

Advisory Committee of Allied Health Professions (ACAHP)

Position Statement on Delegation

Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) play a crucial role in delivering high-quality, patient-centred care across various healthcare settings. Effective delegation is essential to optimising patient outcomes, improving efficiency, and ensuring safe and ethical practice. This position statement outlines the principles, responsibilities, and best practices for delegation within allied health professions.

The HCPC's Standards of Conduct, Performance, and Ethics (Standard 4) outlines the fundamental principles of delegation for AHP registrants:

“You must only delegate work to someone who has the knowledge, skills and experience needed to carry it out safely and effectively. You must continue to provide appropriate supervision and support to those you delegate work to.”

Each AHP professional operates autonomously, with the ability to assess, diagnose, treat, and discharge patients. This autonomy allows AHP registrants to complete an assessment, diagnosis, and treatment prior to delegating tasks to others who are appropriately trained and supervised. For delegated tasks AHP registrants remain accountable for the decision to delegate, ensuring that the individual accepting the task is competent and supported. However, delegation is not ‘task substitution’. While certain tasks can be shared, AHP registrants cannot delegate their specialist expertise, clinical reasoning, or professional decision-making.

To explain the principle further it may be helpful to look at the definition of Delegation in relation to AHP registrants.

The HCPC's definition of: **‘Delegate To’** is to ask someone else to carry out a task ***on your behalf***.

‘On your behalf’ in this context means an AHP registrant asking an individual to carry out a task that would *normally* be completed by the AHP registrant.

The delegated task must be within the individual's scope of practice. The HCPC defines scope of practice, as the limit of your knowledge, skills and experience and is made up of the activities you carry out within your professional role.

Key Principles of AHP Delegation

All delegated tasks are precluded by a patient assessment and diagnosis from the autonomous AHP registrant, ensuring delegation is safe and appropriate.

1.Accountability

- The AHP registrant remains accountable for ensuring delegation is appropriate and safe.
- The individual accepting delegation is responsible for carrying out the task safely.

2. Competence

- The individual delegated to, must have the necessary training, skills, and experience.
- Competence must be assessed, not assumed. If competence is not yet achieved, the AHP registrant must provide training and supervision to that individual.

3. Supervision and Support

- The level of supervision depends on the task and the individual's experience.
- Some tasks require direct oversight, while others allow for more independent working.

4. Clarity of Communication

- There should be a clear rationale for delegation documented, with the scope and limits of the delegated task clearly defined.
- AHP registrant's contact details should be provided to allow feedback and resolution of any issues.

5. Legal and Ethical Considerations

- Delegation must comply with HCPC regulations, employer policies, and ethical standards.
- AHP registrants must not delegate tasks that require professional judgment beyond the skills of the individual performing them.

When is delegation NOT appropriate?

AHP registrants must ensure that delegation is safe, legal, and within professional boundaries. Tasks that should not be delegated include:

- Any assessment, diagnosis, or treatment planning requiring professional clinical reasoning.
- Tasks requiring specialist expertise that the delegated individual does not have.
- Any intervention outside the delegated individual's scope of practice.

Who do AHP registrants delegate to?

AHP registrants primarily delegate to AHP support staff, who are trained to assist in delivering specialised care. These staff are highly skilled within their roles and work

under the close supervision of AHP registrants to ensure that delegated tasks align with clinical treatment plans.

AHP registrants also delegate to students during practice based learning.

Some examples include, a Physiotherapist has prescribed an exercise programme following assessment and delegates the supervision of completing this programme to the Physiotherapy Assistant; an Occupational Therapist (OT) has assessed a service user for a piece of equipment and delegates the OT Technical Instructor to set up the equipment and instruct on its use.

What does not constitute delegation for AHP registrants?

AHP registrants often provide professional advice and recommendations to service users, carers, and others involved in supporting their needs. Examples include advice on self-management; manual handling and use of associated equipment; recommendations on the best way to perform certain tasks; recommendations on supportive environments. These examples are classed as professional advice or recommendations and do not constitute delegation for AHP registrants.

AHP registrants also signpost service users to other professions and services, again this does not constitute delegation but is a referral to another profession or service.

AHP registrants also provide education and training to other staff. Examples include training in relation to, moving and handling techniques, clinically assisted hydration and nutrition, or eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties. This does not constitute delegation but is the provision of training and education to allow the staff to meet their own particular competencies.

Position statement

The HCPC and ACAHP support the responsible delegation of tasks by Allied Health Professionals, primarily to AHP support staff, provided that:

1. Patient Safety and Quality of Care are prioritised:

- Delegation must not compromise patient care or safety.
- The delegated task must be appropriate to the skill level, training, and competence of the individual receiving the task.
- AHP registrants must ensure that those to whom tasks are delegated understand their scope of practice and limitations.

2. Accountability and Professional Responsibility:

- AHP registrants remain accountable for the decision to delegate and must ensure that tasks are completed to the required standard.
- The person accepting the delegated task is responsible for performing it within their competence and training.

- If the task is beyond the recipient's capability, they must decline the delegation until competency is achieved.

3. Clear Communication and Supervision:

- Delegation must involve clear instructions, including expected outcomes and reporting requirements, and be clearly documented in the patient record.
- AHP registrants must provide appropriate supervision and support, ensuring that the delegated task is performed safely and effectively.
- Feedback mechanisms should be in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the delegation process.

4. Ethical and Legal Considerations:

- Delegation must align with relevant professional standards, regulations, and workplace policies.
- AHP registrants must be aware of legal responsibilities regarding delegation within their roles.
- Ethical principles, including informed consent and patient autonomy, must be upheld when delegating tasks.

5. Workforce Development and Training:

- Organisations should invest in training and competency development to ensure that support staff are well-prepared for delegated tasks.
- Continuous professional development should be encouraged to enhance delegation skills and teamwork.

Conclusion

Delegation is a crucial aspect of all AHP registrants practice, allowing them to work within their scope while ensuring safe, effective, and patient-centred care. AHP registrants must delegate within their professional boundaries, guided by specialist expertise, HCPC standards, competence frameworks, and risk assessments. Effective delegation enhances collaboration, supports workforce development, and improves patient outcomes, reinforcing AHP registrants accountability and commitment to high-quality healthcare.