

# What if every health and care practitioner had the wound care skills, in line with their scope of practice?



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We are acutely aware that throughout England, there is marked, unwarranted variation in the treatment of wounds. We know the reasons for this are many, not least the gap in wound care related knowledge and skills across our health and care workforce. A desktop review of the pre-registration standards of proficiency for registered health professionals shows widely varying knowledge and skills requirements relating to wound care. This has contributed to a culture whereby some health professionals consider wound care to be within their scope of practice and some do not.

As the number of people with a wound in England increases year on year (Guest et al, 2020), so too does the demand on care requirements across settings and services. Subsequently, the likelihood that many people with wounds will be seen by health and care professionals who have little wound care related knowledge and skill, is high. The ensuing referral, to a person or team with the right expertise then causes a delay in treatment, affecting healing time, and consequently, the person's quality of life.

But what if all patient-facing health and care professionals, in any setting, felt that wound care was within their scope of practice? And all had the skills to clean and appropriately dress a wound?

When the National Wound Care Strategy Programme (NWCSP) was established and I joined as education delivery lead, it quickly became apparent that redressing this knowledge and skills imbalance was a priority. So, we soon set to work on the development of a capability framework for health and care practitioners that could both improve wound care and promote self-care, on a national scale.

A capability framework provides a means to assess the capabilities of an individual, team, or organisation, enabling a better understanding of where there are skills and where there are gaps. It also allows us to respond to any identified gaps.

To develop a national core capability wound care framework, we brought together key individuals from across nursing, physiotherapy, paramedics, medicine and surgery, with experts by experience, and representatives from academia, Skills for Care, the Royal College of Nursing, the Royal College of Podiatry, the Queen's Nursing Institute and Health Education England. Working together, supported by Skills for Health, the resulting framework sets out the expected wound care knowledge and skills for all patient-facing practitioners, in any healthcare setting where a person with a wound might be found.

It is in this way, that the framework is unique — as the first overarching, multiprofessional wound care capability framework for England. While many other publications exist in this space, often for specific wound types or audiences, we have made it clear in the document that the framework does not negate the need for these previous resources, but rather builds on them.

To some, our approach may seem reductive. But due to the variation in wound care, and its subsequent implications, we feel that professions working collectively to define the required wound care related knowledge and skill is a necessary first step.

Each core capability is described in three tiers, with an increasing level of knowledge and skill required in each. We have steered away from aligning these tiers to specific roles. Instead designing them to allow flexibility, so that individual practitioners, in partnership with their employers, can determine the tier of knowledge and skill they require for their specific role. They may require different tiers of knowledge and skill in different capabilities.

In addition to the expertise of those developing the framework, 585 health and care professionals and organisations contributed their feedback on the draft through an online consultation, finding strong levels of agreement with the content. In fact,

97% of respondents agreed in full or part with each capability and felt that it offered clear standards to be met in service provision that would improve safety in wound care delivery.

Published on June 9, 2021 The National Wound Care Core Capability Framework for England is available free to download, on the Skills for Health Info Hub here: <https://skillsforhealth.org.uk/info-hub/national-wound-care-core-capability-framework-for-england/>

Nevertheless, our work does not stop because the framework has been launched. Now, it is vital that it is widely used by health and care providers to assess the wound care capabilities of their workforce. We will continue to produce educational resources which support the development of the requisite

knowledge and skills, while working towards having comprehensive wound care data which will allow us to measure its impact.

Over time, it is anticipated that as the wound care capabilities of the patient-facing workforce are developed by the framework, the NWCSP's aspirations of reducing the suffering of people who have a wound will be better realised, alongside healing and prevention rates improved. **WUK**

#### REFERENCE

Guest JG, Fuller GW, Vowden P (2020) Cohort study evaluating the burden of wounds to the UK's National Health Service in 2017/2018: update from 2012/2013. *BMJ Open* 10:e045253. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2020-045253>



Health Education England

**“It enables the highest standards of practice as well as providing a structure for career and role development within wound care.”**

**Baroness Watkins of Tavistock**

Chair, National Wound Care Strategy Programme Board

