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A CAREER PATHWAY FOR REGISTERED NURSES LEARNING DISABILITIES



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BACKGROUND

As the largest professional group in healthcare, nurses play a pivotal role in the delivery of safe, effective, compassionate and quality person-centred care. Their unique combination of knowledge, skills, compassion and dedication makes them indispensable in preventing ill-health and promoting and maintaining the health and well-being of individuals and communities across the lifespan.

In September 2022, the Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) commissioned the Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council (NIPEC) to establish a Regional Strategic Workforce Development Group to agree a new model for the future for Registered Nurses Learning Disabilities (RNLDs).



In response and in line with evidence-based practice and population health data, a proposed future model for the RNLD workforce is presented within the report **Equity of Access and Outcome: the future role of RNLDs in supporting people with learning disabilities to achieve the best health possible¹**. The report was officially launched by the Health Minister in November 2024.

Within the **Equity of Access and Outcome¹** report 27 recommendations were identified to shape the future role of RNLDs in supporting people with learning disabilities to achieve the best possible health outcomes. These recommendations are aligned to the Chief Nursing Officer's five-year vision for

¹ Department of Health (DoH) (2024) Equity of Access and Outcome: the future role of RNLDs in supporting people with learning disabilities to achieve the best health possible. DOH Belfast

the Nursing and Midwifery professions across Northern Ireland, **Shaping our Future: The Strategic Vision for Nursing and Midwifery 2023-2028**².

One key recommendation outlines the need for the development of a career pathway for RNLDs that:

“...enables the profession to develop the necessary knowledge, skills, confidence and leadership required to enable people with a learning disability to have equity of access and outcomes from RNLDs working in primary, community, secondary and hospital care and structures...”

RNLDs are qualified at the point of registration to work with both adults and children who have learning disabilities. They work collaboratively with multidisciplinary colleagues to uphold human rights and to promote, protect and maintain health and wellbeing, supporting equity of access to services, ensuring reasonable adjustments are made where required. In addition, RNLDs possess specialist expertise and skills that are frequently used to identify, assess and support people with developmental needs across the lifespan.

In order to better meet the health and care needs of people with a learning disability, in an effective and sustainable workforce model there is a renewed focus in the **Equity of Access and Outcome** report¹ on RNLDs to:

- promote wellness and prevent ill health;
- support self-management, anticipatory care and early intervention;
- respond to deterioration and acute needs;
- monitor and treat long-term conditions including palliative and end of life care¹.

² Department of Health (2023) Strategic Vision for Nursing and Midwifery (2023-2028). DoH, Belfast. Available at <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/news/five-year-vision-outlined-nursing-midwifery> (Accessed 16th June 2026).

This approach aims to provide a nursing workforce with the right skills, knowledge and behaviours who can provide the right care at the right time and in the right place for people with learning disabilities across the life course. It is anticipated this will be best facilitated by having RNLD expertise at every point across the system to support people with a learning disability. This will require RNLDs to be embedded within a range of services where their expertise has greatest impact and improves health outcomes for the person with a learning disability.

In 2025, NIPEC formally launched a new Career and Development Model for Nursing and Midwifery, providing a strategic framework to support professional development, career progression and workforce retention across the nursing and midwifery professions in Northern Ireland. The model was commissioned by the CNO and is a key enabler of the ambitions set out in **Shaping Our Future: The Strategic Vision for Nursing and Midwifery 2023-2028²**.

The model is built around two interrelated components:

- **Nursing and Midwifery Career Pathways**, which outline clear, competency-based routes for career progression and define the knowledge, skills, experience and capabilities required at each stage of professional development; and
- **The Learning and Development Framework**, which supports individuals and organisations to identify, plan and access education, and learning and development opportunities that enhance professional practice and career advancement.

To Note: The Career and Development Model provides structured routes for advancement across three core career pathways - **Clinical Practice, Operational Management**, and **Education and Research** - each making professional development visible and achievable. As the first stage of implementation, this

work focuses on the **RNLD Clinical Practice Career Pathway**. The development of the Operational Management and Education and Research pathways is currently underway and will further strengthen career opportunities for RNLDs across a range of professional roles and settings. This RNLD Clinical Practice pathway will be refreshed at a later date to ensure it includes relevant information regarding all core career pathways.

The NIPEC Career and Development Model has guided the development of the RNLD Clinical Career Pathway as it:

- offers a structure with key knowledge, skills and behaviours to inform career, learning and workforce development;
- can help to benchmark knowledge and skills and support professional development at every level across a career journey;
- can also be used by practitioners, managers, educators and commissioners to support the development of a suitably skilled and resourced workforce;
- focuses on the essential knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to underpin good practice at all levels of the workforce, supporting safe and effective care delivery;
- recognises how complex roles have become and helps to explain the difference in expectations and learning for all levels of practice across the nursing and midwifery workforce,

all of which contribute to the ambitions outlined within *Shaping Our Future: The Strategic Vision for Nursing and Midwifery 2023-2028*² and the recommendations contained within the *Equity of Access and Outcome* Report¹

INTRODUCTION

This pathway is aligned to the clinical practice core pathway within the Career and Development Model and sets out a career pathway specifically for RNLDs in Northern Ireland (NI).

It has been developed to clarify and strengthen the range of RNLD roles that contribute to the delivery of high-quality, safe, effective, and person and family centred care. It supports continuity of care and the provision of appropriate reasonable adjustments, when required, for people with a learning disability, underpinned by a biopsychosocial approach to assessment, care management and support.

The pathway outlines the knowledge, skills, behaviours, and competency requirements associated with each level of practice, together with bespoke educational requirements to support professional development. It is designed to enhance the expertise and experience of RNLDs while creating meaningful opportunities for career progression and advancement within clinical practice. All nurses and midwives on the NMC register must practice in line with the NMC Code³.

The RNLD career pathway aims to grow support and sustain the development of a suitably skilled, competent, and sustainable registered learning disability nursing workforce, with a primary focus on supporting individuals with learning disabilities to live healthy and fulfilling lives within their communities.

By providing clear role expectations and career progression opportunities at every level of practice, the pathway enables organisations to determine the posts

³ Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) (2018) The Code. Professional standards of practice and behaviour for nurses, midwives and nursing associates. London: NMC.

and skills required within their services, supporting workforce sustainability and ensuring services are aligned to population needs.

PURPOSE

This pathway is designed to help clarify and strengthen the range of important RNLD roles that support the delivery of high quality, safe, effective, person and family centred care.

The Career Pathway is designed to be used as a guide for:

- Registered Nurse Learning Disabilities (RNLDs);
- Employers and managers;
- Education providers;
- Student Nurses.

This RNLD Clinical Career Pathway identifies the role profile summaries, core competencies and education requirements for the core roles within RNLD Nursing, supporting a standardised approach to career development⁴. The core competencies and defined education will guide the development of RNLDs to enhance their professional knowledge, skills and experience.

This nursing career pathway will encourage RNLDs to stay within their field of nursing by:

- providing clear, structured clinical progression routes valuing Learning Disabilities Nursing specific expertise
- supporting specialist, advanced and consultant practice
- aligning education and supervision to clinical identity

⁴ The prevalence of core roles within HSC Trust is dependent on the needs of the services/populations and specialities.

- offering flexible career pillars without loss of professional focus
- explicitly linking Learning Disabilities Nursing retention to system sustainability.

The individual roles within the career pathway will enable organisations to identify the posts needed for their services through effective workforce planning. Each post will be advertised and a selection process utilised.

The pathway will support employers and service providers to identify and develop the workforce required to meet service demands effectively. Through robust workforce planning, organisations will be better positioned to respond to the current and future needs of people with learning disabilities, ensuring the delivery of safe, effective, person-centred and high-quality care across all sectors and settings. Furthermore, the pathway supports a sustainable workforce by providing clear and transparent routes for career progression, succession planning and workforce retention.

LEVELS AND PILLARS OF PRACTICE

Levels of Practice (see Figure 1) outline the expectations of roles at practice level 2-9 for nurses, midwives and related support roles. They span from Level 2 support Worker/Assistant to Level 9 Consultant Nurse/ Consultant Midwife/Director/Professor.

Figure 1: Levels of Practice

Level	Role Overview
2	People at level 2 require basic factual knowledge of a field of work. They may carry out clinical, technical, scientific or administrative duties and provide safe, effective, person-centred care under the direction of a registrant.
3	People at level 3 require knowledge of facts, processes and general concepts in a field of work. They may carry out a wider range of duties than a person working at level 2 and will have more responsibility, with supervision by a registrant.
4	People at level 4 require factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work. Work is guided by standard operating procedures, protocols or systems of work and they may have responsibility for supervision. BSc (Hons) or MSc (Hons) to Registered Nurse and Registered Midwife.
BSc (Hons) or MSc to Registered Nurse and Registered Midwife	
5	People at level 5 will have a comprehensive, factual and theoretical knowledge on registration. They use knowledge to solve problems creatively, make judgements which require analysis and interpretation, and actively contribute to service development, supervision or training.
6	People at level 6 require a critical understanding of detailed theoretical and practical knowledge, are specialist and/or have management, education and leadership responsibilities. They demonstrate initiative and creativity in finding solutions with responsibility for team performance and development.
7	People at level 7 have a critical awareness of knowledge and issues in the field and at the interface between different fields. They are innovative and have a responsibility for developing and changing practice and/or services in a complex and unpredictable environment.
8	People at level 8 require highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work. They are leaders with considerable responsibility, and the ability to research and analyse complex processes. They may lead policy, research, education or service delivery and improvement and have a clinical, management or education responsibilities.
9	People working at level 9 require knowledge at the most advanced frontier of the field of work and at the interface between fields. They will have responsibility for the development and delivery of a service to a population or leading research at the highest level of the organisation.

The **Levels of Practice** (see Figure 1), adapted from *Skills for Health (2010)*⁵ reflect role development and progression similar to the Knowledge and Skills Framework. The Level of Practice does not equate to the banding of Agenda for Change, which is related to remuneration.

⁵Skills for Health (2010) Key Elements of the Career Framework. Bristol: Skills for Health.

TO NOTE: The RNLD Career Pathway currently reflects the NIPEC Role Frameworks at **Levels 5 to 9**. Development of the core role frameworks for **Levels 2 to 4** is currently underway, and the pathway will be updated as these frameworks are finalised and implemented.

The levels are aligned to four pillars of practice: Clinical Practice, Education and Learning, Leadership and Research and Development (Figure 2). It is the underpinning knowledge, skills and behaviours outlined in the four pillars of practice which determine the level of practice of each role. This will enable a standardised approach to the design and delivery of models of nursing and midwifery roles across service provision to support delivery of safe and effective person-centred care.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND BEHAVIOURS

All roles within the pathway have been organised around four pillars, previously known as domains. The **Pillars of Practice** (Figure 2.) outline the breadth and range of knowledge, skills and behaviours required to practice safely and effectively across the wide variety of roles and settings, as described below:

Figure 2: Pillars of Practice



Clinical Practice: It is important that individuals acquire key clinical knowledge, skills and behaviours appropriate to their specific job to ensure the delivery of safe and effective person-centred care. This will support workforce planning and workforce modelling to enable the right people, with the right skills to be in the right place at the right time.

Education and Learning: The pillars of practice will define educational requirements to support individuals to maintain and advance their knowledge, skills and behaviour throughout their career journey.

Leadership: The leadership pillar of practice promotes the importance of the role of registrants in inspiring and managing practice, demonstrating professionalism and accountability at every level.

Research and Development: This pillar focuses on advancing nursing and midwifery practice through evidence-based care, continuous learning and dissemination of practice to improve healthcare outcomes.

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A [Staff Assessment & Development Tool](#)⁶ will help staff, in consultation with their line manager, to reflect on their current job role and identify areas where further training and development could enhance or advance their skills in each pillar of practice. For each job role, greater emphasis may be placed on one of the pillars e.g. clinical practice will have a greater emphasis for a staff nurse than leadership. There should however, be a focus in developing under all four pillars.

In addition to the educational requirements specific to the roles, individuals should also have access to a range of ongoing professional development activities to enable them to continue to enhance their knowledge and skills throughout their career. The [NIPEC Learning and Development Framework](#)⁷ is available to guide and signpost nurses in their continuing professional development.

⁶ Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery (NIPEC) (2026) *Self-Assessment and Development Tool*. Available at:

<https://nursingandmidwiferycareersni.hscni.net/download/44/nursing-home-pathway/2905/20260708selfassessmenttoolfinal.pdf> (Accessed: 7 October 2026).

⁷ Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery (NIPEC) (2026) *Learning and Development Framework*. Belfast: NIPEC. Available at:

<https://nursingandmidwiferycareersni.hscni.net/learning-development-framework/> (Accessed: 7 October 2026).

These ongoing professional development activities include:

- Mandatory training.
- Training related to the specialist area of practice in which a nurse works e.g. dementia care.
- Appraisal and personal development planning.

Registered Nurses are required to engage in the following:

- Reflective Supervision with access to peer support and professional networks relevant to the role.
- Preceptorship processes e.g. Northern Ireland Preceptorship Framework.
- Local and national initiatives.
- Management and leadership development.
- Quality Improvement initiatives.
- Practice Supervisor / Practice Assessor for Nursing students and support for other learners.

All nurses using this career pathway should use the Self-Assessment and Development Tool to map the core knowledge, skills and behaviours included in the career pathway document with their nursing practice.

RNLD CLINICAL NURSING ROLES

In order to better meet the health and care needs of people with a learning disability, in an effective and sustainable workforce model there is a renewed focus on RNLDs to:

- promote wellness and prevent ill health,
- support self-management, anticipatory care and early intervention,
- respond to deterioration and acute needs,
- monitor and treat long-term conditions including palliative and end of life care¹

This approach aims to provide a nursing workforce with the right skills, knowledge and behaviours who can provide the right care at the right time and in the right place for people with learning disabilities and their families across the life course. It is anticipated this will be best facilitated by having RNLD expertise at every point across the system to support people with a learning disability. This will require RNLDs to be embedded within a range of services where their expertise has greatest impact and improves health and social outcomes for the person with a learning disability.

Equity of Access and Outcomes: The Future Model of RNLDs in Supporting People with Learning Disabilities to Achieve the Best Health Possible¹ identifies a clear career and practice framework for Registered Nurses in Learning Disabilities (RNLDs). Agreed by Executive Directors of Nursing across HSC Trusts and the Independent Sector, the framework outlines six core RNLD roles.

Together, these roles support a career pathway that strengthens the contribution of learning disability nursing to improving health outcomes, reducing inequalities, and promoting equitable access to healthcare for people with learning disabilities. These roles, as they relate to clinical practice in Northern Ireland, are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: RNLD Roles in Clinical Practice

Level of Practice		Role Profile Summary
5	RNLD Staff Nurse	The RNLD Staff Nurse role consolidates previous experience and prepares those new to the role of RNLD nursing. They will develop comprehensive, specialised, factual, and theoretical knowledge within RNLD Nursing and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge.
6	RNLD Senior Staff Nurse	The RNLD Senior Staff Nurse is responsible for providing a higher level of responsibility and autonomy and utilise management and leadership skills including deputising for the nurse in charge.
7	RNLD Specialist Nurse	The RNLD Specialist Nurse works as a member of the community team in a defined area of practice. The RNLD Specialist Nurse works at a specialist level of practice and is responsible for a higher level of clinical decision making. They contribute to education, innovation and research and they lead on quality and service improvement initiatives.
7	RNLD Enhanced Nurse Practitioner	The RNLD Enhanced Nurse Practitioner works in areas that support continuity of care such as: acute and community liaison roles and where relevant in general and specialist services e.g. mental health. They practice autonomously and as part of a team, assuming accountability and responsibility and appropriate delegation to achieve equity of access to and outcomes from health care services which are proactive and timely.
8	RNLD Advanced Nurse Practitioner	The RNLD Advanced Nurse Practitioner practices autonomously within their expanded scope of practice. They provide expert care, incorporating evidence-based specialised nursing knowledge and skills thus enhancing their clinical decision making.
9	RNLD Consultant Nurse	The RNLD Consultant Nurse practises autonomously at an advanced level in the delivery of quality, safe and effective person-centred care. They use an innovative, evidenced based approach combined with complex decision-making skills to facilitate better outcomes and experience for patients.
Registration Requirements - Registered Nurse Learning Disabilities Part 1		
Additional Learning - As per role requirement outlined in the RNLD Clinical Career Pathway		

[to NOTE: further roles for levels 2-4 will be inserted when agreed]

Roles within the Pathway

These roles are the core RNLD roles included within the career pathway. Neither the pathway nor the roles are prescriptive, nor are they designed to impact on organisational structure.

It is recognised that organisations may have other job roles within their organisational structure not included in the pathway. Should those roles be mapped and assessed as being a similar 'level', the related education and competencies can be applied.

The pathway should be used to support the career development of RNLD nurses working across Northern Ireland (see Figure 3).



Figure 4: RNLD Roles within the Pathway

PATHWAY ROLE FRAMEWORKS

A Role Framework for defined roles at each level of practice outlines: summary profiles, competencies/proficiencies (knowledge, skills and behaviours) and is supplemented with a learning and development framework.

The **Role Profile Summary outlines in concise statements**: the level of practice, purpose and scope of a specific role within the career pathway. It answers the question: “What does this role exist to do?”

The **Professional Registration Requirements** of a role within the role framework document refers to the registration status that an individual must hold with the NMC to professionally perform the duties of that role.

The **Expected Education and/or Experience on appointment** section in the role framework document defines the minimum qualifications and professional experience a candidate should have when starting in the role. It sets a baseline for entry to that role.

Competencies are the defined set of **knowledge, skills, behaviours, under the 4 pillars of practice: clinical practice, education and learning, leadership, and research and development**, required for successful performance, at a specific level of practice and within a specific role

The **Additional Learning and Development Opportunities** section within the role framework document refers to supplementary activities to help staff grow, professionally and personally. These opportunities are designed to enhance competencies, broaden knowledge and support career progression.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND BEHAVIOURS FOR A RNLD STAFF NURSE

The Registered Nurse Learning Disabilities Staff Nurse practices autonomously and delivers safe, effective, compassionate person-centred care in collaboration with members of the interdisciplinary team to individuals of all ages, families, groups and communities, sick or well and in all settings. This includes the promotion of health, the prevention of illness, clinical assessment and the care of ill, disabled and dying people⁸. Through their professional practice nurses will demonstrate equality, inclusivity, advocacy, respect for the dignity of others, individual choice and human rights⁹.



Figure 5: Illustrative representation of the relative weighting of the four Pillars of Practice for the RNLD Staff Nurse. The graphic is not to scale.

⁸World Health Organisation (WHO) (2024) Nursing and Midwifery. Geneva: WHO.

⁹Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) (2022) Our EDI aims. London: NMC.

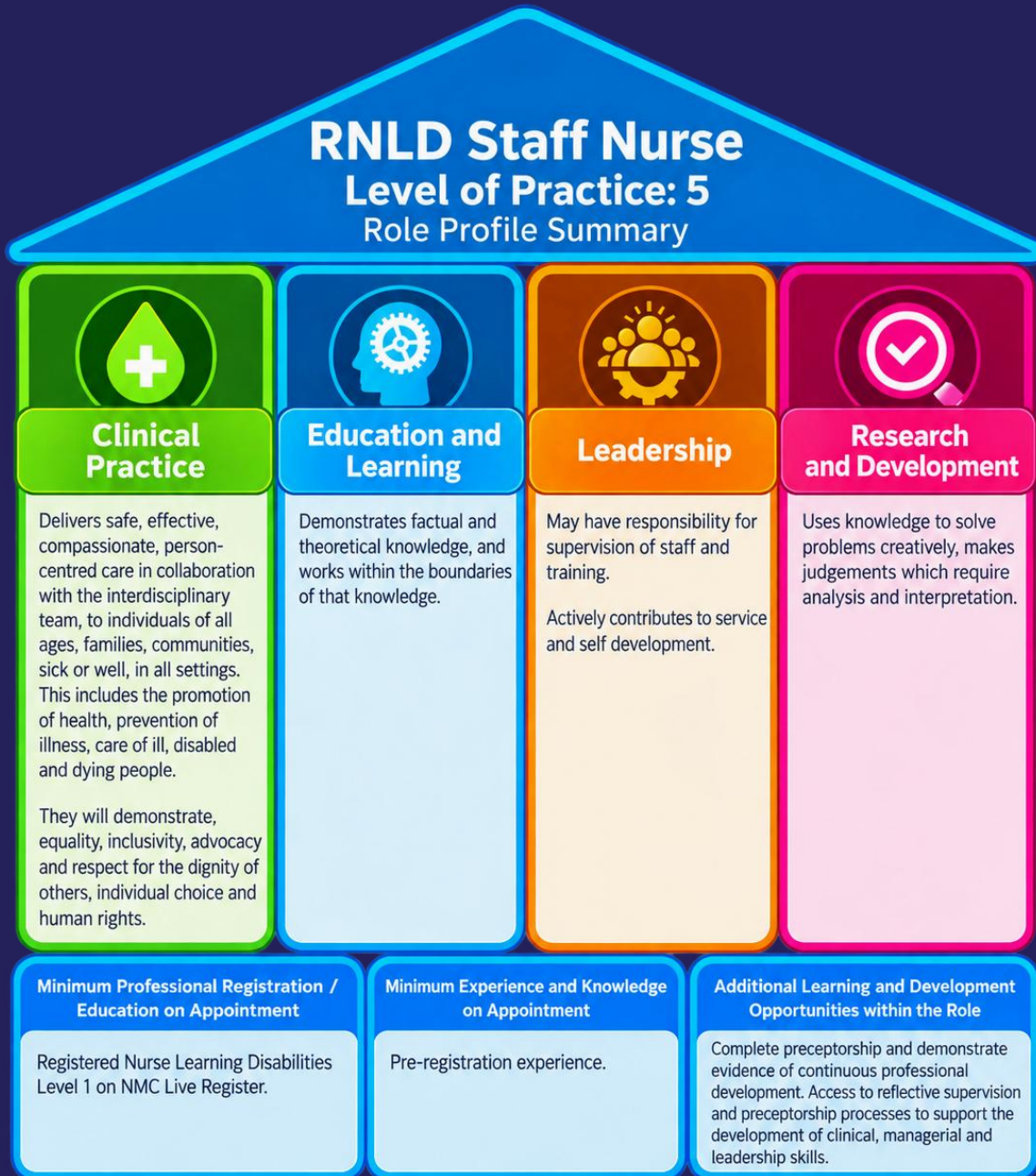


Figure 6: Role Profile Summary for the RNLD Staff Nurse

CLINICAL PRACTICE**KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, BEHAVIOURS****Ability to**

- Practise autonomously and as part of a team, assuming accountability and responsibility for the promotion and delivery of safe, effective, trauma informed, compassionate and quality person-centred care;
- Use skills of critical thinking, analysis and evaluation to make justifiable timely clinical decisions, utilising a range of appropriate information and sources;
- Holistically assess, plan, implement or delegate care/interventions and evaluate effectiveness in partnership with their patients/clients;
- Develop and apply clinical knowledge, skills and behaviours, ensuring they are current and appropriate to the specific area of practice;
- Use and adapt a range of strategies to role model empathic, compassionate interpersonal and communication skills to effectively and appropriately enable interactions with individuals, carers and colleagues;
- Promote values-based decision making;
- Demonstrate the use of technology and information systems and resources available in order to deliver quality care;
- Provide and share information effectively and concisely for a range of situations and contexts to maximise effectiveness, safety and continuity of care;
- Act and influence others to incorporate non-judgemental, values-based care into practice demonstrating equality, equity, diversity and inclusion¹⁰;
- Identify and implement the principles of population health, health promotion, health protection and factors that may influence a range of health inequalities. This will include mental, physical health and patterns of health, through use of appropriate resources including health literacy;
- Act as an advocate for people with a learning disability and their families and empower them to participate in decision-making about their care;
- Maintain and apply knowledge of relevant guidance, policies and legislation that govern legal and ethical aspects of service provision;

¹⁰Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) (2015) Enabling Professionalism. London: NMC

- Apply and ensure adherence to the NMC Code³, relevant guidance, policies and legislation that govern legal and ethical aspects of service provision and embed into practice;
- Contribute to the review and development of local policies, guidelines and protocols;
- Monitor and maintain health, safety and security of self and others, by adhering to health isolation and policies;
- Raise and escalate concerns and/or report incidents in accordance with local reporting policies and procedures and professional standards⁹
- Implement and promote relevant safeguarding policies and procedures

EDUCATION & LEARNING

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, BEHAVIOURS

They will have a factual and theoretical knowledge and awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge.

Ability to

- Accept responsibility for own professional development and the maintenance of professional competence and NMC revalidation¹¹;
- Successfully complete a preceptorship programme¹²;
- Engage in a range of learning and development activities and reflective supervision to improve care and practice;
- Engage in appraisal process and the development and implementation of a Personal Development Plan (PDP) to ensure continuous professional development in order to facilitate career development and progression;
- Contribute to the development of others through a supportive learning environment;
- Facilitate learning and development by providing feedback, mentoring, buddying, role-modelling, motivating and encouraging others;
- Apply the evidence-based skills of facilitation, teaching, assessment and development to ensure best practice standards;

¹¹ Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) (2021) Revalidation. London: NMC.

¹² Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council (NIPEC) (2022) Northern Ireland Preceptorship Framework for Nursing and Midwifery. Belfast: NIPEC.

- Contribute to the supervision and assessment of pre-registration and post-registration nurses¹³;
- Supervise and contribute to the development of non-registered healthcare/nursing staff;
- Provide education to support and facilitate patients and families in self-management and decision making;
- Recognise role and responsibility in raising concerns, listening to others' concerns, and escalating these in line with local policies to support the psychological safety of self and others;
- Implement and promote relevant safeguarding policies and procedures;
- Apply the appropriate Delegation Framework.

LEADERSHIP

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, BEHAVIOURS

They may have responsibility for supervision of staff or training. They actively contribute to service and self-development.

Ability to

- Develop personal leadership and management abilities specific to role by:
 - gaining insight into self and own behaviours through reflective practice;
 - practice self-care to sustain optimal well-being enabling safe and effective care;
 - obtaining, analysing and acting on feedback from a variety of sources for example internal and external to the organisation;
 - demonstrating compassionate leadership;
 - demonstrating skills in motivating, influencing and negotiation;
 - role modelling professional ethics, values and best practice as per NMC Code;
- recognising, valuing, respecting and promoting equality and diversity to build a person-centred healthful culture¹⁴;
- Demonstrate accountability for own practice and work autonomously, as an equal partner with a range of other professionals, and in interdisciplinary team;
- Appropriately delegate others in accordance with the regional framework guidelines² and organisational governance arrangements;

¹³ Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) (2023) Standards for education and training. Part 2: Standards for student supervision and assessment. London: NMC.

¹⁴ McCormack, B., McCance, T. (2017) Person-Centred Practice in Nursing and Health Care. Theory and practice. 2nd Ed. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell

- Communicate effectively across a variety of channels ensuring accessibility and inclusivity;
- Seek, receive and provide feedback in an open, honest and constructive manner;
- Identify and analyse problems and work collaboratively to implement solutions;
- Respond proactively to concerns by addressing or escalating as per organisational policy and professional guidance;
- Demonstrate the ability to practice both independently and in collaboration with others;
- Contribute to the effective and efficient management of resources, having awareness of budgetary constraints and needs of the service;
- Be aware of effective staffing levels to meet safe, person-centred care and raise concerns when appropriate;
- Demonstrate awareness of local governance structures, frameworks, strategic policy and strategy used to improve care quality;
- Contribute to a safe, inclusive and healthful culture that learns from and responds to risk as per organisational governance arrangements;
- Give support and guidance to colleagues enabling personal and professional development;
- Complete a person-centred risk assessment as appropriate and implement plan of care, for example: Care Bundles, Mental Capacity Act¹⁵, etc;
- Implement and promote safeguarding policies and procedures ^{16, 17}.

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, BEHAVIOURS

They are able to use knowledge to solve problems creatively, make judgements which require analysis and interpretation.

Ability to

- Search appropriate databases, identify current and valid evidence to inform person-centred practice;
- Adhere to research governance, including Good Clinical Practice, ethics, data protection and confidentiality;

¹⁵ Department of Health (DoH) (2016) Mental Capacity Act. Belfast: DoH.

¹⁶ Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council (NIPEC) (2019) Safeguarding Adults: A core competency framework for nurses and midwives. Belfast: NIPEC.

¹⁷ Public Health Agency (PHA) (2022) Safeguarding Children Learning and Development: Guidance for Nurses, Midwives and Allied Health Professionals. Belfast: PHA.

- Identify ideas for service improvement and share these with your line manager;
- Participate in Quality Improvement, clinical audit and contribute to research activity informing practice^{18,19};
- Disseminate good practice and learning emerging from for e.g. quality indices, risk reporting systems, serious adverse incidents, audit, research and quality improvement activity;
- In conjunction with senior staff, monitor and evaluate standards of care, adhering to defined guidelines, policies, standards, and protocols to ensure the delivery of safe, effective and person-centred care;

¹⁸ Department of Health (DoH) (2019) Quality 2020 - A ten-year strategy to protect and improve quality in health and social care in Northern Ireland. Belfast: DoH.

¹⁹ Department of Health (DoH) (2020) Nursing and Midwifery Task Group (NMTG) Report and Recommendations. Belfast: DoH.

PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION, EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

Minimum Professional Registration, Education Level and Experience

RNLD Staff Nurse

A relevant nursing qualification and current registration as a Registered Nurse Learning Disabilities, Level 1, on the NMC register are required.

RNLD Staff Nurses should complete a preceptorship programme, where this is their first post-registration role, alongside local induction. Nurses who have previously completed a recognised preceptorship programme should undertake local induction appropriate to their role and area of practice. Ongoing professional development should support the maintenance and development of knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Coaching, mentoring and reflective supervision provide opportunities to strengthen clinical expertise, professional judgement, leadership and management capabilities.

The RNLD Staff Nurse will participate in:

- Mandatory and role-specific training
- Continuing professional development.
- Reflective supervision, peer support and relevant professional networks.
- Preceptorship and local induction.
- Link nurse/champion roles where appropriate.
- Quality improvement and service development initiatives.
- Management and leadership development.
- Practice Supervisor / Practice Assessor preparation, where appropriate, and support for nursing students and other learners.

Additional Learning and Development Opportunities

Access to coaching, mentoring and reflective supervision will support continued development of clinical, leadership and management skills.

See Appendix A for examples of additional learning and development opportunities.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND BEHAVIOURS FOR A RNLD Senior Staff Nurse

The Registered Senior Staff Nurse practises autonomously and delivers safe, effective, compassionate person-centred care in collaboration with members of the interdisciplinary team to individuals of all ages, families, groups and communities, sick or well and in all settings – using enhanced clinical judgement and decision-making in assessment, diagnosis (within scope) and management of care^{20, 21}.

This includes the promotion of health and well-being, the prevention of illness, clinical assessment and the care of ill, disabled and dying people. Through their professional practice nurses will demonstrate equality, inclusivity, advocacy, respect for the dignity of others, individual choice and human rights⁵.



Figure 7: Illustrative representation of the relative weighting of the four Pillars Of Practice. The graphic is not to scale.

²⁰Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) (2014) Standards for competence for registered nurses. London: NMC.

²¹Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) (2018) Standards of proficiency for registered nurses. London: NMC.

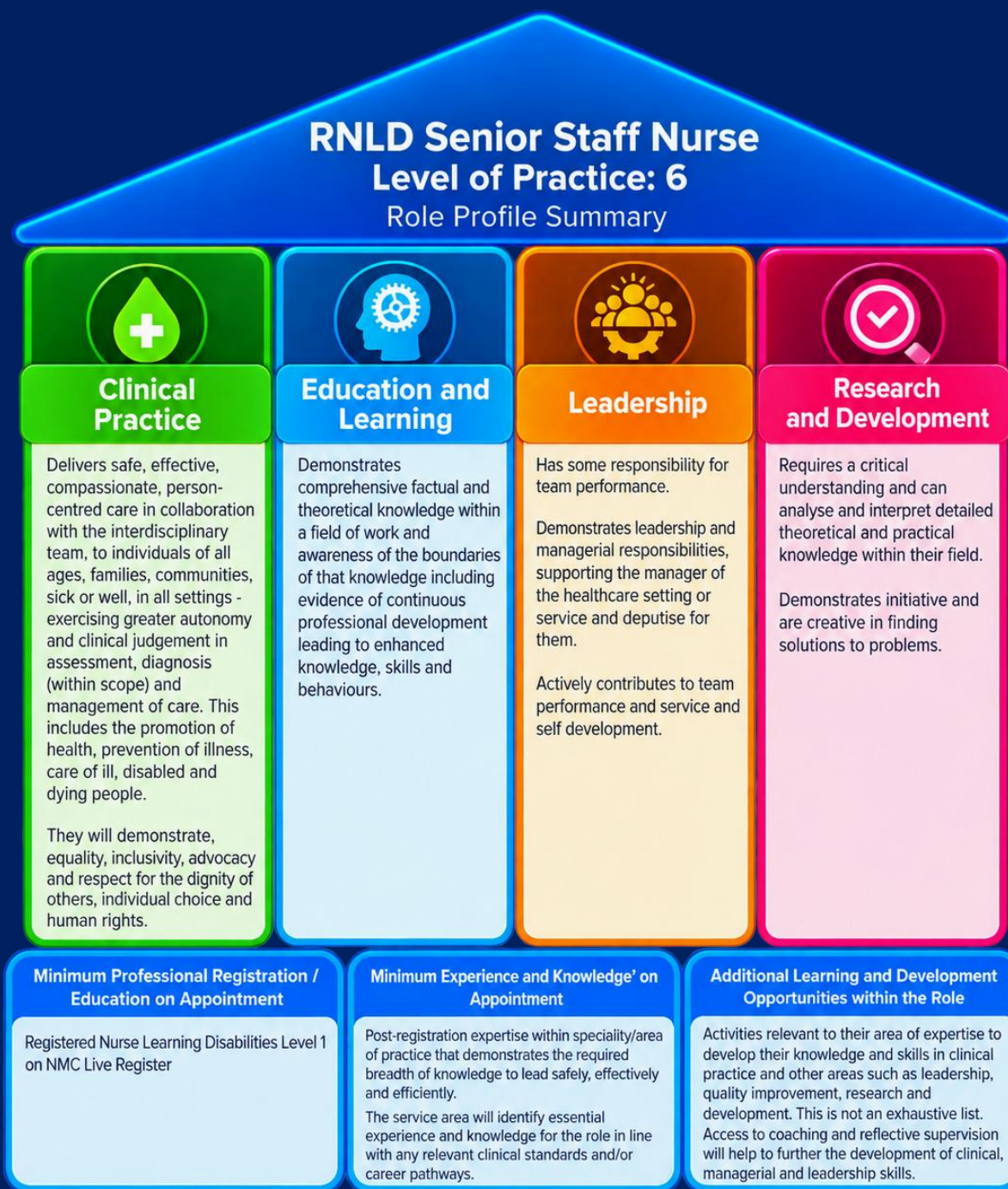


Figure 8: Role Profile Summary for the RNLD Senior Staff Nurse

CLINICAL PRACTICE**KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, BEHAVIOURS****Ability to:**

- Practise autonomously and as part of a team, assuming accountability and responsibility for the promotion and delivery of safe, effective, trauma informed compassionate and quality person-centred care;
- Demonstrate accountability and responsibility to lead the delivery of safe, effective and person-centred care as part of the multi-disciplinary team;
- Use skills of critical analysis, evaluation and effective management to make justifiable timely clinical decisions, utilising a range of appropriate information and resources;
- Holistically assess, plan, implement or direct complex care/interventions and evaluate effectiveness;
- Apply and continue to develop specialist clinical knowledge, skills and behaviours appropriate to specific area of practice;
- Utilise advanced communication skills and strategies to communicate across relevant interdisciplinary teams/multiagency when dealing with complex issues;
- Select and use technology and information systems to both inform and support practice;
- Use technology and information systems to collect, analyse and share complex information effectively and concisely for a range of situations and contexts to ensure safety and continuity of care;
- Promote and influence others to incorporate non-judgemental, values-based care into practice demonstrating equality, equity, diversity and inclusion⁵;
- Identify and implement the principles of population health, health promotion and factors that may influence a range of health inequalities. This will include mental, physical health and patterns of health, through use of appropriate resources including health literacy;
- Act as an advocate for people with learning disabilities and their families and empower them to share in decision-making about their care;
- Apply and ensure adherence to relevant guidance²², policies and legislation that govern legal and ethical aspects of service provision and embed into practice;
- Lead and support the implementation of local policies, guidelines and protocols, ensuring they reflect national policy, legislation and current evidence;

²² Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council (NIPEC) (2024) A Collective Leadership Framework for Nursing and Midwifery. Belfast: NIPEC.

- Monitor and maintain health, safety and security of self and others, by adhering to health and safety legislation and policies;
- Escalate and/or respond to concerns and/or incidents in accordance with local reporting policies and procedures and professional standards;
- Ensure completion of person-centred risk assessments and implementation of plans of care, for example: Care Bundles, Mental Capacity Act etc¹³; Promoting Quality Care
- Implement and promote safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Apply appropriate Delegation Framework

EDUCATION & LEARNING

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, BEHAVIOURS

They will have a comprehensive factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work and awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge including evidence of continuous professional development leading to enhanced knowledge a, skills and behaviours.

Ability to

- Role model accountability for own professional development and the maintenance of professional competence and NMC revalidation¹¹;
- Engage in, support and facilitate and implement a range of learning activities and reflective supervision to improve care and practice in self and others;
- Support and develop new team members and colleagues;
- Engage in learning needs analyses, educational audit and evaluation of educational interventions;
- Identify, address and report underperformance as per organisational policy;
- Implement lessons learned from audit, adverse incidents and complaints.
- Contribute to the development of a positive teaching/learning environment to develop the capability and capacity of staff to care for patients and families to support self-management and decision making.
- Facilitate and contribute to the dissemination and implementation of learning from, for example incident reporting, team briefs/de-briefs, compliments and complaints, learning/safety alerts etc to promote the delivery of safe, effective patient centred care

- Contribute to the development, delivery and evaluation of educational initiatives that promote the health of people with a learning disability
- Ensure continuous professional development of self/others through appraisal and personal development planning processes;
- Create an effective and supportive environment that ensures learning opportunities for others;
- Facilitate learning and development by role-modelling, motivating and encouraging others;
- Apply the evidence-based skills of facilitation, teaching, assessment and development to ensure best practice standards;
- Supervise and assess pre-registration and post-registration nurses;
- Supervise and support the development of non-registered healthcare/nursing staff;

LEADERSHIP

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, BEHAVIOURS

They have some responsibility for team performance. The RNLD senior staff nurse demonstrates leadership and management responsibilities, supports the manager of the healthcare setting service and deputises for them. They actively contribute to team performance and service and self-development.

Ability to:

- Utilise the Collective Leadership Framework for Nursing and Midwifery to assess, develop and demonstrate leadership capabilities through:
 - gaining insight into self and own behaviours through reflective practice and acting on feedback;
 - demonstrating compassionate leadership;
 - demonstrating skills in motivating, influencing and negotiation;
 - role modelling professional ethics, values and best practice as per NMC Code;
 - valuing and promoting equality and diversity;
 - respectful practice ensuring a culture of inclusion.
- Engage in activities to promote self-care and enhance the team's health and well-being;
- Demonstrate accountability for own professional practice and hold others to account as per NMC Code²³;
- Work autonomously as an equal partner with a range of other professionals, and in interdisciplinary teams¹⁷;

²³ Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) (2018) The Code. Professional standards of practice and behaviour for nurses, midwives and nursing associates. London: NMC.

- Appropriately manage and delegate to others in accordance with the regional framework guidelines¹⁴ and organisational governance arrangements;
- Communicate complex information at an appropriate level to a range of audiences, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity;
- Actively promote a supportive and just culture, where constructive feedback is received positively and regarded as a learning opportunity;
- Display creativity and innovation in exploring and implementing possible solutions to problems and evaluating their effectiveness;
- Respond proactively and support others to take responsibility for ensuring concerns are addressed in a timely manner applying relevant policies and professional guidance;
- Demonstrate the ability to use recognised workload assessment and skill mix tools to ensure safe and effective person-centred care;
- Demonstrate the ability to lead a team utilising the Collective Leadership Framework for Nursing and Midwifery ¹⁹
- Ensure the effective and efficient management of resources, having knowledge of budgetary constraints and needs of the service;
- Recognise, monitor, and implement suitable processes to improve safe and effective staffing levels, ensuring the provision of person-centred care, raising concerns and escalating as per organisational policy;
- Utilise local governance structures, frameworks, strategic drivers and policy to improve care;
- Provide leadership for quality improvement and service development to enhance people's wellbeing and experiences of healthcare ^{16 17};
- Promote and manage a safe, inclusive and healthful culture¹¹ that learns from and responds to risk as per organisational governance arrangements;
- Contribute to workforce development through personal and professional development of individuals and teams aligned to organisational priorities;
- Demonstrate leadership behaviours when managing people, adhering to organisational human resource policies and processes;
- Work effectively across professional boundaries, actively involving and respecting others' contribution.

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT**KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, BEHAVIOURS**

RNLDs require a critical understanding and can analyse and interpret detailed theoretical and practical knowledge within and/or their field. They demonstrate initiative and are creative in finding solutions to problems.

Ability to

- Demonstrates the ability to search, critically appraise evaluate evidence and implement to inform person-centred practice;
- Promote adherence to research governance, including Good Clinical Practice, ethics, data protection and confidentiality;
- Support and assist in implementation of ideas for service improvement;
- Enable and contribute to Quality Improvement projects and initiatives, clinical audit and research activity which informs^{17,18};
- Disseminate and implement good practice and learning emerging from quality indices, audit, research and quality improvement activity to enhance practice and patient experience.

PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION, EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

Minimum Professional Registration, Education Level and Experience

RNLD Senior Staff Nurse

A relevant nursing qualification and current registration as a Registered Nurse Learning Disabilities, Level 1, on the NMC register are required.

Post-registration expertise within speciality/area of practice that demonstrate the required breadth of knowledge to lead safely, effectively and efficiently.

Access to coaching, mentoring and reflective supervision will support continued development of clinical leadership and management skills.

The RNLD Senior Staff Nurse will participate in:

- Mandatory and role-specific training.
- Continuing professional development.
- Reflective supervision, peer support and relevant professional networks.
- Local induction, where appropriate.
- Link nurse/champion roles where appropriate.
- Quality improvement and service development initiatives.
- Management and leadership development.
- Practice Supervisor / Practice Assessor preparation, where appropriate, and support for nursing students and other learners.

Additional Learning and Development Opportunities

Access to coaching, mentoring and reflective supervision will support continued development of clinical, leadership and management skills.

See Appendix A for examples of additional learning and development opportunities.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND BEHAVIOURS FOR A RNLD Specialist Nurse

The RNLD Specialist Nurse employed in specialist nursing roles are guided by the NMC Code²⁰ and practice with higher levels of autonomy, knowledge and skill. This enables them to achieve their full potential and to optimise their contribution to meeting population health needs, delivering person centred care and improving quality, safety and efficiency. They also contribute to the support and leadership of the wider health and social care team and ensure the service is delivered effectively for the benefit of the people, families and communities they serve. Specialist nurses have undertaken additional education and learning after their initial professional registration to develop further knowledge and skills. The post-registration standards published by the NMC ensure the consistency of practice so that a higher level of quality and safety of care is provided.

Specialist Nursing roles involve more autonomous decision-making, in situations that require them to manage a greater level of clinical complexity, unpredictability and risk, in terms of the people they care for, the nursing care they manage and co-ordinate and the services they work within, which in turn may be integrated with other agencies, professionals and disciplines.



Figure 9: Illustrative representation of the relative weighting of the four Pillars of Practice for the RNLD Specialist Nurse. The graphic is not to scale.

Core Proficiencies for Specialist Nursing Roles

The NMC post-registration standards of proficiency support nurses working in specialist roles to advance their clinical, leadership, research and educative practice. This will enable greater clinical autonomy, independent decision-making and leadership in complex and high-risk situations for the benefit of people, families, communities, populations and services.

NIPEC has mapped the core post-registration standards against each of the four pillars that apply to all fields of community and non-community Specialist Nursing practice²⁴ (Table 1 shown below). This will help Specialist Nurses* when preparing for revalidation, appraisal and supervision.

²⁴ Nursing and Midwifery Council (2022) Standards of proficiency for specialist community nursing specialist practice qualifications (SPQ). London: NMC



Figure 10: Role Profile Summary for the RNLD Specialist Nurse

Table 1: Mapping of NMC Standards of Proficiency for SPQ (2022) to the Four Pillars of Practice

NMC Standards of Proficiency for SPQ (2022)	DoH Clinical Career Pathway Pillars
Platform 1: Being an accountable autonomous professional & partner in care	Clinical Practice
Platform 2: Promoting health & wellbeing & preventing ill health	Clinical Practice
	Education & Learning
Platform 3: Assessing people's abilities & needs & planning care	Clinical Practice
	Education & Learning
Platform 4: Providing and evaluating evidence-based care	Education & Learning
	Research & Development
Platform 5: Leading, supporting & managing teams	Education & Learning
	Leadership
Platform 6: Leading improvements in safety & quality of care	Education & Learning
	Leadership
	Research & Development
Platform 7: Care co-ordination & system leadership	Leadership

*All Specialist Nurse roles should have an associated job plan.

KEY KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, BEHAVIOURS

Ability to:

- Work autonomously and independently within a defined area of nursing practice;
- Work with and delegate to diverse interdisciplinary and interagency teams;
- Exercise a higher level of clinical autonomy, independent decision-making and leadership in complex, dynamic, unpredictable, and high-risk situations;
- Use advanced communication skills;
- Undertake comprehensive assessments, make differential diagnoses, if within scope of practice;
- Work independently and prescribe nursing care, treatment and interventions;
- Identify and mitigate risk, intervene early to promote the health and wellbeing of populations;
- Lead on identifying vulnerable people, families and communities at risk of direct and indirect abuse or harm and take action to support, safeguard and protect them by coordinating timely evidence-based care from relevant services when needed;
- Recognise, identify, respond, contribute to assist children and adults when they may be at risk of harm or in need of protection;
- Appropriately refer and discharge from specialist nursing episode of care/services or refer to other services or agencies;
- Contribute to education, innovation and research and demonstrate the application of evidence-based practice;
- Undertake and apply the principles of health promotion, protection, improvement and prevention and recognise factors which contribute to health inequalities and wider determinants of health;
- contribute to policy and service development; and
- contribute to service improvement/quality improvement initiatives.

PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION, EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

Minimum Professional Registration, Education Level and Experience

RNLD Specialist Nurse

A relevant nursing qualification and current registration as a Registered Nurse Learning Disabilities, Level 1, on the NMC register are required.

In addition, RNLD Specialist Nurses must hold a Specialist Practice Nursing Qualification (SPQ) (Community SPQ, non-community SPQ), or an equivalent post-registration qualification relevant to the area of specialist nurse practice. Where prescribing is required for the role, the postholder must hold an NMC-recorded Independent/Supplementary Prescribing qualification*.

Post-registration expertise within speciality/area of practice that demonstrate the required breadth of knowledge and expertise to work in a specialist role: to be determined by employing organisation.

Ongoing professional development should support the maintenance and development of knowledge, skills and behaviours required for specialist practice.

The RNLD Specialist Nurse will participate in:

- Mandatory and role-specific training
- Continuing professional development.
- Reflective supervision, peer support and relevant professional networks.
- Local induction, where appropriate.
- Link nurse/champion roles where appropriate.
- Quality improvement and service development initiatives.
- Management and leadership development.
- Practice Supervisor / Practice Assessor preparation, where appropriate, and support for nursing students and other learners.

Additional Learning and Development Opportunities

Access to coaching, mentoring and reflective supervision will support continued development of clinical, leadership and management skills. **See Appendix A for examples of additional learning and development opportunities.**

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND BEHAVIOURS FOR A

RNLD Enhanced Nurse Practitioner

A Nurse working as an RNLD Enhanced Nurse Practitioner works in areas that support continuity of care such as in: acute and community liaison roles and where relevant in general and specialist services e.g. mental health. They practice autonomously and as part of a team, assuming accountability and responsibility and appropriate delegation to achieve equity of access to and outcomes from health care services which are proactive and timely.

The RNLD Enhanced Nurse Practitioner practises autonomously and delivers safe, effective, compassionate person-centred care in collaboration with members of the interdisciplinary team meeting the needs of people, families and communities. They provide enhanced clinical oversight of care across the clinical unit/department, managing emerging risks and guiding responsive clinical decisions.

They practice with a high level of autonomy, providing specialist clinical advice through:

- interpretation of complex information and application of clinical judgment,
- decision-making in assessment, diagnosis and management of care.
- promotion of health, the prevention of illness and the care of ill, disabled and dying people



Figure 11: Illustrative representation of the relative weighting of the four Pillars of Practice for the RNLD Enhanced Nurse Practitioner. The graphic is not to scale.

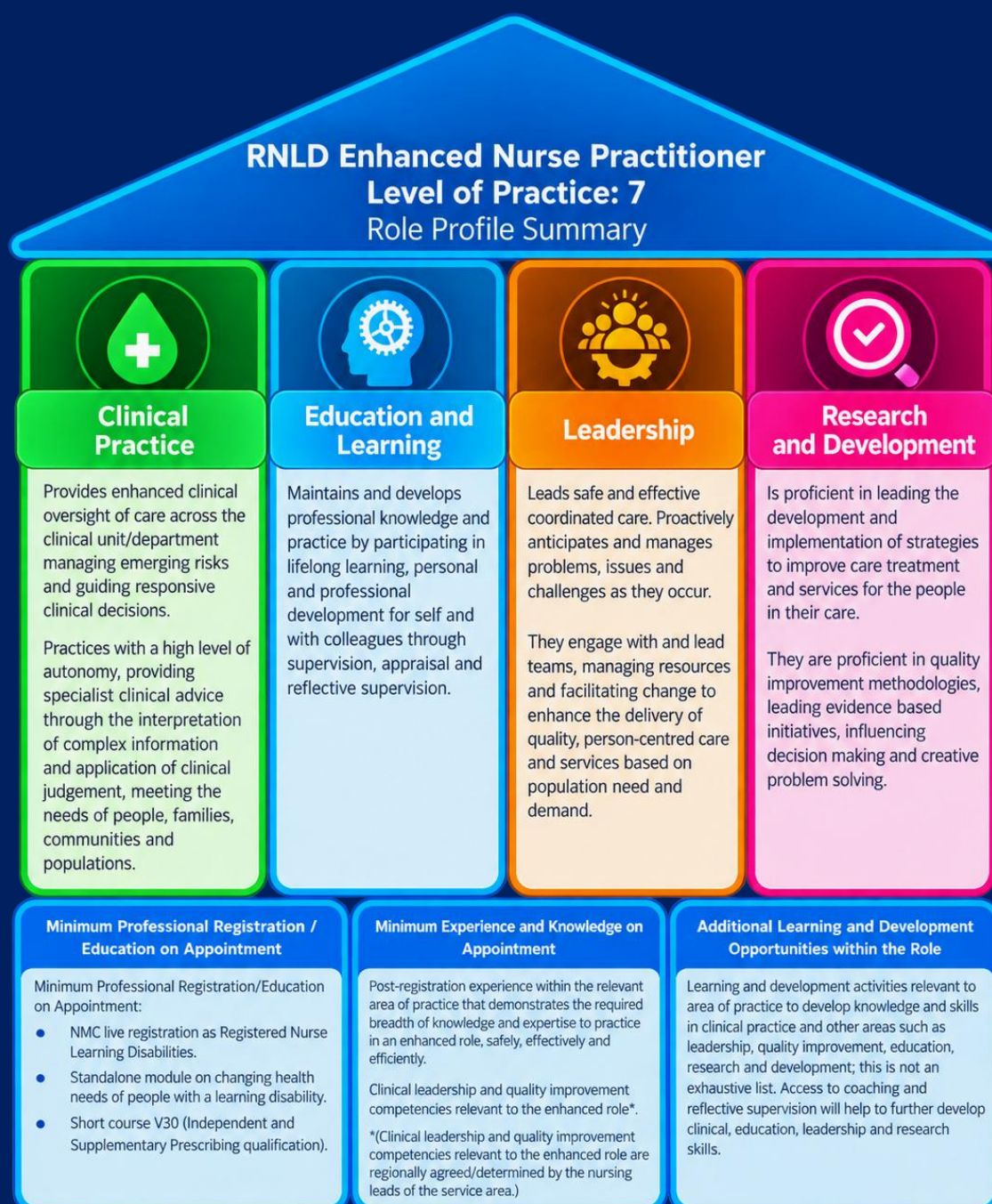


Figure 12: Role Profile Summary for the RNLD Enhanced Nurse Practitioner

CLINICAL PRACTICE

KEY KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, BEHAVIOURS

Ability to:

- Demonstrate accountability and responsibility to lead the delivery of safe, effective and person-centred care, as part of the multi-disciplinary team, demonstrating enhanced expertise within the scope of the profession and individual practice aligned to DOH Equity of Access and Outcome Report (2024)¹;
- Lead and co-ordinate continuity of care, progression and/or navigation of clinical care as the person with learning disability transitions between different parts of the health and social care system across the lifespan recognising and escalating specific areas of need and gaps in service provision¹;
- Holistically assess, plan, implement and direct complex care/interventions and evaluate effectiveness and outcomes;
- Use a wide range of skills, strategies and advanced communication skills such as social stories, easy read and desensitisation techniques to support people in making decisions on complex matters or in complex, challenging and unpredictable situations;
- Use and evaluate technology, digital and information systems to collect, analyse and share complex information effectively and concisely, incorporating reasonable adjustments to support accessibility, safety, continuity of care and improved health outcomes across a range of situations and contexts;
- Promote and influence others to incorporate non-judgemental, values-based care into practice, demonstrating equality, equity, diversity and inclusion⁵ challenging discriminatory behaviours and acting to improve inclusion;
- Work collaboratively, and act as an advocate for people ¹³ and empower them to share in decision-making about their care to improve health literacy and to maximise their health and well-being;
- Critically understand and apply relevant legal regulatory and governance requirements, frameworks, guidance⁸, policies and professional and ethical frameworks; embedding them into practice, to uphold the human rights of people with a learning disability including Safeguarding, Mental Capacity Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, minimisation of Restrictive Practices (DoH 2023), and Deprivation of Liberty Standards;

- Assess how pain and distress is presented and communicated by a person with a learning disability and take appropriate action to prevent diagnostic overshadowing;
- Promote, monitor and maintain health, safety and security of self and others, by adhering to health and safety legislation and policies;
- Act on concerns and/or incidents, (including escalation, reporting and responding) in accordance with local reporting policies and procedures and professional standards; including people in need of safeguarding;
- Ensure completion of person-centred risk assessments and implementation of plans of care, for example: Promoting Quality Care, Care Bundles, Mental Capacity Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 ¹³;
- Monitor and evaluate partnership working with people with a learning disability, families/carers (s) and key stakeholders to deliver safe and effective person-centred care and to advocate on their behalf to support the co-design and best interest decision making when necessary;
- Act as a resource providing professional advice for people with a learning disability, their family/carers(s) and other professionals in navigating Care Pathways including Advanced Care planning.

EDUCATION & LEARNING

KEY KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, BEHAVIOURS

The RNLD Enhanced Nurse Practitioner will have a comprehensive factual and specialised theoretical knowledge within the area of practice and awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge including evidence of continuous professional development.

Ability to:

- Role model accountability for own professional development and the maintenance of professional competence and NMC revalidation⁸;
- Engage in, support and facilitate a wide range of learning activities, assessment, complex decision making and organisational skills and reflective supervision to improve care and practice in self and others;

- Create an effective and supportive environment that ensures learning opportunities for others;
- Act as an experienced supervisor, assessor, teacher, mentor, facilitator for: pre-registration and post-registration nurses; new team members; non-registered healthcare/nursing staff; and other healthcare professionals supporting others to take on these roles to ensure best practice standards and a culture of excellence;
- Lead the development of a positive learning culture for the interdisciplinary team supporting positive team development and cohesion across disciplines and agencies;
- Engage in learning needs analysis, educational audit and evaluation of educational interventions. Review data collected to plan and lead on a positive learning environment, manage talent and succession plan;
- Implement lessons learned from audit, adverse incidents and complaints;
- Lead the development and facilitate use of education materials for students, staff and people and evaluate effectiveness and impact.

LEADERSHIP

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, BEHAVIOURS

The RNLD Enhanced Nurse Practitioner leads safe, effective, coordinated, and person-centred care. Proactively anticipates and manages problems, issues and challenges as they occur. They engage with and lead teams, managing resources and facilitating change to enhance the delivery of quality, person-centred care and services based on population need and demand.

Ability to:

- Utilise the Collective Leadership Framework for Nursing and Midwifery to assess, develop and demonstrate leadership capabilities through:
 - gaining insight into self and own behaviours through reflective practice and acting on feedback;
 - demonstrating compassionate leadership;
 - demonstrating enhanced skills in motivating, influencing and negotiation;
 - role modelling professional ethics, values and best practice as per NMC Code² and in specific to the relevant area of expertise;
 - valuing and promoting equality and diversity; and
 - respectful practice ensuring a culture of inclusion.

- Engage in activities to promote self-care and enhance the team's health and well-being;
- Demonstrate accountability for own professional practice and hold others to account as per NMC Code³;
- Work autonomously as an equal partner with a range of other professionals, and in interdisciplinary teams¹⁹;
- Appropriately manage and delegate to others in accordance with the regional framework guidelines¹² and organisational governance arrangements, and in the area of practice;
- Role model highly developed verbal, non-verbal and written communication skills, utilising appropriate augmentative and alternative communication systems at an appropriate level to a range of audiences, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity;
- Actively promote a supportive and just culture, where constructive feedback is received positively and regarded as a learning opportunity;
- Display creativity and innovation in exploring and implementing possible solutions to problems and evaluating their effectiveness, that takes account of the abilities and needs of people with learning disabilities and their family/ carer(s);
- Review lead and manage staff, financial and other resources required to deliver safe effective person-centred care, making professional risk-based decisions when necessary to resolve resource issues;
- Use recognised workload assessment and skill mix tools to ensure safe and effective person-centred care;
- Develop and utilise local governance structures, frameworks, strategic drivers and policy to improve care;
- Provide leadership for quality improvement and service development (in particular for area of practice) to enhance people's wellbeing and experiences of healthcare²¹;
- Contribute to workforce development through personal and professional development of individuals and teams aligned to organisational priorities, in particular for the area of practice;

²⁵ Department of Health (2023) Regional Policy on the use of Restrictive practices in Health and Social Care settings available at [doh-regional-policy-restrictive-practices-hsc-nov-2023.pdf](https://www.doh.gov.uk/regional-policy-restrictive-practices-hsc-nov-2023.pdf) (Accessed June 2026)

- Lead on restrictive practice protocols to minimise use and promote the principle of least restriction possible following requirement for decision making, reporting and governance²⁵;
- Co-produce strategies and plans for service design with people with learning disabilities families and staff to improve care outcomes and which achieves a safe, inclusive and healthful culture.

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT KEY KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, BEHAVIOURS

The RNLD Enhanced Nurse Practitioner is proficient in leading the development and implementation of strategies to improve care, treatment and services for the people in their care. They are proficient in quality improvement methodologies; leading evidence-based initiatives; influencing decision-making, and creative problem solving.

Ability to

- Act as a role model for the wider team by promoting a positive culture in quality improvement, research, implementation science and evidence-based practice;
- Demonstrate the ability to search, critically appraise and evaluate evidence to inform person-centred and family centred practice, in the area of practice;
- Promote adherence to research governance, including Good Clinical Practice, ethics, data protection and confidentiality;
- Lead on, enable and contribute to quality improvement projects, health promotion service improvement initiatives, clinical audit and research activity²⁶, which aims to improve care and reduce preventable and avoidable deaths caused by health inequalities experienced by people with a learning disability;
- Disseminate and implement best practice and learning emerging from quality indices, audit, research and quality improvement activity to enhance practice and people's experience of care across the lifespan;
- Contribute to the wider research agenda through initiating or supporting nursing led research and improvement activity, especially within the area of practice;

²⁶ National Health Service (NHS) England (2023). Improving patient safety culture- a practical guide. London: NHS England.

PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION, EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

Minimum Professional Registration, Education Level and Experience

RNLD Enhanced Nurse Practitioner

A relevant nursing qualification and current registration as a Registered Nurse Learning Disabilities, Level 1, on the NMC register are required.

The RNLD Enhanced Nurse Practitioner must hold an NMC-recorded Independent/Supplementary Prescribing qualification (V300).

In addition, RNLD Enhanced Nurse Practitioners should have completed a standalone module on the changing health needs of people with a learning disability across the lifespan.

Post registration experience within the relevant specialty/area of practice that demonstrates the breadth of knowledge and expertise required to work in an enhanced role within the specific service area or area of practice, and to lead safely, effectively and efficiently. Clinical, leadership and quality improvement competencies relevant to the enhanced nursing role, as regionally agreed/determined by nursing leads within the service area and the employing organisation.

Ongoing professional development should support the maintenance and development of knowledge, skills and behaviours required for enhanced practice.

The RNLD Enhanced Nurse Practitioner will participate in:

- Mandatory and role-specific training.
- Continuing professional development.
- Reflective supervision, peer support and relevant professional networks.
- Link nurse/champion roles where appropriate.
- Quality improvement and service development initiatives.
- Management and leadership development.
- Practice Supervisor / Practice Assessor preparation, where appropriate, and support for nursing students and other learners.

Additional Learning and Development Opportunities

Access to coaching, mentoring and reflective supervision will support continued development of clinical, leadership and quality improvement capabilities. **See Appendix A for examples of additional learning and development opportunities.**

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND BEHAVIOURS FOR A RNLD Advanced Nurse Practitioner

RNLD nurses employed in Advanced Nursing Practice roles are guided by the NMC Code and NMC Principles for Advanced Practice²⁷. The NMC define Advanced Nursing Practice as: “A registered nurse or midwife working at an advanced level is an expert professional with additional post-graduate education and experience. They use their evidence informed knowledge, skills and capability to influence, shape, deliver and lead safe and effective care, while managing risk, uncertainty and complexity”.

The NMC Principles for Advanced Practice apply to individual professionals who have attained the capabilities of advanced level practice and are employed in an Advanced Practice role, rather than those developing the knowledge and skills to practise at an advanced level. They recognise that nurses working at an advanced level, practise across a variety of settings, both clinical and non-clinical, and across all four pillars of practice.

The principles enable them to achieve their full potential and to optimise their contribution to meeting population health needs, delivering person centred care and improving quality, safety and efficiency. They also ensure the service is delivered effectively for the benefit of the people, families and communities they serve.

²⁷ Nursing and Midwifery Council (2025) Principles for advanced practice NMC London. (available at [Principles for advanced practice](https://www.nmc.org.uk/principles-for-advanced-practice) (nmc.org.uk) (Accessed June 2026)

Advanced Nurse Practitioners have developed expert, high-level knowledge and skills through substantial additional post-qualification education – both theoretical (in an academic learning environment) and applied (in both clinical and non-clinical learning environments) and with supervision and professional support from employers.

In 2023 the NMC launched a review to consider the additional regulation of advanced nursing and midwifery practice. In March 2024 the NMC Council agreed the Principles for advanced practice. The NMC, during 2027, plan to work to develop standards of proficiency and associated advanced practice programme standards.



Figure 13: Illustrative representation of the relative weighting of the four Pillars of Practice for the RNLD Advanced Nurse Practitioner. The graphic is not to scale.



Figure 14: Role Profile Summary for the RNLD Advanced Nurse Practitioner

Principles for Advanced Nurse Practitioner Role

The NMC Principles for Advanced Practice are set out under two headings. The first, presented below, relates to individual professionals and the second are for employers of advanced practitioners

Advanced Level Practitioners will:

- I. Practise within their individual scope of practice and in line with their level of knowledge, experience, qualifications, training and employment role;
- II. Demonstrate expertise, confidence, critical thinking, and evidence appraisal and synthesis within their individual scope of practice to lead and influence education, research and practice;
- III. Demonstrate professional accountability and capability in making complex evidence-informed decisions, managing varying degrees of risk, unpredictability and uncertainty while exercising professional judgement. This includes using initiative, demonstrating significant autonomy and being accountable for their actions;
- IV. Demonstrate self-awareness with compassionate and inspirational leadership within inter-professional teams to influence practice for effective, holistic, person-centred care;
- V. Demonstrate use of evidence-informed expert knowledge to practise reflectively, identifying areas for self-improvement and improved outcomes for a diverse range of individuals, teams and people;
- VI. Role model reflective and reflexive practice and advocate for access to individualised support and clinical supervision to ensure continuous learning, improvement and professional development across the four pillars;

- VII. Role model professional practice, advocating for and contributing to interprofessional learning and working to provide leadership and effective support and supervision to a broad range of colleagues and learners;
- VIII. Use their expert, advanced level knowledge and experience to challenge themselves and others to promote and embed professional curiosity and the principles of equality, equity, diversity and inclusion in their area of practice, seeking and acting upon feedback received from peers, colleagues and the public;
- IX. Support, influence and lead projects in the environments they work in to shape a reflective learning culture where safety, quality, continuous improvement and sustainability are prioritised, including promoting advocacy for all, speaking up and raising concerns where required;
- X. Evidence continued capability, reflective and reflexive practice, ongoing learning and professional development at an advanced level, relevant to their scope of practice through local appraisal processes and through professional revalidation requirements;
- XI. Utilise their expertise and experience to minimise environmental impacts, enhance economic growth and embed sustainable approaches to service planning, delivery and implementation;
- XII. Lead and contribute to the proactive identification and resolution of challenges to health, safety and wellbeing for individuals and population groups, shaping the design and delivery of effective services and policies that promote holistic health and wellbeing.

PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION, EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

Minimum Professional Registration, Education Level and Experience

RNLD Advanced Nurse Practitioner

A relevant nursing qualification and current registration as a Registered Nurse Learning Disabilities, Level 1, on the NMC register are required.

RNLD Advanced Nurse Practitioners should have completed an MSc Advanced Nurse Practitioner programme, incorporating Independent Supplementary Prescribing (V300), with postgraduate education relevant to the role and area of practice. Education relating to the changing health needs of people with a learning disability across the lifespan should be undertaken either as a module within the Advanced Nurse Practitioner programme or as a standalone module.

The RNLD Advanced Nurse Practitioner should have post-registration experience within their relevant area of practice that demonstrates the breadth of knowledge and expertise required to practise safely, effectively and efficiently, as determined by the organisation.

Ongoing professional development should support the maintenance and development of knowledge, skills and behaviours of advanced nursing practice.

The RNLD Advanced Nurse Practitioner will participate in:

- Mandatory and role-specific training
- Continuing professional development.
- Reflective supervision, peer support and relevant professional networks.
- Link nurse/champion roles where appropriate.
- Quality improvement and service development initiatives.
- Management and leadership development.
- Practice Supervisor / Practice Assessor preparation, where appropriate, and support for nursing students and other learners.

Additional Learning and Development Opportunities

Access to coaching, mentoring and reflective supervision will support continued development of clinical, leadership and management skills.

See Appendix A for examples of additional learning and development opportunities.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND BEHAVIOURS FOR A RNLD Consultant Nurse

The RNLD Consultant Nurse practises autonomously at an advanced level in the delivery of quality, safe and effective person-centred care. They use an innovative, evidenced based approach combined with complex decision-making skills to facilitate better outcomes and experience for patients. They develop and improve practice through involvement in local, regional and national groups and disseminate their findings at national and international conferences.

The core knowledge, skills and behaviours for Consultant Nurse are listed below under each Pillar of Practice:



Figure 15: Illustrative representation of the relative weighting of the four Pillars of Practice for the RNLD Consultant Nurse. The graphic is not to scale.



Figure 16: Role Profile Summary for the RNLD Consultant Nurse

CLINICAL PRACTICE

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, BEHAVIOURS

Ability to:

- Exercise a high degree of personal and professional autonomy in making complex clinical decisions drawing on advanced knowledge, skills and behaviours;
- Make decisions where precedents do not exist, challenge as necessary and provide advice and support to colleagues where standard protocols do not apply within multidisciplinary teams across organisational, professional and agency boundaries;
- Lead and influence service and policy development at strategic level while continuing to provide a strong clinical commitment and expert advice to clinical colleagues;
- Demonstrate advanced skills for assessment, diagnosis, treatment, management and prescribing within the field of practice and make and receive referrals, where appropriate;
- Identify and adopt innovative clinical practice models, e.g. implementation and evaluation of new treatments, technologies, and therapeutic techniques;
- Lead/collaborate in the design and conduct of quality improvement initiatives;
- Actively participate in formalised ongoing supervision with Consultant peers e.g. peer review of clinical practice at Consultant level;
- As an expert, conduct and contribute to systematic reviews of clinical practice;
- Provide a professional opinion on and where relevant lead clinical investigations/reviews;
- Lead and support authentic stakeholder engagement, through co-production and codesign, to facilitate improvement in services and patient/service user experience.

EDUCATION & LEARNING

KEY KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, BEHAVIOURS

Ability to:

- Contribute to the education, training and development of colleagues and others especially supporting experienced colleagues to develop advanced competencies;
- Support others in achieving their potential by acting as coaches, mentors and role models;
- Advocate and contribute to the development of an organisational culture that supports continuous learning and development, evidence-based and person-centred practice and succession planning;
- Lead and contribute to a range of Quality Improvement, audit and evaluation strategies which inform education and learning;
- Work with key stakeholders, including Higher Education Institutes and other education providers, to develop and promote a range of learning opportunities;
- Self-development towards academic activity, leadership skills, service improvement methodology, leading/participating in multidisciplinary teams and peer supervision, publication and learning opportunities.

LEADERSHIP**KEY KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, BEHAVIOURS****Ability to:**

- Demonstrate professional leadership to support and inspire colleagues to improve standards, quality and professional practice;
- Have a significant role in Quality Improvement, providing expert input and influencing/challenging other professions, the wider organisation and across organisational boundaries to help deliver better services;
- Provide expert advice to others within and outside of the professions of Nursing/Midwifery, acting as a resource for others and also facilitating support within and outside of the organisation;
- Provide leadership to national/ international, as well as local, developments in their recognised area of expertise;
- Have the ability to challenge, motivate and inspire others, including other staff groups and organisations, to deliver the highest quality of care within their area of practice and beyond;
- Challenge organisational and professional barriers that limit or inhibit effective service delivery;
- Process complex, sensitive or contentious information in contributing to the development of strategic planning at local and national levels;
- Contribute to strategic planning to drive service change within and across health care organisations and across organisational boundaries and systems, where appropriate;
- Assume leadership roles, which promote broader advancement of clinical practice, e.g. membership of editorial boards, leadership of position papers and development of advanced nursing practice standards.

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT KEY KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, BEHAVIOURS**Ability to**

- Provide direction for professional practice and service improvement within NI, nationally and/or internationally. Mentor colleagues and advise on personal development;
- Promote evidence-based, person-centred practice, setting of standards monitoring, management of risk and evaluation of care and services;
- Develop and advance professional practice to benefit patients/clients/carers and communities by creating, monitoring and evaluating practice protocols;

- Lead or collaborate in the application of research in practice, and develop research proposals with academic colleagues, business cases and funding applications, in addition to setting research objectives in line with the strategic direction of the organisation;
- Develop a research culture within the area of practice, act as a role model, establishing appropriate policies, support clinical research activity and contribute to publications and dissemination of work;
- Liaise and collaborate as appropriate with the Lead Research Nurse/Midwife in the HSC Trust;
- Maintain a publication record in relevant professional, peer reviewed journals and present at local, national and international conferences;
- Contribute to evaluations of service developments, which may lead to service redesign and the introduction of new models of care that are evidence-based and person-centred.

Principles for RNLD Consultant Nurse

RNLD Consultant Nurses should use the NMC Principles for Advanced Practice²⁷, outlined below, as a framework for critically reflecting on their role and scope of practice. This process will enable the identification of strengths and development needs, supporting the enhancement and advancement of the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for effective practice at consultant nurse level.

The NMC Principles highlight that Advanced level practitioners should:

- I. Practise within their individual scope of practice and in line with their level of knowledge, experience, qualifications, training and employment role;
- II. Demonstrate expertise, confidence, critical thinking, and evidence appraisal and synthesis within their individual scope of practice to lead and influence education, research and practice;
- III. Demonstrate professional accountability and capability in making complex evidence informed decisions, managing varying degrees of risk, unpredictability and uncertainty Nursing and Midwifery Council (2025) Principles for Advanced Practice. London: NMC while exercising professional judgement. This includes using initiative, demonstrating significant autonomy and being accountable for their actions;
- IV. Demonstrate self-awareness with compassionate and inspirational leadership within inter-professional teams to influence practice for effective, holistic, person-centred care;
- V. Demonstrate use of evidence informed expert knowledge to practise reflectively, identifying areas for self-improvement and improved outcomes for a diverse range of individuals, teams and people;

- VI. Role model reflective and reflexive practice and advocate for access to individualised support and clinical supervision to ensure continuous learning, improvement and professional development across the four pillars;
- VII. Role model professional practice, advocating for and contributing to inter-professional learning and working to provide leadership and effective support and supervision to a broad range of colleagues and learners;
- VIII. Use their expert, advanced level knowledge and experience to challenge themselves and others to promote and embed professional curiosity and the principles of equality, equity, diversity and inclusion in their area of practice, seeking and acting upon feedback received from peers, colleagues and the public;
- IX. Support, influence and lead projects in the environments they work in to shape a reflective learning culture where safety, quality, continuous improvement and sustainability are prioritised, including promoting allyship and advocacy for all, speaking up and raising concerns where required;
- X. Evidence continued capability, reflective and reflexive practice, ongoing learning and professional development at an advanced level, relevant to their scope of practice through local appraisal processes and through professional revalidation requirements;
- XI. Utilise their expertise and experience to minimise environmental impacts, enhance economic growth and embed sustainable approaches to service planning, delivery and implementation;
- XII. Lead and contribute to the proactive identification and resolution of challenges to health, safety and wellbeing for individuals and population groups, shaping the design and delivery of effective services and policies that promote holistic health and wellbeing.

PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION, EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

Minimum Professional Registration, Education Level and Experience

RNLD Consultant Nurse

A relevant nursing qualification and current registration as a Registered Nurse Learning Disabilities, Level 1, on the NMC register are required.

In addition, the RNLD Consultant Nurse should have:

- Evidence of academic study at Level 7 relevant to that area of practice
- A post-registration qualification relevant to the role and area of practice
- An NMC-recorded Independent/Supplementary Prescribing qualification (V300), where required for the role

The minimum educational requirement is evidence of academic study at Level 7 relevant to the area of practice. Individual service areas may have additional requirements; some may require applicants to hold a full Master's degree whilst others accept successful completion of relevant academic study at Level 7 alongside progression towards completion of a Master's degree.

The RNLD Consultant Nurse should have substantial post-registration experience within the relevant area or field of practice, demonstrating a high degree of autonomy, complex decision-making and innovation.

Ongoing professional development should support the maintenance and development of knowledge, skills and behaviours required for consultant-level nursing practice.

The RNLD Consultant Nurse will participate in:

- Mandatory and role-specific training
- Continuing professional development.
- Reflective supervision, peer support and relevant professional networks.
- Quality improvement and innovation initiatives
- Strategic leadership and service development.
- Management and leadership development.
- Research and dissemination of learning.
- Practice Supervisor / Practice Assessor preparation, where appropriate, and support for nursing students and other learners.

Additional Learning and Development Opportunities

Access to coaching, mentoring and reflective supervision will support continued development of clinical, leadership and management skills.

See Appendix A for examples of additional learning and development opportunities.

RNLD Learning and Development Framework

Learning and development activities should be relevant to area of clinical practice. Access to preceptorship and reflective supervision will help to further develop clinical, education, leadership and education/research knowledge and skills.

The programmes and modules outlined within this Appendix A are provided as **examples of learning opportunities** that can support the development of knowledge, skills, and competencies relevant to each role. They are **not mandatory or prescriptive requirements but an indication to guide career progression and safe and effective practice**. Progression across roles should instead be underpinned by the **demonstration of role-specific competencies**, which may be achieved through a combination of formal education, workplace learning, experiential development, and continuing professional development (CPD). Individuals and line managers should consider the most appropriate learning approaches based on service need, prior experience and individual career aspirations.

Where specific courses are referenced (e.g., Specialist Practice Programmes, stand-alone modules, or leadership programmes), these should be interpreted **as indicative examples of the type and level of learning** that may support practice, rather than a requirement to complete the exact course listed – **this will be decided by the service area**.

There are a wide range of **approved education providers and training organisations**, including universities, professional bodies and the Clinical Education Centre, that offer relevant programmes across different academic levels (e.g., - no credits, Level 6, Level 7, postgraduate and doctoral study).

When planning a career pathway, individuals are encouraged to explore **varied educational routes and providers** to identify programmes that best align with their current role, future career goals and preferred learning style. This may include **accredited academic programmes, short courses, modular study and workplace-based learning opportunities**, all of which can contribute to the achievement of required competencies and support career progression.

Appendix 1: Additional Learning Opportunities

Programme Provider <i>Approved Education Institution/Universities</i> <i>Clinical Education Centre</i> <i>Professional Bodies</i> <i>HSC Leadership Centre</i> <i>In house/Work Based Learning</i>	Staff Nurse	Senior Staff Nurse	Enhanced Nurse/Specialist Nurse	Advanced Nurse Practitioner	Consultant Nurse
<i>Specialist Practice Programme</i>		✓	✓		
<i>Continuous professional development/ academic scholarly activity - relevant to ANP and Consultant Nurse ROLE</i>			✓	✓	✓
<i>Stand Alone modules relevant to the area of practice for example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Biopsychosocial Assessment /principles of assessing people with learning disability and mental health problems</i> <i>Principles of working with people with learning disability and behaviours that challenge</i> 		✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Positive Behaviour Support</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Restrictive Practices via Positive Steps</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Introduction to population health needs for people with Learning Disabilities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Quality Improvement Level 1	✓				
Quality Improvement Level 2		✓	✓	✓	✓
Safety Interventions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Trauma Informed care (Respond)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Collective leadership relevant programme [RCN]	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Effective Teaching in practice Programme [3days]			✓	✓	✓
Advanced Communication Skills Training	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recognising the deteriorating patient	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Undertaking Mental State Examination	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mental Health Order	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mental Capacity Act – level aligned to area of practice inc Informed consent	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Adversity Trauma and Resilience Awareness / [ACE]	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Blood Investigations: Routine blood tests and their interpretation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Motivational Interviewing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Coaching and Mentoring				✓	✓

Appendix 2: Glossary

Collective Leadership Framework

A framework promoting shared leadership across teams and organisations to improve culture, collaboration, and patient outcomes.

Competencies

The combination of knowledge, skills, behaviours, and abilities required to perform a role effectively.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Ongoing learning activities that professionals undertake to develop and maintain their competence and improve practice.

Delegation Framework

Guidance that supports safe and appropriate delegation of tasks within healthcare teams, ensuring accountability and patient safety.

Equity of Access and Outcomes

The principle that individuals should have fair and equal access to healthcare services and achieve comparable health outcomes regardless of background or need.

Enhanced Nursing Role

A role with additional clinical skills and responsibilities beyond core practice, often focused on coordination, continuity of care, and complex patient needs.

Health and Social Care (HSC)

The integrated system of health and social care services in Northern Ireland.

Interdisciplinary / Multidisciplinary Team (MDT)

A group of healthcare professionals from different disciplines working collaboratively to deliver comprehensive care.

Learning Disabilities (LD)

A reduced intellectual ability and difficulty with everyday activities, affecting someone throughout their life.

Levels of Practice

A structured framework (Levels 5–9) describing increasing complexity, autonomy, and responsibility in nursing roles.

Mental Capacity Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

Legislation providing a framework for decision-making on behalf of individuals who lack capacity.

Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC)

The regulatory body for nurses and midwives in the UK, responsible for maintaining professional standards, registration, and revalidation.

Person-Centred Care

Care that respects and responds to the preferences, needs, and values of individuals, ensuring they are active participants in decision-making.

Pillars of Practice

The four domains underpinning nursing roles:

- Clinical Practice
- Education and Learning
- Leadership
- Research and Development

Population Health

An approach focused on improving the health outcomes of groups of people, including reducing health inequalities.

Preceptorship

A structured period of support for newly registered practitioners to transition safely into professional practice.

Quality Improvement (QI)

A systematic approach to improving healthcare services through continuous measurement, evaluation, and change.

Reasonable Adjustments

Changes made to services or environments to ensure individuals with disabilities can access care equitably.

Registered Nurse Learning Disabilities (RNLD)

A registered nurse with specialist training in supporting individuals with learning disabilities across the lifespan.

Role Framework

A structured outline of a role describing its purpose, scope, competencies, and required education and experience.

Scope of Practice

The range of responsibilities, roles, and activities a professional is educated, competent, and authorised to perform.

Specialist Nurse

A nurse who has undertaken additional post-registration education and training to develop expertise in a specific area of practice.

Stakeholders

Individuals or organisations with an interest or role in healthcare delivery, including patients, professionals, and policymakers.

Workforce Planning

The process of ensuring the right number of staff with the right skills are available to meet current and future service needs.

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