Occupational Health (OH) Nurse competency

Competent: A registered nurse who has achieved the minimum necessary ability, knowledge or skill to do something successfully. (NMC)
Competence: The combination of training, skills, experience and knowledge that a person has and their ability to apply them to perform a task safely (HSE). The ability to undertake responsibility for and perform well-defined technical or job task-related activities to a recognised standard regularly and can effectively share that knowledge and teach at a basic level. (RCN, NMC, iOH – Competence in OH)

Competence can be demonstrated through:

- Observed practice with a competent supervisor and assessor, passing and achieving audit criteria against a set standard
- Qualified from an NSOH and stakeholder-approved provider with a standardised and approved curriculum, and has appropriate content for competence
- Relevant training in specific tasks to an approved standard e.g. spirometry and audiometry and for a defined period i.e. until an update course.
- Undertaking appropriate and regular CPD to remain updated, including task-specific update courses and self-directed learning
- Requesting and receiving feedback: Undertaking reflective practice.





FOHN: What do OH nurses do

NMC: All registered nurses must meet the latest standards of proficiency set out by the NMC across four areas of practice: professional values, communication and interpersonal skills, nursing practice and decision-making, and leadership, management, and teamwork. They must also practise per the most recent version of The Code: Professional Standards of Practice and Behaviour for nurses, midwives, and nursing associates. NMC professionalism.

Employer guidance: The employer should appoint competent people. It is for the employer to determine what level of competency and experience is required to ensure their organisation meets their legal, ethical and regulatory requirement and supports them in their

ambition to maintain and improve the health and wellbeing of their employees. Appoint a clinician with the knowledge, skills and experience to undertake responsibility for and perform activities to a recognised quality and repeatable standard. The exact competencies required will depend on the nature of the employer's business and the scope of the role. (FOHN)

HSE states that for OH nurses to be competent to carry out health surveillance they should be registered with the NMC and hold an OH qualification. For example, a relevant certificate, diploma or degree that **may be** recorded on the NMC register for Specialist Community Public Health Nursing (SCPHN)**.** Additionally, they advise that practitioners should **"**check for specific competency requirements and see evidence outlined in the applicable health and safety regulations, for example, certificates of competency for hand-arm vibration syndrome assessments, spirometry or audiometry". (HSE; FOHN/NSOH)

Competency criteria (FOHN; Lalloo et al, 2016; Milne 2024)
Health risk management: assessing, controlling and monitoring workplace health risks
- Understand and apply the general principles of risk assessment. Recognition and management of potential hazards to health in the work environment, evaluating risks and providing advice and information on control measures - Support workplace monitoring including statutory health surveillance where required - Provide support and training to all stakeholders on health risk management and responsibilities under H&S legislation - Recognise and advise on health risks in the general environment arising from industrial activities - Take and analyse a clinical, occupational and exposure history, in a relevant, succinct and systematic manner, generally and related to a specific exposure - Providing appropriate advice, education and training on workplace health - Oversight of the competence on the effectiveness of workplace controls to determine whether health exposures will be within legal limits rests with the BOHS Faculty of Occupational Hygiene. Statement of Occupational Hygiene Competencies
Assessing and enhancing fitness for work
- Provide an independent functional assessment of an individual's fitness for work to the requirements of the role and any physical & mental capacity impairment, ill-health, injury or disability - Provide attendance management and rehabilitation, advising on adjustments, using a holistic and multidisciplinary approach - Provide guidance and signposting to specialist support - Undertake fitness-for-task assessments where roles or industries have particular demands - Analyse fitness for work data to determine health trends and provide reports
Promoting good health

- Assess the health needs of a workforce and develop health and wellbeing related strategy and policies
- Promote healthy living and healthy working environments
- Provide physical, mental and psychological health education and promotion of public health at organisation, individual and group levels
- Help organisations to understand and enhance the health of their working population

Clinical care
- Be well-informed about acts, regulations, codes of practice and guidance relevant to the workplace - Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, with employers, employees, primary and secondary care providers, and other stakeholders, such as organisations, regarding OH and well-being. - Work with others at a senior level to influence organisational direction. - Provide or support training to upskill managers and leaders. - Provide quality assurance and clinical improvement of OH services including auditing and benchmarking the quality and effectiveness of the service. - Ensure good record-keeping, confidentiality and data protection. - Clinical governance, ensuring policies and procedures are in place, followed and updated. - Promote good teamwork and leadership skills: collaboration with all stakeholders. - Use data effectively to manage workplace health and target assessments - Use research methods to inform practice: Be able to define a problem in terms of needs for an evidence base

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