

Careers in OH Nursing



Guiding principles for nursing careers in Occupational Health



A Career Framework for Occupational Health Nursing

The speciality of Occupational Health is diverse, highly skilled and very rewarding.

OH professionals provide risk-based advice to support organisations and their workers to live well, perform well, heal if ill or injured and continue into retirement in the best health possible.

- The Career Framework provides an overview of areas of practice and levels in Nursing. These can be used by individuals, service users, employers, managers, funders, commissioners and the profession.
- If you are **a nurse, support worker, student or someone who is interested in developing a career in occupational health**, the Career Framework supports you to plan your journey and direction within the profession.
- If you are **an employer or manager**, the Career Framework supports the development of job descriptions and clarifies/helps to identify the specific abilities of individual team members. It can be used to identify learning and development needs in appraisals/ supervision of individuals or groups, to support the most appropriate skill mix and staff retention within a setting.
- If you **are a funder or commissioner of services**, including statutory services, the insurance industry or case managers - the Career Framework articulates the broad knowledge and skills that occupational health personnel can offer. The Career Framework is part of a strategic toolkit to guide the profession and includes the Professional Standards and Code of Ethics. This supports the development of an effective and efficient skill mix to meet service demands.

Four areas of practice

Professional Practice

- Maintain specialist nursing practice
- Deliver safe, effective, person-centred and ethical practice
- Use professional judgment, reasoning and decision making

Facilitation of Learning

- Teach, mentor, supervise and/or assess others
- Facilitate placement learning
- Create and evaluate learning environments, tools and materials

Leadership

- Identify, monitor and enhance own knowledge and skills
- Guide, direct and/or facilitate teamwork
- Design, implement and manage professional and/or organisational change
- Policy Development

Evidence Research & Development

- Influence broader socio-economic and political agendas
- Create, use and/or translate evidence to inform practice
- Design, implement evaluate and disseminate research

Which area of practice is for me:

Professional Practice

- Is working closely with people important to you?
- Would you like to expand your clinical skills or clinical knowledge?
- Do you have an interest in a particular area or clinical remit?

Facilitation of Learning

- Do you enjoy coaching or mentoring people?
- Are you passionate about education and training?
- Would you mind having less direct clinics contact with patients?

Leadership

- Are you passionate about improving the health of employees and organisations?
- Can you motivate individuals and teams?
- Do you want to influence how the working environment is managed?
- Are you interested in strategy and organisational development?

Evidence Research & Development

- Would you like to use knowledge and innovation to transform care?
- Do you have strong verbal and written communication skills?
- Do you have good organisational skills and an eye for detail?
- Do you enjoy working with data and technology?

Professional practice

- The majority of OH Nursing roles fall within the category of professional/clinical practice, characterised by delivering direct care to employed individuals and organisations, in a wide variety of workplace/industry settings and levels.
- In terms of career progression, nurses will be qualified as a registered nurse, on Part 1 of the NMC register. Many nurses enter OH nursing a few years post-qualifying as they evolve their experience in clinical nursing and apply in an Occupational Health setting.
- OH Nurses are situated in a wide variety of work settings including construction, retail, oil and gas, the emergency services including the police service, the NHS, the armed forces, and a range of corporate environments. Many set up their own independent businesses as practitioners for small and medium sized businesses. The clinical skills and experience developed is very much in line with the health and safety needs posed in these work environments so that clinical care is adapted to meet the employees' needs.
- They will also usually have completed or will be working towards post-registration qualifications relevant to their specialist area such as modules towards a degree pathway, SCPHN courses, or Masters programme.

Considering a senior nursing role:

Senior OH nursing roles are usually characterised by working at a higher and more autonomous level, utilising enhanced skills and competencies, and often dealing with more complex cases requiring coordination across other multi-professional disciplines. Providing clinical leadership and mentoring/teaching often form a key part of these roles.

Consider advanced clinical practice:

ACP roles are characterised by advanced clinical skills and competences, usually in a specialised area of OH Nursing such as Occupational Asthma, Travel Medicine, Mental Health, Psychology, have a higher degree of autonomous decision-making, along with the remit to diagnose and treat. They require an education to Master's level.

Facilitation in learning

- If you're passionate about learning and like the idea of developing others, you may want to consider a role within OH education or the facilitation of learning and development. Education roles mainly sit within educational settings of universities and colleges. They may also exist in larger organisations and commercial service providers.
- This role is involved in developing, implementing and delivering strategies to support the educational needs of nurses and/or other multi-professional students in Occupational Health, ensuring best practice and evidence based care at all times.
- The new NMC Post Registration Standards for Education include several roles supporting nurse education: Practice supervisor; Practice assessor; Academic assessor. Completing further education/study on mentorship training is usually a good place to start.
- To develop teaching skills you might wish to explore further teaching qualifications such as a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE).

Leadership

- OH Nurse leaders have a pivotal role in our speciality, drawing upon clinical experience and the coordination of the multidisciplinary team. They can also play an important role in providing others with learning and development opportunities. In senior leadership roles, OH nurse leaders may be involved in managing services or operations, or in commissioning.
- It's not only about having line management responsibilities. You can act as a role model by exhibiting excellent values and behaviours, inspiring others, leading on implementing best practice. You can be a voice for and representation of the profession by participating in regional or national projects, speaking at conferences or writing in Journals.
- You can provide leadership in organisations by improving the health of employees and the organisation. Leadership in wellbeing is evolving with OH taking a pivotal role, not only in the wellbeing of employees, but in the 'health' of an organisation as a whole. You can assist in creating an environment where wellbeing thrives and contributes to effectiveness and productivity.
- If you enjoy situations where you can take the lead and like the idea of motivating teams and organisations, you may want to consider a leadership role. Leaders use all their resources to make best use of the efforts and ideas of every member of staff. They should be willing to work with change and uncertainty in the spirit of co-operation and respect.

Leadership resources:

TED talks on Leadership : https://www.ted.com/playlists/140/how_leaders_inspire

Evidence, research and development

- OH Nursing in the field of research is a growing area. There is a small number of nurses working on specific OH related research projects. These projects are immensely important, as they help to build the evidence for example, areas such as depression, back pain, skin surveillance, to name just a few.
- Duties could include preparing trial protocols and other trial-related documentation, dealing with data collection, submitting study proposals for regulatory approval, and coordinating the initiation, management and completion of the research.
- Commissioning workplace research and development could also be part of a wider leadership role.

Resources:

<https://www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/research-and-innovation>



Types of OH work

SPECIALISED INDUSTRIES

These include construction, rail, oil and gas, policing, emergency services, education, retail, NHS, aerospace, corporate firms, pharmaceuticals, banking – the list goes on. All have specialised OH provision.

INDEPENDENT / SINGLE-HANDED PROVIDERS

Many OH Nurses set up their own businesses to provide services to small and medium sized businesses.

COMMERCIAL PROVIDERS

Nursing in commercial organisations is designed to support a variety of businesses who are receiving services under contract, usually purchasing services in bulk such as absence management, pre-employment health assessments, immunisation programmes and health surveillance.

SPECIALIST PRACTICE

There is a growing number of OH Nurses working in very specialised areas of Occupational Health, such as software development, national policy development and wellbeing. These nurses often influence practice development for large populations of the workforce.

Career levels in healthcare

- Within each of the four areas of OH nursing practice, there are levels which can be achieved.
- The Career Framework is based on the Post Registration Career Development Framework, available from:
 - <http://www.careerframework.nes.scot.nhs.uk> (NHS Education for Scotland, 2016).
 - It also draws from the Skills for Health Career Framework (2016), available from: <http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/career-framework>,
 - Also see the Career and Development Framework for Nursing in Occupational Health (2012) https://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/media/2373948/nursingoccupationalhealthframework_v2.2_.pdf
- When considering the Career Framework, please remember:
 - Every role will have elements of all four Pillars, but the Levels are likely to differ. For example, a person who is working at a Level 7 in a practice-based role may have more responsibilities in the Professional Practice Pillar whereas someone working in a university lecturing role may have less responsibility in this Pillar but more responsibility in the Pillars for the Facilitation of Learning and Evidence, Research and Development.
 - The career levels are not the same as NHS bands, local authority grades or higher education spine points. Occupational health personnel work in different sectors, so it is essential for this Career Framework to be inclusive and relevant to everyone.
 - It is likely that you will be at different levels across the four Pillars. This will help you identify potential areas for development as you plan your career. This means your career profile evolves over time.

OHN Career framework levels

An OH Nurse in practice can be assessed on five levels:

LEVEL

9

Industry Influencer/Subject Matter Expert/Director

Nurses working at level 9 are at the most advanced frontier of the field of OH and multiprofessional interface. They are often the national subject matter experts and have responsibility for development and delivery of a service to a population, at the highest level of organisation or membership. They will use innovation and critical thinking skills to advance occupational health practice in industry or wider context of health and work.

8

Service Lead/Advanced Nurse Practitioner

Nurses at this level will have additional specialist training and qualification for advance practice in specialised areas of OH, such as travel medicine, health surveillance, mental health. They may be at the forefront of knowledge in their specialist field which they use as the basis of original thinking and/or research. They are leaders with high levels of responsibility often leading a team and responsible for service improvement and development, accountable for service delivery or leading education or commissioning role.

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Senior Specialist Practitioner

Highly specialised knowledge and critical awareness of knowledge in the OH setting and interface in the multi-professional dimensions of OH. They have a responsibility for changing practice and/or services in a complex and unpredictable environments. This level may seek additional specialist training, will be supervising others and pro-actively self developing.

6

Specialist Nurse Practitioner

Nurses at this level will have achieved a specialist qualification in OH applying comprehensive and theoretical knowledge in OH setting. They demonstrate initiative, creative problem solving and leadership in their liaison with clients and their organisations.

5

Qualified Nurse/
Trainee SNP

People at level 5 will have a comprehensive and theoretical nursing knowledge to apply within the OH setting and understand their boundaries of that knowledge. They are able to use their nursing experience to assess clinical history, solve problems creatively, make judgements which require interpretation and actively contribute to service and self development. This role may seek further specialist education and qualification in OH.

Level 4 *Senior Support worker/Technician*

Level 3 *Senior Support worker/Technician*

Level 2 *Support worker/Technician*

Level 1 *Pre-employment/Entry level to workplace*



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