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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR

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Category: Health Professional Letter

Title: Standards for Competency Assurance of Non-Medical Prescribers in Wales

Date of Expiry / Review: 1 April 2026

Action by: 30 September 2024

Required by: Chief Executives, Nurse Directors, Directors of Therapies and Healthcare Science and Chief Pharmacists.

Local Health Boards, Velindre University NHS Trust, Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust, Public Health Wales NHS Trust.

Sender: Andrew Evans, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, Welsh Government

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Enclosures: Chief Professional Officers' letter to NHS Wales

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg hefyd / This document is also available in Welsh
Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg / We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh

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Standards for Competency Assurance of Non-Medical Prescribers in Wales

Background

1. Nurses, pharmacists, optometrists, physiotherapists, paramedics, radiographers and dietitians are subject to completing additional training, able to prescribe medicines for patients as either independent or supplementary prescribers, these healthcare professionals are collectively referred to as non-medical prescribers.

2. Non-medical prescribing has demonstrable benefits for patient care and investing in and supporting an increasing non-medical prescriber workforce is a key enabler in the planning and delivery of new care models and transforming care.

3. There are many non-medical prescribers working in health boards and NHS trusts and in primary care in Wales and non-medical prescribing training can support role and career development by enabling practitioners to take on greater responsibilities for managing patient care.

4. Non-medical prescribing enhances patient care by supporting patients' timely access to treatment with medicines, enabling choice whilst helping to reduce waiting times, reduce hospital admissions and maximising the wider skills of the healthcare team.

Responsibility of non-medical prescribing practitioners

5. Non-medical prescribers are accountable for all their prescribing decisions and any consequences arising from them. They should therefore only prescribe medicines they know are safe and effective for the patient and the condition being treated. They must be able to recognise and deal with pressures and conflicts of interest that could lead to inappropriate prescribing.

6. All non-medical prescribers are individually professionally accountable to their respective professional regulatory bodies and must act in accordance with the relevant professional standards and code of ethics and conduct.

Responsibility of employers

7. Where an appropriately trained and qualified non-medical prescriber prescribes as part of their professional duties with the consent of their employer, the employer is vicariously liable for the actions of the prescriber. Employers must therefore have in place robust arrangements for ensuring the initial and continued competence of non-medical prescribers working within their organisations.

8. All health boards and NHS trusts in Wales will have existing policies regarding the employment, supervision and review of non-medical prescribers.

Implementing a consistent approach to competency assurance

9. In 2019, Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) conducted scoping work which identified a need to produce guidance to more consistently support non-medical prescribers in appropriately evidencing their continued competence to prescribe.

10. The Standards for Competency Assurance of Independent and Supplementary Prescribers in Wales were developed by HEIW following a review of the non-medical prescribing policies currently in place within NHS organisations in collaboration with key internal and external stakeholders.

11. The standards support a "once for Wales" approach to the quality assurance of the non-medical prescriber workforce in Wales. They set the minimum requirements for evidencing and review of ongoing competence to prescribe for non-medical prescribers and employers of non-medical prescribers in four key areas:

    - Annual self-assessment of prescribing competence;
    - Annual declaration of scope of prescribing practice and of continued competence to prescribe;
    - Regular prescribing appraisal with a suitably qualified individual; and
    - Use of portfolios to evidence competence

12. The standards are aimed at all non-medical prescribers who provide NHS services to patients in Wales, and their employers in all sectors of practice and apply to all independent prescribers, community practitioner nurse prescribers and supplementary prescribers practicing in Wales.

13. These standards complement and do not replace or supersede standards set by professional regulatory or leadership bodies either relating to prescribing or revalidation more generally.

Required actions

- All health boards, Velindre NHS Trust, the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust, and Public Health Wales NHS Trust are required to implement the standards for competency assurance of non-medical prescribers within their organisation by 31 March 2026 at the latest.

- To support implementation, these organisations are required to develop an implementation plan with the support of HEIW by 30 September 2024.

- All health boards, Velindre NHS Trust, the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust, and Public Health Wales NHS Trust should identify an appropriate senior manager within their organisation to be responsible for developing the implementation plan and whose details should be shared with HEIW by emailing Karen.Brambles@wales.nhs.uk by 28 March 2024.

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Deputy Chief Scientific Adviser (Health)

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

To: Health board and NHS trust
Chief Executives
Directors of Nursing
Directors of Therapies and Health Sciences
Chief Pharmacists

March 2024

Dear Colleagues,

Standards for Competency Assurance of Non-Medical Prescribers in Wales

NHS organisations employing non-medical prescribers are required to have in place robust arrangements for ensuring the initial and continued competence of non-medical practitioners who prescribe as part of their professional duties within the organisation.

All NHS organisations in Wales have policies and procedures in place to support good governance in relation to non-medical prescribing. However, a scoping exercise undertaken by Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) in 2019 identified opportunities to develop a more consistent "one for Wales" approach to the quality assurance of the non-medical prescriber workforce in Wales.

The scoping exercise which included the review of the existing non-medical prescribing policies in place across Wales, resulted in the production of the Standards for Competency Assurance of Non-Medical Prescribers in Wales.

This letter sets out a requirement for all health boards, Velindre NHS Trust, the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust, and Public Health Wales NHS Trust to ensure arrangements for employing, supervising and reviewing the practice of non-medical prescribers comply with the standards for competency assurance of non-medical prescribers in Wales no later than 31 March 2026.

To support the implementation of standards organisations should identify an appropriate senior manager within the organisation to be responsible for developing an implementation plan by 30 September 2024.

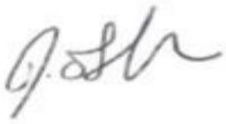
We would be grateful if the details of your organisation's nominated lead can be shared with HEIW by emailing Karen.Brambles@wales.nhs.uk by 28 March 2024.

HEIW will be responsible for providing oversight of each NHS organisationcompliance with the requirements in this Welsh Health Circular and in due course against the standards.

Yours sincerely,

SUE TRANKA

RUTH CROWDER



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