatives and services such as **Pharmacy First and 111**, many patients now seek initial support outside of general practice.

As a result, when patients do present to general practice, their symptoms may be more complex, prolonged, or unresolved. This requires nurses to have a thorough understanding of **acute** presentations, differentiating between self-limiting conditions and those requiring further intervention.

Equipping primary care nurses with the skills and knowledge to **assess, diagnose, and treat** acute on day presentations within their scope of practice will enhance patient outcomes and reduce pressure on the wider healthcare system.

In this addendum we endeavour to describe the skills and knowledge nurses working in and across primary care should have to play their role in delivering safe, consistent, and evidence-based care for acute conditions..



Collaboration

NHSE in partnership with South Yorkshire ICB, University of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University and Kings College London have been working collaboratively to develop a comprehensive educational resource for General Practice and Primary Care Nurses. The published primary care and core career and capability framework provides a useful insight into what characteristics are required to work at each level of practice with examples of the knowledge and skills required to be working at each level.

The six levels of sphere of clinical practice are:

- Support Work Level Practice Nursing Associate Level/Assistant Practitioner Level
- Registered Nurse Level Practice
- Registered Nurse: Enhanced Level Practice
- Registered Nurse: Advanced Level Practice
- Registered Nurse: Consultant Level Practice

Report template [\(\[skillsforhealth.org.uk\]\(https://skillsforhealth.org.uk\)\)](https://skillsforhealth.org.uk)

The Educational resources have been mapped by an expert generalist and specialist group of nurses according to scope of practice.



Primary Care & General Practice Core Capabilities Framework

	Support Work Level Practice	Nursing Associate Level/Assistant Level Practice	Registered Nurse level	Registered Nurse: Enhanced Level Practice	Registered Nurse: Advanced Level Practice	Registered Nurse: Consultant Level Practice
Capability 1. Communication and consultation skills	Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 3
Capability 2. Practising holistically to personalise care and promote public and person health	Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 3
Capability 3. Working with colleagues and in teams	Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 3
Capability 4. Maintaining an ethical approach and fitness to practice	Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 3
Capability 5. Information gathering and interpretation	Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 3
Capability 6. Clinical examination and procedural skills	Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 3
Capability 7. Making a diagnosis			Tier 2	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 3
Capability 8. Clinical management		Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 3
Capability 9. Managing medical and clinical complexity		Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 3
Capability 10. Independent prescribing and pharmacotherapy		Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 3
Capability 11. Leadership, management and organisation		Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 3
Capability 12. Education and development		Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 3
Capability 13. Research and evidence based practice		Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 3
Capability 14. Strategic Management						Tier 3

The framework articulates core capabilities necessary for safe and effective care. The capabilities (i.e., skills, knowledge, and behaviours) described in the framework are defined at 3 tiers.

Each tier articulates the minimum and core capability to be expected as opposed to the maximum:

- **Tier 1:** Capabilities that require a general understanding and that support provision of primary care/general practice nursing.
- **Tier 2:** Capabilities that enable the provision of care more independently and a degree of critical analysis.
- **Tier 3:** Capabilities that require an ability to provide care autonomously and independently, an ability to lead practice, operating at the cutting edge of innovation.

More information is available [here](#).

Role Level Descriptor	Tier and Scope of Practice Aligned to Primary Care Core Career and Capabilities Framework	Qualifications	Skills and Application of Knowledge and Scope of Practice
Health Care Support Worker	1	No assessment of symptoms to be undertaken. All must be directed to a suitably qualified clinician.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to direct patient to a suitable appointment and refer to duty clinician • Awareness of local referral pathways e.g. in surgery, GP out of hours, walk in centre, urgent care centre
NA	1	No assessment of symptoms to be undertaken. All must be directed to a suitably qualified clinician.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to direct patient to a suitable appointment and refer to duty clinician • Awareness of local referral pathways e.g. in surgery, GP out of hours, walk in centre, urgent care centre
GPN Enhanced Level	2	<p>Development of level of practice in line with Primary care & General Practice Nursing Career & Core Capabilities Framework</p> <p>Primary care /minor illness/acute presentation specific module at level 7</p> <p>Non-medical prescribing at level 6/7</p> <p>Works in line with the definition of enhanced practice The principles of enhanced practice</p> <p>Achieve competencies as per agreed scope of practice outlined in Advanced Clinical Practice (Nurses) working in general practice/primary care (2020)</p> <p>Period supervised practice from GPN/AP-Nurse/AP until deemed proficient.</p>	<p>Clear job description, person specification and job plan that reflects the level of practice included in the contract of employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands local referral pathways. • Understands when to refer to AP/GP . • Able to advise on self- care and monitoring. • Ensures accurate coding of diagnosis • Works within a defined scope of practice • Prescribes within agreed scope of practice • Safety netting • Attendance at CPD activities relating to primary care and acute presentations, such as three-day short courses
AP-Nurse	3	<p>Level 7 Advanced Practitioner Pathway with incorporated Primary care competencies (or standalone if not part of pathway) outlined in: Advanced Clinical Practice (Nurses) working in general practice/primary care (2020) and RCN Professional Development Framework – Levels of Nursing Advanced Level Nursing and multi-professionalframeworkforadvancedclinicalpracticeinengland-1.pdf</p> <p>Non-medical prescribing at ideally level 7 but will accept historic level 6</p> <p>Period supervised practice from GP/AP-Nurse/AP until deemed competent and proficient.</p>	<p>Clear job description, person specification and job plan that reflects the level of practice included in the contract of employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tier 2 and additionally: Able to appropriately titrate medications. • Able to devise a personalised care plan with patient in self- monitoring, lifestyle and symptom recognition. • Able to manage complexity, uncertainty and autonomous in practice. • Able to advise on treatment options. • Safety netting • CPD activities relating to primary care and acute presentations, such as three-day short courses

Resources for Tier 1

Local surgery protocol

Local directory of services

Resources for Tier 2

Level 7 primary care focussed modules (such as minor illness, acute presentations) or enhanced practice programme via an accredited university

Accredited Programmes - Advanced Practice

Enhanced clinical apprenticeships

Enhanced Practice

RCN definition The principles of enhanced practice

Primary care & General Practice Nursing Career & Core Capabilities Framework

Advanced Clinical Practice (Nurses) working in general practice/primary care (2020)

Enhanced clinical apprenticeships

Resources for Tier 3

University accredited Primary care focussed (such as minor illness, acute presentations) level 7 programme modules

[Primary care & General Practice Nursing Career & Core Capabilities Framework](#)

[Advanced Clinical Practice \(Nurses\) working in general practice/primary care \(2020\)](#)

[Multi-professional framework for advanced practice in England - Advanced Practice](#)

[RCN Professional Development Framework – Levels of Nursing Advanced Level Nursing](#)

[NMC Principles for Advanced Practice](#)

Additional Support & Resources

[Home](#) | [Spotting the Sick Child](#)

<https://app.geekymedics.com/>

[BNF \(British National Formulary\)](#) | [NICE](#)

[OSCEstop](#)

Many ICSs offer training to primary care staff. Every practice and PCN will have access to Training Hub resources and guidance. There are 42 at Integrated Care System (ICS) level, with several locality hubs that help support links between practices and PCNs. Click [here](#) to find your local Training Hub or email the national team on traininghubs@hee.nhs.uk.

The NHS [knowledge and library hub](#) connects healthcare staff and trainees to a significant range of high-quality knowledge and evidence resources, services, tools, and databases. Accessed using NHS [OpenAthens](#) or through a local NHS Health library, it's a good resource for GPs and practice staff.



Advisory Faculty Group & Contributors

Sarah Fisher Professional lead for Advancing Practice, Advanced practitioner, South Yorkshire ICB

Julie Hoskin Workforce Project Lead for Primary Care, Sheffield

Anissa Djerbib Programme Lead: Advanced Clinical Practice, Advanced Practitioner, King's College London

Louise Brady General Practice Nurse & Primary Care Nursing Lead NHSE

Peer Reviewed By

Louise Brady General Practice Nurse & Primary Care Nursing Lead NHSE

Angie Banks Associate Head of School: Health & Social Care (Advancing Practice) School of Health & Social care, Sheffield Hallam University

Lyca Downing Practice Nurse, Kiveton medical centre

Craig Bell University Teacher, Pathway Lead for Primary Care, Advanced Clinical Practice, University of Sheffield

Laura Carnall Practice nurse lead, Primary care Sheffield

Elizabeth Mills Senior University Teacher. SFHEA, AHPNM Deputy Director of Education for PGT and CPD, Programme Lead for Advanced Clinical Practice. University of Sheffield

