

Embedding Health Check Competencies in Health Care Assistants Competency Frameworks

Background: Committed to ensuring the consistency of a good quality NHS Health Check (NHS HC), the Kent, Surrey & Sussex NHS Health Check (KSS HC) Network explored opportunities to implement the NHS Health Check learner and assessor workbooks, to complement the existing NHS Health Check training and assure practitioner competencies.

Discussions were initiated with Health Education England Kent, Surrey and Sussex (HEEKSS), Practice Nurse leads & Primary Care Workforce Tutors* (PCWT) across the Sussex to gain insight into current training and any perceived synergy between skills and competencies in primary care core work which might be transferable to the NHS HC Competency Framework. In addition, their views were sought on the assessment tool and its practical application within existing resources in primary care teams. PCWTs universally welcomed the guidance but were of the opinion that it had to be reduced in volume whilst still maintaining its assurance function.

The PCWTs in East Sussex and Brighton were developing a Competency and Skills Framework for Health Care Assistants (HCAs), and were keen to include NHS HC competencies in the framework, as many HCAs were providing NHS HCs. The framework supports HCAs with development from entry level and the Care Certificate through to Level 2 and 3 HCA qualifications. Including NHS HCs within the HCA framework provided an excellent opportunity to embed NHS HCs competency assessment within an existing workforce development framework/approach for primary care. The local adaptation would be predicated on the principles that it met the requirements of the national guidance, would not be an additional burden on primary care teams and would fit within the current approach to primary care workforce development.

The following steps were taken to implement and embed NHS HC competencies in the local CCGs HCA Competency Framework.

1. Competency review undertaken in partnership with PCWT and NHS Health Check (or NHS HC) commissioners to produce a streamlined competency list.
2. Proposed streamlined list reviewed and agreed with the wider KSS NHS HC network and PHE.
3. New streamlined competency list embedded in the HCA frameworks shared in E. Sussex & Brighton, with supporting information on accessing local training to support competence development.
4. Competency framework shared across the South East (HEE PCWT network), to encourage other PCWTs to develop similar HCA frameworks, including NHS HCs.
5. The new streamlined competency list specified has been included in the new 2017/18 service specification (E Sussex) for practitioner sign-off.
6. The framework is there to support practices develop their HCA workforce and meet CQC standards, this is promoted to practices by the PCWTs with encouragement to use it to guide development of their workforce against core competencies and aid them to meet CQC standards.

Opportunities to embed NHS HC competencies in Primary Care workforce development nationally – Health Education England are currently implementing extensive transformation and workforce development plans to develop a primary care workforce fit for the future. This provides an excellent partnership opportunity for PHE and HEE, to embed NHS HC competencies in national Primary Care workforce development plans, and ensure the primary care workforce is fit to meet the future aspirations of the Five Year Forward View in scaling up prevention.

** Primary Care Workforce Tutors are employed by CCGs in KSS, and resourced by HEE KSS to support Primary Care Workforce Development, including pre-registration nursing placements and mentorship in Primary Care.*

