

# Allied Health Professions' Support Workforce

A guide to embedding public health  
in practice



**Realising potential to deliver confident,  
capable care for the future**

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The Speech bubble vignettes throughout this document have been taken from the transcripts of interviews held with AHP support workers by Staffordshire University and describe the role of support workforce within the public health model.

Profession specific descriptors of public health and prevention for the 14 AHP professions are in development with the following aims:

- Educating AHPs to understand how they contribute to public health
- Educating the public on how AHP’s contribute to public health

The aim is to bring to life the importance of these roles for support workers and their teams.

# Introduction

This guide provides a resource for support workers and their line managers to clarify the four domains of public health and describe how AHP support worker roles benefit the whole population's health and wellbeing. It is one of several associated Guides that Health Education England (HEE) has published to support the [AHP Support Worker Competency, Education and Career Development Framework](#). The Framework is one element of HEE's AHP workforce strategy, which aims to build capacity and capability across the professions and secure the future workforce nationally, regionally, and locally.

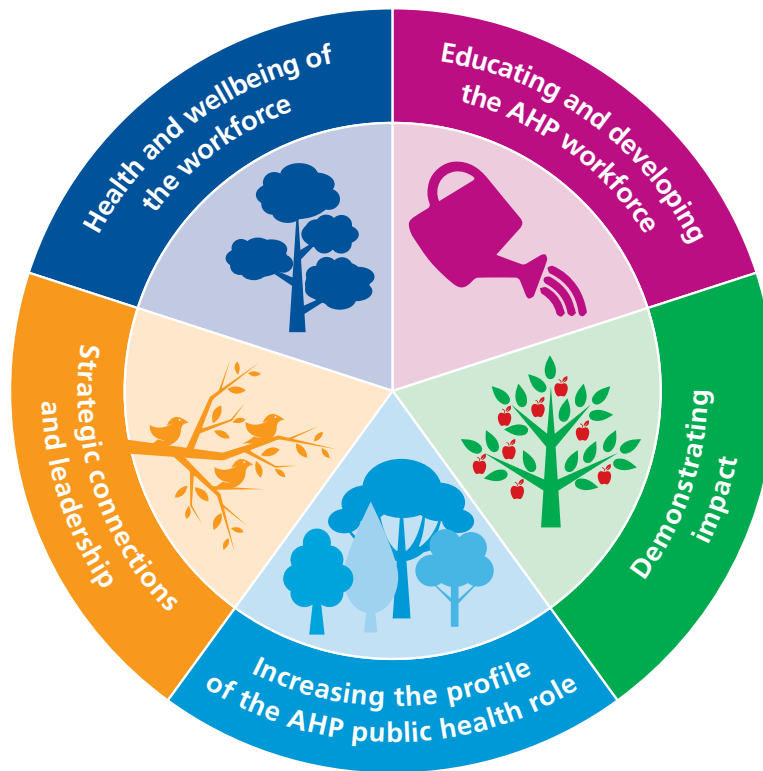
COVID 19 pandemic has shone a light on the importance of public health and as we recover from the pandemic, there is an increased risk of widening the gap in health inequalities.

AHP support workers are perfectly placed to support patients and the public to improve their health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities. They spend a significant amount of time with and develop a relationship with patients and their local community knowledge gives increased credibility.

This document has been developed to help AHP support workers and their employers to understand what we mean by the wider determinants of health, health improvement, population health care, health protection and health inequalities. It will highlight where and how AHP support worker roles can influence and improve the public's health and encourage the reader to reflect on their current and potential roles and responsibilities.

The [UK Allied Health Professions Public Health Strategic Framework 2019-2024](#) was designed through collaboration with partners across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and in partnership with all AHP professional bodies. The central vision is that public health will be a core element of all AHP roles, AHPs will contribute meaningfully to improving population health, and the impact of AHPs on the population's health and reducing health inequalities will be increasingly recognised. The 4 nations and AHP professional bodies have agreed priority actions to achieve our goals. The actions have been expanded in this document to reflect the whole AHP team and the specific needs of the AHP support workforce.

**Figure 1 The UK AHP public health strategic framework goals**



**Goal 1 – Educating and developing the AHP workforce:**  
**The AHP workforce will have the skills, knowledge, and behaviours to promote, improve and protect the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities, and populations.**  
**We will:**

- 1** Work with educational institutions, employers, and professional bodies to ensure public health, prevention and reducing health inequalities are further integrated into AHP education, including practice-based education.
- 2** Support AHP teams to champion and take ownership of new public health solutions through innovation, research, and entrepreneurship, and disseminate and communicate that value widely.
- 3** Advocate for public health competencies as a core part of all AHP team job roles.
- 4** Ensure AHPs and their teams have opportunities to develop the skills required for advanced public health roles.

**Goal 2 – Demonstrating impact:**  
**AHPs and their teams will be able to demonstrate their contribution to improved population level health outcomes through robust evaluation and research.**  
**We will:**

- 1** Support increased use of tools to measure and report the impact of AHP interventions on population health and health inequalities.
- 2** Support return on investment (ROI) analysis of effective interventions backed by good evidence to demonstrate the value of AHP public health interventions.
- 3** Advocate for public health research within the AHP research community and signpost to relevant funding opportunities to stimulate new contributions to the public health evidence base.
- 4** Create and promote evidence to support the scaling up of effective AHP-led public health interventions and to support the shift of practice to earlier and preventative interventions.
- 5** Provide a repository of public health resources to support AHP teams.

**Goal 3 – Increasing the profile of the AHP public health role:  
AHPs will be recognised as valuable public health experts through ongoing profile raising of AHP contribution to public health.**

**We will:**

<b>1</b>	Develop strong and regular messaging to AHP teams and external partners about progress across all 4 nations.
<b>2</b>	Promote the work of AHP teams in public health through local and national conferences and in publications, planning and policy documents.
<b>3</b>	Sponsor and promote awards to recognise how AHPs and their teams are working in partnership with others to improve the health of the public.
<b>4</b>	Capture, disseminate and support the spread of high quality, evidence-based case studies of AHP team initiatives that contribute to public health and tackle health inequalities.

**Goal 4 – Strategic connections and leadership:  
Effective relationships will exist between AHP teams and system leaders at local and national levels to make best use of AHP teams to improve public health and reduce health inequalities.**

**We will:**

<b>1</b>	Support AHPs and their teams to develop the leadership skills to articulate their contribution and influence the public health, prevention, and early intervention agendas.
<b>2</b>	Support AHP teams to develop stronger relationships with system leaders and facilitate mechanisms to enable access to relevant AHP expertise in public and population health.
<b>3</b>	Promote integration of AHPs across the health and social care system to increase co-production with people, partners, and communities; supporting place based public health.

**Goal 5 – Health and wellbeing of the workforce:  
The expertise of AHP teams will be used to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of the health and care workforce.**

**We will:**

<b>1</b>	Ensure that the AHP workforce is encouraged and supported to protect and improve their own health and wellbeing and that of their colleagues.
<b>2</b>	Champion AHP teams as leaders in the development of initiatives that promote workplace wellbeing.
<b>3</b>	Promote the contribution of AHPs and the AHP support workforce as core members of health and wellbeing work-based services, to promote health and wellbeing of employees in their workplace.



# Public health – what does it mean for AHP support workforce?

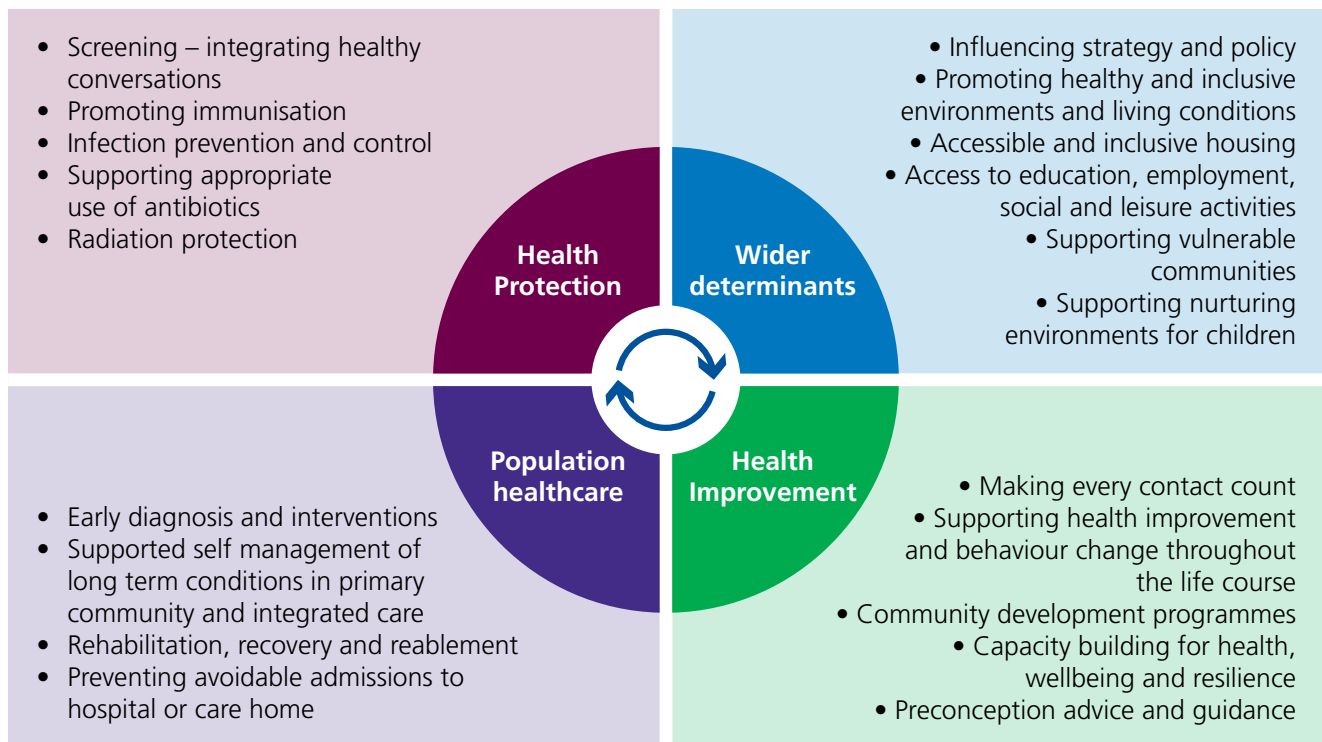
The following section will help you to understand what public health is in practice. The speech bubbles have been taken from the transcripts of interviews held with AHP support workers by Staffordshire University and describe the role of the support workforce within the public health model.

## Model of Public Health for AHPs

The [Faculty of Public Health](#) (FPH) define public health as the science and art of promoting and protecting health and wellbeing, preventing ill-health and prolonging life through the organised efforts of society. AHPs contribute to public health through interventions affecting the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of individuals, communities, and populations.

There are several definitions of public health; we have used these to develop a model relevant to the roles of AHPs and support workers. This model gives examples of how AHPs and their teams may contribute to public health across four areas; this will vary by profession and is not intended to be exhaustive.

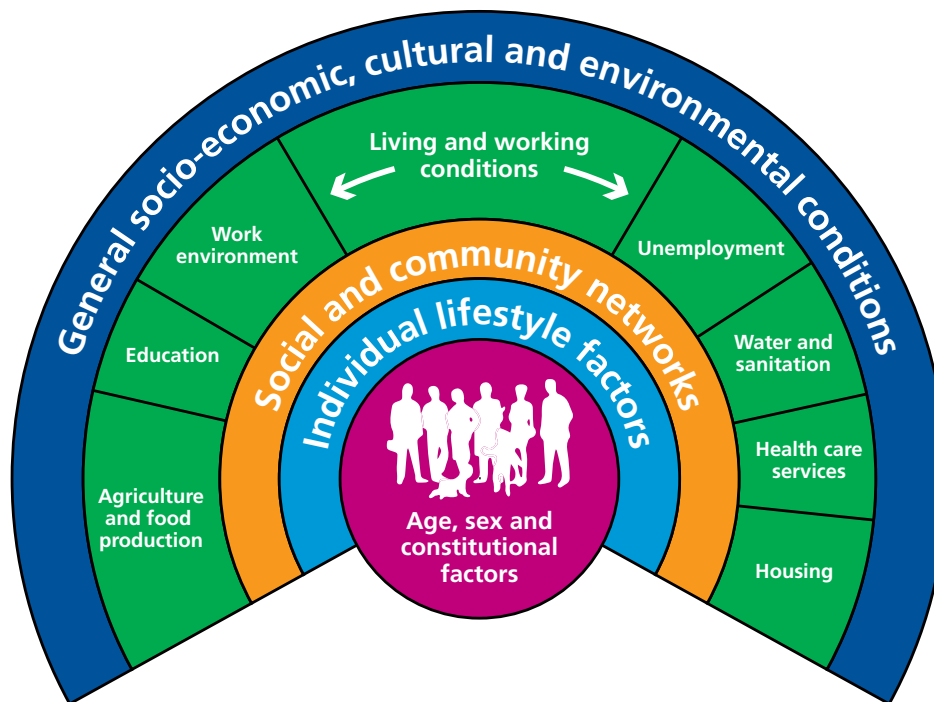
**Figure 2 The Model of public health for AHPs**



# Wider determinants

Wider determinants of health (also known as social determinants) are a diverse range of social, economic, and environmental factors which impact on people's health and wellbeing. Addressing the wider determinants of health and wellbeing has a key role to play in reducing health inequalities.

**Figure 3 Dahlgren and Whitehead's model of determinants of health**



Source: Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991

## What Does This Mean In Practice?

- Support workers providing care in the home as well as supporting conversations around housing needs and signposting to support services and or highlighting any issues to senior AHP/social worker
- Enabling children to participate fully at school and home
- Enabling service users to gain and/or maintain meaningful employment and purpose in their lives
- When patients fail to attend for treatment thinking about the reasons why and addressing any inequalities e.g., digital literacy, financial
- Support workers use the AHP inequalities framework to advocate, raise awareness and action changes for the benefit of others.

*"I am the one seeing patients regularly in the community. So, while doing rehab I also get to know their needs in their environment and the continuing welfare to an individual patient."*

*"So, if we're looking at financial pressures, we can direct to food banks and social services, housing etc."*

*"Podiatry support workers are very aware of socio-economic factors, particularly how diet and access to nutritional food can affect health and impact on diabetes."*





# Health improvement

Health improvement describes the work to improve the health and mental wellbeing of individuals, communities, or populations through enabling and encouraging healthy lifestyle choices and developing resilience.

## What Does This Mean In Practice?

- Using MECC (making every contact count) behavioural change conversation skills to enable and encourage health lifestyle choices
- Supporting service users to return to hobbies by referring to link workers and social prescribers in the community to enable participation in activities
- Supporting healthy behaviour across the life course e.g., children with disabilities, mothers with severe mental illnesses, falls prevention, and self-management

*“Recognising conversation cues, picking up on the smallest indicators to address public health.”*

*“All high-quality rehabilitation is very much about health improvement and behaviour change. It’s about really encouraging those patients, using coaching skills and psychological support as well.”*

*“We do general clinics; you’ll get people referred for weight management and so obviously within those clinics there’s a heavy emphasis on behaviour change.”*

*“Encourage patients to think and talk rather than giving advice.”*

*“You integrate making every contact count into the work that you do. Dietitians use an electronic system in our consultations and smoking comes up as something to talk about, and alcohol, and we can help signpost anyone to the relevant help that’s out there if needed.”*

# Population healthcare

Population healthcare aims to maximise value, equity, and good outcomes by focusing on the needs of the population and delivering person centred services across the entire health and care system.

## What Does This Mean In Practice?

- Providing information about local activities and supporting people to build confidence in attending-helping with issues such as loneliness
- We understand the needs and wants of our patients care of vulnerable groups, elderly, veterans, people with disabilities. E.g., care of pregnant women,
- Support workers encouraging vaccination and uptake of screening through promoting reasonable adjustments
- Key populations E.g., high risk foot clinics to prevent amputation
- Providing falls, dementia, aphasia, dysphagia, and malnutrition screening

*"The training that we deliver in care homes isn't just about how to use the Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool. We're there to train the staff in how you prevent and treat that malnutrition, this includes the Food First approach, food fortification and teaching the kitchen staff."*

*"Making information accessible, making sure we can provide diet sheets in easier to read formats. There's lots of work on adapting current education sessions for different ethnic groups and in a range of languages. A lot of the food models that we will talk about bring in different culture's, different food models."*

*"In the clinic there is a stark rich/poor divide, and this is considered when making arrangements for appointments. Many of the older patients, for example, need to consider the impact of expenses for travel, and walking pain can affect travel on the bus."*

*"We work with other members of the primary care team - social prescribers and health coaches are integral to our role - which fosters shared decision-making and approach to personalised care that's absolutely critical."*

*"Public health means to me the wellbeing of everyone in our communities, access to healthcare, use of healthcare services, timeliness of access."*

# Health protection

Health protection aims to protect the population's health from communicable diseases and other threats, while reducing health inequalities.

## What Does This Mean In Practice?

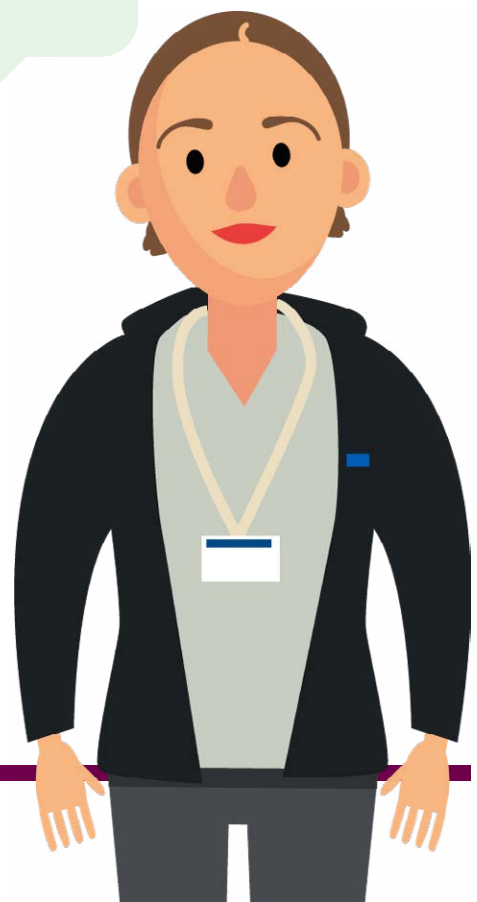
- Support workers adhering to infection control guidance
- Early detection of cancer or illness
- Encouraging vaccination uptake
- Cancer screening programmes

For more information visit [RSPH | Allied Health Professions hub](#) where you can access reports and case studies.

*"Podiatry support workers as part of the podiatry service influence strategy and policy – e.g., minimising the use of antibiotics."*

*"Our nutrition service does a monthly bulletin which highlights food hygiene advice for the prevention of foodborne infections."*

*"We use Books Beyond Words to discuss COVID-19 and the vaccine to explain the situation to individuals with learning difficulties."*



# Social Justice: addressing health and care inequalities

The AHP support workforce have an important contribution to reducing health inequalities and improving health and wellbeing. The King's Fund has worked with AHPs across the UK to develop a [framework](#) to support all AHPs to understand their contribution to tackling health inequalities, whatever their role. The framework details how AHPs can raise awareness, act, and optimise advocacy through six lenses:

- self
- patients
- clinical teams, pathway, and service groups
- communities and networks
- systems
- nurturing the future

**Figure 4 AHPs health inequalities action framework**



# Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability is one of the areas of focus in the [AHP strategy for England 2022 to 2027](#), AHPs Deliver was launched for the whole AHP community. The AHP support workforce offer sustainable health care, through increasing independence and reducing the need for care and equipment.

**Figure 5 Greener AHP logo**



The [Greener AHP hub](#) provides information on the importance of environmental sustainability for both population health and the health of the environment. There are also suggestions of how we can contribute in relation to our clinical practice, digital, food and diet we consume and how we use and recycle equipment we provide.



# Public health Knowledge and skills

The [AHP Support Worker Competency, Education and Career Development Framework](#) is grouped under eight domains. Domain 2 (Supporting Service Users) outlines over twelve key competencies how AHP support workers can support service users and their families throughout their care, promote health and wellbeing, and understand the wider health and social care system. This directly relates to the AHP public health models we have already highlighted.

The [Personalised Care Institute](#) is equipping health and care professionals with the knowledge, skills and confidence to help patients get more involved in decisions about their care. Evidence shows this leads to better health outcomes and increased patient and clinician satisfaction.



# Education and training

There is a range of public health topics and population health management resources and training available on the [HEE e-learning for Healthcare \(eLfH\) portal](#). The modules and resources vary in lengths and depth and are free to e-LfH registrants – NHS and public health workforce.

Whatever your involvement with improving the health of the population, these resources will support you in expanding your knowledge and understanding and enable you to have a positive impact.

1. [Population Health and wellbeing – e-learning](#)
2. [All Our Health – e-learning for healthcare](#)
3. [HEE eLfH portal](#)
4. [RSPH](#) - level 2 courses
5. [Making Every Contact Count \(MECC\)](#)

**Figure 6** HEE e-learning All Our Health

## About the All Our Health programme



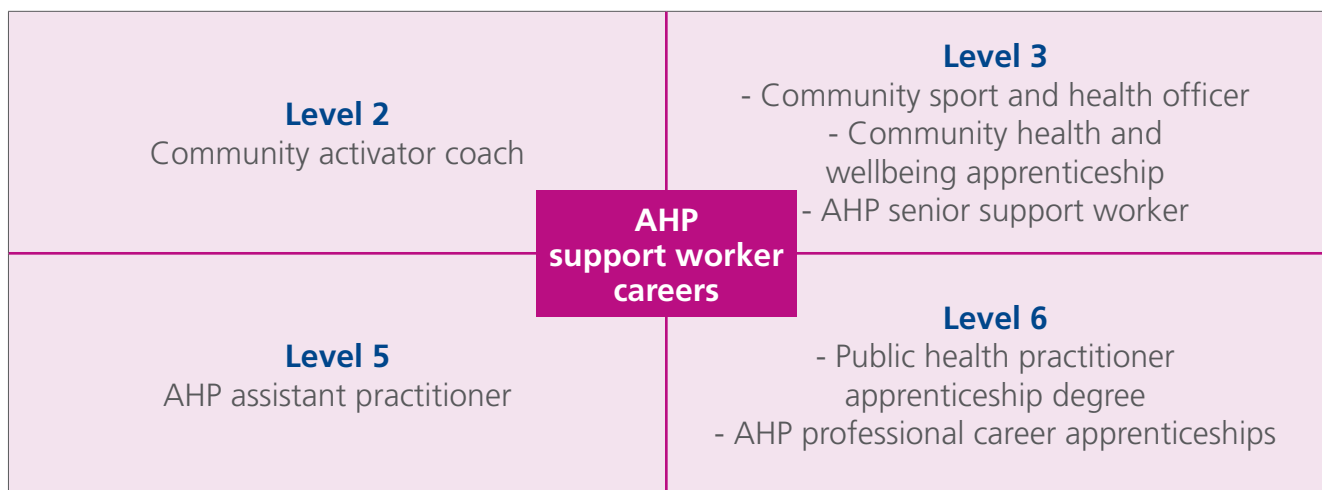
The banner features the text 'All O♥R Health' with a heart symbol. Below it, a dark red box contains the text: 'Evidence based e-learning sessions to support all health and care professionals to prevent illness, protect health and promote wellbeing.' The background of the banner shows a stylized illustration of a community with a house, a hospital, and people.

All Our Health framework is a call to action to all health and care professionals to embed prevention within their day to day practice. Through educational materials, tools and resources, All Our Health helps professionals make an even greater impact in preventing illness, protecting health and promoting wellbeing.

# Career pathways in public health

AHP support workers who are keen to develop their roles in public health can access level 2, 3 and 6 Apprenticeships. Currently the primary opportunities are to become a public health practitioner with a potential future progression towards becoming a public health consultant. Other routes could be to become a social prescribing link worker or sustainability champion in Primary care and/or voluntary sectors. Alternatively, you could continue to develop your public health contribution whilst progressing your career to become a registered AHP.

**Figure 7 AHP support workforce public health career pathway**



To find out more about careers in Public Health visit the [NHS Health Careers website](#).

The Healthcare Apprenticeship Standards Online (HASO) website has published a [career pathways tool](#) within its online [apprenticeships toolkit](#). This tool sets out potential career development/progression options via apprenticeship routes.

The [Healthcare support worker learning and development roadmap](#) has been designed to be a useful resource to HCSWs, educators and managers. For HCSWs, this resource can support you to identify your learning and development goals and how to improve your skills to deliver the best possible patient care. It brings together sources of information and resources to help you explore your own skills and support you with your ongoing learning and career development.



# Job description narrative

The job descriptions of AHP support workers should clearly identify their roles and responsibilities in improving population health and wellbeing – wider determinants of health, health protection, health improvement, and population healthcare.

There is no mandate to map with national profiles around additional information applicable to all posts therefore some organisations have already added statements such as the examples below which you may wish to champion.

## **Equality and Diversity**

The post holder must comply with all Trust policies and procedures designed to ensure equality of employment and that services are delivered in ways that meet the individual needs of patients and their families.

The post holder must promote equality, diversity, and human rights for all and treat others with dignity and respect. No person whether they are staff, patient or visitor should receive less favourable treatment because of their gender, ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion etc.

## **Sustainability and Carbon Reduction**

Every member of staff is encouraged to take responsibility for energy consumption and carbon reduction and is expected to incorporate the agenda of sustainability, carbon, and health in their daily work.

## **Public health**

Every member of staff is encouraged to promote the principles of health promotion, protection, and improvement to provide relevant interventions for individual service users and their families including Making Every Contact Count in their daily work.

## Making Every Contact Count (MECC)

Front line staff are in an ideal position to offer support and advice on how to improve health and wellbeing.

Staff should use their interactions with the public to give them additional advice on health and wellbeing.

Staff will be given training and support to help them to signpost people to other services which may improve their health and wellbeing.

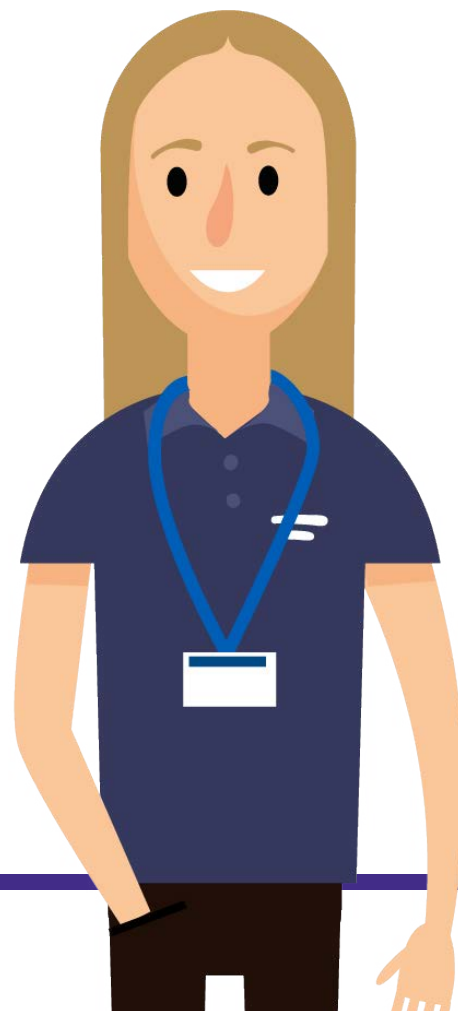
## Communication

To be able to motivate and persuade others through effective communication skills

## Care for patients and/or service users

Respect individual's privacy, dignity, wishes and beliefs, minimising any discomfort and encouraging full participation in assessment and treatment.

To provide information and health advice to patients and carers on how to optimise their functional abilities.



# Further information

The Allied Health Professions strategy for England 2022-2027 AHPs Deliver:  
[AHP strategy for England 2022 to 2027](#)

The UK Allied Health Professions Public Health Strategic Framework:  
[UK Allied Health Professions Public Health Strategic Framework](#)

The Royal Society for Public health Allied Health Professions Hub:  
[RSPH | Allied Health Professions hub](#)

NHS England and Improvement Greener Allied Health Professions Hub:  
[NHS England » Greener Allied Health Professional hub](#)

Rapid review of the impact AHP have on equalities  
[AHP-and-Inequalities-Final-Version-V2.0.pdf \(cam.ac.uk\)](#)

Kings fund - My role in tackling health inequalities: a framework for allied health professionals  
<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/tackling-health-inequalities-framework-allied-health-professionals>

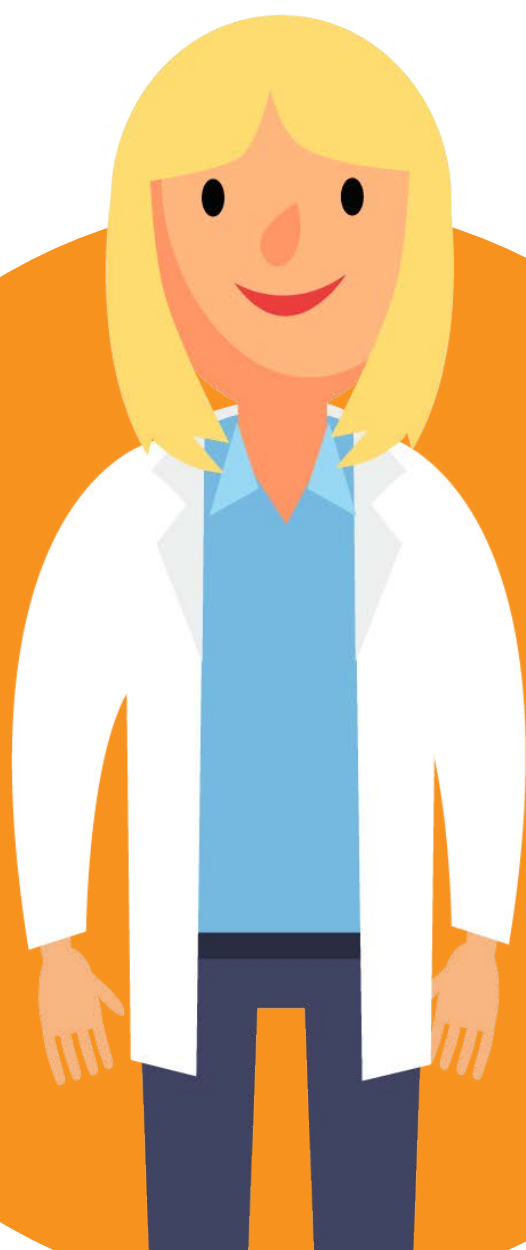
The current and potential contribution of allied health support workers to public health  
<https://alliedhealthsolutions.co.uk/PDFs/SupportWorkforce/PHE-AlliedHealthSupportWorkerStudyReport.pdf>

The Personalised Care institute is a virtual organisation, accountable for setting the standards for evidence-based training in personalised care in England.  
[Personalised Care Institute](#)

# Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Katrina Kennedy, Associated Director of AHP at Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust for drafting this guide with support from Linda Hindle OBE, Deputy Chief AHP in the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities.

This report was supported by the background work completed by Eddison, Faux-Nightingale, Healy, Royse, and Chockalingam from the Centre for Biomechanics and Rehabilitation Technologies at Staffordshire University and from Dorset County Hospital.



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