

NextGen: HN unit specification

Professional Practice in Healthcare Settings (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: JRG7 47

SCQF level: 7 (32 SCQF credit points)

Valid from: August 2026

This unit specification provides detailed information about the unit to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year. It is for lecturers and assessors, and contains all the mandatory information you need to deliver and assess the unit.

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Unit purpose

This unit helps learners to understand the professional standards and responsibilities underpinning interprofessional working, effective care delivery and practice across the healthcare professions. They learn the importance of the therapeutic relationship, effective communication, inclusiveness and person-centred care. They reflect on their own values, beliefs and communication skills in the context of supporting others. They examine society and its impact on human development and behaviour and the range of factors that may contribute to the health status of individuals. Learners explore public health approaches, considering how public health and government agendas tackle inequalities that influence health and wellbeing.

This is a project-based unit, and learners should work to design or develop, and evaluate, a project in a healthcare setting. This could be patient, education or activity-based, but it should be appropriate to the Higher National Certificate (HNC) pathway being carried out. You should agree on project topics and approaches with learners.

Entry to the unit is at your centre's discretion. Learners should, however, have effective communication and interpersonal skills. They can demonstrate these with relevant qualifications at SCQF level 6 or experience of working in the health or social care sectors.

This is a mandatory unit in HNC Healthcare Practice. Learners can also complete it as a stand-alone unit for continuous professional development (CPD). Learners who complete the unit as part of HNC Healthcare Practice may progress to further study, including Higher National Diploma (HND) or degree-level programmes.

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

1. discuss the professional standards, responsibilities and governance underpinning effective care practice
2. explain the professional behaviours that support the therapeutic relationship, person-centred care, and a personal outcomes approach
3. describe current relevant legislation and policies that support effective care practice, empowerment of the service user, and regulation of care processes
4. explain how cultural, social and political factors influence the health and wellbeing of the individual
5. evaluate the role of public health in tackling health inequalities and promoting health and wellbeing in Scotland
6. develop meta-skills in a vocational or academic context
7. develop knowledge and understanding of the United Nations Sustainability Development Goals (UN SDGs) and their application to care practice

Evidence requirements

Learners must provide knowledge evidence for these outcomes. This can be oral or written (or a combination of both) and captured in a range of media. Learners can produce evidence throughout the unit. You must authenticate this evidence.

We recommend a holistic approach to assessment. Learners must show their knowledge, skills and application (where appropriate) across each outcome. You should use your professional judgement to determine if they've generated appropriate evidence to meet the evidence requirements.

There are mandatory elements to each outcome that learners must address and there are optional elements that learners should cover if relevant to their project assessment. This should be discussed and agreed with their academic advisor.

We suggest that you assess outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 in a combined project submission. You should assess outcome 6 as a reflective account covering learners' meta-skills, learning and achievement from across the qualification.

To successfully achieve these outcomes, learners must provide the following evidence:

Discuss the professional standards, responsibilities and governance underpinning effective care practice (outcome 1)

Mandatory elements	Optional elements
Professional practice, regulation and registration, ethics, accountability and delegation	Whistleblowing
Governance	Supervision
Roles and responsibilities	
The multi-disciplinary team and interprofessional working, including the role of significant others	
Continuing professional development (CPD) and the role of reflection in improving practice	

Explain the professional behaviours that support the therapeutic relationship, person-centred care, and a personal outcomes approach (outcome 2)

Mandatory elements	Optional elements
The therapeutic relationship and the importance of effective communication in person-centred care	
• Neurodiversity • Communication support needs • Personal outcomes approach • Promoting independence • Empowerment and enablement	
Skills, qualities and personal values necessary for effective care delivery	Principles of trauma-informed practice
Understanding behaviour and associated influences	
Equality and diversity approaches in healthcare services	
Participation frameworks	
Concepts of prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination	
Types of abuse and the support required to safeguard individuals	
Legislation and organisational policies relating to safeguarding individuals from harm and abuse	

Describe current relevant legislation and policies that support effective care practice, empowerment of the service user and regulation of care processes (outcome 3)

Mandatory elements	Optional elements
Describe three pieces of current relevant legislation and one policy that supports effective care practice	The Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities
Informed consent	

Explain how cultural, social and political factors influence the health and wellbeing of the individual (outcome 4)

For this outcome, learners should show reference to reputable sources of information.

Mandatory elements	Optional elements
Cultural, social and political factors that influence health, development and behaviour	Concepts of health and wellbeing
Determinants of health, health inequalities and the impact on individual behaviour and health	
Sustainability goals: • ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages • reduce inequality in and among countries	

Evaluate the role of public health in tackling health inequalities and promoting health and wellbeing in Scotland (outcome 5)

Mandatory elements	Optional elements
Health improvement and promotion	Public health purpose and initiatives
Promoting: • early intervention • self-management • independent living	Health economics, such as the funding of health and social care
Changing demographics and their impact on health and social care provision and planning, including associated statistical data	
Planning for the future: • challenges • innovation • digital and technology-enabled care	

Develop meta-skills in a vocational or academic context (outcome 6)

This outcome assesses the meta-skills learners achieve from the knowledge, skills and application across the qualification. You can include the assessment in this unit or in a personal development unit.

Learners must produce evidence to show they can:

- self-assess their meta-skills baseline
- create a plan to develop their own meta-skills
- carry out activities to develop and demonstrate their meta-skills
- use reflective practice to monitor and assess the meta-skills they have improved and developed

For more information about meta-skills, see the educator guide, [Skills 4.0: A skills model to drive Scotland's future](#) and [our meta-skills web page](#).

Develop knowledge and understanding of the UN SDGs and their application to care practice (outcome 7)

Mandatory elements	Optional elements
The UN SDGs and their purpose	
The implications of two relevant SDGs to care practice	
Legislation, policies and strategies to meet the relevant SDGs	
How care practice can be made more sustainable	

Knowledge and skills

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 1 Learners should understand: • regulation in professional practice • professional registration ethics • accountability and delegation • governance in healthcare practice • roles and responsibilities in healthcare practice • the multidisciplinary team and interprofessional working, including the role of significant others • supervision in healthcare practice • CPD and the role of reflection on improving practice • duty of candour and whistleblowing	Outcome 1 Learners can: • identify and apply relevant, standards, codes of practice and frameworks to practice • participate in quality processes and risk management • participate in CPD and reflective practice • participate in interprofessional working • explain the duty of candour • involve and support significant others

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 2 Learners should understand: • the therapeutic relationship and the importance of effective communication in person-centred care • how to promote a personal outcomes approach, empowerment, independence and enablement • Participation in Care Frameworks and their implication for ensuring individuals and communities voices are heard in care delivery • the skills, qualities and personal values required for effective care delivery • behaviour and relevant influences • concepts of prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination • equality and diversity approaches in healthcare services • neurodiversity • types of abuse and the support required to safeguard individuals • principles of trauma-informed practice • legislation and organisational policies relating to safeguarding individuals from harm and abuse	Outcome 2 Learners can: • identify and implement strategies to counter barriers to effective communication and person-centred care • apply the skills, qualities and values required for effective care and enablement • promote empowerment, independence and enablement, together with a personal outcomes approach • explain the impact of Participation in Care Frameworks • apply equality and diversity practices • apply the principles of trauma informed practice • identify types of harm and abuse • identify indicators of harm and abuse • explain how to respond appropriately to actual or suspected harm

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 3 Learners should understand: • current relevant legislation and policies that support effective care practice, including: ○ health and safety legislation ○ data protection ○ freedom of information ○ equality and diversity legislation • the Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities • informed consent	Outcome 3 Learners can: • describe risk assessment procedures • reflect on their role in the risk assessment process • work safely within relevant legislation and regulations • evaluate how the individual's rights and responsibilities are met • ensure informed consent
Outcome 4 Learners should understand: • concepts of health and wellbeing • society and its influence on health, development and behaviour • determinants of health, health inequalities and the impact on individual behaviour and health • SDGs 3 and 10: ○ ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages ○ reduce inequality in and among countries	Outcome 4 Learners can: • interpret data from current research • evaluate the impact of factors on individuals' physical health and mental wellbeing • consider SDGs when assessing and supporting individuals

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 5 Learners should understand: • public health purpose and initiatives • health improvement and promotion • early intervention, self-management and promoting independent living • changing demographics and its impact on health and social care provision and planning • health economics, such as the funding of health and social care • planning for the future: ○ challenges ○ innovation ○ digital and technology-enabled care	Outcome 5 Learners can: • encourage appropriate self-management techniques and promote independence with individuals in receipt of care and/or therapeutic enabling services • implement appropriate strategies that support future care provision plans
Outcome 6 Learners should understand: • the meta-skills categories of self-management, social intelligence and innovation, and associated meta-skills, as described in Skills 4.0 • the importance of developing meta-skills, including employability, adaptability and effectiveness • what meta-skills are most relevant to their vocational or academic context • how to develop meta-skills, including these approaches: ○ self-awareness: analysing preferences, strengths and development needs, meta-skills self-assessment ○ goal setting and action planning ○ reflective practice: principles, tools and approaches for effective reflective practice	Outcome 6 Learners can: • create a plan to develop their meta-skills • carry out, review and adapt their meta-skills development plan • assess their meta-skills development

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 7 Learners should understand: • the purpose of the UN SDGs • the purpose of specific care-related SDGs, and the implications of these SDGs to care practice • how care practice can be made more sustainable, including any legislation, policies and strategies	Outcome 7 Learners can: • describe the relevant SDGs • discuss how these SDGs are relevant to their own care practice • describe how care practice can be made more sustainable in relation to these SDGs

Meta-skills

You must give learners opportunities to develop their meta-skills throughout this unit. We have suggested how to incorporate the most relevant ones into the unit content, but you may find other opportunities.

Self-management

This includes focusing, integrity, adapting and initiative. The most relevant are:

- focusing:
 - researching
 - evaluating understanding on an ongoing basis through formative assessment
- integrity:
 - discussing own values, ethics and personal development
- adapting:
 - demonstrating critical reflection
 - accommodating new ideas through research and practical experience
- initiative:
 - showing independent research
 - collaborating with other professionals to share enthusiasm and knowledge

Social intelligence

This includes communicating, feeling, collaborating and leading. The most relevant are:

- communicating:
 - working collaboratively with others

- sharing ideas and perspectives
- feeling:
 - discussing own values and personal development
 - showing empathy
 - demonstrating personal reflection
 - building relationships
- collaborating:
 - teamworking
 - working towards shared goals within practice

Innovation

This includes curiosity, creativity, sense-making and critical thinking. The most relevant are:

- curiosity:
 - researching and making observations, to understand the link between theory and practice
- creativity:
 - applying creative solutions to problem solving within the scope of professional practice
- sense-making:
 - holistic thinking
 - researching
 - evaluating understanding
- critical thinking:
 - analysing research
 - making informed decisions

Literacies

This unit provides opportunities to develop the following literacies.

- academic writing
- referencing
- using domain-specific language.
- understanding evidence-based literature

Numeracy

Learners develop numeracy skills by:

- analysing research statistics within relevant data
- managing time-sensitive tasks

Communication

Learners develop communication skills by:

- participating in spoken question-and-answer sessions, and small and large group discussions
- receiving and responding appropriately to verbal and non-verbal communication in learning, care and enabling environments
- creating and responding to written and digital communications in learning, care and enabling environments
- completing written assignments and accurately referencing sources of information
- collaborating with others in the practice setting

Digital

Learners develop digital skills by:

- using digital platforms to access information to support learning and understanding

- using a PC or other devices to develop coherent portfolio and project work
- using digital platforms to engage and collaborate with professionals and carers in the sector
- completing risk assessments using digital communication

Learning for Sustainability

Throughout this unit, you should encourage learners to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of sustainability.

This includes:

- a general understanding of social, economic and environmental sustainability
- a general understanding of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- a deeper understanding of subject-specific sustainability
- the confidence to apply the skills, knowledge, understanding and values they develop in the next stage of their life

Delivery of unit

You can deliver the unit as a stand-alone unit for CPD. When you deliver the unit as part of a qualification, you can integrate teaching, learning and assessment within the units.

The notional design length of the unit is 160 hours. We suggest the following distribution of teaching time:

Outcome 1 — Discuss the professional standards, responsibilities and governance underpinning effective care practice (30 hours)

Outcome 2 — Explain the professional behaviours that support the therapeutic relationship, person-centred care and a personal outcome (30 hours)

Outcome 3 — Explain current relevant legislation and policies that support effective care and enabling practice (20 hours)

Outcome 4 — Explain how cultural, social and political factors influence the health and wellbeing of the individual (30 hours)

Outcome 5 — Evaluate the role of public health in tackling health inequalities and promoting health and wellbeing in Scotland (30 hours)

Outcome 6 — Develop meta-skills in a vocational or academic context (10 hours)

Outcome 7 — Develop knowledge and understanding of the United Nations Sustainability Development Goals (UN SDGs) and their application to care practice (10 hours)

You should support learners to carry out autonomous learning and independent research, and use tutorials and group exercises to consolidate learning.

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

Content and context for this unit

You should contextualise your teaching of the unit to the relevant HNC Healthcare Practice pathway, with reference to other care professions as appropriate.

Discuss the professional standards, responsibilities and governance underpinning effective care practice (outcome 1)

You could start by identifying the range of people who provide care for others and highlight those categorised as health professions. Learners should explore a range of care professions, investigating the roles and areas of responsibilities of each. This must include:

- codes of conduct
- professional regulations for relevant professions (and their integral supervision processes)
- CPD

Learners must explore the roles of regulatory bodies for the different professions, such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), the Healthcare Professional Council (HCPC) and any other relevant regulatory body. You must discuss the need for such regulation and the supervision of workers, particularly the need for protection of the public and issues of litigation. Using case studies is relevant for those issues.

Learners should investigate ethical behaviour relating to practice and discuss it in the context of care professionals' responsibilities and accountability. They should explore issues of professional boundaries, the impact of personal experience, and views and beliefs. This helps to prepare learners for the difficult dilemmas sometimes met by care professionals.

You should discuss with learners the ability to recognise one's own limitations of professional competence as being a central aspect of good professional practice. They should explore this in the context of their own professional development. They should also explore issues of clinical and professional supervision, and roles and responsibilities across the professions, recognising the requirement of collaboration between the care professions and when to refer on to a more senior member of the team. You should discuss the relevant professional standards of accountability.

The range of care professions you explore can include:

- nursing
- midwifery
- physiotherapy
- speech and language therapy
- paramedicine
- support workers
- any other relevant specialism

Learners must display knowledge and understanding of the values from a personal, professional and societal perspective. They should be aware of professional values, as identified in the National Standards, codes of practice for care workers, statements of aims and other appropriate policy documents. Learners must develop a reflective approach to the application of values in the health and social care context, and you should encourage an understanding of how values and attitudes are established and changed. Learners should critically evaluate their own values and how these impact on individuals in the care context. They must understand the conflict between personal and professional values and the importance of maintaining the professional base of their organisation.

Learners should identify and explain the principles of good practice in relation to the delivery of individual care:

- promotion of rights and choice
- equality and diversity
- privacy
- dignity

- realising potential
- safety
- confidentiality

Learners should be familiar with the most up-to-date health and social care standards and be able to show dignity and respect, compassion and inclusive, responsive care and support. They should understand how to apply these standards with a variety of care users and the positive impact this can have on the individual's wellbeing. Learners should also be able to describe professional approaches to:

- behaviour
- attitude
- responsibility
- risk management
- person-centred care
- effective communication
- up-to-date knowledge and practice
- collaborative working
- leading by example

You should make sure learners are familiar with the quality-of-care services promoted through clinical governance strategies, and their implications for the care practitioner. They should explore the framework of care and clinical governance and the quality improvement strategies in the health and social care sectors, such as Care Assurance and Accreditation Standards (CAAS), highlighting the important role of audit, evidence-based practice and clinical evaluation. You should discuss agencies such as Health Improvement Scotland (HIS) and the Care Inspectorate.

Learners must understand that care delivery is not an individual activity and that the multi-disciplinary team (MDT) is essential to effective care practice. In addition, learners should gain an understanding of the multi-disciplinary team, the different professions and individuals who can be included, and how a well-co-ordinated multi-disciplinary team can improve the individual's care experience. You should also cover the role of significant others in the individual's life, and the part they play in contributing to the individual's care journey. You should focus on the concept of team

working and how this contributes to the establishment and maintenance of a positive care environment. Learners should explore the aspect of consistency within the team in terms of working practices, but also in relation to shared values and how the team implement the value base for individuals. Learners must understand the wider view of interdisciplinary and interprofessional working. This includes the concept of collaborative working and its importance in the care planning process. Again, you should discuss the aspect of maintaining shared values and explore the difficulties and issues that may arise in relation to collaboration. An important part of team working is continuity of care, and learners must understand that continuity of care is crucial in ensuring that individuals receive comprehensive and co-ordinated healthcare over time. It involves maintaining a consistent relationship between patients and their healthcare providers, which fosters trust and improves communication. This ongoing relationship allows healthcare providers to better understand the patient's medical history, preferences, and needs, leading to more personalised and effective treatment plans. Continuity of care also helps in early detection and management of chronic conditions, reducing the likelihood of medical errors and hospital readmissions. Overall, it enhances patient satisfaction and outcomes by providing a seamless and holistic approach to healthcare.

Learners should understand the crucial role supervision plays in supporting learners and registered practitioners alike. Supervision provides a process of structured support, guidance, and feedback throughout learners' clinical placements and professional practice. Effective supervision helps learners and practitioners to develop and enhance practical skills, deepen their understanding of professional standards, and reflect on their experiences in a safe and supportive environment. It also fosters accountability and encourages them to recognise the limits of their competence, ensuring that patient safety and quality of care remain paramount as they progress towards becoming confident, capable practitioners.

Learners must understand that CPD and reflective practice is a professional requirement across all healthcare professions. They must understand the purpose of CPD, and that it serves a vital purpose in care practice by ensuring that practitioners remain up-to-date with the latest knowledge, skills, and standards required for high-quality care delivery. Reflection is an integral aspect of CPD, as it encourages

learners to critically assess their own practice, recognise areas for improvement, and celebrate good practice. Learners should understand the principles of reflective practice and that through ongoing learning and thoughtful self-evaluation, care professionals can adapt to changing needs, enhance their competence, and maintain accountability, ultimately improving outcomes for those they support.

Learners must understand duty of candour and whistleblowing because they underpin a culture of safety, accountability, and trust in healthcare. They should understand that the duty of candour refers to the professional obligation for healthcare workers to be open, honest, and transparent when things go wrong in the care of patients or service users. Furthermore, they should understand that whistleblowing involves reporting concerns about unsafe, unethical, or illegal practices in a healthcare setting, often to protect individuals from harm. By recognising these responsibilities, learners understand the importance of acting with integrity, ensuring that mistakes or concerns are addressed promptly, and ultimately safeguarding the wellbeing of those in their care. This awareness also prepares learners to navigate complex ethical situations and supports the development of a positive, open working environment. Learners should also understand that to apply the duty of candour they must feel safe enough to be open, honest and transparent when things go wrong and this requires a level of psychological safety. You cover this in more detail in the Understanding Personal and Professional Development unit.

Explain the professional behaviours that support the therapeutic relationship, person-centred care and a personal outcomes approach (outcome 2)

This outcome explores the ‘therapeutic relationship’ and its importance in a care context. Learners should understand the different service user groups they work with, and the differing needs they will encounter in each group. They must be able to demonstrate an understanding of the therapeutic relationship and how it is pivotal to the development of an effective, positive and supportive relationship with the service user. Learners must understand that the therapeutic relationship comprises compassion, caring, empathy, listening, observation, touch and spending time with

the service user. Healthcare support worker and service user relationships will be at risk if there is an over-reliance on electronic monitoring devices, as these devices create a barrier to developing effective relationships with service users. Interaction with service users should not only be task oriented. Learners must understand the importance of human contact as an integral part of the therapeutic relationship and in promoting a positive patient experience.

Learners should understand person-centred care and the benefits of empowerment and enablement to service users. As a fundamental part of the therapeutic relationship, learners must be able to explain the importance of communication. This must include an understanding of the different types of communication, for example:

- aids such as photos, symbols, gestures, signs, and other systems
- body language: sit squarely, open posture, lean forward, eye contact, relax (SOLER)
- eye contact
- intonation, hesitation, observation
- non-task orientated interaction

Learners should also understand the barriers to establishing effective communication, for example:

- distress
- grief
- mental health problems
- age
- sensory impairment
- communication support needs
- language difficulties

Learners must identify ways of overcoming barriers to promote equality and diversity, ensure the rights of individuals to communicate in their preferred method, and challenge discrimination. They should encourage individuals to participate in communication. They communicate with and help to support individuals who are distressed or who use atypical ways of communicating. Learners should reflect on their own communication skills in the context of supporting others and understand

the importance of a personal outcomes approach, actively engaging with the individual to identify their unique goals, preferences and aspirations, and shaping services around these priorities. This approach promotes independence, empowerment and enablement, ensuring that care is truly person-centred and responsive to the individual's circumstances. By prioritising personal outcomes, carers help individuals take ownership of their own care, which can reinforce their value and dignity and encourage greater participation in decision making.

To support and promote a personal outcomes approach, learners should understand that their own value base could be a barrier to effective communication and individualised care, and they must be able to identify the skills, qualities and characteristics required of an effective carer.

You should discuss the process of empowering the individual to promote independence, and highlight ways this can be achieved, for example through the Participation in Care Frameworks established in Scotland since 2021. Learners should understand that these frameworks empower individuals, communities and care-experienced people to be central to decision making and service design in health and social care. These frameworks aim to create more person-centred services by ensuring people's voices are heard and that they are actively involved in shaping their own care. Learners could explore frameworks, such as:

- [the Care Inspectorate: A Quality framework for children and young people in need of care and protection](#)
- [Quality Frameworks for Community Engagement and Participation 2023: Supporting the delivery of effective engagement, developing practice and sharing learning](#)
- North Lanarkshire's [Engagement and Participation Strategy 2024 – 2027](#)

Learners could also explore support tools such as the [HIS Participation Toolkit](#). They should understand that the concept of empowered individuals should also have a positive effect on minimising misuse of power within the care setting.

This outcome should further an understanding of human behaviour and the influences that impact individuals, their behaviour and health. This should involve introducing appropriate theories on human development and behaviour. Learners

understand the evolution of behaviour and if learned behaviour can be 'unlearned', as this has an impact on changing behaviours and healthier life choices. You should discuss health as a subjective concept, that is 'you are as healthy as you feel'. You should consider how differences of personality, risk-taking behaviour and coping strategies can influence health.

Learners must understand the concepts of prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination, because these issues can significantly impact the quality of care provided and the wellbeing of service users. Awareness of these concepts enables carers to recognise and challenge their own assumptions, attitudes and potential biases, ensuring that they treat every individual with respect and dignity. By understanding how prejudice and stereotyping can lead to discrimination, learners can promote equality, foster inclusive environments, and uphold the rights of those in their care. Anti-discriminatory practice should encompass an understanding of what constitutes discrimination — including cultural, organisational, and positive discrimination — and should focus on recognising diversity, working with individuals to establish their needs, and identifying barriers or challenges that may inhibit a person's basic rights. As part of anti-discriminatory awareness, learners must also understand the causes and impact of exclusion on groups and individuals in society regarding accessing and receiving effective healthcare. This involves considering the care received by protected characteristics groups as outlined in the Equalities Act 2010, as well as reflecting on the experiences of those in the wider community, such as individuals with mental health or addiction issues, young people, the homeless, and people from different ethnic backgrounds, all of whom may have faced disadvantages in accessing and receiving care. Such understanding helps learners address and overcome barriers to effective communication and person-centred care, thereby supporting more empowering and supportive relationships with service users and contributing to positive health and social outcomes.

Neurodiversity is a concept that recognises and values the natural variations in human brain function and behavioural traits. It acknowledges that conditions such as autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia and others are part of normal human diversity, rather than deficits or disorders to be 'fixed'. Through understanding neurodiversity, learners can challenge discrimination and understand

that neurological differences should be respected and accommodated, just as society seeks to embrace other forms of diversity like culture or gender. In care and health contexts, understanding neurodiversity encourages more inclusive and person-centred approaches, ensuring that we recognise and support individuals' unique strengths and challenges within services and environments.

Learners demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the different types of abuse, as well as their legal obligation to record and report concerns, particularly when working with vulnerable adults. Abuse can present in various forms, including physical, emotional, sexual, financial, and neglect, and learners must recognise the signs of all types and respond promptly. Legislation and organisational policies, procedures, and professional codes of conduct all underpin safeguarding practices. This includes:

- Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000
- Adult Support and Protection Act 2007Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007
- Human Rights Act 1998, Equality Act 2010
- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Domestic Abuse Act 2018
- Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)
- Health and Social Care Standards

These measures are complemented by guidance such as the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland, which outlines best practice for recognising and responding to abuse. Learners should understand that effective support involves providing access to safe environments, advocacy and specialist services, clear reporting procedures, and ongoing emotional and practical assistance. Training carers and professionals to identify and address abuse is vital, and a multi-agency approach that prioritises the individual's safety and wellbeing should be central to every action.

Trauma-informed practice is an essential approach for anyone entering the field of care. As a learner in healthcare, it is important to understand that many individuals accessing health and social care services may have experienced trauma at some point in their lives. Trauma can have a profound and lasting impact on a person's wellbeing, behaviour, and ability to engage with support. Trauma-informed practice recognises these effects and seeks to create environments that foster healing, safety, and empowerment for all service users.

At the heart of trauma-informed practice are several core principles designed to guide your interactions with those you support. These principles include:

- safety: prioritising both physical and emotional safety so that individuals feel protected and secure in care settings
- trustworthiness and transparency: building trusting relationships through honesty, openness, and clear communication about decisions and expectations
- peer support: valuing shared experiences by encouraging opportunities for service users to connect and learn from others with similar backgrounds
- collaboration and mutuality: working in partnership with individuals, respecting their expertise in their own lives, and minimising power imbalances in care relationships
- empowerment, voice and choice: supporting individuals to have an active say in their care, recognising and building on their strengths, and promoting their autonomy and confidence
- cultural, historical, and gender awareness: being sensitive to the diverse backgrounds and identities of those you support and understanding how these factors influence experiences of trauma and recovery

By embedding trauma-informed principles into their practice, learners are better equipped to support individuals with compassion, reduce the risk of re-traumatisation, and help create a culture of dignity, respect, and holistic wellbeing within care

Explain current relevant legislation and policies that support effective care and enabling practice (outcome 3)

Learners should describe current legislation and policies that support effective care practice, empowerment of the service user and regulation of care processes, for example the:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001
- Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002
- Equality Act 2010
- Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities
- Public Service Reform (Scotland) Act 2010
- Equality Act 2010
- Patient Rights (Scotland) Act 2011
- Social Care (Self-Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013
- Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014
- Data Protection Act 2018 (incorporating the UK General Data Protection Regulation, UK GDPR)

Each of these legislative frameworks is essential for ensuring safe, fair, and respectful care practice in Scotland. Care practitioners should be familiar with these laws and policies to uphold high standards of service and safeguard the rights and wellbeing of those they support.

Learners must understand what informed consent means and that in Scotland, informed consent in health and social care is covered by several key policies and legislative frameworks. The Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000 sets out clear guidance on decision-making for individuals who lack capacity, ensuring that any intervention is carried out with respect for the person's rights and, wherever possible, their wishes. The Patient Rights (Scotland) Act 2011 further supports informed consent by establishing the right of patients to receive information about their care and treatment, enabling them to make informed decisions. Additionally, professional codes of practice, such as those from the General Medical Council (GMC) and the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), require practitioners to obtain informed

consent before providing treatment or care. These policies collectively ensure that individuals are empowered to participate actively in decisions about their health and wellbeing, safeguarding autonomy and promoting ethical practice.

Explain how cultural, social and political factors influence the health and wellbeing of the individual (outcome 4)

Outcome 4 provides learners with knowledge of society and an insight into social factors that influence the health and wellbeing of individuals and social groups. You should introduce appropriate theories on sociology and their explanation of society and societal behaviour, as well as their impact on individual behaviour.

Learners also explore concepts of health and wellbeing, becoming familiar with and understanding terms such as ‘determinants of health’, ‘dimensions of health’ and ‘health inequalities’, and discussing them in terms of society. Learners should explore statistical data in relation to health inequalities to determine current health challenges in Scotland and their causes.

Learners debate current health issues and consider their relation to societal changes, lifestyle and determinants of health. As there is an increase in the elderly population, there is also a rise of age-related illnesses, chronic diseases and dementias. The link between poverty and ill-health identified in the Black Report (1980) and the Acheson Report (1998) is still relevant today, with the health gap between rich and poor continuing to widen. These inequalities are the subject of more recently published reports, such as:

- the Health Foundation, (2023) *Leave no one behind: The state of health and health inequalities in Scotland*
- the Scottish Health Equity Research Unit, (2024) *2024 Inequality Landscape: Health and Socioeconomic Divides in Scotland*

Learners could consider why these inequalities still exist so long after the Black Report was first published.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3) aims to ‘ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages’ through promoting healthy

lives and wellbeing for all, making it central to care delivery by advocating for effective, equitable, and preventative healthcare. SDG 10 seeks to 'reduce inequality within and among countries' by targeting the reduction of inequalities, urging care services to address barriers to access and ensure fair treatment regardless of background. Together, these goals guide practitioners to provide holistic, needs-led care that tackles both immediate health issues and broader social factors influencing health, aligning with Scottish policies on equality and wellbeing.

Evaluate the role of public health in tackling health inequalities and promoting health and wellbeing in Scotland (outcome 5)

Learners should understand what public health is and, specifically, the role of Public Health Scotland. Public health serves the essential purpose of improving population health, reducing inequalities, and supporting overall wellbeing through a range of targeted initiatives. Health improvement and promotion are central to this aim, with strategies focused on encouraging healthier lifestyles, raising awareness about preventable diseases, and supporting communities to take control of their health. Learners should explore early intervention and self-management programmes that empower individuals to manage long-term conditions and maintain independent living. This is especially important as Scotland faces changing demographics, with a growing elderly population. This demographic shift significantly influences the planning and provision of health and social care services, requiring a move towards more integrated, needs-led approaches that can respond flexibly to evolving demands. Learners should understand how health and social services are funded in Scotland, and that control of these services lies with the Scottish Government. Furthermore, they should understand that health economics plays a crucial role in the allocation and funding of health and social care resources, ensuring that services are both sustainable and equitable. They should investigate the policies and national priorities aimed at preventative care and that seek to address longstanding socioeconomic health disparities.

Learners should have some knowledge of the emerging technologies set to significantly impact Scotland's future care delivery. Digital health platforms, such as electronic health records and telemedicine, aim to streamline communication

between practitioners and patients, making care more accessible — especially in rural areas. Artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics are used to predict health trends, personalise treatment plans, and support early intervention for chronic conditions. Assistive technologies, including smart home devices and wearable health monitors, empower individuals to manage their health independently and enable earlier responses to health concerns. Robotics and automation may also play a role in supporting those with mobility or cognitive challenges, improving both safety and quality of life.

Moreover, remote monitoring and mobile health applications facilitate self-management and continuous support, aligning with the growing focus on preventative care and independent living, as Scotland's demographic profile shifts towards an older population. As digital literacy and access improve, these technologies should help to reduce health inequalities by making services more equitable and responsive to diverse needs. The adoption of such innovations requires robust data protection, training for care practitioners, and ongoing evaluation, to ensure ethical and effective integration within Scotland's health and social care frameworks.

Develop meta-skills in a vocational or academic context (outcome 6)

You should introduce learners to meta-skills and understand their importance in underpinning effective learning, working and personal development across all areas of life. They should explore the different categories of meta-skills, all of which are essential for working in complex areas with ever-changing demands, such as healthcare. By working towards the development of meta-skills, learners should understand that they enhance their employability, adaptability, and overall effectiveness but also become more capable of managing themselves, connecting with others and responding creatively to new challenges. Understanding and cultivating these skills helps them to thrive in their healthcare and academic careers, enabling them to set goals, reflect on their progress and continue to grow personally and professionally. Learners should understand that they're working towards the achievement of these meta-skills throughout the qualification.

Develop knowledge and understanding of the United Nations Sustainability Development Goals (UN SDGs) and their application to care practice (outcome 7)

You should introduce learners to the [UN SDGs](#) and they should understand their purpose. They should explore development goals related to care practice in detail and discuss the implications for care practice. You can use current health promotion campaigns and strategies to reduce inequalities and widen access to care for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups to explain how these goals can be included and promoted within care practice.

The sustainability goals that are most relevant for this unit are:

Reduce inequalities within and among countries (SDG 10)

Reducing inequalities includes:

- empowering and promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of all
- providing equal opportunities
- eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices
- wage and social protection policies
- safe migration and mobility of people

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (SDG 3)

This includes:

- reducing maternal mortality rates
- ending preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age
- reducing premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment
- promoting mental health and well-being
- strengthening the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol

- ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes
- universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, ensuring access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all
- strengthening the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks

Resources

There are a variety of media resources that you can use to support your delivery of the unit. Learners' work experience in their practice placement can enhance their learning and application in the unit.

Approaches to delivery

We recommend that you deliver the unit through:

- lectures
- group work
- practical classroom activities
- visiting speakers
- visits to appropriate practice settings

If you deliver the unit as a stand-alone unit, you should assess the outcomes holistically. If you deliver it as part of the qualification, we recommend integration with the remaining HN units. You can integrate teaching, learning and assessment across units.

Approaches to assessment

Where possible, you should integrate knowledge, skills and application across units, to evidence a holistic understanding of the course topics and to reduce the assessment burden for learners.

You can use a range of assessment methods and instruments, such as:

- assignments
- individual or group presentations
- video diaries
- critical incident analysis
- reflective accounts
- professional discussions
- folios

We recommend that you introduce learners to meta-skills in the initial stages of the unit, so that they can plan their strategy to develop them. For outcome 6, they must implement and review plans to develop their meta-skills and reflect on and assess them in the end stages of delivery. The product documentation from these activities forms part of learners' portfolios of evidence for the unit.

We recommend an ongoing assessment that enables learners to evidence their learning and skills across the qualification and practice placement. This enables them to evidence learning, application, practice and reflection for the unit. This could be folio based, with reflective blogs or video diaries, professional discussions and reflective accounts.

Equality and inclusion

This unit is designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

You must consider the needs of individual learners when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled learners and those with additional support needs is available on the [assessment arrangements web page](#).

Information for learners

Professional Practice in Healthcare Settings (SCQF level 7)

This information explains:

- what the unit is about
- what you should know or be able to do before you start
- what you need to do during the unit
- opportunities for further learning and employment

Unit information

This is a mandatory unit in Higher National Certificate (HNC) Healthcare Practice. You learn about the underpinning factors and standards that impact the behaviour and professionalism of those working in healthcare services. You must comply with codes of practice to ensure that individuals achieve better outcomes, are treated with respect and dignity, and that their basic human rights are upheld. You consider your own values and skills to support effective practice, and examine health inequalities and the impact these have on an individual's health, behaviour and decision making. You learn about prejudice, discrimination and practice that promotes equality and diversity, including the legislation that underpins the individual's rights when receiving healthcare services. You explore the concept of society and the impact its structures and expectations have on individuals and their health. The unit introduces the topic of health improvement and promotion and the role that you have in promoting independence and self-management in individuals. You investigate the future of healthcare provision, and explore the role of current and future technologies.

Entry to the unit is at your centre's discretion. You should, however, have effective communication and interpersonal skills before starting the unit. Experience in care is not essential for entry to the unit, but it may be beneficial.

The teaching, learning and assessment of the unit takes place in healthcare and care settings. You should refer to current:

- terminology
- regulatory bodies
- national standards
- relevant Scottish and UK legislation
- Scottish policy frameworks and recommended practices

Completing the unit in a practice setting, such as a work placement or your place of employment, provides you with invaluable opportunities to develop and apply your knowledge, skills and understanding and meet the evidence requirements.

As you progress through the unit, you become increasingly confident at linking your knowledge and understanding to your practice, and you should make links between the learning completed in this unit and others in the qualification.

Your centre assesses you. Assessments can include:

- assignments
- folios
- essays
- individual or group presentations
- video diaries
- critical incidents analyses
- reflective accounts
- any other appropriate methods

You must complete the assessments, submit them by the required dates, and retain evidence in a portfolio, with a checklist of evidence and statements from you that confirm that it is all your own work. Your centre may also use an anti-plagiarism software package to confirm authenticity.

HNC Healthcare Practice is a recognised qualification for senior healthcare support workers at Band 3, and it also enables progression to a variety of job roles and degree programmes. You may gain advanced standing and progress to year 2 of

your chosen degree programme. Your centre can give you more information about how to achieve this. You should also investigate your chosen university's entry criteria.

Meta-skills

Throughout this unit, you develop meta-skills that are useful for the healthcare sector.

Meta-skills are transferable behaviours and abilities that help you adapt and succeed in life, study and work. There are three categories of meta-skills: self-management, social intelligence and innovation.

Self-management

This meta-skill includes:

- focusing:
 - researching
 - evaluating understanding on an ongoing basis through formative assessment
- integrity:
 - discussing own values, ethics and personal development
- adapting:
 - demonstrating critical reflection
 - accommodating new ideas through research and practical experience
- initiative:
 - showing independent research
 - collaborating with other professionals to share enthusiasm and knowledge

Social intelligence

This meta-skill includes:

- communicating:
 - working collaboratively with others
 - sharing ideas and perspectives
- feeling:
 - discussing own values and personal development
 - showing empathy
 - demonstrating personal reflection
 - building relationships
- collaborating:
 - teamworking
 - working towards shared goals within practice

Innovation

This meta-skill includes:

- curiosity:
 - researching and making observations, to understand the link between theory and practice
- creativity:
 - applying creative solutions to problem solving within the scope of professional practice
- sense-making:
 - holistic thinking
 - researching

- evaluating understanding
- critical thinking:
 - analysing research
 - making informed decisions

Learning for Sustainability

Throughout this unit, you develop skills, knowledge and understanding of sustainability.

You learn about social, economic and environmental sustainability principles and how they relate to the healthcare sector. You also develop an understanding of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#).

Administrative information

Published: June 2026 (version 1.0)

Superclass: PA

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date

Please check [our website](#) to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this unit.

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