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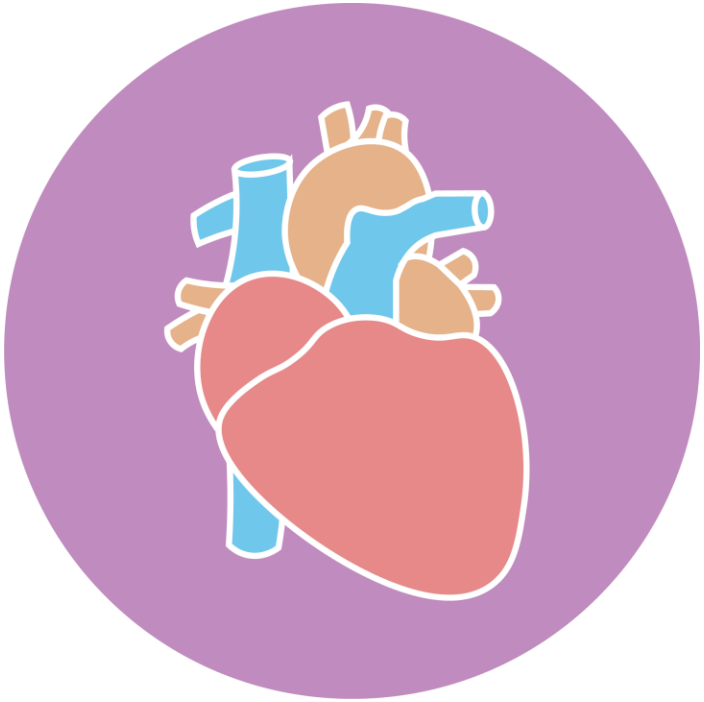
Heart Failure Specialist Nurse Competency Framework



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Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust
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Introduction

The competency framework serves to guide Heart Failure Specialist Nurses' (HFSNs) to develop the knowledge and clinical and consultation skills required to work safely, competently and effectively within the Heart Failure Service. The HFSN is the named professional co-ordinating the patient's care plan (co-created with the patient) and is involved in collaborative care planning across all relevant health and social care sectors where appropriate.

The document covers the clinical aspects of the role along with the organisational skills required to be an effective practitioner able to work autonomously and within the multidisciplinary team. All HFSNs should work towards achieving non-medical prescribing accreditation.

The Competency Framework should be used in conjunction with the HFSN Service Operational Procedure Document. The HFSNs also require to undertake an accredited heart failure module, clinical assessment skills training and maintain their knowledge and skills by continuous professional development to support them to provide holistic management to people with heart failure and associated co-morbidities.

Acknowledgements

Guy's and St Thomas' and Kings College Hospital Heart Failure Specialist Nurse Competency Document (March 2017) created by Carys Barton (Lead clinical nurse specialist for heart failure), Guys and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, Julia deCourcey (Consultant nurse for heart failure, Kings College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and Lynda Blue (Heart failure nurse advisor), Guys and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust.

This document was adapted from University Hospital Southampton (UHS) 2012, heart failure competency framework (endorsed by the British Society for Heart Failure) and Cheshire and Merseyside heart failure competency framework (2015), also adapted from the UHS 2012 competency framework.

How to use the framework

The aim of the framework is to support the development of the learner to achieve the required levels of competencies to carry out the role of HFSN. Being competent defines a person who has acquired through training, qualification, experience or a combination of these, the knowledge and skills to perform the task required.

The competencies in the framework reflect the personal and professional development as an HFSN as well as a documented record of achievement and should be used in the HFSNs PDR and portfolio to support their development and learning within the role.

The framework is based on a stage 1 to 4 development from beginner to expert/teacher within the team. The assessor will be a senior member of the heart failure team who is deemed **Level 4** on the required skill.

Timescales for achieving competence

As all people learn and develop at different rates it is important to set milestones and engage in one-to-one sessions with your assessor in order to ensure that the learning needs are being met and that the learner is progressing appropriately. When the competency level has been reached and the HFSN has completed an accredited heart failure module or relevant level 6/7 cardiology module the assessor will sign and date.

Role of the HFSN (learner)

It is the learner's responsibility to ensure that they meet their required competencies and once they have achieved level 3 or above in a competency they are comfortable in the delivery of the skill in their practice, and they continue to maintain those skills in practice.

Role of the assessor

The role of the assessor is to ensure that the learner is exposed to the required competencies in clinical practice and to observe the nurse in clinical practice on more than one occasion to ensure that they are supported in their learning in a way which is both safe for the patient and the practitioner in order to achieve level 3 or above.

Register of assessors

Name	Position	Signature	Initials

HFSN Name……

Band……..

Date commenced framework……

Academic achievements

Below is a record of your academic achievements to support your level 3 and 4 core competencies which are essential and desirable to support your practice as a HFSN.

There are spaces left for you to complete with related modules you may have completed to support your competencies.

Module/Course	Date Completed	Institute/Education Provider
Clinical Assessment		
Heart Failure		
Non-medical Prescribing		
Advanced Communication Skills		
Palliative Care		
Cognitive Behaviour Training		

Levels of competence

Level	Definition
1	You are working under the supervision of an appropriate assessor within the team, observing the skill in practice/simulated environment.
2	You are working independently with patients'. Your assessor will meet you to discuss your planned actions as you do not have enough experience to practice this skill autonomously.
3	You are deemed competent by your assessor to undertake this expanded role. You recognise your own limitations and make the appropriate referrals necessary. You are competent to supervise junior members.
4	You have developed a knowledge base to a level where you are now competent to assess a more junior member of the Heart Failure Team

It is expected that HFSNs (band 6) achieve level 2-3 in all competencies and that the HFSNs (band 7) will achieve level 3-4 in all competencies.

Communication and History Taking				
Competencies	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**
	Under supervision	**With minimal assistance**	**Independent**	**Competent to assess others**
Explains the role of the Heart Failure Nurse and responsibility to the patient				
Respects the diversity and culture of patients				
Ensures that the patient is aware of the key/named HFSN care co-ordinator				
Uses a structured approach for obtaining the history				
Explores all patient problems and complaints				
Able to identify and manage other co-morbid conditions within own competence and recognise when referral/advice required from other teams/services				
Able to adapt the history taking to different situations				
Involves the patients' relatives/cares appropriately				
Recognises own limitations and acts appropriately				
Documents findings in a legible and structured manner				

Communication and History Taking				
Competencies	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**
	Under supervision	**With minimal assistance**	**Independent**	**Competent to assess others**
Applies rationale for ordering investigation and tests				
Provides suitable and timely follow up based on findings				
Involves other specialist input appropriately i.e. renal, palliative, respiratory				
Facilitates patient empowerment and self-management of condition				
Offers reassurance to patient and relatives/carers				
Able to complete a structured letter to communicate findings and management plan to the patient and other health & social care providers				
Able to provide patient with information in a manner/language understood by patient/carers				
Provides patients/carers with supporting information, literature, websites and film access				
Provides time for patient/carer to ask questions				
Maintains confidentiality, both verbally and written documentation				

Physical Assessment – Heart Failure Specific				
Competencies	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**
	Under supervision	**With minimal assistance**	**Independent**	**Competent to assess others**
Completes assessment in a logical manner				
Obtains relevant information from patient i.e. current symptoms, medical history, medication				
Assesses patient's general health and lifestyle status				
Able to perform a cardiovascular assessment and document the findings				
Able to perform a respiratory assessment and document the findings				
Able to identify signs of fluid overload in the heart failure patient and take appropriate action				
Able to discuss the findings of the assessment with the patient/carer in an appropriate manner which they understand				

Physical Assessment – Heart Failure Specific				
Competencies	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**
	Under supervision	**With minimal assistance**	**Without assistance**	**Competent to assess others**
Able to identify when a referral to another specialist or team is required				
Makes appropriate referral for investigations based on findings i.e. blood tests, ECG etc.				
Able to advise the patient on the action plan and any investigations ordered based on the findings				
Provides time for the patient/carer to ask questions				
Identifies limitations to knowledge and where necessary take appropriate action i.e. discuss/refer to medical colleagues				
Able to complete the patient record with clinical findings (paper/electronic)				
Able to provide rationale for triaging follow up to a hospital clinic, community clinic, telephone clinic or home visit review				
Able to initiate urgent/emergency transfer to hospital if required				
Able to identify when thiazide or IV diuretics are required				
Able to identify and initiate referral to hospital@home/day case for IV diuretics				

Heart Failure Knowledge				
Competencies	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**
	Under supervision	**With minimal assistance**	**Without assistance**	**Competent to assess others**
Able to explain the pathophysiology of the patient's condition in a way in which the patient can understand				
Able to understand the process of diagnosing heart failure and able to explain this to the patient				
Able to understand the results of diagnostic testing and the required management plan. Able to communicate this in a way the patient understands				
Able to educate HF patients about how to monitor and manage their condition and to be able to recognise symptom deterioration				
Able to provide patients with information to enable them to take appropriate action on what to do and whom to contact should their condition deteriorate				
Able to identify modifiable factors for HF decompensation/admissions				

Heart Failure Knowledge				
Competencies	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**
	Under supervision	**With minimal assistance**	**Without assistance**	**Competent to assess others**
Able to identify and understand the effects of comorbidities on the patient's condition				
Able to understand the close relationship between the cardiac and renal systems and the effects of renal impairment on the patient's condition				
Able to recognise therapies used for specific co-morbidities that impact on heart failure				
Able to explain to patients the benefits of exercise and identify suitable patients to refer to cardiac rehabilitation				
Able to identify when patients are safe to be discharged/inactive from the HFSN service				
Able to understand criteria for use of pacing devices				
Able to support patients about living with a device and able to recognise complications and seek review				
Able to sensitively explain ICD deactivation to patients and carers at end of life				

Medicines Management of Heart Failure				
Competencies	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**
	Under supervision	**With minimal assistance**	**Without assistance**	**Competent to assess others**
Demonstrates knowledge of the agents licensed for use in heart failure and the regime for use				
Able to recognise medications that are contra-indicated and seek medical advice for an alternative and understand the follow up monitoring required				
Able to communicate the prescribing decisions to related healthcare professionals with rationale				
Able to recognise/explore intentional and non-intentional non-adherence				
Knowledge of when to use yellow card reporting including specific requirements of reporting black triangle drugs				

Medicines for Heart Failure Beta-blockers				
Competencies	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**
	Under supervision	**With minimal assistance**	**Without assistance**	**Competent to assess others**
Demonstrates understanding of the rationale for using betablockers				
Able to identify patients for whom the treatment is suitable				
HFSN prescribers able to safely prescribe, titrate and monitor to the maximum tolerated dose				
HFSNs who are not prescribers able to advise the GP/physician to prescribe, titrate and monitor to the maximum tolerated dose as per national guidelines				
Understands side effects of the medication and identify when necessary to down-titrate or discontinue therapy				
Aware of possible drug interactions				

Medicines for Heart Failure ACE inhibitors				
Competencies	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**
	Under supervision	**With minimal assistance**	**Without assistance**	**Competent to assess others**
Demonstrates understanding of the rationale for using ACE inhibitors				
Able to identify patients for whom the treatment is suitable				
HFSN prescribers able to safely prescribe, titrate and monitor to the maximum tolerated dose				
HFSNs who are not prescribers able to advise the GP/physician to prescribe, titrate and monitor to the maximum tolerated dose as per national guidelines				
Understands side effects of the medication and identify when necessary to down-titrate or discontinue therapy				
Aware of possible drug interactions				

Medicines for Heart Failure Angiotensin receptor blockers				
Competencies	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**
	Under supervision	**With minimal assistance**	**Without assistance**	**Competent to assess others**
Demonstrate understanding of the rationale for using angiotensin receptor blockers				
Able to identify patients for whom the treatment is suitable				
HFSN prescribers able to safely prescribe, titrate and monitor to the maximum tolerated dose				
HFSNs who are not prescribers able to advise the GP/physician to prescribe, titrate and monitor to the maximum tolerated dose as per national guidelines				
Understand side effects of the medication and identify when necessary to down-titrate or discontinue therapy				
Aware of possible drug interactions				

Medicines for Heart Failure Mineralocorticoid receptor blockers (MRAs)				
Competencies	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**
	Under supervision	**With minimal assistance**	**Without assistance**	**Competent to assess others**
Demonstrates understanding of the rationale for using MRAs				
Able to identify patients for whom the treatment is suitable				
HFSN prescribers able to safely prescribe, titrate and monitor to the maximum tolerated dose				
HFSNs who are not prescribers able to advise the GP/physician to prescribe, titrate and monitor as per national guidelines				
Understand side effects of the medication and identify when necessary to down-titrate or discontinue therapy				
Aware of possible drug interactions				

Medicines for Heart Failure Sacubitril/valsartan				
Competencies	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**
	Under supervision	**With minimal assistance**	**Without assistance**	**Competent to assess others**
Demonstrates understanding of the rationale for using sacubitril/valsartan				
Able to identify patients for whom the treatment is suitable				
HFSN prescribers able to safely prescribe, titrate and monitor to the maximum tolerated dose				
HFSNs who are not prescribers able to advise the GP/non-specialist physician to titrate and monitor to the maximum tolerated dose as per national guidelines				
Understands side effects of the medication and identify when necessary to down-titrate or discontinue therapy				
Aware of possible drug interactions				

Medicines for Heart Failure Ivabradine				
Competencies	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**
	Under supervision	**With minimal assistance**	**Without assistance**	**Competent to assess others**
Demonstrates understanding of the rationale for using ivabradine				
Able to identify patients for whom the treatment is suitable				
HFSN prescribers able to safely prescribe, titrate and monitor to the maximum tolerated dose				
HFSNs who are not prescribers able to advise the GP/physician to prescribe, titrate and monitor to the maximum tolerated dose as per national guidelines				
Understands side effects of the medication and identify when necessary to down-titrate or discontinue therapy				
Aware of possible drug interactions				

Medicines for Heart Failure Digoxin				
Competencies	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**
	Under supervision	**With minimal assistance**	**Without assistance**	**Competent to assess others**
Demonstrates understanding of the rationale for using digoxin				
Able to identify patients for whom the treatment is suitable				
HFSN prescribers able to safely prescribe, titrate and monitor to the maximum tolerated dose				
HFSNs who are not prescribers able to advise the GP/physician to prescribe, titrate and monitor to the maximum tolerated dose as per national guidelines				
Understands side effects of the medication and identify when necessary to down-titrate or discontinue therapy				
Aware of possible drug interactions				

Medicines for Heart Failure Hydralazine and Nitrates				
Competencies	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**
	Under supervision	**With minimal assistance**	**Without assistance**	**Competent to assess others**
Demonstrates understanding of the rationale for using hydralazine and nitrates				
Able to identify patients for whom the treatment is suitable				
HFSN prescribers able to safely prescribe, titrate and monitor to the maximum tolerated dose				
HFSNs who are not prescribers able to advise the GP/physician to prescribe, titrate and monitor to the maximum tolerated dose as per national guidelines				
Understands side effects of the medication and identify when necessary to down-titrate or discontinue therapy				
Aware of possible drug interactions				

Medicines for Heart Failure Diuretic therapy				
Competencies	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**
	Under supervision	**With minimal assistance**	**Without assistance**	**Competent to assess others**
Demonstrates understanding of the rationale for the use of loop and thiazide diuretics				
Demonstrate an understanding of the effects loop diuretics have on the kidneys				
Able to identify when diuretics should be initiated, increased and decreased				
Able to teach appropriate patients when to increase or decrease diuretics				
Able to identify and provide appropriate follow up after changes to diuretic therapy				
Able to oversee the initiation of diuretics				
Able to identify when a combination of loop and thiazide diuretic is required and the frequency of renal function monitoring				
Able to advise teams/or oversee switch from IV diuretics to oral diuretics and vice versa				

Psychological Support				
Competencies	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**
	Under supervision	**With minimal assistance**	**Without assistance**	**Competent to assess others**
Able to screen and document patients for psychological distress at various points in their journey				
Identifies local tools used to assess psychological distress				
Undertakes psychological training (if available locally) to increase knowledge and skills to support patients' presenting with psychological distress				
Identifies local service provision available to support patients' presenting with psychological distress				
Discusses individual cases with the MDT involved in the patient's care				
Able to provide psychological support and support self-management for people with less complex psychological needs				
Able to identify patients who require more complex psychological intervention and know how they can be referred				
Able to discuss with the patient psychological therapy available to them				

Any Additional Comments

Identified learning needs			
On initial review	**Follow up review (within 18 months)**	**Date Completed**	**Any other issues raised**

Assessor comments