

# Advanced practice in physiotherapy

## Understanding the contribution of advanced practice in physiotherapy to transforming lives, maximising independence and empowering populations: a summary

### Advanced Practice Physiotherapy – the external context

The CSP is actively contributing to the development of advanced practice both in general terms and specifically for physiotherapy. This includes influencing national multi-professional frameworks and recognition schemes, workforce development and investment opportunities, and regulatory reform.

CSP contribution aims to gain clarity on many currently unresolved questions such as ‘how long should a physiotherapist have practised before becoming an advanced practitioner?’ ‘what skills are core and what courses and qualifications should be achieved?’

The Advanced Clinical Practice framework is about to be published by Health Education England, NHS Improvement and NHS England. This will partly address these questions in England – though not taking a prescriptive approach.

There are also examples of employer support for advanced practice development and roles – for example the development of an Advanced Clinical Practice apprenticeship.

Existing advanced practice knowledge, capabilities and experience held by the profession, along with established mechanisms (e.g. HCPC regulations), provide robust support for the development of Advanced Practice Physiotherapy posts.

### What physiotherapists do

Physiotherapists work with people to optimise function and mobility and to reverse the impact of illness and disability. They build resilience and enable individuals to be independent and healthy. Using a bio-psycho-social, evidence-based approach, physiotherapists target and tailor care in line with individuals’ needs and goals.”

They work autonomously within their scope of practice.

### What advanced practice in physiotherapy is

Advanced practice is a combination of advanced skills, knowledge and attitudes together with the core set of physiotherapy skills and knowledge, tailored to individual patients and local environments.

#### Skills include;

- diagnostics, e.g. inclusion within MSK interface roles
- invasive treatments, e.g. prescribing and therapeutic injections
- advanced clinical care in a specialism, e.g. women’s health
- complex case management, e.g. using integrated knowledge, skills and abilities to manage complex patients such as those with frailty or with multiple co-morbidities.

#### Having advanced practice skills;

- enables physiotherapists to address complex problems and manage risk in unpredictable contexts – such as A&E and General Practice
- uses advanced critical thinking to deliver care to patients with complex needs safely and competently
- provides capability to recognise and manage unfamiliar presentations

### Where Advanced Physiotherapy Practitioners can be found

- Within a physiotherapy team, multi-professional or multi-agency environments
- In acute, community and primary care settings in the NHS, and in providers of other public sector services, including adult social care and the military
- In a specialist capacity within a defined area, e.g. rheumatology or for a specific condition that requires more than one part of the care system to coordinate around the person and where practice is highly specialised

- In a generalist capacity managing patients presenting with undifferentiated concerns, and often with complex co-morbidities e.g. for a specific patient group such as the elderly requiring a breadth of skills and knowledge.

## Advanced Practice Physiotherapists deliver system-wide benefits

The development of advanced practice capability within the physiotherapy workforce can modernise services, improve patient care, release capacity in other parts of the workforce and achieve efficiencies.

### APPs achieve improvement and transformation through;

- influence across professional and organisational boundaries, locally and nationally
- professional and workforce development
- applying advanced level skills and clinical leadership skills and knowledge to improve patient outcomes and experience
- applying innovative and tailored approaches to transform services and population health
- holding high levels of personal autonomy.

## How safe advanced practice is assured

### APPs deliver safe services through;

- Accountability as a physiotherapist on the HCPC register
- Completion of an advanced programme of studies and demonstration of the ability to work at an advanced/Masters level of practice
- A structured approach to CPD, particularly where working at the limits of practice
- Working collaboratively with other members of healthcare teams and agencies to share expertise
- Service models that support collaborative working and avoid isolated practice
- Practising within their individual scope
- Understanding professional, organisational, regulatory and legal accountability frameworks
- Engagement in clinical, regional and international networks.

## Key resources

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. The vision for UK physiotherapy. London: The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy; 2015  
[www.csp.org.uk/about-csp/what-we-do/vision-uk-physiotherapy](http://www.csp.org.uk/about-csp/what-we-do/vision-uk-physiotherapy)

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. Physiotherapy framework. London: The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy; 2013  
[www.csp.org.uk/professional-union/careers-development/career-development/professional-frameworks](http://www.csp.org.uk/professional-union/careers-development/career-development/professional-frameworks)

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. Code of members' professional values and behaviour. London: The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy; 2012  
[www.csp.org.uk/publications/code-members-professional-values-behaviour](http://www.csp.org.uk/publications/code-members-professional-values-behaviour)

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. Quality Assurance Standards for physiotherapy service delivery. London: The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy; 2012  
[www.csp.org.uk/publications/quality-assurance-standards](http://www.csp.org.uk/publications/quality-assurance-standards)

Health and Care Professions Council: [www.hcpc-uk.org/](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/)

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. The Royal College of General Practitioners. The British Medical Association. Implementing physiotherapy services in general practice: a guide for implementation and evaluation. London: The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy; 2017  
[www.csp.org.uk/publications/implementing-physiotherapy-services-general-practice-guide-implementation-evaluation](http://www.csp.org.uk/publications/implementing-physiotherapy-services-general-practice-guide-implementation-evaluation)

Allied Health Professions Network. North West AHP Network tenders for programme to support AHP primary care readiness. Salford: Allied Health Professions Network. [www.ahpnw.nhs.uk/latest-news/260-north-west-ahp-network-tenders-for-programme-to-support-ahp-primary-care-readiness](http://www.ahpnw.nhs.uk/latest-news/260-north-west-ahp-network-tenders-for-programme-to-support-ahp-primary-care-readiness)

Skills for Health. Advanced clinical practice apprenticeship in development. London: Skills for Health; 2017.  
<https://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/standards/#standard-355>