

**National  
Sexual Health Advisers  
Competencies**

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## PURPOSE

This Competency Record Book was developed as an easy to use guide in order to:

- Provide quality assurance in the sexual health adviser workforce ensuring practice is to common and agreed standards.
- Provide quality control of the workforce through a framework where by practitioners demonstrate skills and knowledge to deliver the core roles of sexual health advising at differing points across service networks.

It allows practitioners and employers to have an easy to use framework for education and learning and enables the practitioner to:

- Identify skills gaps and take appropriate action to in order to meet them.
- Plan the most effective way of achieving competence.
- Demonstrate progress through the stages of competence.
- Record and evidence achievement of competence.

**This competency framework will be useful for appraisals, CPD and personal and career development and planning. It can be used in conjunction with existing appraisal processes and may also assist practitioners working towards an academic award. It is important to have liaison and discussion with the appropriate staff at the institution as the level and the amount of credit awarded for the achievement of competence will be decided by the awarding institution.**

**Practitioners should be strongly encouraged to develop a portfolio that not only includes evidence in support of competency but evidence of CPD in sexual health advising.**

## SCOPE

This competency framework was developed as an easy to use guide for managers and practitioners in order to identify skills gaps and take appropriate action to fill these, plan the most effective way of achieving competence, develop and record competence, facilitate progress through the stages of competence and evidence achievement of competence working in the UK & Ireland and acknowledges the diversity of workforce and different entry routes to the profession.

## BACKGROUND

Sexual health advisers are employed within genitourinary medicine services (GUM), sexual health services, in community sexual health advising roles and within the national Chlamydia screening programme

At present there is no nationally recognised programme of preparation for the role of sexual health advising even though this role is recognised under Agenda for Change (DH 2004a). The document "Sexual health Advising: Developing the Workforce" by the Society of Sexual Health Advisers, Unite the Union and the Department of Health (2008) attempts to provide guidance for not only sexual health advisers but also Higher Education Institutions, strategic and public health leads and commissioners on the issues on new arrangements for education and practice preparation of sexual health advisers (SSHA, DoH 2008).

This competency document aims to help give practitioners a framework to use in order to prepare them for providing the role of sexual health advising within all services in which they are employed.

### The structure of this competency Record Book

This document has been framed around 3 specific domains:

#### **1. PROFESSIONAL AND ETHICAL PRACTICE**

#### **2. CARE DELIVERY AND MANAGEMENT**

#### **3. KNOWLEDGE, UNDERSTANDING AND SKILLS**

These domains are broken down into specific competencies that underpin sexual health adviser practice based on broad public health principles (including partner notification), sexually transmitted infection management, health promotion/risk reduction.

## How to use this Competency Record Book

1. Identify a practitioner competent in sexual health advising who can act as your mentor. This may require negotiation with your line manager and may also be within another service.
2. Read the list of competencies under each specific domain. You can find this in the Competencies section itself. Assess which stage of competence you are currently at using the stages 1-4. Ensure that you can clearly evidence this assessment. Leave blank to indicate where you are below stage one i.e. you have little or no understanding of the knowledge, skills and attitudes to achieve the competence.

### **Competency Stages**

- Stage 1** Activity observed, basic understanding of principles & concepts involved.
- Stage 2** Activity carried out under supervision, broad understanding of principles and concepts involved.
- Stage 3** No need for supervision but needs senior colleague available for support and advice.
- Stage 4** Activity carried out without direct supervision within current, profession, legal and ethical frameworks and any other professional body they are registered with.

3. Identify with your mentor those areas in which you require to develop your stage of competence.
4. Agree with your mentor how you will develop your competence.
5. Competence can be demonstrated by undertaking in-house training, through supervision from a sexual health adviser or/and by undertaking a course of study or training.
6. Ensure you have a record of achieving the desired stage of competence, using the "Summary of evidence in support of learning" pages at the end of each domain section describing the individual activities. Learning objectives should be signed off also. Make sure also to keep the evidence used to demonstrate achieving competence –documents, reports, literature reviews, reflective practice, etc. Keep these as separate Appendices attached to this Competency book or with the competency book in a portfolio. Once you have

demonstrated competence, your mentor and you can agree your competence and sign it off.

While the steps involved require you to work with your mentor, the process puts you in charge of your own learning and allows you to be proactive in relation to developing competence and to plan your own personal and professional development within the role of sexual health advising. The assessment of competence may fall to several experienced practitioners but overall responsibility will be with your mentor.

## Case Study

To illustrate how to use the Competency Record Book, assume you want to achieve a competency in partner notification in relation to a MSM who has been diagnosed with Gonorrhoea.

All 3 domains are relevant to this example.

### 1. Domain – Professional and Ethical Practice

#### **1.4 Competency**

Understand the effects of legislation, guidelines and codes of conduct on the practice of sexual health advising and other relevant professional standards.

#### **1.5 Competency**

Ensure that clients have clear and concise information in order to make clear choices about their care in order to facilitate informed consent.

### 2. Domain – Care Delivery and Management

#### **2.12 Competency**

As part of a complete episode of care provide effective partner notification for those individuals diagnosed with STI/HIV considering patient referral, provider referral or conditional referral.

### **2.14 Competency**

Demonstrate accurate and confidential record keeping with relation to the principles and practice of partner notification.

## **3. Domain – Knowledge, Understanding & Skills**

### **3.1 Competency**

Demonstrate a specialist clinical knowledge of the nature of Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV

### **3.2 Competency**

Demonstrate and understanding of the principles and practice of partner notification from both an individual and public health perspective.

## **Decide on an action plan**

- 1 Select a consultation in which you were involved, using information from this on which to base your learning. Briefly discuss the history and the needs of the client.
- 2 Access research based evidence and guidelines relating to this particular clients needs, in this example MSM and Gonorrhoea, and then critically analyse this evidence. Ensure you scrutinise this evidence to check if it is valid and reliable and then document your conclusions.
- 3 Indicate how you applied what you learned to this particular case. For example in the MSM with Gonorrhoea document relevant partner notification guidelines that exist.
- 4 Produce a reflective account in order to demonstrate your learning and help you inform future practice. There are many models of reflection that can be used as a template but the overall aim is that reflection enables us to learn from experience. Your written reflection should include the following:
  - What learning did you bring to the consultation?
  - How do you feel the consultation went?
  - Were there any ethical/legal issues relating to this case?
  - How could your practice or practice overall be improved?
  - Did research/guidelines support your decisions and actions?
  - Link all theory to learning and ensure that all research/guidelines are should be referenced.
- 5 Complete a record of your achievement with your mentor.

Discuss your reflective account and learning with your mentor and provide the appropriate evidence to show that you have achieved the relevant competency. On this has been agreed your mentor can “sign off” your record book. Make a note of these documents in the

Summary of evidence in support of learning pages of your record book and keep the documents themselves in your portfolio. Also make a note of the new stage of competence you have reached next to each of the competencies you have worked on.

## Example

### 1. Domain – Knowledge, Understanding & Skills

#### 3.1 Competency

Demonstrate a specialist clinical knowledge of the nature of Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV

#### 3.2 Competency

Demonstrate and understanding of the principles and practice of partner notification from both an individual and public health perspective.

Summary of evidence in support of learning	Date	Signature
<p>Attended training on STI's &amp; partner notification – discussed learning with mentor</p> <p>Critically analysed research evidence that supported the management of this case</p> <p>Read relevant literature, BASHH guidelines, and SSHA guidelines in relation to partner notification and discussed with mentor.</p> <p>Shadowed mentor during a consultation involving partner notification and then was shadowed carrying out similar consultation.</p> <p>Reflective account completed, detailing how I felt consultation went and what I would change in future.</p>		

You can include:

- Evidence of your reading and its application to practice.
- Personal reports
- Exams written/oral
- Essays
- Reflective accounts
- Appraisal Reports
- Testimonials of your skill
- Project/workbooks
- Dissertation/Thesis
- Guideline documents
- Supervision
- Literature reviews
- Research and Audits
- Evidence of learning from study days.

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# The Competencies

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## The Competencies

1.PROFESSIONAL AND ETHICAL PRACTICE	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
1.1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of legal, ethical and practice issues and dilemmas likely to arise in sexual health advising.				
1.2 Recognise and act within the limits of their own competence seeking advice when needed.				
1.3 Demonstrate an awareness of the impact of personal attitudes and beliefs regarding human sexuality and behaviour upon the individual and his/her care				
1.4 Understand the effects of legislation, guidelines and codes of conduct on the practice of sexual health advising and other relevant professional standards.				
1.5 Ensure that clients have clear and concise information in order to make clear choices about their care in order to facilitate informed consent.				
1.6 Acknowledge the concepts of equality and diversity and promote these as they apply to sexual health advising practice				
1.7 Demonstrate ability to work in partnership with those with sexual health problems or concerns, within an ethical framework and Professional guidelines.				
1.8 Acknowledge the importance of data confidentiality and disclosure and the use of data sharing protocols.				
1.9 Reflecting on own behaviour and practice and identify where				

	improvements should be made. Formulate strategies to develop own lifelong learning and the practice of others				
1.10	Demonstrate a critical awareness of discourses in professional power				
1.11	Reflect upon the impact of personal and professional values on partnership working and practice				
1.12	Manage own workload within the multi professional team				
1.13	Analyse and learn from practice through the process of supervision in order to develop own practice.				

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<b>Summary of evidence in support of learning</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Signature</b>
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<b>2.Care Delivery and Management</b>	<b>Stage 1</b>	<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>Stage 3</b>	<b>Stage 4</b>
2.1 Assess individuals sexual and reproductive health/wellbeing needs according to frameworks for assessment and their application in practice.				
2.2 Understanding theory and skills around the principles of Sexual History taking in order to facilitate needs in relation to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexually Transmitted Infections</li> <li>• HIV, Hepatitis B &amp; C</li> <li>• Reproductive Health</li> <li>• Counselling &amp; Support</li> </ul>				
2.3 Demonstrates an understanding of what constitutes sexual risk taking behaviour				
2.4 Understanding and skills around pre and post test discussion for HIV and BBV				
2.5 Demonstrate a general understanding of and is able to assess the emotional and social issues that impact on client management. This may include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexual assault</li> <li>• Sexual abuse</li> <li>• Sexual difficulty</li> </ul>				
2.6 Collate data from a variety of sources to inform the process of health and social sexual needs assessment				
2.7 Appraise the range of screening and diagnostic tests available to assess sexual health and their potential use in sexual health advising practice				
2.8 Analyse the significance of assessment data and test results for future management				
2.9 Demonstrate the ability to analyse data, current practice and policy drivers in order to identify specific				

health and/or social need and to use this to assess care.				
2.10 Formulate and document in partnership with client's specific and appropriate management plans for their sexual health needs.				
2.11 Participate in the monitoring and management of those with sexually transmitted infections and HIV.				
2.12 As part of a complete episode of care provide effective Partner notification for those individuals diagnosed with STI/HIV considering patient referral, provider referral or conditional referral				
2.13 Administer medication according to agreed policy to manage sexual health problems as appropriate to qualifications and service needs				
2.14 Demonstrate accurate and confidential record keeping with relation to the principles and practice of partner notification.				
2.15 Use records to audit and evaluate health advising practice				
2.16 Evaluate sexual health service provision and support networks for individuals, families and groups in the local area or setting				
2.17 Planning and delivering episodes of care underpinned by relevant policies and guidelines to improve sexual health and wellbeing				
2.18 Obtain, verify, analyse, interpret and contribute data and/or information to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes of individuals and populations.				
2.19 Participate in clinical audit and research in relation to sexual health adviser practice.				

2.20 Plan deliver manage and evaluate programmes and developments to improve the sexual health and wellbeing and experience of individuals and groups				
2.21 Contribute to policy development related to sexual health and wellbeing				

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<b>3. Knowledge, Understanding &amp; Skills</b>	<b>Stage 1</b>	<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>Stage 3</b>	<b>Stage 4</b>
3.1 Demonstrate a specialist clinical knowledge of the nature of Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV				
3.2 Demonstrate an understanding of the principles and practice of partner notification from both an individual and public health perspective				
3.3 Demonstrates knowledge and understanding of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clinical governance</li> <li>• quality assurance</li> <li>• audit</li> <li>• evaluation</li> </ul>				
3.4 Critically analyse the developments required to enable and engage in partnership working				
3.5 Critically evaluate resource implications in relation to inter-professional working and service development.				
3.6 Demonstrate effective partnership working in managing patients/clients with, or at risk of sexually transmitted infection or with other sexual /health problems				
3.7 Demonstrate ability to work in partnership with patients/clients to facilitate adherence to treatment/management plan				
3.8 Plan, participate in and evaluate collaborative projects or programmes to protect, promote and improve sexual health and wellbeing				
3.9 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of models and theories of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselling</li> <li>• Behaviour change</li> <li>• Risk reduction</li> </ul>				

and their application to sexual health advising practice				
3.10 Critically evaluate the evidence base and its application to sexual health promotion.				
3.11 Demonstrate self awareness of interpersonal skills that are need to respond to sexual health need of individuals or referring appropriately				
3.12 Appraise various approaches to working with complex clients individually or in groups.				
3.13 Critique the application of risk management theories and models to sexual health advising practice				
3.14 An awareness of the changing political and health care context and the implications for sexual health care provision.				
3.15 Demonstrate risk analysis and management in practice				

<b>Summary of evidence in support of learning</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Signature</b>
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**Consultation Period 01<sup>st</sup> November 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2012**

**Please use the following headers when responding to the consultation on this document and ensure all comments are received by 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2012:**

- State your name and area of interest/organization.
- Do you feel the aims and objectives of this document are sufficiently clear?
- Do you feel this will be a useful tool in practice for both new entrants to the profession and experienced Sexual Health Advisers?
- If you have comments on specific competencies or any part of the document, please reference the particular statement(s) to which you are responding. Example – page, paragraph number, line numbers
- Are there any other areas that you feel it would be useful to include with regards expected competencies of Sexual Health Advisers or anything else in the framework? If so it would be useful to outline these specifically and where you feel they may sit in the document.
- Please if applicable provide reference(s) to any evidence used to support your agreement or points for discussion.
- Other comments.

Please forward all responses

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