

# **Scottish Neonatal Nurses' Group**

## **The Competency Framework and Core Clinical Skills for Neonatal Nurses 2005**



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The views expressed in the report are those of the Scottish Neonatal Nurses' Group and not necessarily the views of the funder.

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## Introduction

In order to fulfill two recommendations made in the Scottish Neonatal Nurses' Group (SNNG) report (2004) on neonatal nurse staffing and career pathways, a project to develop competencies and core clinical skills for neonatal nurses was undertaken. The background to the project, justification for the SNNG (2004) recommendations, the source of funding for the project and information on the working group members, their remit and methods are presented in the first part of this document. The competencies and core clinical skills are then detailed and the conclusion includes the recommendations arising from the project.

## Background

Recruitment and retention of nursing and midwifery staff is central to the provision of health care services in Scotland (Scottish Executive 1999). The SNNG has been concerned about issues related to neonatal nurse recruitment and retention for some time. Historically neonatal units (NNU) in Scotland were predominately staffed by midwives. Although staffing profiles are changing with the recruitment of nurses from adult and child health branches, there are problems with the national midwifery grading structure (Department of Health 2001) that lead to inequality among NNU staff.

A survey of Scottish NNUs was undertaken (Kerr 2003) to determine the extent to which midwives worked in NNUs, their grading structure, their opportunities for professional development within neonatal nursing and what implications there were for achieving post-registration education and practice (PREP) requirements (United Kingdom Central Council (UKCC) 2000). The results indicated that

- changes in the midwifery grading structure had effectively removed direct entry midwives as a potential recruitment source from some NNUs
- there is inequality in career and grading structure between nurses and midwives working in NNUs
- midwives' grading does not necessarily reflect neonatal nursing experience
- a midwife working only in NNU can meet the PREP practice standards, however if she perceives her practice to be deficient, she should be facilitated and supported to work in other areas to achieve the standards.

During 2003 the SNNG undertook a survey to ascertain what issues, if any, were prevalent in Scottish NNUs in respect of the apparent staffing problems (SNNG 2003). This survey concluded that factors contributing to staffing problems in NNUs were

- the changing roles and delivery of care within NNUs
- staffing establishments that were not planned for all levels of care within NNUs
- a lack of staff training and development opportunities
- nursing and midwifery grading.

On the recommendation of a Nursing Officer at the Scottish Executive Health Department (SEHD), the SNNG commissioned a working group to explore the issues further and make recommendations for a way forward for neonatal nurses and midwives in Scotland. The working group presented The Report on Neonatal Nurse Staffing and Career Pathways (SNNG 2004) to the SEHD Nursing Officer in April 2004 and it was subsequently widely distributed in Scotland.

The recommendations in the report were that:

1. the proposed career structure for neonatal nurses with supported educational opportunities is adopted
2. there is standardization of essential skills / competencies for neonatal nurses at each level of practice, including expert roles
3. the proposed neonatal nurse generic job description with competencies is adopted
4. further work is undertaken to develop specific competencies for each level of neonatal nurse practice
5. the salaries of neonatal nurses reflect their individual level of knowledge and skill
6. a specific neonatal nurse job evaluation profile is developed and implemented
7. the British Association of Perinatal Medicine's (2001) standards for hospitals providing neonatal intensive care and high dependency care are implemented throughout Scotland
8. there is ring-fenced funding to support neonatal nurse education

The responsibility for implementation of the first, third and fifth to eighth recommendations lies with external agencies. The work required to fulfill the second and the fourth recommendations was accepted by the SNNG.

## **Justification for the second and fourth recommendations**

“The development of high quality nurses and midwives, practising the right skills and competencies in the right place at the right time, is pivotal to the delivery of the Scottish Executive’s plan for NHS Scotland, Our National Health” (Scottish Executive 2001a p 1, Scottish Executive 2001b). Therefore it is fundamental to have neonatal nursing staff in sufficient numbers who are appropriately trained, qualified and competent to care for preterm and sick babies and their families.

Broad and specific core competencies have been agreed for foundation level neonatal nurses (National Health Service Education for Scotland (NES) 2002) and have proved beneficial in several ways. The benefits include providing the basis for a job description; local, national and international recognition of the extent and expectations of the role; the basis for a clinical performance assessment tool; and providing a framework for training. These benefits could apply to the other levels of neonatal nursing practice were competencies to be developed and thus the development of competencies was judged to be desirable.

As the foundation level competencies were originally being developed, they were complemented by specific clinical skills to enhance understanding and further guide the development of training programmes. Therefore with the development of competencies, standardisation of specific clinical skills at each level of neonatal nursing practice was deemed appropriate.

## **General Nursing Council for Scotland (Education) Fund 1983 Scholarship**

A successful application was made via NES for a scholarship from the General Nursing Council for Scotland (Education) Fund 1983. This funding award allowed completion of the project without depleting the minimal financial reserves of the SNNG.

## **Establishment of the working group, members, remit and methods**

Individuals from the SNNG who volunteered to undertake the project represented many Scottish NNUs (see Appendix 1). The general remit was to produce competencies and skills to underpin the generic job description (SNNG 2004). As foundation level competencies were in place (NES 2002), the working group aimed to develop competencies for the initial entrant, the proficient and the expert levels of neonatal nurse practice. However, in order that the competency framework could be presented in an inclusive format, the working group decided to adapt the foundation level competencies so that they could be incorporated into the framework.

The working group also agreed to adapt the skills identified for foundation level (NES 2002) to fit with the clinical skills that were to be defined for neonatal nurses at initial entrant, proficient and expert levels.

Therefore the agreed remit of the working group was to:

- develop specific competencies for each level of neonatal nursing practice, incorporating those already developed at foundation level
- standardise essential clinical skills for neonatal nurses at each level of practice, including expert roles, incorporating those already developed at foundation level.

The group met on five occasions, usually alternating venues between Glasgow and Edinburgh. While not all members could attend every meeting, there was sufficient representation from a core group of members at each meeting to ensure that continuity was maintained. E-mail contact between the group members was established allowing speedy communication of meeting minutes and the developing report. This medium also facilitated continued participation by direct feedback to the group from members unable to attend some meetings. Only one member was not contactable electronically but normal mail was used to maintain communication.

## The Competency Framework

The competency framework is based on the career structure devised by an SNNG working group (SNNG 2004) (see Appendix 2). This structure provides a pathway from point of registration through different levels where a practitioner may choose to advance their career or remain at a specific point. The pathway also demonstrates the educational opportunities that are available/required to meet the needs of neonatal nurses and the employing organisation. The pathway has been slightly amended due to changes and proposed changes in Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) policy since the report was published (NMC 2004). The levels referred to in the pathway and the qualifications expected at each level are further explained Appendix 3.

The competencies were derived with guidance from the National Health Service (NHS) (2004) Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) core dimensions and are presented under the following headings:

- Communication and interpersonal relationships
- Personal, professional and people development
- Health, safety and security
- Service development
- Quality
- Equality, diversity and rights
- Responsibility for patient care

The competencies included under each heading overlap with several of the specific dimensions of the NHS (2004) KSF, therefore these are included as subheadings throughout. Mapping of the proposed competencies against those of the NHS (2004) KSF is found in Appendix 4.

## **Communication and Interpersonal Relationships**

**(including data processing and management, production and communication of information and knowledge, and the design and production of visual records)**

The neonatal nurse will utilise a wide range of media to communicate effectively with babies, parents, carers and health care workers. She will demonstrate interpersonal behaviour and skills conducive to developing and maintaining therapeutic and professional relationships.

### **Elements**

Communicate effectively with babies, families, relatives, carers and other professional colleagues

Act as the baby's advocate

Maintain effective and supportive communication within the neonatal nursing team and with other professionals

Contribute to creating an environment that fosters open communication and trust with families and colleagues

Liaise with health care professionals and individuals in other disciplines from within and outwith the organisation to support quality patient care

### **Tools**

- All forms of communication – oral, written, electronic, body language, tone of voice
- Active listening
- Facilitating
- Advising and counselling
- Influencing and persuading

## Competencies for the four levels of neonatal nursing practice

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the importance of effective communication</li> <li>• Demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively and efficiently with colleagues</li> <li>• Receive and provide all forms of communication as required</li> <li>• Establish and maintain communication with neonatal staff on routine operational matters</li> <li>• Use effective communication strategies to work with babies and in partnership with parents/carers, give them information necessary to facilitate informed choice, to meet the needs of the baby</li> <li>• Collect, collate, record, input and report routine and simple data and information</li> <li>• Maintain accurate and contemporaneous records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a rapport and communicate effectively with other members of the neonatal team</li> <li>• Communicate tactfully, maintaining trust, integrity and confidence</li> <li>• Ensure effective communication between babies, families and colleagues</li> <li>• Establish and maintain communication with neonatal staff and others about routine and daily activities, overcoming differences that may exist</li> <li>• Influence and teach others</li> <li>• Structure, analyse, interpret and report factual data and information</li> <li>• Supervise others in the maintenance of accurate and contemporaneous records</li> <li>• Check information, confirm accuracy, recognise discrepancies and take appropriate action</li> <li>• Recognise and take action either verbally or in writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process, modify and manage data and information</li> <li>• Write complex reports</li> <li>• Prepare and deliver presentations</li> <li>• Establish and maintain communication with individuals and groups about complex and difficult neonatal matters, overcoming any problems</li> <li>• Actively support and lead initiatives to ensure optimal communication of local and national policy directives and information pertinent to neonatal care</li> <li>• Persuade, motivate, influence and negotiate with a wide range of people to assist with decision-making and action as required</li> <li>• Analyse, interpret and report information and knowledge related to ideas and concepts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence strategic policy making at local and national level</li> <li>• Lead meetings, give presentations and influence a wide range of individuals and groups at strategic level to take action and make changes</li> <li>• Receive and process complex, sensitive and contentious information, initiating actions required</li> <li>• Establish and maintain communication with various individuals and groups on complex, wide ranging, potentially stressful topics related to neonatal services</li> <li>• Ensure effective communication to overcome barriers</li> <li>• Design/develop strategies to process and manage data and information</li> <li>• Analyse, synthesize and present knowledge and information about complex subjects and concepts to influence key decisions</li> </ul>

## **Personal, Professional and People Development**

The neonatal nurse will assume responsibility for her professional development, demonstrating a commitment to lifelong learning and activities that enhance knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required for safe and effective neonatal nursing practice

### **Elements**

Practice at all times within current legislation, professional rules, codes and guidelines

Provide ongoing evidence of competence through maintenance of a personal professional portfolio

Develop self and others

Contribute to practice development through active participation in clinical working groups

Contribute to the development of the philosophy of shared governance within the neonatal team

Facilitate and actively participate in clinical support activities and orientation of colleagues and learners

### **Tools**

- Formal learning
- On-the-job training opportunities
- E-learning
- Access to specific training and awards
- Networking

## Competencies for the four levels of neonatal nursing practice

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to own personal development</li> <li>• Be aware of limitations of skills, scope of professional practice in neonatal nursing, exercise accountability and seek advice and support accordingly</li> <li>• Demonstrate a commitment to continuous professional development and actively participate in the appraisal process</li> <li>• Actively participate in teaching programmes and facilitate learning of students and juniors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop own knowledge and skills and provide information to others to help their development</li> <li>• Recognise the limitations of self and others, seek advice and provide support accordingly</li> <li>• Facilitate teaching programmes to meet the needs of self and others</li> <li>• Identify skills/knowledge deficits and formulate a plan of action as part of continuous professional development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop own knowledge, skills and practice and contribute to the development of others</li> <li>• Act as a resource of specialist knowledge and clinical practice</li> <li>• Foster an environment that encourages staff development, supporting and counseling staff as necessary</li> <li>• Develop, deliver and evaluate staff development programmes that support the achievement of clinical skills, leadership and best practice in neonatal nursing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate knowledge of public policies and participate in professional activities that relate to the advancement of neonatal nursing practice</li> <li>• Develop and evaluate own and others' knowledge and practice across professional and organisational boundaries</li> <li>• Identify and deliver strategies to ensure the provision of education and development programmes to meet the needs of the neonatal service</li> <li>• Support the development of a culture in which professionals learn together</li> </ul>

## **Health, Safety and Security**

The neonatal nurse will utilise a range of policies, procedures and protocols that optimise a safe and secure environment that supports neonatal practice.

### **Elements**

Maintain and promote health, safety and security

Demonstrate knowledge of and comply with local and national Health and Safety legislation, infection control policies, and clinical governance and risk management regulations.

Contribute to maintaining a safe and secure environment

### **Tools**

- Health and safety legislation and policies
- Infection control policies
- Clinical governance
- Risk management
- Moving and handling
- Staff governance
- Training/mandatory updates as defined in employer's health and safety policies and procedures

## Competencies for the four levels of neonatal nursing practice

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware of and comply with local and national Health and Safety legislation, infection control policies, and clinical governance and risk management regulations.</li> <li>• Assist in maintaining a safe and secure environment</li> <li>• Identify potential risks in the workplace and take appropriate action to minimise the risk</li> <li>• Participate in the preparation and maintenance of neonatal equipment</li> <li>• Identify emergency situations, summon help and act within own level of expertise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively implement local and national Health and Safety legislation, infection control policies, clinical governance and risk management regulations, and integrate these into practice</li> <li>• Manage emergency situations, summon appropriate help, and act within own level of professional competence</li> <li>• Monitor and maintain the health, safety and security of self and others in the neonatal unit</li> <li>• Prepare and maintain equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support others to deal with emergency situations</li> <li>• Carry out risk assessments related to neonatal care and manage those risks appropriately</li> <li>• Ensure all appropriate measures are taken in relation to infection control</li> <li>• Act as a role model and promote best practice in health, safety and security</li> <li>• Prepare and maintain equipment and ensure staff training is current and up-to-date</li> <li>• Contribute to staff training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the working environment complies with organisational, professional and legal requirements and guidelines</li> <li>• Monitor safe work practices</li> <li>• Assume line management responsibility for accident/incident reporting and monitoring</li> <li>• Develop a culture that actively improves health, safety and security</li> <li>• Advise others to manage risk in the neonatal unit</li> <li>• Acknowledge/identify training needs of staff, negotiate resources, facilitate training to meet needs</li> <li>• Ensure best practice in health, safety and security, including adequate training for staff</li> <li>• Develop and provide appropriate training opportunities</li> <li>• Assess the need for and manage the purchase of equipment to support neonatal care</li> </ul>

## **Service Development**

**(including Logistics, Facilities Maintenance and Management, Partnership, Leadership, Management of People, and Management of Physical and/or Financial Resources)**

The neonatal nurse will demonstrate knowledge of effective inter-professional working practices that respect and utilise the contribution of all members of the health care team.

The neonatal nurse will contribute effectively to the planning and organisation of neonatal care services to maximise the provision of a high quality service to babies, parents, families and carers.

### **Elements**

Demonstrate ability to co-ordinate, organise and prioritise workload

Demonstrate leadership skills within the neonatal nursing practice

Maintain collaborative working relationships with the multidisciplinary team, the general public and external agencies

Manage resources effectively

Be receptive to new developments in the provision of neonatal care

Participate in clinical governance initiatives

### **Tools**

- Setting goals and objectives
- Supervising and facilitating
- Delegating
- Equipment
- Operational planning
- Budgeting
- Controlling and monitoring
- Administration
- Leading, managing and developing staff
- Coaching and mentoring
- Visioning
- Resources
- Time management
- Prioritising
- Project planning
- People management

## Competencies for the four levels of neonatal nursing practice

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist in maintenance and development of the neonatal service</li> <li>• Act as a role model for junior colleagues and learners</li> <li>• Supervise one or two junior staff engaged on routine work</li> <li>• Comment on policies, procedures or possible developments</li> <li>• Participate in partnership working within the neonatal unit</li> <li>• Assist with the logistics of moving babies and equipment within the service</li> <li>• Recognise the need to organise and prioritise workload as part of a team, taking cognisance of activities within the neonatal unit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervise a group of staff within predetermined parameters and provide feedback to the team</li> <li>• Provide leadership within the clinical environment, acting as a role model for staff and peers</li> <li>• Effectively manage resources in the neonatal unit</li> <li>• Contribute to the development of neonatal services</li> <li>• Participate in partnership, working with individuals, groups and others within the neonatal unit</li> <li>• Plan own time and prioritise over a daily and weekly time-scale</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively contribute and participate in the development of neonatal services</li> <li>• Provide effective professional leadership, facilitating change and developing the service in response to changing health care needs</li> <li>• Proactively facilitate and participate in resource and neonatal unit management, maximising resources and contributing to the management and development of staff</li> <li>• Highlight and instigate action plans to manage deficits in resources</li> <li>• Deputise for the line manager</li> <li>• Be involved in the recruitment/selection and personal professional development of staff</li> <li>• Develop and sustain working with individuals, groups, agencies and others involved in neonatal care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop strategies and policies for neonatal service development at local and national level</li> <li>• Monitor staff development</li> <li>• Lead a team with complex work activities by establishing objectives and standards</li> <li>• Develop, sustain and evaluate partnership working with individuals, groups, agencies and others involved in the provision of neonatal care</li> <li>• Develop, implement and evaluate policies and strategies for recruiting, deploying, developing and retaining staff</li> <li>• Demonstrate a critically analytical approach to strategic decision making and judgements related to neonatal care</li> <li>• Provide leadership and management in neonatal nursing through effective role modelling, offering vision for the advancement of neonatal nursing, stimulating co-operation and enthusiasm in neonatal nursing and empowering neonatal nurses in practice</li> </ul>

## Competencies for the four levels of neonatal nursing practice

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware of and maintain the physical resources in the neonatal unit</li> <li>• Be aware of and efficiently use the financial resources in the neonatal unit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan and organise straightforward activities in the neonatal unit</li> <li>• Organise the logistics to move babies and equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Propose policy/service changes</li> <li>• Allocate, delegate, co-ordinate, monitor and assess work of the team and individuals</li> <li>• Plan and organise several complex neonatal care activities</li> <li>• Organise and prioritise conflicting workload demands</li> <li>• Prioritise the movement of babies and equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare, develop and monitor financial and material resource for a range of complex neonatal care activities</li> <li>• Identify success criteria and establish monitoring systems for neonatal nursing practice</li> <li>• Plan and manage projects related to service development</li> <li>• Develop strategies to ensure safe and efficient movement of babies and equipment</li> <li>• Secure physical and financial resources and establish strategies for their use</li> </ul>

## **Quality (includes Research and Development)**

The neonatal nurse will demonstrate commitment to evidence-based practice, utilising research, quality standards and clinical audit tools.

The neonatal nurse will demonstrate critical thinking approach to problem solving to enhance neonatal care.

### **Elements**

Actively use a problem solving approach to care delivery and the needs of the baby

Utilise research skills, critically appraise and evaluate neonatal practice

Contribute to the maintenance of an environment within the neonatal unit where research, quality and clinical audit are valued

In collaboration with the multi-professional team, audit standards of care delivery

Use decision-making skills

### **Tools**

- Creative thinking
- Decision making
- Research
- Audit
- Evaluation
- Making recommendations
- Reflective practice

## Competencies for the four levels of neonatal nursing practice

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt a questioning/reflective attitude towards clinical practice, seeking and utilising best evidence guidelines in the provision of care to babies and their families.</li> <li>• Assist with audit, research and development projects, including simple data collection.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt a critical approach to clinical practice and encourage questioning/reflection in others to promote a culture of best practice in neonatal care.</li> <li>• Identify areas for practice development and assist in the formation of evidence-based guidelines in neonatal care.</li> <li>• Participate in audit, research and development projects, including more complex data collection.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess and analyse information to solve problems.</li> <li>• Make recommendations that have a positive impact on neonatal care.</li> <li>• Instigate and facilitate research and audit.</li> <li>• Proactively foster a culture of enquiry and facilitate change to integrate best evidence into neonatal care.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make decisions and develop solutions to problems that involve clear risk and may have no clear answer.</li> <li>• Make significant decisions that have a direct impact on the medium or long-term performance of the neonatal unit.</li> <li>• Analyse and develop solutions for complex professional, clinical or managerial problems.</li> <li>• Identify areas for nursing research in clinical practice.</li> <li>• Participate in and/or lead research projects in collaboration with others.</li> <li>• Participate in the systematic review of protocols, treatment plans and outcomes to determine their effectiveness in meeting established standards of care.</li> </ul>

## **Equality, Diversity and Rights**

The neonatal nurse will practice within a legal, professional and ethical framework that includes employer's and local guidance, policies and procedures, ensuring that own actions support and promote equality, diversity and rights.

### **Elements**

Know, understand, use and integrate into practice all current legislation, rules and codes that are relevant to neonatal nursing practice, including:

- Code of Professional Practice
- Midwives' Rules and Standards
- The Children's Act and Child Protection Framework
- International Convention on Human Rights/The Rights of the Child

### **Tools**

- Creative thinking
- Decision making
- Research
- Audit
- Evaluation
- Making recommendations
- Reflective practice

## Competencies for the four levels of neonatal nursing practice

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist in maintaining an environment in which everyone is treated equitably and with respect</li> <li>• Ensure own actions support equality, diversity and rights</li> <li>• Support the baby's rights</li> <li>• Recognise and respect the preferences and beliefs of the family/carers</li> <li>• Reflect on and challenge personal assumptions and ways of working</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect on and challenge assumptions and ways of working of others</li> <li>• Support an environment in which everyone is treated equitably and with respect</li> <li>• Provide parents with the information required for them to make informed decisions regarding their baby</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote an environment in which everyone is treated equitably and with respect</li> <li>• Enable parents to make informed decisions regarding their baby and support them in their decisions</li> <li>• Identify the potential for discrimination and compromise of rights</li> <li>• Take action to prevent or rectify discrimination and compromise of rights</li> <li>• Interpret and challenge ways of working and develop appropriate solutions</li> <li>• Act as an advocate on behalf of those whose rights have been compromised</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively develop and promote an environment in which everyone is treated equitably and with respect</li> <li>• Develop anti-discriminatory policies/procedures and provide appropriate support services for babies, parents, carers and staff that comply with legislation, professional regulations and best practice</li> <li>• Monitor effectiveness of equality, diversity and rights policies and procedures throughout the neonatal unit</li> <li>• Regularly review implementation, effectiveness and compliance</li> </ul>

## **Responsibility for Patient Care**

**(including Assessment of, Addressing individuals', Improvement of, Protection of Health and Well-being Needs, Biomedical Investigation and Reporting, and Measuring, Monitoring and treating Physiological Conditions through the Application of Specific Technologies)**

The neonatal nurse will apply knowledge, clinical judgement, a range of skills, demonstrate by example and encourage others to provide safe, effective care to babies and their families/carers.

### **Elements**

Develop and maintain a sound knowledge base relevant to neonatal care

Develop and maintain own clinical competence

Critically appraise own level of competence, identifying areas for further development

In collaboration with the family and the multidisciplinary team, assess, plan, deliver and evaluate neonatal care that reflects individual physical, social, cultural and spiritual needs

Ensure that the most appropriate, individualised clinically effective neonatal care is achieved within the confines of available resources

Implement care under the direction of current unit and professional policies, procedures and guidelines, and the law

Demonstrate effective decision-making in the context of current role

Use health promotion strategies to support/advise parents and families

Ensure care is taken to safeguard babies and their families/carers at all times

Ensure written documentation is clear, concise, timely and complies with professional and local guidelines and standards

Demonstrate an awareness of current developments in neonatal practice

Demonstrate that neonatal practice is embedded in evidence/best practice

Maintain and improve quality in all areas of neonatal practice

### **Tools**

- Education and training
- Health promotion
- Guidelines, protocols, policies and standards
- Biomedical investigations and reporting
- Neonatal care assessment tools
- Quality standards
- Legislation
- Specific technologies

## Competencies for the four levels of neonatal nursing practice

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a sound knowledge base relevant to neonatal nursing</li> <li>• Provide quality basic routine neonatal care within clearly defined guidelines</li> <li>• Respond to the needs of the baby and the family, providing quality care using current information and knowledge</li> <li>• Undertake routine assessment tasks related to the health and well-being of the baby</li> <li>• Assist in delivering programmes of neonatal care</li> <li>• Perform routine tests and tasks related to neonatal investigations and reporting</li> <li>• Assess, intervene, evaluate and report the outcomes of planned care</li> <li>• Ensure actions assist the maintenance of high quality neonatal care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a comprehensive knowledge and skills base relate to neonatal nursing</li> <li>• Act as a resource to colleagues</li> <li>• Use critical judgement and reasoning to facilitate and deliver care to babies in partnership with parents/carers and the multi-professional team</li> <li>• Assist other staff and families assess babies' health, well-being and related needs</li> <li>• Assist in planning, delivering and evaluating programmes of neonatal care</li> <li>• Anticipate, interpret and respond to babies' needs and those of the families</li> <li>• Assess the health and well-being needs of the baby whose needs are relatively stable and consistent with others</li> <li>• Apply technology for measurement, monitoring and treatment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage the implementation of quality care/service</li> <li>• Act as a role model, providing support and guidance to others in implementing care</li> <li>• Assess, plan, deliver and evaluate neonatal care to address needs that are complex and ever changing</li> <li>• Plan analyse, interpret and report biomedical investigations within own level of practice</li> <li>• Plan monitor and quality assure the application of technology for measurement, monitoring and treatment</li> <li>• Contribute to quality improvement</li> <li>• In partnership with parents/carers and the multi-professional team, use highly developed/specialist knowledge and clinical skills in the neonatal unit to create a culture and climate that is proactive and responsive to meet the health care needs of babies</li> <li>• Supervise the care given by junior colleagues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and maintain knowledge, skills and competence to the level of the expert who is able to function in an independent role</li> <li>• Develop and implement strategies for neonatal care, including standards, policies and guidelines for care delivery</li> <li>• Develop policies and strategies to improve the health and well being of babies</li> <li>• Develop practice in biomedical investigation and reporting</li> <li>• Develop practice in applying technology for measurement, monitoring and treatment</li> <li>• Foster a proactive care culture</li> <li>• Seek opportunities to add value to care provision</li> <li>• Improve quality of neonatal care through practice review</li> <li>• Continuously monitor activities against quality standards, anticipate factors that may reduce quality and take effective action to address them</li> <li>• Develop, implement and evaluate initiatives/strategies to improve the quality of care</li> <li>• Demonstrate a critically analytic approach to strategic decision-making and judgements related to neonatal care</li> </ul>

## Competencies for the four levels of neonatal nursing practice

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use core clinical skills and develop critical reasoning skills to provide safe and effective care to babies in partnership with parents/carers and the multi-professional team</li> <li>• Contribute to practice development</li> <li>• Accountable for own practice</li> <li>• Responsible and accountable for overall care delivery for a defined group of babies with indirect supervision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide advice in relation to care of an individual or group</li> <li>• Ensure actions promote quality and alert others to relevant quality issues</li> <li>• Supervise care delivery of junior colleagues</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide leadership in neonatal nursing through effective role modelling, offering a vision for the advancement of neonatal nursing, stimulating co-operation and enthusiasm in neonatal nursing, empowering neonatal nurses in their practice, publishing locally, nationally and internationally</li> </ul>

## Core Clinical Skills for Neonatal Nurses

To achieve the competencies expected for each of the four levels of neonatal nursing practice, the neonatal nurse must develop specific skills. The skills required are diverse, may be transferable across several competencies, and will change over time, therefore the working group chose to restrict the clarification of core clinical skills in this document to those that specifically relate to patient care within the competency “Responsibility for patient care” and incorporate those previously developed for level 2 (NES 2002). To place the core clinical skills in context of all four levels of neonatal nursing practice, an overview of skill development can be described as follows

At level 1, the new entrant gains skills through a structured orientation programme, with the new entrant working under a preceptor’s supervision and direction.

At level 2, the neonatal nurse is achieving and consolidating neonatal knowledge and skills and is described as ‘qualified in speciality’. Essential skills for this level have already been devised and produced (NES 2002). Along with defined competencies, the NES (2002) document also contains the essential skills expected at the competent neonatal nurse level, obtained either through work-based learning or through an accredited programme delivered by a Higher Educational Institution. These essential skills have been slightly amended and are included in the core clinical skills presented in this document (see pages 27-38).

The neonatal nurse may choose to remain at level 2 assuming personal responsibility for continuing professional development, and teaching and supervising learners in the skills in which the level 2 neonatal nurse is competent. Alternatively, additional experience/ education may be undertaken to develop the skills required to achieve the competencies of level 3 practice.

Proficient neonatal nurses functioning at level 3 are experienced and may act independently within a multi-disciplinary / multi-agency context, with some having a more defined role. Neonatal nurses at level 3 are eligible to undertake formal education leading to an academic degree that supports their higher level functioning in the neonatal unit. Such an award may give them eligibility to record a professional qualification of Specialist Practitioner. Currently there are few designated Specialist Practitioner roles in Scottish neonatal units and the NMC now limits those neonatal nurses who can record this qualification to those with Registered Nurse (Child Health) status.

Working at level 3, the neonatal nurse will assess health, health related and nursing needs of babies, parents, families and other carers by identifying and initiating appropriate steps for effective care for individuals and groups. At level 3 the neonatal nurse will work independently to assess, plan, implement and evaluate nursing care of babies requiring all levels of neonatal nursing. In collaboration with medical staff, the level 3 neonatal nurse will assess, plan, implement and evaluate the overall management of babies requiring all levels of neonatal care. The level 3 neonatal nurse will assess and manage critical and clinical events to ensure safe and effective care, summoning appropriate assistance as necessary. She/he will also facilitate learning by others in the neonatal unit.

Neonatal nurses may choose to further develop their knowledge, skills and competence to level 4, the expert neonatal nurse who is able to function in an independent role. Roles at this level may include the following:

- Neonatal Manager – providing service management for a defined area
- Neonatal Practice Development Facilitator/Researcher – promoting best practice, including undertaking clinical research
- Advanced Neonatal Nurse Practitioner – providing total care for a caseload of babies, achieved through an accredited educational programme and work within a designated Advanced Neonatal Nurse Practitioner role
- Neonatal Nurse Consultant – championing strategic policy development

The core clinical skills listed below will pertain only to those neonatal nurses with a direct clinical role, acknowledging that some level 4 nurses do not have such a role.

All neonatal nurses must conduct themselves in a professional manner in respect to confidentiality, empathy, information giving and liaising with other staff. Effective communication with parents / carers / staff and other colleagues is essential for all levels of neonatal nursing practice through active listening, acknowledging, responding, explaining, questioning, negotiating, analysing and facilitating. At all levels, neonatal nurses should be aware of how to contact relevant colleagues when required and understand the barriers and boundaries to effective communication.

Planning, assessment and evaluation are essential parts of all care and the decisions taken at all levels. Accurate record keeping and documentation is a fundamental part of all nursing, and midwifery practice and are important tools in promoting high quality care. Records and documents must be legible, accurate, concise and contemporaneous, and comply with the NMC standards (NMC 2002). At all levels, the neonatal nurse must be able to initiate and maintain accurate care plans and document the outcomes of nursing and other interventions.

At all levels, neonatal nurses work in partnership with parents, families and carers. Neonatal nurses are in a unique position to act as an advocate for the baby and can play a vital role in child protection.

Following on from the categorisation of skills previously used (NES 2002), the working group presents the core clinical skills under the following headings:

- Fluid, Electrolyte, Nutrition and Elimination Management
- Neurological and Pain Management
- Respiratory and Cardiovascular Management
- Skin and Hygiene Management
- Thermal Control Management
- Bereavement Management
- Investigations and Procedures
- Equipment

The neonatal nurse must have knowledge and ability to rationalize the strategy chosen in the application of all clinical skills.

## Fluid, electrolyte, nutrition and elimination management

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise normal gastro-intestinal function, urinary tract function and bilirubin elimination, reporting deviations</li> <li>Implement interventions to sustain homeostasis according to unit guidelines</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiate management and follow guidelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate, prescribe and manage treatments for any GI problems, and problems with urinary tract function and bilirubin elimination</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist the mother to breast feed according to evidence base/unit guidelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inform and advise on storage of breast milk, breast feeding, hand and mechanical expression and supplementary methods of feeding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate and involve others in research and development of practice to promote breast feeding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devise, audit and review guidelines for best practice in partnership with medical staff</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist parents/carers in other enteral feeding techniques</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inform and advise on all aspects of other enteral feeding methods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use evidence based practice for enteral feeding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devise, audit and review guidelines for best practice in partnership with medical staff</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safely carry out all forms of enteral feeding (except breast) according to evidence base/unit guidelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess enteral feeding needs, devise plan and review appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devise procedures / guidelines for enteral feeding.</li> <li>Monitor and evaluate, audit and review implementation</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administer nutritional supplements according to prescription</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the required nutritional supplements are prescribed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor the need for nutritional supplements and ensure compliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prescribe nutritional supplements as required</li> <li>Review the need for nutritional supplements</li> </ul>

## Fluid, electrolyte, nutrition and elimination management continued

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safely administer intravenous therapy according to unit guidelines, recognising and reporting deviations/ complications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set up, maintain and discontinue intravenous /intra-arterial therapy, according to unit guidelines.</li> <li>Maintain central lines</li> <li>Intervene appropriately to reduce/avoid deviations/ complications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In specific situations, insert peripheral intravenous lines and</li> <li>Supervise insertion of intravenous lines by others</li> <li>Manage appropriate treatment for deviations/ complications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish intravenous and intra-arterial access</li> <li>Remove central lines</li> <li>Instigate and prescribe treatment</li> <li>Select and prescribe appropriate fluid management</li> <li>Devise, audit and review guidelines for best practice in partnership with medical staff</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor input and output</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Calculate intake requirements according to guidelines.</li> <li>Measure output</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Calculate intake and output according to clinical condition and environment within set guidelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Calculate and prescribe fluid intake according to clinical condition and environment</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measure weight and length</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor growth and development through measurement of weight and length, reporting of deviations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Act on deviations from normal growth and development and refer appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate, prescribe and manage treatments for problems with weight or length</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Obtain capillary blood sample to measure and monitor blood glucose levels, reporting deviations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement interventions according to unit guidelines for blood glucose regulation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure implementation of evidence based guidelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpret and instigate appropriate management and further investigation</li> <li>Devise, audit and review guidelines for best practice in partnership with medical staff</li> </ul>

## Fluid, electrolyte, nutrition and elimination management continued

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Care for baby requiring phototherapy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiate phototherapy according to predetermined criteria</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prescribe phototherapy according to clinical need</li> <li>Investigate cause of pathological hyperbilirubinaemia</li> <li>Devise, audit and review guidelines for best practice in partnership with medical staff</li> </ul>

## Neurological and pain management

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise normal behaviour in babies of different gestations, including sleep/awake states</li> <li>Report deviations from normal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise physiological and behavioural differences between stress, distress, discomfort, pain, convulsions and drug withdrawal</li> <li>Alleviate baby's discomfort, pain etc using standard nursing strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide anticipatory guidance and support for staff to recognise physiological and behavioural differences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiate referrals based on need</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete available/appropriate assessment tools and report findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpret outcomes of assessment and implement strategies according to local guidelines</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devise, audit and review guidelines for best practice in partnership with medical staff</li> <li>Initiate appropriate treatment</li> </ul>

## Neurological and pain management continued

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anticipate potentially adverse events and minimise their impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan, implement and evaluate care to avoid / minimise the impact of adverse events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review care and management strategies to avoid/minimise the impact of adverse events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devise, audit and review guidelines for best practice in partnership with medical staff</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise and report overt signs of pain</li> <li>Provide routine nursing care to alleviate pain and stress to the baby</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise and report subtle signs of pain</li> <li>Implement strategies that minimise painful experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devise protocols to reduce stress and relieve pain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audit stress relief and pain reduction protocols</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise behaviour associated with neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS)</li> <li>Provide routine nursing care to alleviate the effects of NAS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement strategies that minimise the effects of NAS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide support and guidance for staff involved in the care associated with maternal drug dependency and NAS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop strategies for staff regarding maternal drug dependency and NAS involving multi disciplinary /agency groups</li> <li>Initiate referrals based on need</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use developmental care strategies: including environmental aspects, positioning and handling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adapt strategies to meet the needs of specific babies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the use of developmental care strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiate referrals based on need</li> </ul>

## Respiratory and cardiovascular management

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise normal respiratory/ cardiovascular function</li> <li>Report deviations from normal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intervene to restore/maintain homeostasis according to local guidelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpret trends and evaluate management, including blood gas analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define normal limits</li> <li>Instigate appropriate investigations and management</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observe resuscitation of the baby</li> <li>Initiate basic life support measures</li> <li>Recognise need for and request assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perform basic life support</li> <li>Recognise need for and request assistance</li> <li>Assist with advanced resuscitation and stabilisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team lead in basic life support situation and stabilisation</li> <li>(In some situations perform the role of an advanced resuscitator)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performs and leads advanced resuscitation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safely administer oxygen therapy via the incubator, head box, nasal cannulae and facially, including adequate humidification as prescribed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safely care for the baby requiring mechanical ventilation/continuous positive airways pressure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjust respiratory support according to need within local guidelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiate and manage respiratory support</li> <li>Devise, audit and review guidelines for best practice in partnership with medical staff</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use safe and effective oral and nasal suction techniques</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess the need for suction of respiratory secretions</li> <li>Use safe and effective endotracheal tube/tracheostomy suction techniques</li> <li>Perform chest physiotherapy techniques as prescribed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and evaluate the effectiveness of physiotherapy and suction interventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prescribe chest physiotherapy</li> <li>Initiate referrals based on need</li> <li>Devise, audit and review guidelines for best practice in partnership with medical staff</li> </ul>

## Respiratory and cardiovascular management continued

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist with elective / emergency intubation/extubation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise the need for intubation/extubation</li> <li>Perform extubation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perform intubation</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist with the insertion/removal of chest drainage</li> <li>Provide care for baby with chest drain in situ</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insert, secure and remove chest drainage</li> <li>Devise, audit and review guidelines for best practice in partnership with medical staff</li> </ul>

## Skin, hygiene and infection control management

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement correct hand washing and other infection control measures as per local guidelines</li> <li>Police compliance with infection control guidelines</li> <li>Perform aseptic and non touch techniques</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devise, audit and review guidelines for best practice in partnership with medical staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audit compliance with best practice in relation to infection control measures</li> <li>Research evidence-based practice to support guidelines for infection control</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examine skin and mucous membranes, eyes and cord base for deviations from normal and report</li> <li>Implement treatment for deviations as prescribed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement strategies to prevent iatrogenic damage and potential injury</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prescribe, manage therapies to promote skin integrity</li> <li>Devise, audit and review guidelines for best practice in partnership with medical staff</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use appropriate measures to maintain hygiene and skin integrity, including stoma care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise normal wound healing, wound cleansing techniques, application of dressings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refer as appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devise, audit and review guidelines for best practice in partnership with medical staff</li> <li>Prescribe treatments</li> <li>Refer as appropriate</li> </ul>

## Temperature management

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess neonatal body temperature using appropriate method and site for babies who require special care and high dependency, and report deviations from normal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess neonatal body temperature using appropriate method and site for babies who require intensive care, and report deviations from normal</li> <li>Monitor central and peripheral temperature gap, and report deviations from normal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devise, audit and review nursing guidelines for temperature monitoring</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use appropriate strategies to maintain body temperature within normal limits, including environmental aspects, clothing and equipment for babies who require special care and high dependency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anticipate the baby's risk of temperature deviations</li> <li>Use strategies to prevent temperature deviations for babies who require intensive care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devise, audit and review nursing guidelines for temperature regulation strategies</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use appropriate interventions to correct temperature deviations for babies who require special and high dependency care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use appropriate interventions to correct temperature deviations for babies who require intensive care</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devise, audit and review guidelines for best practice in partnership with medical staff</li> <li>Investigate and treat temperature deviations</li> </ul>

## Bereavement management

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sensitively and empathetically care for the dying baby and his/her parents with support and guidance from senior staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support and guide staff caring for the dying baby</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiate and facilitate sensitive discussion with parents and senior medical staff</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sensitively and empathetically care for the baby who has died and the bereaved parents in accordance with bereavement protocol with support and guidance from senior staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support and guide staff caring for the baby and parents after the baby's death</li> <li>Devise bereavement protocol</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access the unit's network of support available at time of a baby's death</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in support network; seek appropriate guidance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support and guide staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate sensitive discussion with staff</li> </ul>

## Investigations and procedures

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perform routine diagnostic and therapeutic procedures according to protocols and guidelines</li> <li>Implement prescribed management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise the significance of results and seek appropriate management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instigate appropriate management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Request specimens and samples.</li> <li>Prescribe appropriate management according to results</li> <li>Devise, audit and review guidelines for best practice in partnership with medical staff</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist in the care of babies requiring special and high dependency care undergoing non-invasive investigations and procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist in the care of a baby requiring intensive care undergoing non-invasive and invasive investigations and procedures</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perform non-invasive and invasive procedures</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist in the care of babies requiring special and high dependency care undergoing blood sampling</li> <li>Perform capillary blood sampling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist in the care of babies requiring intensive care undergoing blood sampling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perform venepuncture according to local guidelines</li> <li>Perform arterial and central line sampling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insert arterial, percutaneous central venous catheter and central lines</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measure blood pressure using non-invasive techniques, reporting deviations from normal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set up arterial blood pressure transducer</li> <li>Measure arterial blood pressure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpret blood pressure recordings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prescribe appropriate therapy to maintain homeostasis</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Care for baby receiving blood transfusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Care for baby receiving exchange and partial exchange transfusion</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prescribe blood and blood products according to national and local policies</li> <li>Perform exchange and partial exchange transfusion</li> </ul>

## Investigations and procedures continued

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administer drugs via oral, topical, rectal and intramuscular routes, according to professional and local policies</li> <li>• Assess the therapeutic response</li> <li>• Identify side effects and report appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administer drugs via IV route according to professional and local policies</li> <li>• Assess the therapeutic response</li> <li>• Identify side effects and act appropriately within local guidelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review therapeutic response and act accordingly within local guidelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prescribe and administer drugs via all routes, according to national and local policies</li> <li>• Plan, implement and evaluate drug therapies</li> <li>• Evaluate therapeutic response / side effects and act accordingly</li> </ul>

## Equipment

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clean and store equipment necessary for the care of babies requiring special and high dependency care in accordance with local and manufacturer's instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clean and store equipment necessary for the care of babies requiring intensive care in accordance with local and manufacturer's instruction</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set up and test equipment necessary for the care of babies requiring special and high dependency care in accordance with local and manufacturer's instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set up and test equipment necessary for the care of babies requiring intensive care in accordance with local and manufacturer's instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devise guidelines for the setting up and testing of equipment</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Efficiently and safely use equipment necessary for the care of babies requiring special and high dependency care in accordance with local and manufacturer's instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Efficiently and safely use equipment necessary for the care of babies requiring intensive care in accordance with local and manufacturer's instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devise guidelines for the safe use of equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess the need for equipment used in neonatal care and advise appropriately</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpret significance of equipment alarms in babies requiring special and high dependency care and respond appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpret significance of equipment alarms in babies requiring intensive care and respond appropriately</li> <li>Troubleshoot equipment problems</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devise, audit and review guidelines for best practice in partnership with medical staff for alarm parameters</li> </ul>

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The competency framework and core clinical skills were developed by a SNNG working group that included clinical, managerial and neonatal nurse educator staff from across Scotland. The work followed on from the recommendations of the SNNG (2004) report on neonatal nurse staffing and career pathways and was supported by a scholarship from the General Nursing Council for Scotland (Education) Fund 1983. Taking into account the many changes likely to take place in the organization of Scottish neonatal services, and in the salary structure, working practices and continuing professional development of neonatal nurses, the report is designed to offer guidance on neonatal nursing practice and therefore will be widely distributed to individuals and groups in Scotland.

The following recommendations were made:

- that the competency framework for neonatal nursing is adopted by neonatal units as the basis for practice.
- that the competency framework for neonatal nursing is used by Higher Education Institutions when planning academic course development to meet the educational needs of neonatal nurses who wish to progress their career.
- that the core clinical skills in relation to the competency “Responsibility for patient care” are used as a guide by neonatal nurses to assess their own practice and development needs.
- that those responsible for continuing professional development, either in neonatal units, the National Health Service or Higher Education Institutions, use the competency framework and the core clinical skills as a guide.

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## Appendix 1 Working Group Members

### Chairperson

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## Appendix 2

## Neonatal Nurse Career Structure

Levels	Educational Opportunities/Qualifications			Roles/Competencies
			First level registration	
New entrant Novice and Advanced Beginner	Preceptored practice in NNU			Basic skills and knowledge for supervised practice in special and high dependency neonatal care
↓ <b>Neonatal nurse</b> (Qualified in Specialty)  Competent	Consolidation of practice and development of knowledge and skills	Continuing professional development opportunities  (Higher education credits)	“Qualified in specialty” programme attracting Higher education academic credit	Competent in skills and knowledge for qualified neonatal nurse to practice in all areas of neonatal care  Achieves NES (2002) core neonatal nurse competencies
<b>The neonatal nurse may remain at this level, maintaining competence, or choose to develop further</b>				
↓ <b>Experienced neonatal nurse</b>  Proficient	Consolidation of practice and development of enhanced practice skills	Continuing professional development opportunities  (Higher education credits)	Higher education academic credit/degree  (possible professional recording of Specialist Practitioner, possible Specialist Practitioner status)	Skilled neonatal nurse who practices independently within prescribed nursing role  Achieves proposed Scottish competencies for this level  (if appropriate, achieves defined specialist practitioner competencies (UKCC 2001))
<b>The neonatal nurse may remain at this level, maintaining competence, or choose to develop further</b>				
↓ <b>Specific expert roles in neonatal nursing</b>  Expert	Continued development of practice in specific roles	Continuing professional development opportunities  (Higher education credits)	Higher education academic credit/degree: ANNP programme, Masters programmes, PhD programme, Post Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching	Achieves competencies defined in each of the roles  Achieves proposed Scottish competencies for this level

(adapted from SNNG 2004)

## Appendix 3

### Neonatal Nurse Competency Levels and Qualifications

Competency level		
<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Novice and Advanced Beginner</b>	Entry to neonatal nursing
<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Competent</b>	Achieves and consolidates neonatal nursing “qualified in specialty” status
<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	Experienced neonatal nurse and team leader
<b>Level 4</b>	<b>Expert</b>	Functions in an expert role

(Benner 1984)

Qualifications		
<b>Level 1</b>	<b>RM/RN(Child)/RN(Adult)/RSCN</b>	commitment to undertake neonatal nursing “qualified in specialty” education programme to achieve core neonatal nursing competencies
<b>Level 2</b>	<b>RM/RN(Child)/RN(Adult)/RSCN</b>	neonatal nursing qualification, degree (desirable) and/or evidence of continued professional development, expanded skills
<b>Level 3</b>	<b>RM/RN(Child)/RN(Adult)/RSCN</b>	neonatal nursing qualification, degree, leadership programme or commitment to undertake, and evidence of continued professional development, expanded skills/specialist roles
<b>Level 4</b>	<b>RM/RN(Child)/RN(Adult)/RSCN</b>	neonatal nursing qualification, degree, evidence of continued professional development plus expanded skills/expert roles with qualification or relevant master’s degree as Advanced Neonatal Nurse Practitioner or in research, leadership, education, management.

(SNNG 2004)

## Appendix 4

### Mapping of Neonatal Nurse Competencies against National Health Service Knowledge and Skills Framework Dimensions (NHS 2004)

COMPETENCIES	KNOWLEDGE SKILLS FRAMEWORK DIMENSIONS
Communication and Interpersonal Relationship, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data processing and management</li> <li>Production and communicating of information and knowledge</li> <li>Design and production of visual records</li> </ul>	Core Dimension – 1 Information and Knowledge - IK 1 Information and Knowledge - IK 2 Information and Knowledge - IK 2 /3
Personal, Professional and People Development	Core Dimension – 2 Learning and Development - G 1 Development and Innovation – G 3
Health, Safety and Security	Core Dimension – 3
Service Development, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Logistics, facilities and maintenance management</li> <li>Partnership</li> <li>Leadership</li> <li>Management of People</li> <li>Management of physical and /or financial resources</li> </ul>	Core Dimension – 4 Estates and Facilities – EF1 /2 Core Dimension - 4 Core Dimension – 4 People Management – G 6 Financial management - G 4
Quality, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research and development</li> </ul>	Core Dimension – 5 Information and Knowledge – IK 2
Equality, Diversity and Rights	Core Dimension – 6
Responsibility for Patient Care, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment, addressing and improving the health and well being needs of babies, families and carers</li> <li>Bio-medical investigation and reporting</li> <li>Measuring, monitoring and treating physiological conditions through application of specific technologies</li> </ul>	Promotion of Health and Wellbeing and Prevention of Adverse Effects on Health and Wellbeing Dimension – HWB 1-10 Health and Wellbeing – HWB 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 Health and Wellbeing – HWB 8, 9 and 10