

# UK Career Framework for Pain Nurses

Level Eight

CLINICAL PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE



**THE BRITISH  
PAIN SOCIETY**  
EXPERTISE WHERE IT MATTERS



Pain Nurse Network

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This document has been designed in collaboration with our members to ensure it meets most accessibility standards. However, if this does not fit your requirements, please contact [corporate.communications@rcn.org.uk](mailto:corporate.communications@rcn.org.uk)

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# Level Eight

This document has been designed to be used **in combination with** the appropriate standards / competency assessment framework, for example, for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales.

This document should be used as evidence for your own practice development and can be used as part of a personal development plan or as part of professional body revalidation

Those working at level 8 will have obtained the knowledge and skills as outlined in the previous levels and this is a natural progression in their development.

<b>Example role title:</b>	Consultant practitioner; consultant nurse; senior clinical nurse specialist; advanced clinical practitioner; lead nurse/matron; professor.
<b>Qualification:</b>	<p>Working towards or completion of Professional Doctorate/Doctor of Philosophy.</p> <p>Masters level award in either pain management, advanced practice or equivalent topic.</p> <p>Level 6/7 or level 9/10 in Scotland. Pain management module or related topic, i.e. palliative care/symptom management.</p> <p>Mentorship/Practice Supervisor Training.</p> <p>Level 7 or level 9/10 in Scotland Physical Examination and clinical reasoning skills.</p> <p>Level 7 or level 9/10 in Scotland non-medical prescribing qualification.</p> <p>Completion of EFIC Diploma in Pain Nursing.</p> <p>Practice assessor/supervisor training.</p>
<b>Role descriptor:</b>	The consultant role practices at the highest level of advanced clinical practice. These roles blend direct care, education, research and leadership and management. These practitioners are at the forefront of services. They are leaders in pain nursing.

# Domain One: Recognition of pain

This aspect of care examines definitions of pain, its anatomy and physiology, psychological, emotional, spiritual and social aspects of pain.

Knowledge	Skills
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrates expert understanding of the patient's pain through completion of a postgraduate course in, or relating to, pain management and significant clinical experience in supporting patients living with acute and persistent pain states.</li> <li>2. Demonstrates expert leadership in the utilisation of a biopsychosocial/spiritual approach to pain management in practice.</li> <li>3. Expert in the use of person-centred approaches in the recognition of the impact of pain on an individual's life.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Expertly evaluates the potential adverse physiological effects of acute, persistent and cancer-related pain from the perspective of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cardiovascular and respiratory systems</li> <li>• gastrointestinal and genitourinary systems</li> <li>• metabolic and neuroendocrine systems</li> <li>• neurological and central nervous system</li> <li>• considers these in the context of wind-up phenomenon (hyperalgesia and allodynia).</li> </ul> </li> <li>5. Expertly evaluates the potential psychological effects of acute and persistent pain and has an awareness of how to support individuals across the psychosocial/spiritual domains of pain.</li> <li>6. Critically analyses and adapts approach to patients according to the characteristics of their pain when performing observations and assessments when planning and implementing treatment.</li> <li>7. Expertly discusses and escalates issues in relation to pain diagnosis, anatomy and physiology, and psychological distress with nursing staff, clinicians, managers and the wider health care arena.</li> <li>8. Initiates appropriate referrals in response to abnormal findings and ensures that patients are followed up appropriately.</li> <li>9. Can work autonomously throughout an episode of patient care from assessment, diagnosis and initiation of management plan, and following up care.</li> </ol>

## Domain Two: Assessment of pain

This aspect of care outlines how pain can be assessed, measured and communicated.

Knowledge	Skills
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Expert knowledge of pain assessment tools and ability to select appropriate tool for the situation and patient.</li> <li>2. In-depth knowledge of the clinical rationale for laboratory tests and radiological investigations in response to patient's clinical presentation, abnormal results/ findings and implications for treatment.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Demonstrates leadership in the use of appropriate frameworks/tools relevant to clinical practice for the comprehensive assessment of pain.</li> <li>4. Completes a focused physical assessment and clinical examination.</li> <li>5. Completes a comprehensive pain history and clinical examination to gather and critically analyse subjective and objective health data to inform differential diagnosis across a range of complex pain presentations.</li> <li>6. Acts as a role model to guide and teach other health care staff about the importance of a comprehensive pain history, the approaches to taking this and the formulation of differential diagnosis for the complex pain patient.</li> <li>7. Assesses the patient and family's knowledge of pain and provides individualised information and education as appropriate.</li> <li>8. Acts as a role model to guide and teach other health care staff about the importance of assessment, identification and, where possible, appropriate management of risk factors in the health history.</li> <li>9. Comprehensively and critically evaluates effectiveness of pain management interventions at agreed follow up, modifies plan/therapy and/or referrals accordingly, and communicates with appropriate staff/ services.</li> <li>10. Comprehensively discusses and escalates issues in relation to pain assessment with nursing staff, clinicians, managers and the wider health care arena.</li> <li>11. Initiates appropriate referrals in response to abnormal findings and ensures that patients are followed up appropriately.</li> </ol>

# Domain Three: Treatment – physical strategies to manage pain

This aspect of care outlines the importance of physical strategies to improve and maintain function in acute and persistent pain.

Knowledge	Skills
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrates an expert level of knowledge and understanding of the essential nature of improving and maintaining function in relation to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• activities of daily living</li> <li>• different functional activities</li> <li>• incorporating cognitive behavioural interventions into those functional activities</li> <li>• activity tolerance</li> <li>• sleep and sleep hygiene</li> <li>• relationships – social, sexual and intimate</li> <li>• returning to work.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Utilises this knowledge in clinical practice and teaching others.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Demonstrates an advanced level of clinical decision making and whole system working within local, regional and national clinical and/or academic environment.</li> <li>4. Has advanced communication skills.</li> <li>5. Demonstrates effective leadership skills.</li> <li>6. Demonstrates precision in working within sphere of own practice.</li> <li>7. Manages competing demands, adverse effects and completes comprehensive documentation.</li> <li>8. Generates new solutions that best meet the needs of the patient, through lateral thinking and evidence base.</li> <li>9. Provides thorough consultation with patient and family about the importance of using physical strategies in managing pain to improve and maintain function.</li> <li>10. Discusses advanced evidence-based knowledge with patients and the interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary team.</li> <li>11. Contributes to the development of pain practice by publicising and disseminating developments.</li> <li>12. Independently establishes a nursing and interdisciplinary team training programme on physical strategies.</li> <li>13. Integrates the importance of safeguarding patients and patient information into all clinical practice.</li> <li>14. Demonstrates influence into physical strategies and service delivery from national and international evidence and practice.</li> <li>15. Collaborates with expert working groups at a regional, national and international level.</li> <li>16. Appreciates and evaluates ethical diversity in developing strategies for ethical approaches in cultural groups within patients and staff members.</li> <li>17. Identifies shortcomings in the service delivery and ensures equitable access.</li> <li>18. Evaluates, develops and implements strategic plans.</li> </ol>

## Domain Three: Treatment – self management strategies

This domain describes how the nursing team contributes to enabling patients to engage with self-management strategies for managing acute and chronic pain.

Knowledge	Skills
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrates expert knowledge of how to use health behaviour change theories and strategies.</li> <li>2. Demonstrates expert knowledge of how to use the patient’s existing skills, coping strategies and strengths.</li> <li>3. Expert in the use of self-management strategies and coaching patients to optimise their coping skills.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Identifies gaps in patient’s knowledge and abilities.</li> <li>5. Promotes excellence in sleep hygiene, facilitates pacing and challenges unhelpful or destructive beliefs, values and behaviours.</li> <li>6. Communicates expertly to reinforce helpful behaviours to enhance patient confidence and self-esteem.</li> <li>7. Acts as a role model to guide and teach other health care staff about the importance of self-management and behavioural approaches.</li> <li>8. Collaborates closely with other members of the ICT such as psychologists and other mental health professionals to ensure safe and effective care for all patients.</li> <li>9. Evaluates effectiveness of self-management strategies and contributes to local, regional and national health care agenda.</li> <li>10. Critically evaluates own values and beliefs and is willing to put the patient’s values and beliefs at the centre of supporting self-management.</li> <li>11. Identifies and works within sphere of own practice.</li> <li>12. Adheres to information governance (IG).</li> <li>13. Comprehensively discusses and escalates issues in relation to self-management strategies with the interdisciplinary/ multidisciplinary team and wider health care team.</li> </ol>



# Domain Three: Treatment – use of pharmacological strategies

This domain explores how nurses contribute to the safe, timely and appropriate use of pharmacological therapies.

Knowledge	Skills
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Advanced knowledge of the pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics of medicines used in a wide range of settings.</li> <li>2. Advanced knowledge of how analgesia and medication prescribing can impact mental capacity.</li> <li>3. Has a wide knowledge base in relation to prescribing in specialist groups such as extremes of age, substance misuse and addiction, organ impairment/failure, mental health, pregnancy and polypharmacy.</li> <li>4. Expert knowledge of the roles of the regulatory agencies involved in drug use, monitoring and licensing (for example, the National Institute of Clinical Excellence, the Committee on Safety of Medicines, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and local formularies committees).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Delivers complex care at an advanced level in an autonomous manner.</li> <li>6. Develops and leads teaching organisation-wide on analgesic pharmacological strategies.</li> <li>7. Recognises that medicines may impact mental capacity.</li> <li>8. Leads on the development of protocols and guidelines for treatment of side effects and complications associated with pharmacological strategies.</li> <li>9. Leads on organisation-wide audit and research related to pharmacological interventions.</li> <li>10. Collaborates with local, regional, national and international expert working groups.</li> <li>11. Recognises and acts appropriately/ taking the lead in relation to clinical signs and symptoms of adverse effects from interventions.</li> </ol>

## Domain Three: Interventional strategies

This aspect of care outlines the role of interventions to improve and maintain function.

Knowledge	Skills
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrates an expert level of clinical decision-making as to the suitability of patients for pain management interventions and the outcomes.</li> <li>2. Independently interprets and manages the clinical signs and symptoms associated with multiple co-morbidities and interventional therapies.</li> <li>3. Demonstrates the ability to provide expert clinical knowledge, skills and advice for patients undergoing a pain management intervention.</li> <li>4. Where appropriate, has knowledge and skills in performing specific interventions that are within own scope of practice.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Communicates advanced evidence-based knowledge with patients, families, interdisciplinary team and managers at local, regional and national settings with regards to the use and suitability of interventional strategies.</li> <li>6. Demonstrates the ability to perform expert clinical examination of patients who have undergone an interventional strategy and identify potential serious adverse effects.</li> <li>7. Expertly discusses and escalates issues in relation to potential adverse effects, patient safety or service delivery in relation to interventional strategies with nursing staff, clinicians, managers and the wider health care arena.</li> <li>8. Collaborates on and initiates the development of policies and guidelines pertinent to practices related to interventional techniques.</li> <li>9. Leads on audit and research activities to measure, evaluate and feedback to managers and the wider health care arena on interventional practice outcomes.</li> <li>10. Performs interventions that are within their scope of practice and has completed the required additional training and competency assessment.</li> </ol>

# Domain Four: Service development

This aspect of care describes how the nursing team contributes to the development of person-centred pain management provision ensuring the use of audit, research and education.

Knowledge	Skills
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Communicates and disseminates innovations in nursing practice at local, regional, national and international level.</li> <li>2. Plans for, develops and applies local/national policy initiatives that will change pain management practice within staff team.</li> <li>3. Leads a dynamic pain service that responds to appropriate changes and motivates the staff team.</li> <li>4. Leads and applies ethical and professional education to manage patients in pain and uses wider concepts in the professional and ethical literature to improve practice.</li> <li>5. Acts as a role model to guide and teach other health care staff about the rationale for incorporating a biopsychosocial/spiritual approach to pain management.</li> <li>6. Demonstrates expert knowledge base on the use of audit, service evaluation, quality improvement and research as a means for influencing and developing local, regional and national practice.</li> <li>7. Leads on the development and completion of audit, service evaluation, quality improvement and research within pain.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Plans for and applies local/national policy initiatives that will change pain management practice within staff team.</li> <li>9. Promotes a dynamic pain service that responds to appropriate changes and motivates the staff team.</li> <li>10. Develops a common vision of patient-centred and evidence-based services and create systems and processes to achieve this in liaison with other groups of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• service users</li> <li>• wider public</li> <li>• colleagues and co-workers</li> <li>• general practitioner/primary care health care providers</li> <li>• people in other parts of the organisation</li> <li>• other agencies.</li> </ul> </li> <li>11. Expertly engages the public, service users and other interested parties in an open and effective discussion on values, direction, policies and strategies for the organisation/services.</li> <li>12. Identifies own strengths and utilises them to develop the pain service within sphere of own practice.</li> <li>13. Acts as a mentor and role model to support and develop roles of staff in relation to pain management.</li> <li>14. Works in partnership with others to develop, take forward and evaluate direction of policies and strategies.</li> <li>15. Lobbies for resources to support and develop pain services.</li> <li>16. Exhibits confident and independent decision making.</li> <li>17. Demonstrates examples of being a clinical expert through publication and speaking at national and international conferences.</li> <li>18. Working at national and international level in the development of best practice guidance and protocols relating to pain.</li> </ol>

## Domain Five: Pain management in specialist groups

This aspect of care describes how the nursing team contributes to the development of person-centred pain management provision in specialist complex groups ensuring the use of audit, research and education.

Knowledge	Skills
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrates an expert knowledge and comprehensive understanding of the biopsychosocial model of pain and relationship to pain behaviours in complex and specialist pain groups.</li> <li>2. Demonstrates expert knowledge and comprehensive understanding of the pathophysiology and psychology of:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• addiction and substance misuse</li> <li>• chronic primary pain conditions</li> <li>• older adults</li> <li>• children and young people</li> <li>• headache and migraine</li> <li>• cancer-related pain</li> <li>• palliative and end of life</li> <li>• diabetic peripheral neuropathy</li> <li>• neuromodulation</li> <li>• learning disabilities</li> <li>• other areas specific to own area of practice.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Identifies situations such as suicidal ideation that requires a more comprehensive assessment and seeks advice or refers as appropriate.</li> <li>4. Identifies and works within sphere of own practice.</li> <li>5. Demonstrates expert leadership and clarity in working with patients with complex pain at a local, regional and national level.</li> <li>6. Comprehensively and critically evaluates pain management interventions for patients with complex pain.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Undertakes an expert biopsychosocial assessment of a patient with complex pain.</li> <li>8. Demonstrates expert clinical decision-making on the implementation and effect of pain management strategies in complex pain.</li> <li>9. Evaluates the effect of pain management approaches using biopsychosocial assessments for patients receiving evidence-based treatment.</li> <li>10. Manages adverse effects and completes comprehensive documentation in clinical records.</li> <li>11. Initiates the development of local, regional and national policies, guiding practice in relation to complex pain.</li> <li>12. Independently delivers nursing and IDT education and/or programmes at local, regional, national and international level.</li> <li>13. Acts as role model and mentor to guide and teach other health care staff about the importance of complex pain.</li> <li>14. Demonstrates an expert knowledge of the rationale for any investigations required for the diagnosis and ongoing management of the patient with pain needs.</li> <li>15. Leads on audit, service evaluation, quality improvement and research activities to measure, evaluate and feedback to managers and the wider health care arena.</li> <li>16. Demonstrates influence on the patient living with complex pain health care agenda at a local, regional and national level.</li> <li>17. Communicates complex information effectively with patients, families, IDT and managers.</li> </ol>



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