



Royal College
of Nursing

Capturing the Reality of Your Role

A practical guide and diary template for
Agenda for Change job evaluation, banding
reviews and job description updates

KNOW YOUR WORTH

Re-banding the nursing
workforce within the NHS

Member guidance notes

This diary template equips members with practical tools, prompts and guidance to support members to create high quality work diaries for Agenda for Change job evaluation, banding challenges, consistency reviews and job description updates.

It is not about performance, or how busy you feel – it is about:

- the level of responsibility you carry
- the knowledge and skills you use
- the decisions you make
- the pressures and demands of your work.

Many roles evolve significantly over time, and your job description may not fully reflect the work you actually do. This diary helps ensure your day-to-day responsibilities, decision making and expertise are accurately captured.

How to write your diary

The template prompts you to record:

- a range of shift types (for example, early, long day, nights, weekends, on-call)
- what you actually did, including tasks undertaken due to staffing gaps or because you're the most skilled person available
- real examples, not generic lists of duties
- decisions you made, who relied on them, and what the risks were if they weren't done properly
- unplanned work, interruptions, and invisible labour.

Be honest and factual. If in doubt – **include it**.

What good diary evidence looks like

Your entries should demonstrate:

- **decision making:** how you judged risk, when you escalated, how you prioritised
- **responsibility:** patient safety, supervising others, managing equipment or service delivery
- **autonomy:** working without direct supervision, interpreting policies, being the “go to” person
- **communication and emotional labour:** managing distressed patients/relatives, conflict, or supporting colleagues
- **physical/mental effort and conditions:** sustained concentration, multitasking, exposure to unpleasant or risky environments

Diary template:

Section 1 – role details

Name:

Job title:

Department/service:

Organisation/trust:

Current band: Line manager job title:

Diary start date: Diary end date:

Shift pattern covered: ☐ Early ☐ Long day ☐ Night ☐ Weekend ☐ On-call

Section 2 – daily entry

Date:

Shift worked: ☐ Early ☐ Long day ☐ Night ☐ Weekend ☐ Public holiday: ☐ On-call

Hours worked:

Briefly describe the day (2-3 sentences)

.....
.....
.....

Was this: ☐ typical ☐ busier than usual ☐ short staffed ☐ unusually complex or pressured

Activity log

Activity/Task:

- What did you do?
- Was this: ☐ planned ☐ unplanned?
- Time spent – approximate duration:

Decision making/judgement – did this task involve:

- following clear procedures ☐
- interpreting guidance ☐
- using professional judgement ☐
- managing risk ☐
- deciding when to escalate ☐

Describe briefly:

.....
.....

1. Responsibility:

Who/what were you responsible for?

- Patient care/safety ☐
- Staff supervision or support ☐
- Information/records ☐
- Equipment/resources ☐
- Service delivery ☐

What could happen if this task was not done properly?

2. Level of autonomy:

- Closely supervised ☐
- Works independently within policies ☐
- Makes decisions without immediate supervision ☐
- Acts as a specialist/reference point ☐

Knowledge, skills and experience

3. Describe the knowledge or skills required for today's work:

- Clinical expertise.
- Experience based judgement.
- Training or qualifications used.
- Skills not fully reflected in your job description.

4. Communication and emotional demands

- Communicating complex or sensitive information ☐
- Dealing with distressed, angry or anxious patients/relatives ☐
- Supporting colleagues ☐
- Managing conflict or complaints ☐

Who was involved and how demanding was this?

5. Physical and mental effort:

- Manual handling. ☐
- Prolonged standing/walking. ☐
- Fine motor skills. ☐
- PPE use. ☐

Describe duration and intensity

6. Mental effort:

- Sustained concentration ☐
- Multitasking ☐
- Frequent interruptions ☐
- High level of alertness or risk ☐

Describe

.....

7. Working conditions:

- Bodily fluids ☐
- Aggression or violence ☐
- Unpleasant environments ☐
- Lone working ☐

Interruptions and pressures

Were you:

- frequently interrupted? ☐
- required to reprioritise work? ☐
- unable to take breaks on time/at all? ☐

8. Working outside your job description

Did you undertake duties not listed in your job description? Yes ☐ No: ☐

What were they?

.....

Why were you required to do them?

.....

.....

.....

Guide to completing diary entries

Purpose of the diary

This diary is a fact-gathering tool to support:

- job evaluation
- banding challenges
- consistency arguments
- updating job descriptions.

Its value lies on translating work done in to Agenda for Change factor evidence.

Common problems to watch for

Red flags such as:

- “It’s just routine,”
- “Anyone can do it,”
- “I don’t make decisions,”

Questions to think about:

- What happens if you are not there?
- Who checks your decisions?

Probe for autonomy and risk.

Task dumping without analysis

- Complexity
- Responsibility
- Impact

Questions to think about:

- How do you decide what to do?
- What are the risks?
- Who relies on you doing this properly?

Task dumping without analysis

- High workload not higher band by itself
- Redirect members towards
- Decision-making
- Knowledge depth
- Accountability
- Emotional and mental demands

Mapping diary content to JE factors

Knowledge, training and experience

Look for:

- specialist knowledge
- experience based judgement
- training beyond your job description
- acting up or informal expertise.

Analytical and judgement

Evidence includes:

- assessing risk
- prioritising competing demands
- responding to deterioration or incidents
- problem solving without clear guidance.

Responsibility

Key areas:

- Patient safety.
- Supervising/supporting others.
- Equipment, stock, budgets.
- Ask – what would go wrong if this wasn't done properly?

Freedom to act

Strong evidence includes:

- Working without direct supervision.
- Interpreting policies.
- Deciding when to escalate.
- Acting as the go-to person.

Communication and emotional effort

Often under-record:

- Breaking bad news.
- Managing distressed or angry people.
- Supporting colleagues emotionally.
- De-escalation.

Physical and mental effort/working conditions

- Encourage specificity.
- Duration.
- Frequency.
- Sustained concentration.
- Exposure to risk or unpleasant conditions.

Questions to think about:

- Talk me through that decision – who else was involved?
- How often does this happen in a normal week?
- What training or experience lets you do that safely?
- Would someone at a lower band be expected to do this?

Checklist

This is a practical checklist that members can use to complete their diary for job evaluation. It is suitable for use individually or in groups.

Coverage and quality check	
Diary includes at least 2-4 weeks.	☐
Includes different shift types (where appropriate).	☐
Includes both typical and untypical days.	☐
Entries are legible, factual and specific.	☐
Uses examples, not just lists tasks.	☐
Does the diary describe the job?	
Reflects what the member <i>actually</i> does?	☐
Includes unplanned work, interruptions etc.	☐
Includes work done due to staffing gaps or service pressures.	☐
Captures work that has become normalised over time.	☐
Decision making and judgement	
Decisions are described, not assumed.	☐
Shows how decisions are made, not just outcomes.	☐
Explains when the member escalates and when they don't.	☐
Identifies risk and consequences.	☐
Responsibility	
Patient care/safety.	☐
Staff supervision, support or training.	☐
Equipment, resources or stock.	☐
Service delivery or continuity.	☐
Knowledge to act/autonomy	
Member explains how closely they are supervised.	☐
Shows independent working within policies.	☐
Describes interpreting guidance, not just following it.	☐
Identifies occasions where they are the go-to person.	☐
Communication and emotional effort	
Emotional labour is explicitly described.	☐
Includes difficult conversations and de-escalation.	☐
Includes support provided to colleagues.	☐
Physical and mental effort	
Physical effort includes duration and repetition.	☐
Mental effort includes sustained concentration and multitasking.	☐
Interruptions and pace are clearly described.	☐
Work outside your job description	
Additional duties clearly identified.	☐
Reason member undertakes them explained.	☐