

# Healthcare Support Worker's Guide



“Valuing the contribution Healthcare Support Workers make to delivering safe, effective and person centred care across NHSScotland”



I am delighted to introduce the Healthcare Support Worker (HCSW) Learning Framework for clinical HCSWs developed by NHS Education for Scotland as part of the “Everyone Matters: 2020 Workforce Vision” resources.

Clinical HCSWs play an extremely valuable role in teams, and their learning and development is very important. This framework values the contribution of HCSW and promotes learning which will support safe, effective and person-centred care.”

**Caroline Lamb, Chief Executive**

The HCSW Learning Framework supports clinical healthcare support workers (HCSWs) to learn and develop in post or progress to higher level support worker posts. It is based on the same principles as the [Post-registration Career Framework](#) for registered nurses, midwives and allied health professions and directly links into the [NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework](#) annual development review cycle. Set within **Support Worker Central** ([www.supportworkercentral.nes.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.supportworkercentral.nes.scot.nhs.uk)) the [HCSW Learning Framework](#) is designed to take all of this into account, to empower healthcare support workers and leaders to make good choices about learning. We know that when staff and teams are learning, the people they care for and provide treatment to have better outcomes. At NES we believe learning is good for everyone in NHSScotland, especially the people who use our services.

#### Questions which HCSWs asked us frequently during our engagement work included:

- What is expected of me in my role?
- What is the difference between Band 2, 3 and 4 HCSW roles?
- How can I progress to a higher level post?
- Can my experience count towards a qualification?
- What qualifications do I need?
- What qualification is right for me?
- How can I fund my learning?

In response to these questions, we developed [Support Worker Central](#) a website designed to be a one-stop shop about learning for clinical healthcare support workers in NHSScotland.

It was really important to the staff we consulted with that information about learning could be easily accessed. HCSWs may not log on to a computer at work, so the new website works well on tablets and smart phones.

There are key areas which are vital for learning at work to flourish for healthcare support workers:

1. The tools (or infrastructure) which support people to learn at work
2. The culture which is needed for everyone to learn and develop
3. The voice of healthcare support workers in sharing their learning preferences

We know that all of these areas need to be strengthened as we listen to, and work with clinical healthcare support workers and their teams. Learning at work is important and is most likely to be a good experience for clinical healthcare support workers when:

- It directly supports improving the experience of people and their families
- The learning is practical and can be related directly to the job
- Learning is with peers (meeting with other healthcare support workers is incredibly supportive and valuable)
- Good information about relevant qualifications is available
- The learning is not entirely done on-line and is free from jargon
- The learning is in bite sized pieces and on-going support is available to put new skills into practice.

The HCSW Learning Framework is made up of four parts, all of which work together and support the annual KSF Development Review and Personal Development Plan:

- [4 Pillars of Practice for HCSWs](#)
- [Qualifications Search](#)
- [NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework and Personal Development Review](#)
- [Mandatory Induction Standards \(for new employees only\)](#)

The HCSW Learning Framework will help with:

- Developing current and future HCSW roles
- Finding the right qualification at the right level
- Supporting NHS KSF Personal Development Planning



## A: Developing HCSW roles

HCSWs have frontline roles which continue to change and develop. This makes HCSWs really well placed to notice things about the patient/client's experience which could be improved and make suggestions for change. For example HCSWs have an important role in helping students learn in practice settings, and in taking on responsibility for audit and patient safety data.

From our work on developing the HCSW Learning Framework, we can better describe what HCSWs now do by using 4 Pillars of Practice for HCSWs. This is based upon the [Post-registration Career Framework](#) which is used to support the learning and development for registered nurses, midwives and allied health professions.

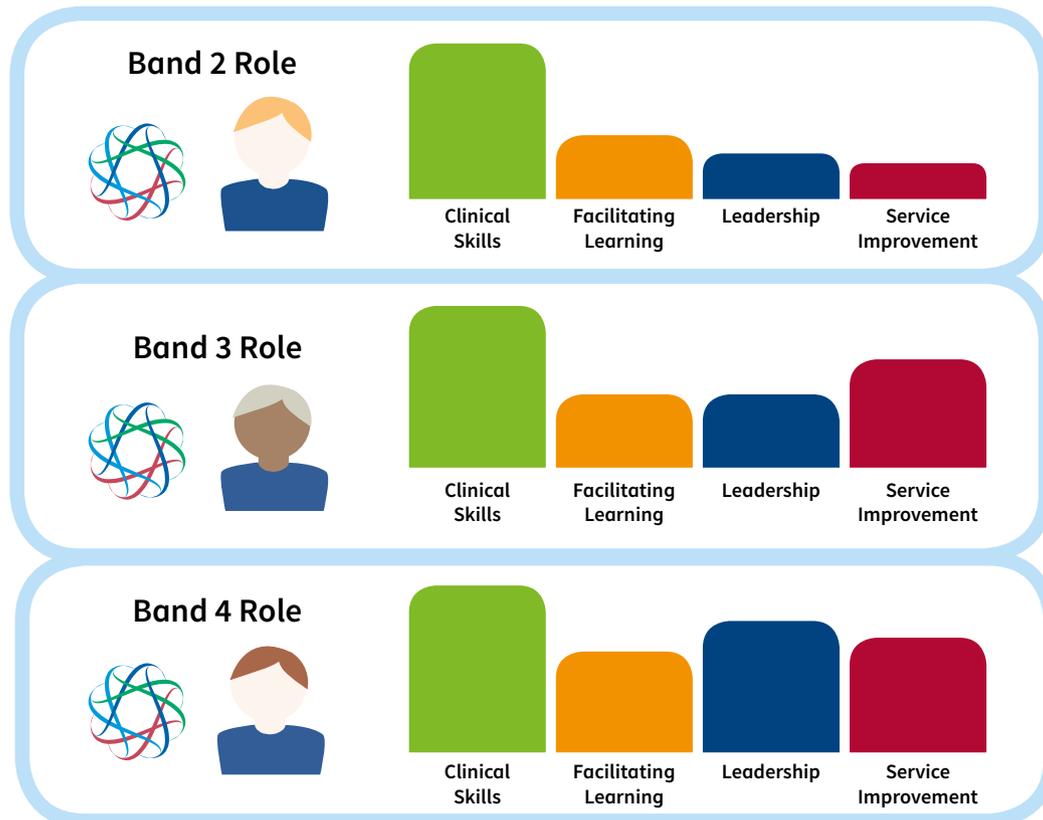
For HCSWs the 4 Pillars of Practice are:

- Clinical Skills
- Facilitating Learning
- Leadership
- Service Improvement

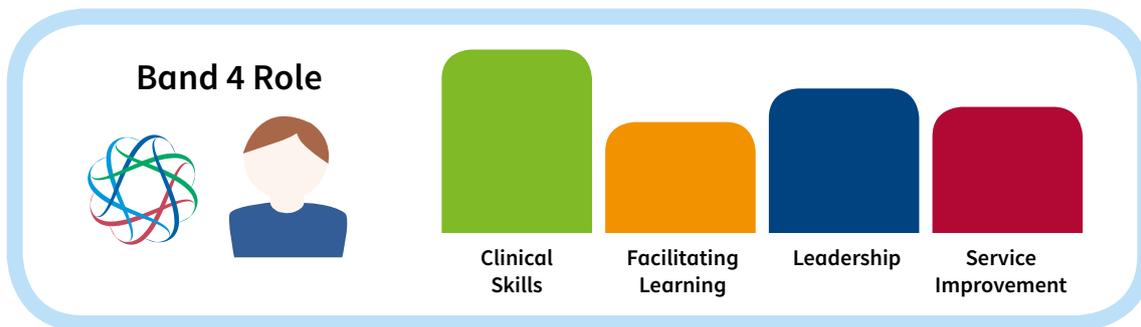
A Band 2 HCSW role is the most common role in NHSScotland, with over 18,000 staff employed at this level. The role is made up mostly of clinical skills and tasks delegated from the clinical team. Often staff working in this role are very experienced clinically, but will also be asked to take forward changes, for example protected mealtimes or patient safety audits. Using the 4 Pillars of Practice lets us see how complex the role is becoming, and makes it easier to identify learning needs. The HCSW Learning Framework clarifies the differences in responsibilities and expectations for HCSW roles at Band 2, 3 and 4.

For example, Band 3 or Senior HCSWs, are expected to develop more complex clinical skills and complete training to safely take on duties delegated by registered staff. Supporting others to learn is also important. For example working with students on placement, or supporting new staff through the [Mandatory Induction Standards](#). Band 3 HCSWs are more involved with service improvement and leadership, such as collecting Patient Safety data, mealtime audits, co-ordinating the practical aspects of people being discharged.

**The roles are represented visually below:**



A Band 4 HCSW or Assistant Practitioner role is the most senior support worker role available in NHSScotland. Band 4 HCSWs have developed clinical skills which are more specialised and specific to an area of practice for example midwifery, speech and language therapy, or renal services. Band 4 or Assistant Practitioners are required to complete a relevant qualification at [SCQF level 7-8](#) to safely undertake roles and tasks delegated by registered healthcare staff.



Using the 4 Pillars of Practice for HCSWs to understand an Assistant Practitioner or Band 4 role, the higher level clinical skills should be described. A Band 4 HCSW can either develop more specialised clinical skills in one setting, or may work across professions and settings. Band 4 HCSWs are actively involved in supporting others to learn, for example by being a KSF reviewer for Band 2 or Band 3 HCSWs,

and are expected to have stronger Leadership and Service Improvement skills, for example working on improvement projects such as information for patients, liaising with other departments and services to co-ordinate discharge from hospital, and following up clients in the community after admission.



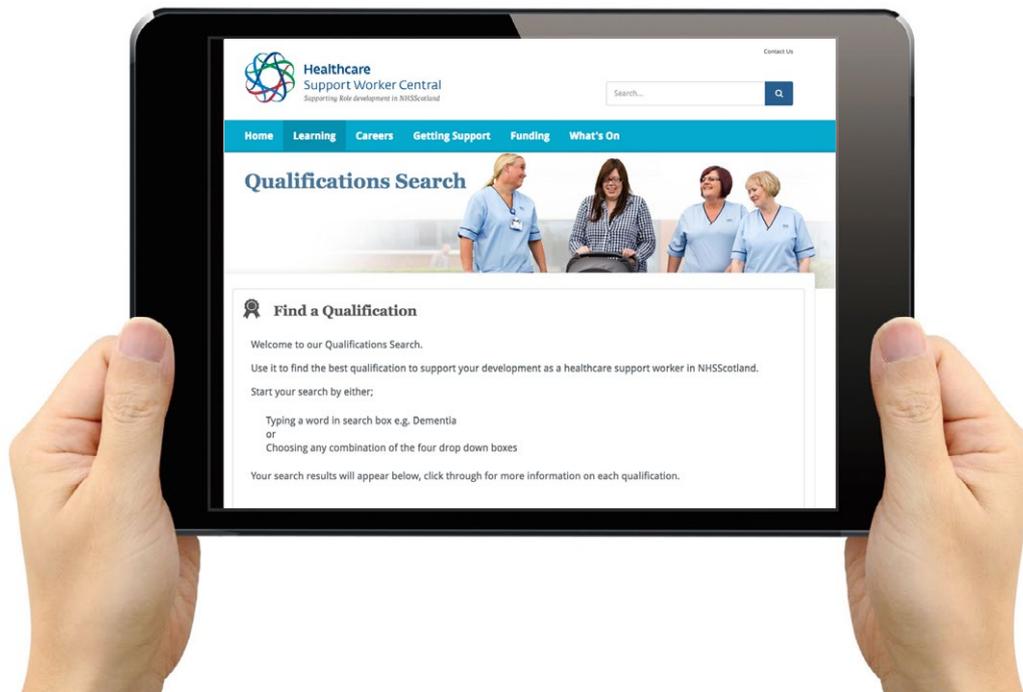
## B: Finding the right Qualification at the right level

Within the website, the [Qualifications Search](#) helps to find qualifications relevant and available for HCSWs in Scotland. You can search by a subject, by job family or by the level of post, or Pillar of Practice. When support workers study for a qualification, there is often a ripple effect across the team as others get involved.

It can be really satisfying and rewarding for registered healthcare staff and senior support workers to become mentors to their HCSW colleagues. We know that staff and teams who are engaged in learning will have better outcomes for patients, clients and their families, therefore a work based qualification can be a good choice.

### There are many benefits to gaining a qualification including:

- A sense of achievement
- Feeling valued by your team and organisation
- Greater confidence, motivation and willingness to improve services
- More career choices
- Gaining skills and knowledge which are recognised and valued



NHS Education for Scotland recognises that there are already many frameworks in place, and that it can be confusing for staff. Therefore the HCSW Learning Framework has been developed to work alongside these existing frameworks:

1. The Career Framework for Health which defines the **level** of a post
2. Agenda for Change Job Evaluation which defines the **pay band** of a post
3. NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) which defines the **skills** a person needs
4. The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) which defines the **academic level** of qualifications in Scotland along with the number of hours of study required.

| Career Framework Level                               | Agenda for Change Pay Band (most common) | Knowledge and Skills Framework  | Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework level | Example of common Qualifications  |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| <b>Level 4 – Associate or Assistant Practitioner</b> | Band 4 post                              | Core Dimensions 1 - 6 plus relevant<br>Health and well-being dimensions | Level 7 - 8  | Higher National Certificate/ Diploma (HNC/D)<br>Professional Development Award (PDA) at Level 8 |
| <b>Level 3 – Senior Healthcare Support Worker</b>    | Band 3 Post                              | Core Dimensions 1 - 6 plus relevant<br>Health and well-being dimensions | Levels 6 - 7                                       | HNC at Level 7 / SVQ Level 3 / PDA  |
| <b>Level 2 Healthcare Support Worker</b>             | Band 2 Post                              | Core Dimensions 1 - 6 plus relevant<br>Health and well-being dimensions | Levels 5 - 6                                       | SVQ Level 2 / National Progression Award (NPA)  |

## C. Supporting NHS KSF and Personal Development Plans

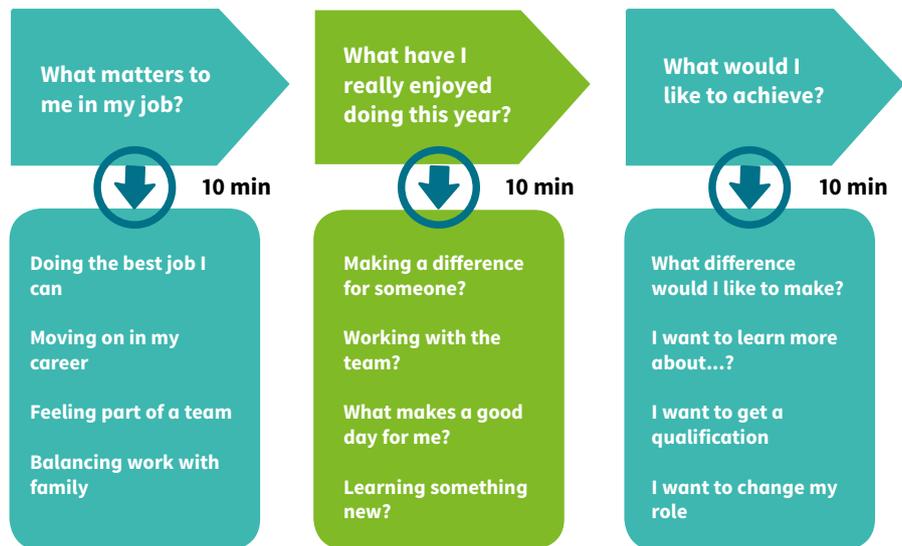
The HCSW Learning Framework has been developed to be used alongside the annual KSF Personal Development Planning and Review cycle. There is a section within Support Worker Central which links to [KSF Guidance](#).

The outcome of the KSF PDP discussion could be to get involved in a Service Improvement project or learn more about supporting learning in the workplace. Whatever the objective is the HCSW Learning Framework supports informed choices about learning for HCSW role development.

The NHS KSF discussion should be about talking – not a tick box exercise. A meaningful Personal Development Plan can easily be achieved when HCSWs and their KSF reviewers ask some recommended questions:

1. What matters to me in my job?
2. What have I enjoyed doing in the past year?
3. What do I want to achieve (in my job, and in my career)?

### Before PDPR Preparation



The HCSW Learning Framework can support the PDP discussions by providing instant access to information about learning. The expectations of a higher level post can be discussed using the 4 Pillars of Practice for HCSWs, and informed choices about qualifications can be made using the Qualifications Search.

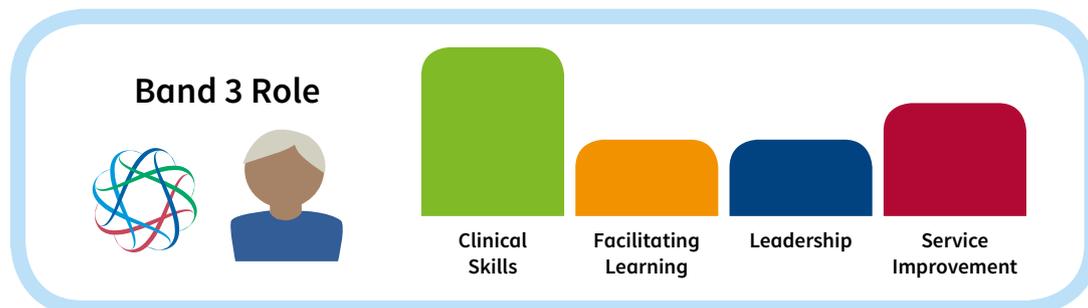
## During PDPR Discussion



In this example, an experienced Band 3 or Senior HCSW might want to consolidate skills and knowledge gained in post. Identified learning needs could include:

- Learning a new clinical skill or taking on more responsibility (Clinical Skills)
- Supporting new staff to achieve the Mandatory Induction Standards (Facilitating Learning)
- Being the lead person for a skill you have developed, for example being the key person in your team for moving and handling
- Getting involved in an improvement project or collecting data for audit (Service Improvement)
- Undertaking an accredited qualification to consolidate your learning, for example an SVQ

By doing some preparation and using the HCSW Learning Framework you can use your time to talk about your role, your contribution and what you want to achieve rather than just “tick” the KSF box.



## Developing the HCSW Learning Framework - Our story so far...

In 2014, NES were tasked by the Scottish Government to develop a national framework for all support staff to increase access to learning and development for support workers, including qualifications. We listened to our [HCSW Advisory Group](#), to healthcare support workers and their managers, to KSF reviewers and colleagues to understand what will help deliver the actions set out in the national workforce development policy [Everyone Matters; 2020 Workforce Vision](#).

The most important aspect of the HCSW Learning Framework now is how it is used in practice. If you would like advice or support to implement the HCSW Learning Framework please contact the HCSW Team: [hcsw@nes.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:hcsw@nes.scot.nhs.uk)



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NHS Education for Scotland  
Westport 102  
West Port  
Edinburgh  
EH3 9DN  
**[www.nes.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk)**

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