

First Contact Practitioners (Enhanced) and Advanced Practice in Primary Care Fact Sheet

What is a First Contact Practitioner (FCP)?

First contact physiotherapists (FCPs) are advanced practitioners working within primary care with extensive expertise in the clinical assessment, diagnosis and management of musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions.

FCPs see patients with (suspected or diagnosed) MSK conditions as the first point of contact, instead of a GP, and can be accessed directly by contacting the practice's reception.

In England HEE have developed [The First Contact Practitioners and Advanced Practitioners in Primary Care: \(Musculoskeletal\) A Roadmap to Practice](#). This is a document that provides a clear educational pathway from undergraduate to Advanced Practice for clinicians wishing to pursue a career in primary care. It is expected that all clinicians applying for roles in primary care will have completed training and have been recognised by the [Centre for Advancing Practice](#) prior to job interview by April 2022.

What is an Advanced Practitioner?

Advanced Clinical Practitioners (ACP) come from a range of professional backgrounds such as nursing, pharmacy, and allied health professionals. They are healthcare professionals, educated to Master's level or equivalent, with the skills and knowledge to expand their scope of practice to better meet the needs of the people they care for. Advanced Clinical Practitioners are deployed across all healthcare settings and work at a level of Advanced Clinical Practice that pulls together the four Advanced Clinical Practice pillars of clinical practice, leadership and management, education, and research.

The roles undertaken by Advanced Clinical Practitioners are determined by the needs of the employer and how they require the level of practice to be deployed within their setting. This may fit with nationally understood roles, such as those within emergency departments or very bespoke roles based upon the needs of a specific population such as an Advanced Clinical Practitioner Dietitian running a complex enteral feeding (tube feeding) service for paediatric patients.¹

What do Advanced Practitioners do?

Advanced Practitioners offer multiple benefits to health service and the population. They bring more holistic care to patients, support continuity of care and extend their scope of practice across traditional boundaries. This leads in turn to a greater focus on prevention, more

¹ <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/advanced-clinical-practice/what-advanced-clinical-practice>

personalised care, a more efficient team, a faster response to patient needs and better outcomes.

Advanced Practitioners and the Long-Term Plan

[The NHS Long-Term Plan](#) highlights how advanced clinical practice is central to helping transform service delivery and better meet local health needs by providing enhanced capacity, capability, productivity, and efficiency within multi-professional teams.

Developing advanced clinical practice roles, as well as the level of practice just below and above ACP level should be considered a key component of contemporary workforce planning, as described in the NHS Long Term Plan.

Advanced Practitioners and ARRS

Advanced Practitioners are a role which is now included within the ARRS. A limit of one WTE Advanced Practitioner will apply where the PCN's patients number 99,999 or fewer, and a limit of two will apply where the PCN's patients number 100,000 or over

The Advanced Practitioner reimbursement is only applicable to the designated roles of Clinical Pharmacists, First Contact Physiotherapists, Dietitians, Podiatrists, Occupational Therapists and Paramedics.²

What are the benefits of employing Advanced Practitioners?

Advanced practitioners have responsibilities that often exceed those of their professional peers and take a lead in the overall care and decision making in the care pathway analysis, using critical thinking skills and making judgments based on accrued knowledge and contemporary research.

Advanced practitioners will have the leadership, education and research training to make the clinical team deliver better, more responsive care for patients and the population. They have advanced training in clinical techniques and are often able to step in to deliver treatments and advice that were previously the domain of particular professionals, such as prescribing.

² 2021-2022 Network DES Contract <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/B0431-network-contract-des-specification-pcn-requirements-and-entitlements-21-22.pdf>

What is the difference between FCPs and AP's?³

First Contact Practitioner Band 7

- Manages undifferentiated undiagnosed conditions
- Able to identify red flags and underlying serious pathology and take appropriate action
- Works within practice, across PCN, multi-organisational, cross professions and across care pathways and systems including health, social care and the voluntary sectors
- High level complex decision making to inform the diagnosis, investigation, management and on referral within scope of practice
- Actively takes a personalised care approach to enable shared decision making with the presenting person
- Contributes to audit and research projects
- Contributes to education and supervision within their scope of practice for the multi-professional team.
- Facilitates Interprofessional learning in area of expertise
- Promotes and develops area of expertise across care pathways
- Working toward Advanced Clinical Practice (level 7 across all 4 pillars)

Advanced Clinical Practitioner Band 8a

- Works within practice, and leads across PCN, CCG and ICS, multi organisational, cross professionals and across care pathways and systems including health, social care and the voluntary sectors
- population and support public health
- Manages medical complexity
- Actively takes a personalised care and population-centered care approach to enable shared decision making with the presenting person
- Actively engages in care from a population care viewpoint
- Leads audit and research projects
- Leading audit within areas of capability
- Provides Multi-professional AP clinical and CPD supervision across all 4 pillars with relevant training
- Leads education in their area of expertise
- Enables, facilitates, and supports change across care pathways and traditional boundaries
- Working toward level 8

What Training and Qualifications are required to be an Advanced Practitioner?

Certain health and care professionals including nurses, pharmacists, radiographers, dieticians, paramedics, art therapists, and healthcare scientists can become advanced practitioners, providing they meet the requirements outlined in the [multi-professional framework for advanced clinical practice in England](#)

HEE have produced Roadmaps to Practice for FCP and APs in Primary Care for [Musculoskeletal](#) and [Paramedics](#). These are supportive documents which provide a clear educational pathway from undergraduate to advanced practice for clinicians wishing to pursue a career in primary care.

The Roadmaps clearly articulate the capabilities so that employers and workforce planners can understand what the clinicians can offer to the multi-professional team to enable the best care for their patient population. It also provides clear guidance of the expected supervision needed to support the roadmap to practice and outlines the bespoke supervision training that a supervisor needs to have completed.

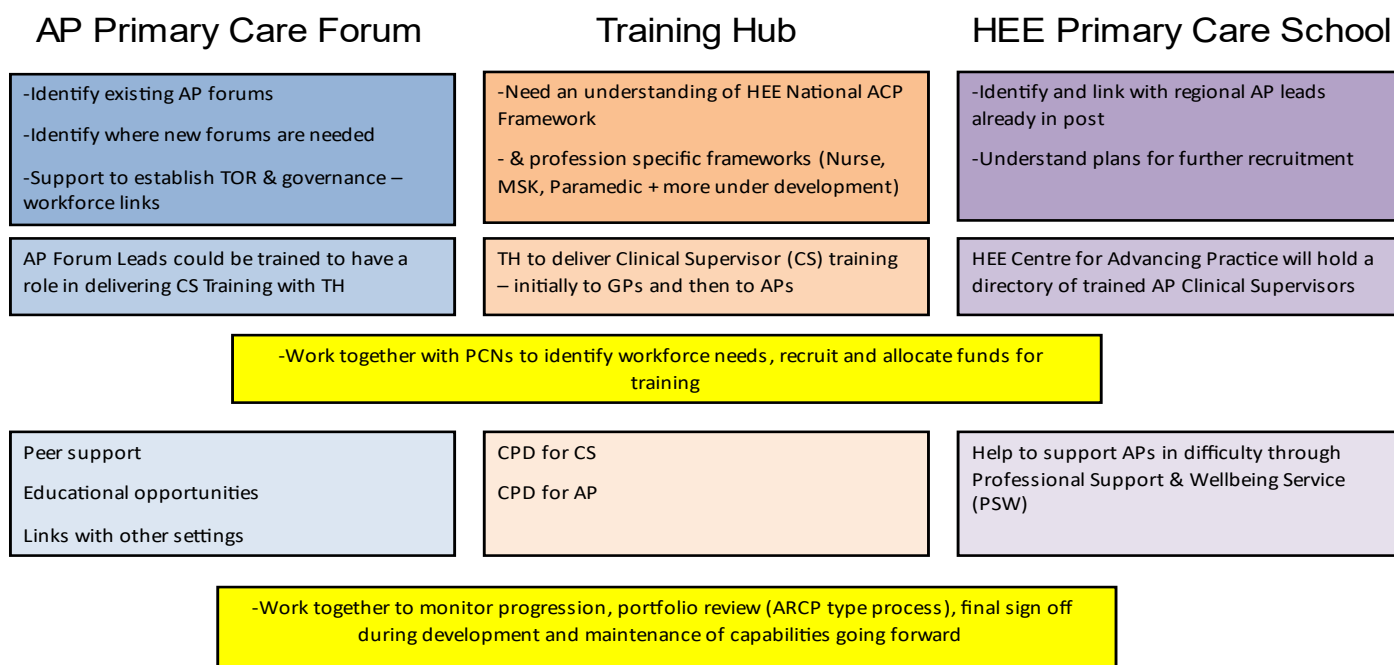
It is expected that all clinicians applying for roles in primary care will have completed training and have been recognised by our Centre for Advancing Practice prior to job interview by April 2022, however due to Covid this date may be delayed (timescale tbc).

³ HEE National Primary & Community Care Team

From April 2021 clinicians should have started either the portfolio route or have started an FCP HEI level 7 module to prospectively and retrospectively to meet this deadline.

By providing a standard of practice there is a solid governance structure around First Contact roles and advanced practice in primary care. This ensures gold standard care and puts our patient's safety first.

What are the next steps and roles of stakeholders?⁴



⁴ HEE National Primary & Community Care Team

Further useful resources and documents:

FCP:

HEE have produced Roadmaps to Practice for FCP and APs in Primary Care for [Musculoskeletal](#) and [Paramedics](#). These are supportive documents which provide a clear educational pathway from undergraduate to advanced practice for clinicians wishing to pursue a career in primary care.

AP:

- HEE is now developing core capability frameworks for advanced clinical practitioner roles
 1. Nursing - [Core Capabilities Framework for Advanced Clinical Practice \(Nurses\) Working in General Practice / Primary Care in England](#)
- A framework for 'Workplace Supervision for Advanced Clinical Practice' The publication sets out seven fundamental considerations which underpin supervision in advanced clinical practice: Practice Context, Competence and Capability, Multiple professional Registrations, Individual Learning Plan, Professional Development and Transition, Integrated Approach, Supervisor Development.
<https://www.hee.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Workplace%20Supervision%20for%20ACPs.pdf>
- A definition of ACP, its underpinning standards and governance, can be found in the [Multi-professional framework for advanced clinical practice in England page](#). The framework ensures there is national consistency in the level of practice across multi-professional roles that is clearly understood by the public, advanced clinical practitioners, their colleagues, education providers and employers.
- Primary care and general practice are ever evolving to meet the increasing and more complex needs of local communities / populations. This will require new ways of working and the development of multi-professional general practice and primary care teams. This framework provides a standard and greater clarity on the capabilities for nurses working at the advanced clinical practice level within general practice.
<https://skillsforhealth.org.uk/info-hub/advanced-clinical-practice-nurses-working-in-general-practice-primary-care-in-england-2020/>

Key contacts

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