

**Standards of proficiency:
Specialist community
public health nurses**

About us

We exist to protect the public by regulating nurses and midwives in the UK. We do this by setting standards of education, training, practice and behaviour so that nurses and midwives can deliver high quality healthcare throughout their careers.

We maintain a register of nurses and midwives who meet these standards, and we have clear and transparent processes to investigate nurses and midwives who fall short of our standards.

About this document

In 2004, we published the [Standards of proficiency for specialist community public health nurses \(SCPHNs\)](#) (NMC, 2004). These standards set out what SCPHNs must achieve before they can join our register.

We're now publishing the standards of proficiency as a stand-alone document: this reflects section 2 of the original publication. We've pulled out the standards to make them more accessible to SCPHNs and to the public so that it is clear that these are the standards that people must meet when they join our register as a SCPHN. We also want to be clear that all SCPHNs must continue to meet these standards of proficiency by keeping their knowledge and skills up to date as long as they are on our register.

What is a SCPHN?

SCPHNs practice safely and effectively to help maintain and improve the health of the public and communities. They are expected to use specialist knowledge and apply their particular skills in practice.

To become a SCPHN you must already be registered with us as either a nurse or a midwife. Nurses and midwives who take an approved SCPHN programme, and achieve the standards of proficiency, can then join the specialist community public health nurses' part of our register.

These standards of proficiency define the principles of practising as a specialist community public health nurse. The context in which someone practises using these principles defines their scope of professional practice. The scope of practice may be within a specific area of practice.

Some areas of practice are identified on our register, including health visitors (HV), school nurses (SN), occupational health nurses (OHN) and family nurses (FHN). This indicates that the programme someone completed focused on a particular area of practice. Other people will be on the register as SCPHNs without a field of practice identified – they may work in more generic public health roles.

SCPHNs must meet the standards of proficiency throughout their careers to remain on our register as a SCPHN. They must also practise in line with the most recent version of the Code.

If someone fails to meet our SCPHN standards, we might investigate their fitness to practise.

About the standards of proficiency

The standards of proficiency required to achieve our standards for SCPHNs underpin the ten key principles of public health practice in the context of specialist community public health nursing. They are grouped into four domain areas:

- search for health needs
- stimulation of awareness of health needs
- influence on policies affecting health, and
- facilitation of health-enhancing activities.

SCPHNs enter a practice-based profession at a level beyond initial registration as a nurse or midwife. These SCPHN standards of proficiency must be achieved within the context of the practice route followed by the SCPHN student. This provides comparability of proficiency at the point of entry to the register, while ensuring that the specific knowledge, skills and proficiencies pertaining to each field of specialist community public health nursing are achieved for safe and

effective practice.

Patients and the public can be confident that all registered SCPHNs will apply knowledge, understanding and skills when performing to the standards required in employment. They will provide the specialist practice required to contribute safely and effectively to maintaining and improving the health of the public and communities. They will therefore assume the responsibilities and accountabilities necessary for public protection.

Standards for competence that apply to all SCPHNs on our register

All SCPHNs must demonstrate competencies across the four areas: search for health needs, stimulation of awareness of health needs, influence on policies affecting health, and facilitation of health-enhancing activities.

Principle of public health practice	Search for health needs
Surveillance and assessment of the population's health and wellbeing.	<p>Collect and structure data and information on the health and wellbeing and related needs of a defined population.</p> <p>Analyse, interpret and communicate data and information on the health and wellbeing and related needs of a defined population.</p> <p>Develop and sustain relationships with groups and individuals with the aim of improving health and social wellbeing.</p> <p>Identify individuals, families and groups who are at risk and in need of further support.</p> <p>Undertake screening of individuals and populations and respond appropriately to findings.</p>

Principle of public health practice	Stimulation of awareness of health needs
Collaborative working for health and wellbeing.	<p>Raise awareness about health and social wellbeing and related factors, services and resources.</p> <p>Develop, sustain and evaluate collaborative work.</p>
Working with, and for, communities to improve health and wellbeing.	<p>Communicate with individuals, groups and communities about promoting their health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Raise awareness about the actions that groups and individuals can take to improve their health and social wellbeing.</p> <p>Develop capacity and confidence of individuals and groups, including families and communities, to influence and use available services, information and skills, acting as advocate where appropriate.</p> <p>Work with others to protect the public's health and wellbeing from specific risks.</p>

Principle of public health practice	Influence on policies affecting health
Developing health programmes and services and reducing inequalities.	<p>Work with others to plan, implement and evaluate programmes and projects to improve health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Identify and evaluate service provision and support networks for individuals, families and groups in the local area or setting.</p>
Policy and strategy development and implementation to improve health and wellbeing.	<p>Appraise policies and recommend changes to improve health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Interpret and apply health and safety legislation and approved codes of practice with regard for the environment, wellbeing and protection of those who work with the wider community.</p> <p>Contribute to policy development.</p> <p>Influence policies affecting health.</p>
Research and development to improve health and wellbeing.	Develop, implement, evaluate and improve practice on the basis of research, evidence and evaluation.

Principle of public health practice	Influence on policies affecting health
Promoting and protecting the population's health and wellbeing.	<p>Work in partnership with others to prevent the occurrence of needs and risks related to health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Work in partnership with others to protect the public's health and wellbeing from specific risks.</p>
Developing quality and risk management within an evaluative culture.	Prevent, identify and minimise risk of interpersonal abuse or violence, safeguarding children and other vulnerable people, initiating the management of cases involving actual or potential abuse or violence where needed.
Strategic leadership for health and wellbeing.	<p>Apply leadership skills and manage projects to improve health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Plan, deliver and evaluate programmes to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals and groups.</p>
Ethically managing self, people and resources to improve health and wellbeing.	Manage teams, individuals and resources ethically and effectively.



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