National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Maternity Support Workers

Context and tracking document

Background

Skills for Health has reviewed the suite of Maternity and Care of the Newborn (MCN) National Occupational Standards (NOS) and their applicability to Maternity Support Workers (MSWs).

To define the tasks undertaken by MSWs, Skills for Health used Royal College of Midwives document ‘The Role and Responsibilities of Maternity Support Workers’ (2011). Existing NOS were mapped to the list of tasks undertaken by MSWs and where NOS from the Maternity & Care of the Newborn suite were identified as appropriate for MSWs, these were updated as part of this project. A document has been produced which maps NOS to the tasks defined by the RCM as appropriate for MSWs. This document can be found here NOS mapping to RCM Roles & Responsibilities

What NOS are and how can they be used

NOS describe the skills, knowledge and understanding needed to undertake a particular task or job to a nationally recognised level of competence. They focus on what the person needs to be able to do, as well as what they must know and understand to work effectively. They cover the key activities undertaken within an occupation, across all the circumstances the job holder is likely to encounter.

NOS need to be standalone as separate functions, which is why you will see duplications in some of the knowledge and understanding across the suite. To use NOS, you need to put them together like a jigsaw to create a role profile or job description. If you are assessing someone against a number of NOS, you can do this holistically where knowledge is common across a number of NOS, therefore the individual will not have to produce additional or duplicate evidence for a number of NOS.

NOS can be used by any organisation (independent, NHS, third sector) providing the function being described is undertaken by and individual or individuals in that organisation. If the function or activity being described in the NOS is not relevant for you, there is no mandatory requirement for you to use it.

NOS are not levelled, but qualifications based on NOS can be. The NOS are written in a generic way so as to apply to anyone who undertakes that function. When you wish to use the NOS in qualifications or education and training programmes, you can then decide upon the detailed breadth and depth of the knowledge individuals require to undertake a particular role.

SfH has a Competence Tools database which contains over 2000 NOS that could be relevant for health sector workers. The NOS range from communication, personal development, to carrying out health interventions, management and leadership and estates and facilities. Some of these NOS have been developed by other sector skills councils and imported into the SfH database for use by the health sector. An individual’s role can be defined by using NOS from different suites and putting them together in a role profile. This can then be used for assessment, workforce planning, education and training programmes or for personal development. To view the Competence Tools, please click here https://tools.skillsforhealth.org.uk/competence_search/
The project

There was a project governance structure in place to undertake this project. The Project Executive Group was responsible to Skills for Health senior management team and this Group ensured that the project did not go beyond the agreed project parameters.

The project convened a Steering Group consisting of membership from the four UK policy leads. The role of the Steering Group was to oversee the project process and provide advice on any risks to the project.

A Working Group was also convened and consisted of membership from NHS Trusts and Health Boards from across the UK. The Working Group was responsible for amending the standards and ensuring that they were appropriate for Maternity Support Workers as well as remaining applicable to others who undertake the same function or activity.

Areas to highlight

The following guidance seeks to clarify key points raised through the consultation process:

Appropriateness of the NOS in the Maternity & Care of Newborn suite

This existing suite of NOS was reviewed against the roles and responsibilities of MSWs which have been agreed across the four nations and are documented in RCM document ‘Roles and Responsibilities of Maternity Support Workers’. The NOS that are applicable to MSWs from the Maternity & Care of the Newborn suite are listed at the end of this document. The other NOS within that suite are intended for use by those who undertake those functions ie. midwives etc.

The MSW role will need to draw on NOS from other suites, such as General Healthcare or Clinical Health Skills as well as the identified NOS from the Maternity & Care of the Newborn suite.

Maternity Support Workers and Assessment

Some feedback received during the consultation, particularly around MCN4 ‘Assess the health and wellbeing of women during the post natal period’ and MCN5 ‘Assess the health and wellbeing of babies’, indicated that MSWs should not be undertaking these tasks as they do not undertake assessments. However, 54% who commented on these two NOS felt that they were applicable to everyone who performs these activities as part of their role.

The Working Group and Steering Group members also agreed that assessment is part of an MSW role, however they agreed that the breadth and depth of an MSW assessment differs from a midwifery assessment. The level required should be outlined in MSW job description.

It should be noted that NOS are not levelled and the NOS do not define the level of assessment that is required for these activities. The NOS should therefore apply to everyone who performs this activity.

MSWs, unlike midwives, are non-registrants and are accountable to their employer and not a regulatory body or organisation, such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council. It is the employer’s responsibility to ensure that the MSWs receive the appropriate training they require in order to undertake tasks that are aligned to their job description.
An example of how MSWs assess the health and wellbeing of women:

During a community visit to a post-natal woman the MSW becomes aware that the woman is behaving in a way that suggests that she could be becoming mentally ill. The MSW makes an assessment that she needs to inform the midwife.

Examples of how MSWs assess the health and wellbeing of babies:

The MSW is assisting a woman with a high BMI to breast feed. The MSW assesses that the position the woman is currently in will make it difficult for the baby to latch on. She suggests to the mother a change of position.

During a community postnatal visit a baby becomes grey and unresponsive. The MSW assesses the baby’s condition and would take appropriate action by initiating neonatal life support (NLS), calling 999 and informing the midwife.

Accountability / delegation

Within each NOS, the individual is required to work within the boundaries of their scope of practice. MSWs will undertake tasks that are appropriate to be delegated and those that have been delegated to them either by midwives or other registered healthcare professionals. However the MSW and person that is delegating the task, must be assured that the MSW is competent to undertake this task and has had the appropriate training to do so. There should be clear guidelines and protocols in place so that the MSWs are not required to make a clinical judgement that they are not competent to make or carry out a task that is out of their scope of practice. The person who delegates the task must ensure that an appropriate level of supervision is available. The level of supervision must be appropriate to the task being delegated. It is the Maternity Support worker, not the midwife supervising the MSW, who is accountable for their acceptance of a particular task and for the competence with which that task is undertaken.

Skills for Health, along with Skills for Care were commissioned by the Department of Health in England (2013) to develop a Code of Conduct and minimum standards for education for support workers. Information on the Code of Conduct and related work can be found here http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/workforce-transformation/code-of-conduct-and-national-minimum-training-stand/.

Taking an example of how the MSW may be accountable in their role:

During a community postnatal visit a baby becomes grey and unresponsive. The MSW assesses the baby’s condition and would take appropriate action by initiating neonatal life support (NLS), calling 999 and informing the midwife.

Once trained if an MSW failed to escalate an adverse event appropriately and not start NLS or call the ambulance and inform the midwife the accountability would remain with the MSW and not the midwife if she were not present.

An example of appropriate delegation is:

If the MSW has received appropriate training and is confident to undertake a task, then MSWs should update records and sign any documentation. A counter signature is not required from a midwife if the MSW is working within scope. If there is a deviation from the norm, which requires escalation, then a MSW should document this in the notes. If the MSW is working under supervision and is not yet deemed competent, then records must be counter-signed.
Assisting the practitioner

The delegated tasks that MSWs undertake can vary across organisation and location within the UK. The NOS that have been identified both from the Maternity & Care of the Newborn suite and from other suites can be used to support training and development by all MSWs.

If an MSW does not undertake a particular task from either the MCN suite or the generic NOS that have been identified, there is no requirement to use the NOS. An example of this is implementing care plans. If an MSW in your organisation implements maternity care plans as part of their role, MCN10 can be used to support them. However if in your organisation, the MSW assists the midwife to implement care plans, then GEN8 ‘Assist the practitioner to implement healthcare activities’ may be more appropriate.

Terminology used in the NOS

The inclusion of Key people – this term is used to indicate those people that are invited by the woman to be involved in her care. This could be partner, family members or friends.

Other relevant resources

Skills for Health National Occupational Standards
https://tools.skillsforhealth.org.uk/competence_search/

Royal College of Midwives – Roles and Responsibilities of Maternity Support Workers
https://www.rcm.org.uk/content/msw-roles-and-responsibilities

The Refreshed Framework for Maternity Care in Scotland

The Healthcare Quality Strategy
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/Policy/Quality-Strategy

The Route map 2020
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/Policy/Quality-Strategy/routemap2020vision

In Scotland - ‘Having a baby in Scotland 2013’,
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/01/8489/0

In England, Maternity Services 2010 – Guide to benchmark reports,

In Northern Ireland - A Strategy for Maternity Care in Northern Ireland July 2012
http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/maternitystrategy.pdf

Transforming Your Care: Review of Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland (2011) is the strategy document for health services in Northern Ireland
http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/tyc.htm
In Wales – A Strategic Vision for Maternity Services in Wales

Please note, all hyperlinks and references to policy documents are correct at the time of publication.

Please also note that this document is not intended to be a policy document but guidance on how to use the NOS which have been deemed as appropriate for MSWs.

Links to other NOS

Clinical Health Skills (Skills for Health)
General Health Care (Skills for Health)
Infection Prevention and Control (Skills for Health)
Health and Social Care (Skills for Health and Skills for Care & Development)

https://tools.skillsforhealth.org.uk/competence_search/

For further information about Skills for Health, please visit our website
www.skillsforhealth.org.uk
## Maternity & Care of the Newborn NOS Old (2005) to New (2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old NOS prefix</th>
<th>OLD NOS title</th>
<th>NEW NOS prefix</th>
<th>NEW NOS title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MCN1</td>
<td>Communicate and interact with babies</td>
<td>MCN1</td>
<td>Communicate and interact with babies and those involved in their care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCN2</td>
<td>Assess the health and well-being of women and their babies during pregnancy</td>
<td>MCN2</td>
<td>Assess the health and well-being of women and their babies during pregnancy</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCN3</td>
<td>Assess the health and well-being of women and their babies during labour and birth</td>
<td>MCN3</td>
<td>Assess the health and well-being of women and their babies during labour and birth</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCN4</td>
<td>Assess the health and well-being of women during the postnatal period</td>
<td>MCN4</td>
<td>Assess the health and well-being of women during the postnatal period</td>
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<td>MCN5</td>
<td>Assess the health and well-being of babies</td>
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<td>Assess the health and well-being of babies</td>
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<td>MCN6</td>
<td>Agree courses of action following assessment of the health and well-being of women and their babies</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCN7</td>
<td>Develop and agree individualised antenatal care plans</td>
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<td>MCN8</td>
<td>Develop and agree individualised care plans for labour and birth</td>
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<td>MCN9</td>
<td>Develop and agree individualised postnatal care plans</td>
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<td>Implement individualised maternity care plans</td>
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<td>Review and revise individualised maternity care plans</td>
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<td>MCN12</td>
<td>Develop and agree individualised care plans for babies and families</td>
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<td>Implement individualised care plans to meet the needs of babies</td>
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<td>MCN14</td>
<td>Implement interventions during pregnancy</td>
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<td>Implement interventions during labour and birth</td>
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<td>MCN16</td>
<td>Implement interventions during the postnatal period</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCN17</td>
<td>Implement interventions for babies and their families</td>
<td>MCN17</td>
<td>Implement interventions for babies and those involved in their care</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCN18</td>
<td>Operate equipment for the care of babies</td>
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<td>Operate equipment for the care of babies</td>
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<td>MCN19</td>
<td>Manage the transfer of babies between care settings</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCN21</td>
<td>Administer medication to babies</td>
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<td>Administer medication to babies</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCN22</td>
<td>Provide pre-conception advice and information</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCN23</td>
<td>Provide advice and information during pregnancy</td>
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<td>Provide advice and information during pregnancy</td>
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<td>MCN24</td>
<td>Provide advice and information to enable parents to promote the health and well-being of their newborn babies</td>
<td>MCN24</td>
<td>Provide advice and information during the antenatal and postnatal period to promote health and wellbeing</td>
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<td>MCN25</td>
<td>Enable parents to reflect and debrief on their experience of childbirth</td>
<td>MCN25</td>
<td>Enable individuals to reflect and debrief on their experience of childbirth</td>
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<td>MCN26</td>
<td>Administer medication to babies</td>
<td>MCN26</td>
<td>Administer medication to babies</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCN27</td>
<td>Support individuals with feeding babies</td>
<td>MCN27</td>
<td>Support individuals with feeding babies</td>
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