



Scottish Government HCSW Commission Health and Care Support Worker Development Programme

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The Scottish Government commissioned NHS Education for Scotland to take forward work on education and development of Agenda for Change Band 2-4 Healthcare Support Workers, several questions have arisen from stakeholders. This set of frequently asked questions and answers is designed to address some of the common enquiries. The questions are themed into the following sections:

1. [Scope of the commission](#)
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Scope of the commission

Q1. What is the aim of the Healthcare Support Worker (HCSW) commission?

To provide a nationally agreed framework to support definition of HCSW roles, career progression and development through education and training, with a focus on how HCSWs support registered staff.

Q2. What is the focus of the HCSW commission?

1. Identify Band 2 – 4 education programmes and career frameworks already in place locally that could be adapted for national use
2. Identify gaps within the extant policy guidance, education and training which would allow staff to work at the highest level of their grade
3. Propose a career framework which supports staff in Band 2 - 4 roles to achieve optimum impact

Summary of the commission can be found on the [NES website](#)

Q3. Will the HCSW commission cover health and social care?

No. This commission relates to NHS health boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships, but not the independent sector.

Q4. Will Support Workers in general practice be included in the remit of the commission?

No. The commission from the Chief Nursing Officer has specific parameters and NES have been asked to focus initially on nursing and acute care as the priority. General practice is not included, at least at this stage. However, we would certainly like to keep general practice engaged in the work and would very much expect the core skills and knowledge that we identify across the pathway to be relevant in all settings.

Q5. Will community nursing be considered in phase one of the HCSW commission?

Yes. Although community was not part of the original submission, Band 3 and 4 community nursing were included in phase one.

Q6. Will the Nursing Associate role be considered as part of the HCSW commission?

No. This is not included in the commission.

Q7. Will standardised or generic job descriptions for Band 2-4 HCSWs be included within the remit of the commission?

No. Chief Nursing Officer Directorate will lead alongside clinical advisors work to establish nationally recognised job descriptions for bands 2-4. These recognised job descriptions will be approved by the Scottish Terms and Conditions Committee (STAC) in advance of roll out across health and social care.

Q8. Will HCSW induction be included in the HCSW commission? How does this fit with work that NHS Scotland National Academy have progressed?

Yes. There is reference within the HCSW Commission that an induction programme be explored and developed for new HCSWs entering the NHS who have very little or no health or social care experience.

NHS Scotland Academy led discussions through a Short Life Working Group to explore what this could look like and how it could best be delivered to relieve pressure on board resources and educators, while delivering a consistent national model. The induction programme can be accessed via the [NHS Scotland National Academy website](#).

Q9. How will existing HCSW standards (local and national) currently in place be considered and factored into the HCSW commission?

Part of the commission is to undertake a review of the extant policy guidance, ensuring this supports the skill sets of the band 2-4 workforce across NMAHP and Healthcare Science in both health and care settings. Following the review and stakeholder feedback

through the three core stakeholder groups, NES will make recommendations to the Scottish Government for amendments to the guidance.

Q10. Will the commission look to introduce nationally agreed definitions for HCSWs at each level of practice?

Yes. There are definitions within the 2010 document [A Guide to HCSW Education and Role Development](#). These definitions will be reviewed, and stakeholder feedback considered in terms of any modifications required. This aspect is highlighted as future policy considerations within the phase one report.

Commission timeline

Q11. What is the timeframe for the HCSW commission?

Due to workforce pressures, this work is being developed at pace with a priority focus on Band 4 nursing roles within acute hospital settings during phase one.

- Phase 1 - Band 4 Nursing HCSWs (completed 10.12.2021)
- Phase 2 - Band 2 - 4 NMAHP (no confirmed date provided but expectation this should be completed 'at pace')
- Phase 3 - Healthcare Science (no confirmed start date agreed)

Stakeholder engagement

Q12. How is the work of the commission being managed and will stakeholders have opportunity to be involved?

NHS Education for Scotland have been commissioned by the Scottish Government Chief Nursing Officer Directorate to carry out the work. This will be undertaken in collaboration with stakeholders. During phase one, three groups were established each comprising representative from health boards, higher and further education, and regulatory bodies. These groups are as follows:

- Steering Group
- Education Sub-Group
- Nursing Short Life Working Group

During Phase 2, further Short Life Working Groups have been established to support specific activities in relation to the recommendations from phase one. These include:

- AHP Short Life Working Group
- Education Short Life Working Group
- Service Needs Analysis Short Life Working Group

Q13. How will stakeholders be able to find out more about the HCSW commission?

Information is available on the [NES website](#). A communication plan has been developed and stakeholders will receive updates through a variety of channels. Representatives on the groups established will feedback locally to their employers and through relevant networks.

[Commission activities](#)

Q14. Will national competencies be introduced for HCSWs as part of the commission?

Competencies in the form of knowledge, skills, and behaviours (KSBs) will be developed as part of the commission and will be recommended for national agreement.

Q15. Will a career pathway be developed for Band 2-4 HCSWs as part of the commission?

Yes. A career development and education framework will be developed which supports staff in Band 2 – 4 NMAHP roles to achieve optimum impact. The framework will align with the [NMAHP Development Framework](#).

Q16. What is the timeline for the development of the HCSW career development and education framework?

Work was undertaken in phase one, between October and December 2021, in respect of the initial ask to produce a framework for level 3 and 4 in acute and community nursing. Phase 2 work commenced March 2022 with stakeholder input from midwifery and AHP with a view to expanding the scope of the framework to cover all NMAHP HCSWs from levels 2-4. The final framework consultation phase will conclude at the end of July 2022.

Q17. Health boards have undertaken work locally on Band 2-4 HCSW education and development. How will this work fit with the outcomes from the commission?

Any outcomes from the commission will support/enhance current Board developments. A Once for Scotland approach through core principles will provide parity and transferability and allow an easier transition for staff if they move posts/Boards.

Q18. Will work be undertaken with further and higher education institutes around articulation routes for HCSWs?

Yes. NHS Education for Scotland will work with further and higher education institutions to continue to develop articulation routes for all NMAHP HCSWs to articulate to degree-level courses with advanced standing, as per recommendation five from phase one report

Q19 Will the AHP Education Review impact on the work of the HCSW commission?

NES are working closely with colleagues involved in the AHP Education Review to stay abreast of developments and ensure alignment of the two workstreams.

Recommendations from the review will be considered in the commission activity.

Q20. What work is being undertaken in respect of recommendation 7 from phase one around the role of Associate Practice Educators?

NES have commissioned scoping work around the Associate Practice Educator roles to understand the experiences of those in the role and those involved in the implementation of the roles in two health boards in Scotland. The scoping work will be completed by end August 2022 and will provide guidance and best practice for health boards interested in implementing these roles.