



Department of  
**Health**

An Roinn Sláinte

Máinnstríe O Poustie

[www.health-ni.gov.uk](http://www.health-ni.gov.uk)

## ***CORE COMPETENCE ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR PALLIATIVE CARE SPECIALIST NURSING ROLES***



December 2018



## PALLIATIVE CARE SPECIALIST NURSING

### Core Specific Competency Areas and Learning Outcomes

These are the core specific competency areas and learning outcomes relevant for Palliative Care Specialist Nurses across adult services in Northern Ireland. The specific core competencies build on the generic core competencies designed for all Specialist Nurses regardless of the area of practice or setting<sup>1</sup>. This competence assessment tool is appropriate for all Palliative Care Specialist Nurses who care for patients with specialist and complex palliative and end of life needs in any adult care setting.

The *Assessment Tool* has been devised to be used alongside a range of general competency frameworks (that focus on core skills and competencies for all qualified nurses) and palliative care and end of life specific competency frameworks relevant to specialist palliative care for adults. The competencies and learning outcomes are informed by the following documents:

- *Competencies In Nursing - A Framework for Nurses Working in Specialist Palliative Care - Competencies Project* (RCN 2002)<sup>2</sup>
- *A Framework for Generalist and Specialist Palliative and End of Life Care Competency* (NICaN 2008)<sup>3</sup>
- *Palliative and End of Life Care Competency Assessment Tool* (NICaN / NIPEC 2012)<sup>4</sup>
- *A Review of Palliative Care Competence Frameworks* (AllHPC 2012)<sup>5</sup>

Thanks to all those involved in the development of these specific competences especially those on the Writing Group (Appendix 1), in particular the Palliative Care Specialist Nurses and all those who provided feedback to ensure they are fit for purpose.

---

<sup>1</sup> DoH (2018) *Career Framework for Specialist Practice Nursing Roles*. Belfast: NIPEC

<sup>2</sup> Royal College of Nursing (2002) *A framework for nurses working in specialist palliative care Competencies Project*. London: RCN

<sup>3</sup> Northern Ireland Cancer Network (2008) *A Framework for Generalist and Specialist Palliative and End of Life Care Competency*. Belfast: NICAN

<sup>4</sup> Northern Ireland Cancer Network and Northern Ireland Practice & Education Council (2012) *Palliative and End of Life Care Competency Assessment Tool*. Belfast: NIPEC

<sup>5</sup> All Ireland Institute Hospice and Palliative Care (2012) *A Review of Palliative Care Competence Frameworks*. Dublin: AllHPC.

## Palliative Care Specialist Nursing Competence Assessment Tool

Undertaking a self-assessment using this *Competence Assessment Tool* (pages 3-9) can help you identify the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for your role. You should discuss your self-assessment with your line manager, as part of your annual appraisal and/or personal development plan, in order to agree an action plan addressing your identified learning and development needs. This self-assessment and accompanying development plan may help you provide evidence for NMC revalidation.

### Assessing yourself

You should use the following rating scale to assess your learning and development needs against each of the competence statements:

#### Rating Scale:

**LD** I need a lot of development

**SD** I need some development

**WD** I feel I am well developed

It generally takes about 15 minutes to assess yourself against the competence statements. Place a ✓ to rate the statement which is applicable to your individual learning and development. When you have finished, review the number of LDs, SDs, and WDs. You can then plan, with your line manager, the learning and development activities which are relevant to your role.

### Practice Tips

Before starting your assessment, you may find it helpful to discuss the statements with one of your peers. You can also test your self-assessment with your line manager. Be honest with yourself when thinking about your role and your learning and development needs and rate them realistically.

The *Palliative Care Competence Assessment Tool* can also enable you to focus on areas for career development and, where relevant, support your preparation for job interviews.

## Core Specific Competency Domains and Learning Outcomes

<b>Core Specific Competency Domain: Clinical Practice</b>			
<p>The Palliative Care Specialist Nurse maintains, develops, and analyses knowledge of the relevant area of practice including the relevant assessment, treatments and care interventions to make professional judgements in meeting the palliative and end of life care needs of patients, their families/carers and those important to them.</p> <p><b>NMC Code theme:</b> Practise Effectively, Preserve Safety, Promote Professionalism and Trust.</p> <p><b>KSF Core Dimensions:</b> Communication, Personal and People Development, Health and Safety, Quality.</p>			
<b>Core Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>LD</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>WD</b>
<p><b>The Palliative Care Specialist Nurse will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate an understanding of the principles and philosophy of specialist palliative and end of life care as applied to people with advanced, progressive disease, and, influence practice to ensure this is embedded across all aspects of service delivery.</li> <li>• Practise within the context of professional, ethical, regulatory and legal codes recognising and respond to moral/ethical dilemmas and issues in day to day specialist palliative and end of life care practice.</li> <li>• Demonstrate an understanding of the care needs of patients living with a range of advanced progressive life limiting conditions and liaise with relevant specialists to ensure the delivery of safe, effective care.</li> <li>• Complete a comprehensive and systematic patient-centred holistic assessment using relevant tools/frameworks, taking into account physical, psychological, social, cultural, spiritual and environmental aspects.</li> <li>• Utilise knowledge of holistic needs assessment to assess, plan, implement and evaluate the needs of patients with advanced, progressive diseases at all stages of their disease trajectory, in partnership with the multidisciplinary team.</li> <li>• Demonstrate knowledge of symptom management and palliative care emergencies and apply appropriate clinical judgement to direct pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions.</li> </ul>			

Core Learning Outcomes cont'd	LD	SD	WD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act as a source of specialist knowledge for other Health and Social Care Professionals (HCPs) when dealing with complex or challenging symptoms and situations relating to the assessment, planning and delivery of care for patients with advanced, progressive disease.</li> <li>• Use specialist knowledge and advanced communication skills to develop and enhance therapeutic relationships with the patient their families/carers and those important to them, to sensitively assess and respond appropriately to the impact of the life limiting illness.</li> <li>• Demonstrate an understanding of all aspects of Advance Care Planning (ACP) (and the underpinning legal framework) and utilise ACP to support patient choice and preferences in the context of specialist palliative and end of life care.</li> <li>• Use the theories of loss, grief and bereavement to assess and appropriately support those facing loss and grief, including complicated grief, and bereavement in specialist palliative and end of life care.</li> <li>• Demonstrate professional duty of care for the patient's body after death, respecting any wishes expressed by the family, taking into account any legal, cultural, religious or health and safety requirements.</li> <li>• Act as a source of specialist knowledge and meet the information needs of patients, their families/carers and those important to them and staff members both directly and indirectly through information provision and signposting.</li> <li>• Contribute as a key member of the multi-professional team through the development and implementation of collaborative and innovative practices including the use of technology.</li> <li>• Identify and manage risks and contribute to multi-professional and interagency discussions related to critical, serious and adverse incidents, and/or root cause analysis.</li> <li>• Advocate for the rights of patient their families/carers and those important to them within the care environment and recognise the influences of power, control and conflict.</li> <li>• Contribute to the development and review of protocols and standard operating procedures.</li> <li>• Monitor and evaluate all interventions and modify care in response to patient specific outcomes.</li> </ul>			

<b>Core Learning Outcomes cont'd</b>	<b>LD</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>WD</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse health and care technologies and provide feedback to inform selection and use in own area of practice.</li> <li>• Incorporate professional accountability and responsibility to enable safe and effective practice within the context of the multi-professional team to meet the needs of patient their families/carers and those important to them.</li> </ul>			

**Core Specific Competency Domain: Education and Learning**

The Palliative Care Specialist Nurse maintains and develops professional knowledge and practice by participating in lifelong learning, personal and professional development for self and with colleagues through supervision, appraisal and reflective practice.

**NMC Code theme:** Prioritise People, Practise Effectively, Promote Professionalism and Trust.

**KSF Core Dimension:** Communication, Personal and People Development.

<b>Core Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>LD</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>WD</b>
<p><b>The Palliative Care Specialist Nurse will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accept personal responsibility for professional development and the maintenance of professional competence and credibility.</li><li>• Facilitate an effective learning environment to support the professional development of staff and students.</li><li>• Engage in clinical supervision, reflective practice and self-evaluation and use this to improve care and practice.</li><li>• Participate in formal and informal inter-professional teaching.</li><li>• Utilise appropriate learning opportunities to facilitate others to care for patients their families/carers and those important to them.</li><li>• Supervise and support others within the scope of each individual's role, competence and capability.</li><li>• Identify and participate in the development, delivery and evaluation of educational initiatives for health and social care providers that address the needs of patients their families/carers and those important to them.</li><li>• Participate in clinical forums or professional groups and facilitate sustainable partnerships.</li></ul>			

**Core Specific Competency Domain: Research and Evidence-based Practice**

The Palliative Care Specialist Nurse develops and updates knowledge of research evidence, and policy initiatives relevant to caring for patients with specialist complex palliative care needs their families/carers and those important to them, to promote and develop effective, evidence-based practice.

**NMC Code theme:** Practise Effectively.

**KSF Core Dimension:** Quality.

<b>Core Learning Outcomes:</b>	<b>LD</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>WD</b>
<p><b>The Palliative and End of Life Care Specialist Nurse will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintain and develop knowledge and understanding of relevant local, regional and national policies and guidelines and collaborate with other members of the multi-professional/multi-agency team to implement them in own area of practice.</li><li>• Critically appraise research in specialist palliative and end of life care and use knowledge of relevant findings to inform clinical decision making.</li><li>• Work collaboratively with others to facilitate the implementation of research, quality improvement and audit findings into practice.</li><li>• Use knowledge of specialist palliative and end of life care to identify areas of potential research, quality improvement and audit.</li><li>• Contribute to audit, quality improvement, research design, data collection and analysis.</li><li>• Disseminate audit, quality/service improvement and research findings through presentations, locally, in collaboration with the multi-professional team.</li></ul>			



**Core Specific Competency Domain: Leadership and Management**

The Palliative Care Specialist Nurse works in partnership with other practitioners and agencies to improve health and wellbeing. The Nurse leads in the development and delivery of palliative and end of life care, manages resources and facilitates change to enhance quality, person-centred care.

**NMC Code theme:** Prioritise People, Preserve Safety, Promote Professionalism and Trust.

**KSF Core Dimension:** Communication, Service Improvement, Equality & Diversity.

<b>Core Learning Outcomes:</b>	<b>LD</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>WD</b>
<p><b>The Palliative and End of Life Care Specialist Nurse will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work collaboratively to identify gaps in service provision within own setting and across geographical and organisational boundaries.</li><li>• Work collaboratively to implement initiatives to enhance or redesign patient care and specialist palliative and end of life care services, through a process of continuous improvement.</li><li>• Act as a change agent and encourage staff and service users to contribute ideas and solutions for quality improvement and innovation.</li><li>• Contribute to Patient and Public Involvement through co- design and co-production initiatives and activities.</li><li>• Contribute to relevant professional networks.</li><li>• Negotiate and influence locally in relation to professional practice.</li><li>• Respond in a transparent and structured way to any complaints about care or services.</li><li>• Promote teamwork with defined areas of responsibility.</li><li>• Demonstrate effective management and leadership skills by sharing own knowledge and experience with other members of the team.</li><li>• Influence the multi-professional team in the development and shaping of services that meet the needs of patients their families/carers and those important to them.</li></ul>			

### Membership of Writing Group

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Representative</b>
Public Health Agency	Loretta Gribben (Chair of Writing Group)
NIPEC	Cathy McCusker (Project Lead)
Macmillan	Genevieve Murphy
Belfast HSC Trust	Lesley Rutherford Jean Maguire Maureen Begley
Northern HSC Trust	Sally Convery
South Eastern HSC Trust	Denise Cranston
Southern HSC Trust	Aileen Mulligan Martina Thompson
Western HSC Trust	Emma King
Foyle Hospice	Brigeen McCloskey
NI Hospice	Hilary Maguire Barbara Watson
Southern Hospice	Carmel Campbell
Marie Curie Centre	Miriam McKeown
Department of Health	Heather Finlay