

Enhanced Clinical Practice Apprenticeship (ECP)



An employer's guide to the enhanced clinical practitioner apprenticeship

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Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Enhanced practice makes a significant and essential contribution to patient care and clinical services. This guide aims to provide support to employers in understanding, implementing, and harnessing the enhanced clinical practitioner apprenticeship within their organisations.

What is enhanced practice?

Enhanced practice is a level of practice within the healthcare workforce. It is delivered by experienced registered professionals (first level statutory registration or a managed voluntary registration) who undertake complex work and manage day to day risk, including risks on behalf of, or with patients. Enhanced practice occurs in multiple settings including secondary, community and primary care.

The enhanced practice workforce

Enhanced practice healthcare professionals have many job titles and roles across many different professions. They tend to have undertaken post registration education relevant to their area of practice and role. They usually work as part of a multidisciplinary team and apply their skills, knowledge, and experience to substantially contribute to episodes of care. Although they work across different settings or spheres of practice, they will often have a skillset and depth of knowledge related to their individual specific sphere of practice.

They occupy a space before advanced practice in terms of the management of complexity and uncertainty. Enhanced practice can be a precursor to advanced practice, or it can be a workplace destination, offering services and patients a consistent level of expertise.

Enhanced level practice: Principles by Alison Leary

In the summer of 2019 Alison Leary, Professor of Healthcare and Workforce Modelling at London South Bank University, consulted with workers, citizens, professional bodies, and healthcare providers to characterise, identify, and document the variety of health care professionals employed in enhanced practice roles. This research was published in 2022 *Enhanced level practice: Principles* [\(link will be inserted when available\)](#).

The report identified the existence of a large workforce made up of different professional groups within different settings, which provides complex care to patients or service users and manages much of the day-to-day risk of the service.

The framework found that there was no common identity to this large productive workforce, however there were several commonalities in relation to the *knowledge and skills* demonstrated and utilised by practitioners; so, after consulting with stakeholders by consensus, the report named them the ***enhanced practice workforce***.

The Enhanced Clinical Practitioner Apprenticeship (ECP)

The [Enhanced Clinical Practitioner Apprenticeship](#) (ECP) was approved for delivery in May 2021. This apprenticeship recognised the enhanced level workforce and provided an additional educational pathway for enhanced practice staff.

The apprenticeship does not seek to replace existing or previously educational pathways, but instead provides an additional education route. The apprenticeship co-exists alongside traditional education for the enhanced workforce such as post qualification certificates, professional development courses, degree, or master's level qualifications.

It is envisaged that the apprenticeship would be well suited to staff who following qualification (i.e., professional registration and preceptorship) are expected to operate at an increased level of complexity that requires them to develop greater complex knowledge and expertise.

It should be noted that experienced staff who have completed post qualification study and who are acting at an enhanced level of practice would not normally need to undertake the apprenticeship, as they are already recognised to be utilising enhanced practice knowledge, skills, and behaviours in their daily practice.

Example role titles where the ECP apprenticeship may be applicable

Please note, the below role titles are provided as examples only. These examples were generated by employers as part of an apprenticeship scoping activity to understand the breadth of professions the ECP apprenticeship would support.

It is recognised that a number of these role titles are used across enhanced *and* advanced practice roles and therefore organisations are advised that the below is only for illustrative purposes:

Specialist Oncology Dietitian	Proton Principal Radiographer	Respiratory Specialist Practitioner	Clinical Specialist Physiotherapist
Senior Occupational Therapist	Reporting Radiographer*	Critical Care Practitioner	Psychiatric liaison practitioner / nurse
Emergency Care Practitioner	Specialist Paramedic	Emergency Nurse Practitioners	Extended Scope Practitioner (physio/dietician/podiatrist)

A typical example of a healthcare professional undertaking the ECP apprenticeship

Role	Level of practice	Qualifications	Agenda for Change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They will be post qualification/ registration working in a clinical setting. This setting doesn't have to be directly patient facing. For example, enhanced practice can be found in laboratories and clinical engineering. • They will have completed their preceptorship and beginning to operate at an increased level of complexity that requires the development of greater complex knowledge and expertise. • They will be registered with either one of the statutory healthcare regulators, Social Work England or with one of the following accredited voluntary registers: The Academy for Healthcare Science, Register of Clinical Technologists or Registration Council for Clinical Physiologists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They will be moving into a new or an enhanced role that requires them to typically (but not limited to): • Critically evaluate and analyse complex clinical problems using expertise and knowledge. • Consult with others to devise and evaluate complex care plans related to their field of expertise. • Continuously update their knowledge and clinical practice and provide support, mentoring and supervision of others. • Recognise and work within the boundaries of their practice, knowing when and who to refer patients to. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They could complete qualifications as part of the apprenticeship that might include (but not limited to): • Post qualification certificates • Post qualification diplomas • Professional development courses • Degree level qualifications • Masters level qualifications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They will typically be newly promoted or working towards A4C band 6 or 7. • Note - this is not absolute as some professional groups are paid at different bands

What are the benefits of the ECP apprenticeship to my workforce?

1. The enhanced workforce is a valuable mission critical resource but can have high rates of turnover and retention issues¹. The ECP apprenticeship offers an additional retention tool; allowing staff to see progression pathways that will provide additional autonomy, pay and responsibility.
2. The ECP apprenticeship offers standardisation of education that, in turn, can provide quality assurance and governance to clinical practice.
3. The ECP apprenticeship celebrates and recognises enhanced practice as not merely a transitional post to advanced practice, but as a legitimate career destination that contributes significantly to patient care, quality, safety, and efficiency. It also provides opportunities for individuals to consolidate their practice, potentially avoiding premature career progression.

¹ Alison Leary 2022. Enhanced Practice: Principles

Key considerations

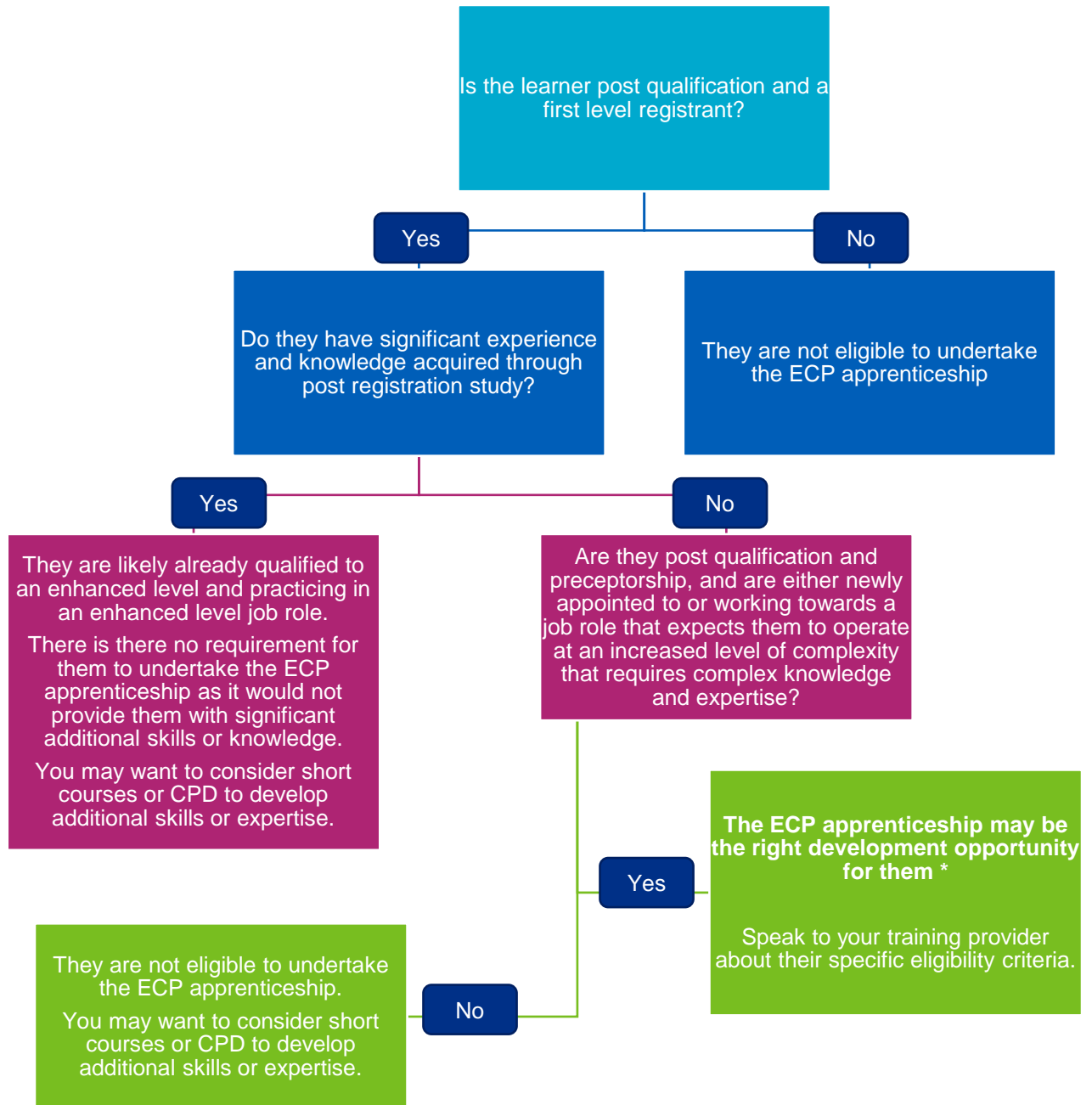
- **What are the current levels of practice within your workforce?** You may want to evaluate your existing roles to ascertain the current levels of practice being demonstrated.
- The Enhanced Clinical Practitioner apprenticeship is not itself creating a discrete new workforce role, but rather is used as a consensus umbrella term to recognise experienced registrants from a wide range of multi-professional backgrounds who work in enhanced practice roles, with many variable job role titles.
- After assessing the current levels of practice within your workforce, **you can identify the service requirement for enhanced practice**. For example, does your service require some staff to undertake more complex decision making and skills within their current scope of practice to enhance current service provision – they may be well suited for the ECP apprenticeship.
- Using the ECP apprenticeship you can plan your workforce, accordingly, using the apprenticeship will allow you to **identify progression pathways** within your workforce, enabling **talent management and succession planning**.
- Consider how the ECP apprenticeship forms part of your **rolling training plans** and plan accordingly for this skill mix.
- The apprenticeship **does not replace** existing or previously educational pathways, but instead provides an additional education route.
- **Don't forget about experienced staff**. They may have already completed post qualification study and who are already acting at an enhanced level of practice. The apprenticeship might not be appropriate for them, but you should ensure that their journey to enhanced practice is equally as recognised as the apprenticeship route.
- Consider how the ECP apprenticeship can **inspire opportunities** within your workforce and act as a key retention tool.
- Could the ECP apprenticeship be used to **unify service or system wide competencies** within your clinical area?

Are all staff eligible to undertake the apprenticeship?

Not all staff will be eligible to undertake the ECP apprenticeship (and nor would it be appropriate for all staff). The [apprenticeship funding rules](#) stipulate criteria by which an individual is eligible for apprenticeship funding. For example, staff who have significant prior learning that would reduce the duration of the apprenticeship to less than 12 months would not be eligible.

Use the eligibility checklist below to see if the ECP apprenticeship is appropriate for your staff:

(Please note this checklist is for guidance purposes only, always speak to your education provider about specific eligibility criteria, including residency criteria)



** Remember the apprenticeship is one pathway to achieving enhanced practice, you should also consider if other post registration qualifications or courses are appropriate.*

Is the ECP apprenticeship the only training route to enhanced practice?

There are multiple educational pathways and training that can support individuals to develop skills and knowledge to an enhanced level. This may include CPD, modular learning, post qualification certificates, post qualification diplomas, professional development courses, degree and master's level qualifications.

How is enhanced practice different to advanced practice?

The Enhanced Clinical Practitioner Apprenticeship is applicable to those in an extended role rather than an advanced role. Enhanced Clinical Practitioner Apprentices operate at an enhanced level of practice with specific knowledge and skills in a field of expertise. They manage a discrete aspect of a patient's care within their current level of practice, which will be particular to a specific context, be it a client group, a skill set or an organisational context. This is in contrast to Advanced Practitioners who have developed their knowledge and skills to an advanced level of practice and would manage the whole episode of a patient's clinical care, from the time they first present, through to the end of the episode.

Enhanced Practice

Uses reflection in action to function in unpredictable environment

Manages risk but defers major decision making

Uses freedom to act within own scope of practice

Found in different settings and across professions

Has a specific body of knowledge

Uses complex clinical decision making but confers with others for overall plan

Often manage a caseload, sometimes providing interventions as part of a dedicated clinical pathway

Post registration qualification / CPD and occasionally masters qualification

Evaluates and creates

will work within national and local protocols where these exist

Proficient

Advanced Practice

Uses reflection in action extensively in an unpredictable environment

Manages risks

Uses freedom to act, and provides professional leadership and supervision in situations that are complex and unpredictable

Found in different settings and across professions

Has a highly developed specific body of knowledge

Uses a high level of complex clinical decision making, including complete management of episodes of care

Manages defined episodes of clinical care independently, from beginning to end

Masters Level

Evaluates and creates

will shape the design and delivery of local protocols where these exist

Expert

Can the ECP apprenticeship lead to advanced practice?

Enhanced practice can be a precursor or preparation for advanced practice, equally it can be a destination career where people want to stay.

Where level 7 content is delivered in the ECP apprenticeship there may also be the opportunity for accreditation of prior learning (APEL) into the ACP apprenticeship and reduce the content and duration. It would therefore be advisable for employers to work closely with their education providers regarding the content of the ECP where they envisage APEL to ACP may occur. This will also depend on specific HEI APEL/RPL requirements and ACP award specifics.

Does the ECP apprenticeship include the four pillars of practice?

In terms of the four pillars of practice (clinical, leadership, education, and research) the following attributes are often found within enhanced practice:

- **Clinical** - provide care including clinical decision making within a scope of practice, participates in decision making amongst wider multi-disciplinary teams, often contributes specific knowledge of an area of practice, a population, or a setting/context. The care provided might not be face-to-face care directly with patients but the end point is usually influencing patient care.
- **Leadership** – provide service level leadership for own service or area of practice. Promotes an inclusive workplace, promotes patient safety and advocacy, actively promotes inclusivity, and uses active listening/communication skills to collaborate with colleagues in the wider multi-disciplinary team. Some enhanced practice workers may manage others. Reflect on and contribute to improving services.
- **Education** - enables others through mentoring, teaching and/or supervision of colleagues and students. Provides mentorship, opportunity for peer-learning and constructive feedback to guide, support, motivate and develop others in the multidisciplinary team.
- **Research** - research informed practice and participation in research. The enhanced practice professional also grasps the limitation of research for example where there is little evidence. Evaluates own service or role in service.

Is the ECP apprenticeship multidisciplinary?

The ECP apprenticeship is multidisciplinary and has relevance to many professions and specialities, such as:

- Dietetics
- Dental
- Healthcare Science
- Mental health
- Physiotherapy
- Nursing
- Paramedic Science
- Oncology

How can the ECP apprenticeship support professional and clinical speciality?

The ECP apprenticeship provides the opportunity to develop enhanced practice education that is relevant to professions within a speciality, by supporting upskilling in professional roles to meet the needs of employers, for example the curriculum of the ECP could be co-designed to ensure that staff moving into Senior Occupational Therapist roles develop enhanced clinical skills that are relevant to their sphere of practice as an occupational therapist, this allows healthcare professionals to work across organisational boundaries, bridging the community, primary and secondary healthcare settings together.

Employers and systems should critically evaluate their workforce requirements to ensure that the content on the ECP apprenticeship can meet their future workforce needs.

What academic level is the ECP apprenticeship?

The level of this apprenticeship is level 6, however as there is no mandated qualification then employers can opt to use level 7 education within the apprenticeship. The Enhanced Clinical Practitioner is an occupational level 6 apprenticeship with a [funding band](#) of £7,000, with a typical duration of 18 months.

Can academic qualifications be delivered as part of the ECP apprenticeship?

There are no mandated qualifications as part of the Enhanced Clinical Practitioner apprenticeship, during the programme apprentices must compile a portfolio of evidence.

Whilst there are no mandated qualifications within the Enhanced Clinical Practitioner apprenticeship, some employers may wish to work with training providers who deliver academic qualifications as part of their apprentices training. This may include modules, units or qualifications that enable apprentices to meet the KSBs of the occupational standard. Regardless of approach during the programme apprentices must compile a portfolio of evidence.

Have any education providers been procured to deliver the ECP Apprenticeship?

HEE has facilitated a national procurement with Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust who manage a supported procurement service. Multiple Universities were awarded for the ECP apprenticeship. To receive a list of those awarded please contact sft.commercial@nhs.net

Why do I need to procure apprenticeship education?

Apprenticeship levy funding is counted as public money and therefore demonstration of best value is required.

Where can I find education providers who are delivering the ECP apprenticeship?

The ECP apprenticeship is a relatively new apprenticeship, and as such universities are in the process of developing their curriculum in conjunction with employers and professional bodies to meet the needs of employers. Therefore, please note that those awarded via the procurement process may not have a course ready immediately, but employers are advised to

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work with their systems and universities to influence course design and content. Where can I find out more?

You can access dedicated apprenticeship support through your regional [HEE Talent for Care Regional Apprenticeship Relationship Managers](#), who work closely with employers, training providers, HEE colleagues and other key stakeholders. The HEE Talent for Care Regional Apprenticeship Relationship Managers have extensive apprenticeship expertise and are on hand to support all employers across the health care system.

You can also find information about apprenticeships via the below links:

[Healthcare Apprenticeship Standards online](#)

[Enhanced Clinical Practitioner Apprenticeship Standard](#)

You can find information on the [national minimum wage, the apprenticeship rate, and the definition of an employee](#) on GOV.UK.

[20% off the job training](#)

[What is an apprenticeship and what does it involve?](#)

[ESFA Funding Rules](#)

[Apprenticeship Implementation Toolkit](#)

[How do I pay for apprenticeship training?](#)

[Apprenticeship Funding Toolkit](#)

[What are the requirements for English and Maths?](#)

[Is there an age limit?](#)

[What happens at the end of an apprenticeship?](#)