

**The NHS  
Knowledge  
and Skills  
Framework  
and Related  
Development  
Review**

# Working Draft

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31394/*The NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework and Related  
Development Review Version 6* can also be made available on  
request in braille, audio cassette tape, disk, in large print, and in  
other languages.

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# Introduction

## How does the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework (NHS KSF) and Development Review relate to Agenda for Change?

The NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework and the development review process are designed to apply across the whole of the NHS.

The NHS KSF has been based on the following principles:

- Simple, easy to explain and understand.
- Operationally feasible to implement.
- Able to use and link with current and emerging competence frameworks.<sup>1</sup>
- UK and NHS-wide.
- Supportive of the delivery of plans for the future development of the National Health Service in the four countries of the UK.<sup>2</sup>

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1 These will include: regulatory requirements/competencies, National Occupational Standards, QAA benchmarks, and other nationally developed competencies, that have been externally quality assured and/or approved.

2 The NHS in England; Health and Personal Social Services in Northern Ireland; NHS Scotland; and NHS Wales. For example, NHS Plan for England, 2000; Our National Health: A plan for action, a plan for change, Scottish Executive 2000.

The NHS KSF, on which the development review process is based, is designed to:

- Identify the knowledge and skills that individuals need to **apply** in their post.
- Help guide the development of individuals.
- Provide a fair and objective framework on which to base review and development for all staff.
- Provide the basis of pay progression in the service.

The NHS KSF and the accompanying process have been developed through a partnership approach between management and staff side. This partnership approach is intended to continue as the NHS KSF is used in development review, with managers working with individual members of staff to plan their training and development and review their work. Effective development is characterised by a partnership between employers – or managers acting on their behalf – and individual members of staff. Both need to take responsibility for fulfilling their agreed roles. The overall purpose is to improve the quality of services to patients across the NHS.

## What is the purpose of the NHS KSF and the development review?

The NHS KSF and the development review are designed to:

- Promote equality for and diversity of all staff – with every member of staff using the same framework, having the same opportunities for learning and development open to them and having the same structured approach to learning, development and review.
- Promote effectiveness at work – with managers and staff being clear about what is required within a post and how an individual can be more effective through the provision of appropriate learning and development opportunities.
- Support effective learning and development of individuals and teams – with all members of staff being supported to learn throughout their careers and develop in a variety of ways and being given the resources to do so.

The approach to development review has been designed to be consistent with the major policy documents that have emerged, or are emerging, from each of the four UK health departments<sup>3</sup> and to build on existing good practice in the service. The development review process seeks to bring consistency across the NHS through linking development review to the UK-wide NHS KSF framework. It also seeks to move all NHS organisations to a more developmental approach through providing tools by which they can move forward.<sup>4</sup>

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3 In England: the NHS Plan, Lifelong Learning Framework, Skills Escalator etc.  
In Scotland: NHS Scotland, 2002, Partnership Information Network, Personal Development Planning and Review Guideline.

4 Working Together and equivalent material in other countries.

## **The NHS KSF and the development review process will enable individuals to:**

- Be clear about what knowledge and skills they need and how to apply them to meet the demands of their job.
- Access appropriate learning and development for their work.
- See how their work relates to the work of others.
- Identify the knowledge and skills they need to learn and develop in order to progress in their careers.

## **The NHS KSF and the development review process will enable organisations to:**

- Audit the knowledge and skills that exists in the organisation using a common framework and approach applicable to all staff groups.
- Make informed decisions about the deployment of staff.
- Identify skill and knowledge gaps within teams and the organisation and plan how to address these gaps.
- Organise training and development across staff groups, across the organisation and possibly with other organisations.
- Develop effective recruitment and selection processes as there will be clear information on current knowledge and skills and their application.

## What is the NHS KSF?

The NHS KSF is essentially a development tool but will also contribute to decisions about pay progression. It is made up of a number of dimensions. The dimensions form the main components of the framework. Six dimensions have been defined as core to the NHS – these dimensions will occur in everyone’s job. A further 16 specific dimensions have been identified – these relate to some jobs and not others. The numbering of the dimensions in the NHS KSF does not reflect any hierarchy – it is purely to aid easy recognition and referencing, and the development of a computer-based tool.

An individual would need to apply the knowledge and skills in a number of dimensions to achieve the expectations of their job. Most jobs will be made up of the core dimensions and about 3–6 of the specific dimensions (although a few jobs might involve more than this).

## The core and specific dimensions in the NHS KSF are:

### *Core dimensions*

1. Communication.
2. Personal and people development.
3. Health, safety and security.
4. Service development.
5. Quality.
6. Equality, diversity and rights.

### *Specific dimensions*

7. Assessment of health and wellbeing needs.
8. Addressing individual's health and wellbeing needs.
9. Improvement of health and wellbeing.
10. Protection of health and wellbeing.
11. Logistics.
12. Data processing and management.
13. Production and communication of information and knowledge.
14. Facilities maintenance and management.
15. Design and production of equipment, devices and visual records.
16. Biomedical investigation and reporting.
17. Measuring, monitoring and treating physiological conditions through the application of specific technologies.
18. Partnership.
19. Leadership.
20. Management of people.
21. Management of physical and financial resources.
22. Research and development.

Each dimension of the NHS KSF is further elaborated by a series of **level descriptors**. These show successively more advanced knowledge and skill and/or the increasing complexity of application of knowledge and skills to the demands of work. Each level builds on the preceding level(s).

The number of level descriptors varies from one dimension to another (although this is being kept under review in case development work reveals there to be a set number across all of the dimensions).

Attached to each level descriptor are:

**Indicators** – these describe the level at which knowledge and skills need to be applied and are designed to enable more consistent and reliable application of the dimensions and descriptors across the NHS.

**Examples of application** – to illustrate how and to what the dimensions, level descriptors and indicators could be applied across the jobs in the NHS. The examples relate both generally to all jobs (eg in relation to individual's rights) and specifically (eg in relation to a particular area of work, or a specific technology).

**References** – to enable users to find further information and connections to the framework and more detailed descriptions of competence for specific areas of work. The references will include:

- Regulatory requirements/competencies.
- National Occupational Standards.
- Academic benchmarks for professional pre-registration programmes.
- Other nationally developed competencies, policy documents and services frameworks.
- National guidance.

## What is a development review?

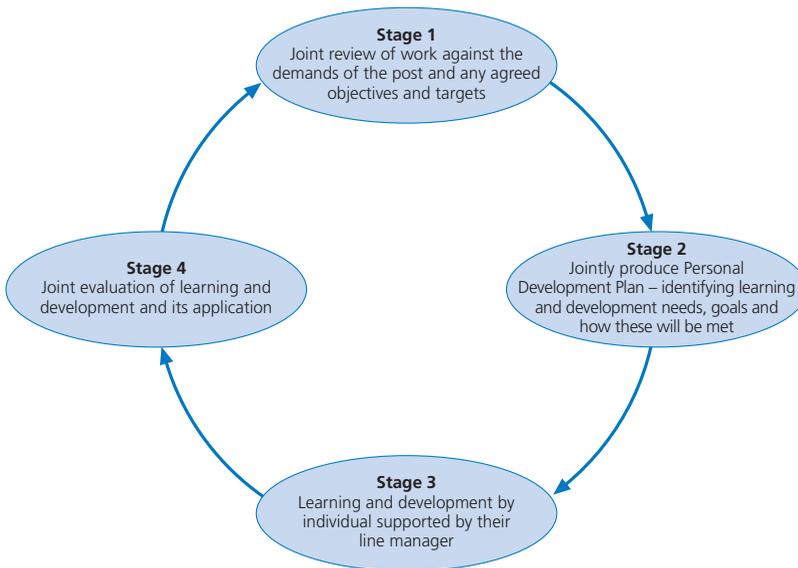
A development review is an ongoing cycle of review, planning, development and evaluation for staff in the NHS linked to organisational and individual development needs. The development review is a partnership between an individual member of staff and their manager (or someone acting in a management capacity) where both take responsibility for fulfilling their agreed roles. Resources are made available to enable the member of staff to develop and apply their knowledge and skills to meet the demands of their current post. Additionally the KSF can be used to support individuals and managers planning further progress in their careers, should they wish to do so. The manager (or the person acting on their behalf) needs to be competent to undertake such a review process. Managers may therefore need to develop their knowledge and understanding of the jobs of individual staff members and their ability to undertake such reviews; or they will need to delegate the process to someone who has that knowledge and ability.

The main purpose of the development review process is to:

- Review how individuals are applying knowledge and skills to meet the demands of their current post.
- Review the development needs of the individual member of staff.
- Identify the development that the individual needs over the next period of time.
- Plan how and when this development will take place and the date of the next review.

This process is shown in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1**



The cycle then starts at (1) again.

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5 Learning cycles are based on the work of Kolb D. 1993, *Experimental Learning*, New York, Prentice Hall.

## What is the development review process?

The development review process is based on the adult learning cycle.<sup>5</sup> It has four stages.

1. A joint review between the individual and their line manager (or another appropriate person acting in that capacity) of the individual's work against the demands of their post.
2. The production of a personal development plan (PDP) which identifies the individual's learning and development needs, short- and long-term goals and joint planning between the individual and their line manager as to how these goals will be met.
3. Learning and development by the individual supported by their line manager.
4. An evaluation of the learning and development that has taken place and the application of this learning and development.

## What are the main outcomes of a development review?

The main outcomes of a development review are:

1. Joint discussion and agreement on work between an individual member of staff and their manager (or someone else who is well placed to undertake this role).
2. A systematic personal development plan (PDP) for the individual member of staff linked to:
  - Their job and any specific objectives/targets linked to that job.
  - Organisational needs for their development.
  - Any requirements placed on that member of staff for maintaining registration with a statutory body or specific legislation related to the work they undertake.
  - The individual member of staff's development needs.
3. Decisions about pay progression at gateway points on the payband.

## Individuals will benefit from the development review process by:

- Having clear expectations of the demands of the post and support to meet those expectations.
- Managers taking a focused interest in their work and their learning and development based on an explicit and objective knowledge and skills framework.
- Resources being available to support their learning and development.

## Organisations will benefit from the development review process by:

- Understanding the contribution of different staff members to service delivery across the organisation and the inter-relationship of the work of those staff members.
- Understanding the link between effective service delivery and the development of staff.
- Having up-to-date knowledge about:
  - The contributions of different staff to service delivery.
  - The learning and development needs of individual staff and staff collectively.
  - The learning and development opportunities within and commissioned by the organisation to address those learning and development needs.
  - Staff's views of the effectiveness of different learning and development opportunities.
  - System, environmental and team issues which are having a detrimental effect on individuals' work and development.

## What happens at the NHS KSF gateway reviews?

In most years pay progression will take the form of an annual increase in pay from one pay point in a pay band to the next unless there are serious concerns about how the individual is undertaking the current role.

At defined points in a pay band – known as ‘gateways’ – access to higher pay points will depend on demonstrating the application of knowledge and skills to a defined level.

Gateways occur at two points:

- **Foundation Gateway** – this relates to the knowledge and skills that need to be applied from the outset in a post coupled with the provision of planned development in the foundation period of up to 12 months. The foundation gateway will be formed from a subset of the NHS KSF outline for that post.
- **Second Gateway** – the knowledge and skills that need to be applied and demonstrated by someone fully developed in a post. This will be formed from the full NHS KSF outline for the post. Having gone through the second gateway, individuals would progress to the top of the pay band provided they continue to apply the knowledge and skills contained within the NHS KSF outline for that post.

This means that it is only at gateways, or if concerns have been raised about serious weaknesses in undertaking the current role, that the outcome of a review might lead to deferment of pay progression. There must always have been formal notification of any concern and an action plan drawn up to try to remedy the weakness before the issue of deferment of progression<sup>6</sup> can be raised. The process after that will be exactly the same as in deferment at a gateway with progression resuming

as soon as a review determines that the NHS KSF outline for the post and the gateway has been met. Deferment will last until any problems are resolved.

This system assumes that (as now) individuals would need to apply for new posts and for career progression. These would be open to advertisement and competition as currently.

# OVERVIEW CHART

## THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS – AN OVERVIEW

A development review is a process of review, planning, development and evaluation for staff in the NHS linked to individual and organisational development needs. The review, which takes place once a year, is a joint responsibility between individuals and their manager. Resources are available to enable individuals to develop their knowledge and skills to meet the demands of their current post. Additionally the review process can be used to support individuals to progress in their career should they wish to do so. There are two types of review, on-going and gateway. Both use the same process, in addition the gateway review will form the basis for a decision about pay progression.

**During your development review:**

**Speak up,** this is your major opportunity to discuss your development with your manager

**Listen** to feedback, and try not to react defensively; not everyone sees things in the same way

**Discuss** any issues you are unclear or unhappy about

**Be realistic** about what you can achieve and by when

**By individual**

Both individuals and managers must set aside protected time and space for the review and make sure they are not interrupted. Both should be fully prepared.

**By manager**

**During the development review:**

**Encourage** the individual to speak and actively participate

**Listen** to what they say

**Offer** examples of what the individual has done well and not so well. However, do not leave everything to the review – **there should be no surprises** as issues should have been raised with the individual as they occur

Be **objective** and constructive with feedback

**Agree** the individual's objectives

Be **realistic** and enable the individual to set realistic goals

Joint review of individual's work against the NHS KSF profile for the post

Joint evaluation of learning and development and its application

Jointly produce Personal Development Plan – identify learning and development needs. Agree goals for the year ahead that are realistic and achievable

**Preparation for review:**

You should:

- Understand the NHS KSF outline for your post;
- Reflect on your work against the outline
- Gather and structure evidence to show how you meet the demands of your NHS KSF outline

The **ongoing development review** feeds back into learning the cycle

**Gateway development reviews:**  
At this stage your manager will discuss with you your pay for the next year. Foundation gateway reviews are undertaken in the first year of your job. Second gateway reviews are undertaken when it is considered that you should be fully developed in your post.

**Individuals undertake learning and development supported by their line manager**

1. Prioritise your learning and development by considering:
  - Your competence in your work.
  - If you have statutory and regulatory requirements which must be met.
  - The support available to you on an ongoing basis.
  - The competence required of your whole team.
  - The performance objectives which you need to meet in the post.
2. Agree who has responsibility for doing what and by when.
3. Agree date of the next review.

**Identifying the learning and development opportunities available:**

- Consider the preferred way of learning and developing such as:  
Their first language:
  - their experience of learning and development in the past
  - the opportunities available to them over recent years and the length of time since they last attended formal training and education of any kind
  - confidence in learning and developing
- Available funding and how to access this
- Practical issues such as location, timing, travel and access routes
- The benefits of gaining formal recognition or accreditation for specific aspects of learning and development, eg NVQs and SVQs, first degree, or Masters.



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