



**SOCIETY OF
HEALTH PLAY SPECIALISTS
(SoHPS)
Professional Standards
June 2024**

Professional Code and Standards of practice
and ethical conduct for
Registered Health Play Specialists,
Students, and Apprentices.

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Foreword

The Society of Health Play Specialists' (SoHPS) Professional Standards exist to ensure that our members' practice is fit for purpose and reflects safe and effective professional practice for Registered Health Play Specialists and for, Students, and Apprentices undertaking the training to achieve this role. We will take action if concerns are raised about whether a Registered Health Play Specialist or a Student or Apprentice are fit to practise.

These Professional Standards have been approved by the newly formed Society of Health Play Specialists and replace all previous professional standards and codes of conduct published by Healthcare Play Specialist Education Trust (HPSET) and National Association of Health Play Specialists (NAHPS).

Introduction

These professional standards replace all previous professional standards and professional codes of conduct. They apply to all Registered Health Play Specialists and to, Students and Apprentices undertaking the training to qualify as a Registered Health Play Specialist.

Our registrants work in a range of different settings, which include direct practice in hospitals, community settings, hospices and private health establishments, management, education, and research. They also work with a variety of different people, including patients, clients, carers, and other healthcare professionals.

These Professional Standards represent the national occupational standards for the profession and registrants who must maintain their own professional registration to uphold the reputation of the profession. This is in respect of their knowledge, skills, professional behaviours and their personal character and conduct.

This document sets out the Professional Standards for Registered Health Play Specialists, students and apprentices, the skills, knowledge, understanding, and professional behaviours required to provide and deliver safe and effective practice for the purpose of safeguarding the public. They define what the Health Play Specialist, the student and apprentice must know, understand, and adhere to during the course of their practice.

For their annual re-registration, practitioners are required to sign and confirm that they adhere to these Professional Standards.

The professional standards aim to help Registered Health Play Specialists, students, apprentices, employers, and stakeholders identify good practice in key areas of work. The professional standards give an overview of the expected competencies of individual professionals in delivering quality play services to children/young people and their families/carers throughout their healthcare journey.

The individual standards are not hierarchical and are all equally important for practice.

A note about our expectations of Registered Health Play Specialists, students, and apprentices.

The SoHPS is committed to the registration process of all qualified Health Play Specialists, to promote public trust, safety and confidence evidencing continuing, professional development.

As a Registered Health Play Specialist, student, or apprentice, you are required to read, understand, and adhere to the Professional Standards whilst undertaking your practice.

The Professional Standards should be used in conjunction with your employer's and/or organisation's policies and guidance.

Scope of professional practice

The scope of professional practice refers to the areas of work in which you have the knowledge, skills, and experience to practise lawfully, safely, and effectively, in a way that protects the public and yourself from any danger.

Children's psychology differs from that of adults and changes as they grow and develop. Children and young people experience a different range of diseases and disorders to those commonly seen in adults, including mental health conditions. This includes a higher proportion of rare, often complex, congenital, and inherited disorders.

The SoHPS, in partnership with the University of West London, University Centre Leeds and Solent University currently provide the Foundation Degree in Healthcare Play Specialism & Apprenticeship Standard (level 5). This qualification is recognised as a requirement for professional registration with the SoHPS and a licence to practice as a Registered Health Play Specialist. The Foundation Degree in Healthcare Play Specialism and professional registration together form the recognised qualification for Registered Health Play Specialists working with sick children/young people and their families and carers.

Previously recognised qualifications in the field of hospital play remain valid recognising that the required level of learning and development is maintained through the registration process.

Registered Health Play Specialists are trained to work with children from birth to young adulthood, throughout their healthcare journey. Play is at the centre of a child's life and is accepted as vital to healthy growth, development, and a natural part of childhood. Play enables babies, infants, children, young people, and families to explore and make sense of the world they live in. For babies, infants, children, young people, and families who access health care, play carries greater significance. Registered Health Play Specialists utilise play and recreation as important tools for providing a safe therapeutic and holistic environment for babies,

infants, children, young people, and their families. The Registered Health Play Specialist also has the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of people with special individual needs, into adulthood.

It is recognised that without the provision of supervised play activities, and environments, play opportunities can be limited, leading to restriction or regression in normative development across all age groups (Koukourikos et al 2015).

These professional standards may change in the future.

These Professional Standards will be reviewed periodically to ensure they reflect developments in the profession and changes in practice. We will always publicise any changes to the professional standards by publishing notices on the website: <https://sohps.org.uk> and notify all registrants, students, and apprentices by email.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

The Registered Health Play Specialist, student and apprentice must:

1. Be able to practise safely and effectively within the scope of professional practice.

1:1 Uphold public trust and confidence by maintaining personal and professional standards.

1:2 Know the limits of your practice. Work up to and within the remit of your professional boundaries as a Registered Health Play Specialist, student, or apprentice, in any setting. Be responsible and inform appropriate practitioners in a timely manner if the care or treatment you are expected to provide, or are providing, is not within the scope of your professional boundaries or expertise.

1:3 Refer and delegate to appropriate practitioners wherever you find yourself compromised by a lack of skills or knowledge or to maintain objectivity and professional boundaries.

1:4 Be responsible for ensuring that, when you work alone or are a lone worker you do so with consideration to your personal and others' safety and comply with your employer's policies.



2. Be able to practise within the legal and ethical boundaries of the profession, exercising your professional 'duty of candour'.

2:1 Act in the best interests of children, young people and their families and carers at all times, safeguarding their wellbeing and interests. For any situation involving Safeguarding, Prevent, or where you have concerns, it is your responsibility to disclose and escalate information, through the appropriate channels.

2:2 Be open and honest when something has gone wrong with the services you provide. Where appropriate, you must inform the child, young person, and family, apologising and taking action to put matters right, following your employers' guidelines on reporting incidents.

2:3 Raise concerns immediately when you come across situations that put patients, or public and your safety at risk. Where you have concerns regarding the wellbeing of others and their capacity to act within their role and take rational decisions, you must escalate your concerns to an appropriate level in a timely manner.

2:4 Be responsible for maintaining your registration and continually reflect and improve your practice.

2:5 Keep up to date and adhere to national legislation, local policies, advice, and guidance. Take personal responsibility to meet the Professional Standards.

2:6 Understand the need to respect, show compassion, and uphold the rights, dignity, values, and autonomy of all service-users. Demonstrate this in the way you interact with them.

2:7 Recognise that your relationships with all service-users should be based on mutual respect and trust, maintaining high standards of care, even in situations of personal incompatibility.

2:8 Be able to exercise a professional duty of care. Ensure no act or omission is detrimental to the condition or safety of children and young people in your care or their families and carers. Take all reasonable



steps to reduce the risk of harm to service-users, carers, and colleagues.

2:9 Do not allow someone else to do anything that could put the health or safety of a service-user, carer, or colleague at unacceptable risk. Take necessary action to deal with any concerns.



3. Be able to maintain fitness to practice.

3:1 Understand the need to maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct, both professionally and outside of the workplace. Avoid conflicts of care and interest within and outside the workplace.

3:2 Understand the importance of maintaining your own health and wellbeing. Seek advice from your line manager and occupational health advisor if your physical or mental health may affect your performance, judgement, or put others at risk for any other reason. Make changes to how you practise, or stop practising, if your physical or mental health may affect your performance or judgement or put others at risk.

3:3 Understand the requirements to keep skills and knowledge up to date through appropriate continual professional development (CPD) activities and continuous professional registration. Be responsible for developing and maintaining a profile of professional practice.

3:4 Ensure the profile of professional practice is updated annually (best practice would be to populate this on an ongoing basis) and submit the profile via your personal page of the SoHPS website every three years or when requested to do so.

3:5 All information you provide in the student and apprentice indexation process, registration, and re-registration process must be accurate. Any falsification is a violation of these standards and may revoke your registration.

3:6 Immediately report any breach of the Professional Standards resulting in any disciplinary process by your employer or any police caution to SoHPS.

3:7 Ensure all mandatory training is undertaken according to local policy. Be responsible for ensuring that you have access to a copy of your employer's policies and that you review them periodically for any updates.



4. Be able to practise as an autonomous professional, exercising own professional judgement.

4:1 Be able to assess a professional situation, to determine the nature and severity of a problem, and to act within your professional scope of practice at all times.

4:2 Be able to initiate, continue, modify, and cease play, based on the developmental needs of the child, using normalising interventions, preparation, distraction, and post procedural play techniques.

4:3 Be able to apply a range of creative and imaginative play techniques to improve the patient's experience and wellbeing.

4:4 Be able to work with babies, infants, children, and young people using coping strategies in order to minimise any distress and anxiety during clinical procedures.

4:5 To facilitate choice and control through patient-centred care, using play-based techniques that support positive outcomes. Where appropriate include the child or young person in the decision-making process

4:6 Be able to work in partnership with other professionals to ensure that clinical procedures are planned and managed, enabling a consistent and compassionate approach by the team.

4:7 Be responsible for sharing all your professional interactions, insights, and observations with other identified professionals. Your information contributes to the management and the care provided for a patient. You must keep accurate and contemporaneous records.

4:8 Be able to guide the child and young person's understanding of their condition using a range of play interventions to enable them to learn the sensory and concrete information they need to prepare for any treatment or procedure or to make any necessary lifestyle changes.

4:9 Encourage and help service-users, where appropriate, to maintain their own health and well-being, and support them so they can make informed decisions. Make sure you have the patient's consent.



4:10 Recognise that you are personally responsible for, and must be able to justify, your own actions and decisions.

4:11 Be able to make and receive appropriate referrals.

4:12 Understand the importance of participation in training and supervision.

4:13 Undertake training and education in mentorship, coaching and supervision in order to support service users, health professionals, colleagues, students, and apprentices.

4:14 When working with students and apprentices you must ensure that adequate support and guidance is provided so that safe practice can be monitored and maintained.

4:15 Only delegate work to someone who has the knowledge, skills and experience needed to carry it out safely and effectively. You must continue to provide appropriate supervision and support to those you delegate work to.

4:16 Support members of the multidisciplinary team and other professionals to understand the needs and preferences of children and young people and how play and health services impact on their care.



5. Be aware of the impact of culture, equality, and diversity on practice.

5:1 Understand the requirement to adapt practice to meet the needs of different groups and individuals, promoting inclusive service provision.

5:2 Understand the specific local context of practice, including the socio-cultural diversity of the community.

5:3 Recognise the impact of economic inequality, poverty, and exclusion on and the ability to access services.

6. Be able to practise in a non-discriminatory manner.

6:1 Remain fully compliant with national legislation, local policies, and procedures, relating to culture, equality, diversity, and inclusion to ensure you adhere to the Professional Standards at all times.

6:2 Ensure that you make reasonable adjustments to meet the individual needs of the children, young people, and families you work with.

6:3 Raise awareness of the specific needs of children, young people, and families within the multidisciplinary team, providing training, role modelling and support where needed.

6:4 Support and uphold the rights of colleagues, service users, and visitors in line with national legislation and local policies.

6:5 Be aware of social, environmental, and work-related policies and services and their impact on individual needs within a diverse society.



7. Understand the importance of and be able to maintain confidentiality and data protection according to current legislation.

7:1 Read, understand, and comply with Data Protection requirements. Be responsible for maintaining confidentiality and data protection at work in all forms of communication. This includes the restrictions on sharing of data and personal information using any form of communication or on digital platforms: your use of the spoken word, all forms of documentation and when using information technology.

7.2 Respect confidential information obtained in professional practice. Refrain from disclosing such information in any form or setting unless it is required by law and is in the public interest. Always act in line with your employers policies and guidelines.

7.3 Be responsible for your use of social media and networking sites. You must use all forms of communication appropriately and responsibly, including social media and networking websites. Breaches of confidentiality or propriety can invalidate your professional registration.

7:4 Be able to recognise and respond appropriately to situations where it is necessary to share information to safeguard babies, infants, children, young people, and their families/carers or the wider public. Be responsible for disclosing and escalating information for any situation involving safeguarding, Prevent or where you have concerns.



8. Be able to communicate effectively.

8:1 Be able to demonstrate effective and appropriate verbal and non-verbal skills in communicating information, advice, instruction and professional opinion to all service-users, colleagues, and others.

8:2 Listen to service-users, their families and carers and take account of their needs and wishes. Give children, young people and their families and carers the information they want or need, in a way they can understand.

8:3 Understand how communication skills affect assessment and engagement of all service-users, and how the methods of communication should be modified to address and take account of factors such as age, capacity, learning ability, physical ability, and English as an additional language.

8:4 Be able to select, use and move between, appropriate forms of verbal and non-verbal communication with service-users and others.

8:5 Be aware of the characteristics and consequences of verbal and non-verbal communication and how these can be affected by factors such as age, culture, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status and spiritual or religious beliefs.

8:6 Understand the need to assist the communication of service-users, such as the use of an appropriate interpreter, assistive technology, and other support systems.

8:7 Recognise and understand where there is a need to use interpersonal skills to encourage the active participation of service-users.

9. Be able to work appropriately with others.

9:1 Be able to work in partnership with service-users, other professionals, and organisations.

9:2 Respect children, young people and their families, other professionals, and the public. Be polite and considerate to ensure care is delivered effectively, working in partnership by sharing your skills, knowledge, and expertise where appropriate.

9:3 Build and sustain professional relationships as both an independent practitioner and collaboratively as a member of a team.

9:4 Understand the need to engage service-users in planning and evaluating therapeutic play techniques to support treatments and interventions to meet their needs and goals.

9:5 Be able to contribute effectively to work undertaken as part of a professional team.

9:6 Understand the need to work collaboratively with those who provide services in and across different sectors. Work in a collaborative and cooperative manner with other professionals, respecting and recognising their expertise and contributions.

9:7 Understand the value of enabling and empowering all service-users with the aim of enhancing their access to all available services and opportunities.



10. Be able to maintain records appropriately.

10:1 Be able to keep accurate, timely, contemporaneous, comprehensive, and comprehensible records in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols, and guidelines.

10:2 Recognise the need to manage records and all other information in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols, and guidelines.

11. Be able to reflect on and review practice.

11:1 Understand the value of reflection on practice and the need to record the outcome of such reflection.

11:2 Recognise the value of supervision and other methods of reviewing, reflecting on and evaluating practice.

11:3 Be able to recognise the potential of play in new and emerging areas of practice.



12. Be able to assure the quality of Registered Health Play Specialist practice(s).

12:1 Be able to engage in evidence-based practice, evaluate practice systematically and participate in audit procedures.

12:2 Be able to gather information, including qualitative and quantitative data, that helps to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention.

12:3 Be aware of the role of audit and review in quality management, including quality control, quality assurance and the use of appropriate outcome measures.

12:4 Be able to maintain an effective audit trail and work towards continual improvement.

12:5 Be aware of, and be able to participate in, quality assurance programs where appropriate.

12:6 Be able to evaluate play plans using recognised outcome measures and revise the plans as necessary.



13. Understand and apply the key concepts of the knowledge base relevant to the profession.

13:1 Understand and be able to apply the theoretical concepts underpinning play, therapeutic play and the development of children and young people.

13:2 Understand and analyse general and therapeutic play and apply this knowledge and information to inform the development of care, developmental and therapeutic play plans for the individual child and young person.

13:3 Create and maintain an age and developmentally appropriate and safe environment for service-users, where they can access a range of normalising, developmental and therapeutic play activities,

13:4 Understand the need to identify and assess physical, psychological, cultural, and environmental needs and challenges of service-users.

13:5 Recognise the value of the diversity and complexity of individual behaviour through the knowledge and understanding of different physical, psychological, environmental, social, emotional, and spiritual perspectives.

13:6 Understand the concept of leadership and its application to practice.

13:7 Recognise and utilise the role of other professionals.



14. Be able to draw on appropriate knowledge and skills to inform practice.

14:1 Be able to change practice as required to take account of new developments or changing contexts.

14:2 Be able to appropriately conduct general and therapeutic play to support procedures, treatments, therapy, or other actions safely and effectively.

14:3 Be able to undertake and record a thorough, sensitive, and detailed assessment.

14:4 Be able to gather and use appropriate information.

14:5 Be able to develop or modify play activities for all service-users, to build on their abilities and enhance their experience.

14:6 Be able to use research, apply reasoning, and problem-solving skills to determine appropriate action to inform own practice.

14:7 Know how to meet the social, psychological, and physical health-based play needs of service-users across a range of practice areas.

14:8 Be able to use information and communication technologies appropriate to practice.

14:9 Be able to write and deliver appropriate play plans including specific and timely reviews.

14:10 Understand the need to agree goals and priorities for general and therapeutic play in partnership with other professionals.



14:11 Be able to select appropriate play resources and provide a full range of general and therapeutic play activities that reflect the particular needs of service-users.

14:12 Be able to analyse, develop or modify play techniques and environments to meet the needs of service-users.

15. Understand the need to establish and maintain a safe practice environment.

15:1 Understand the need to maintain the safety of all service-users and those involved in their play.

15:2 Be aware of health and safety legislation, and any relevant safety policies and procedures enforced in the workplace, such as incident reporting, and be able to act in accordance with these.

15:3 Be able to work safely, including being able to select appropriate hazard control and risk management, reduction, or elimination techniques in a safe manner, and in accordance with health and safety legislation.

15:4 Be able to select appropriate personal protective equipment and use it correctly.

15:5 Be able to establish safe environments for play, which minimise risks to service-users, those working with them, and others, including infection control.

15:6 To be able to purchase and maintain and provide play resources that comply with current Health and Safety legislation.

15:7 Know and be able to apply appropriate moving and handling techniques.



Documents that have informed and influenced the Professional Standards.

Data protection (GDPR) - 'Data protection is the fair and proper use of information about people. It's part of the fundamental right to privacy – but on a more practical level, it's really about building trust between people and organisations.' (Information Commissioner's Office 2019)

Duty of candour - 'The professional duty of candour is about openness and honesty when things go wrong. "Every healthcare professional must be open and honest with patients when something goes wrong with their treatment or care which causes, or has the potential to cause, harm or distress'. Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care 2019, Section 1.1)

Equality - 'Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents. 'It is also the belief that no one should have poorer life chances because of the way they were born, where they come from, what they believe, or whether they have a disability.

The Equality Act 2010 identifies the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. (Great Britain. Parliament 2010, chapter 1)



Fitness to Practice - Being 'fit to practice' requires a registered Health Play Specialist to have the knowledge, skills, health, and character to do their job safely and effectively.

Fitness to Practice is not a punitive process: its aim is to support practitioners to gain the knowledge, skills, experience, and insight required to meet registration standards. The rationale for a Fitness to Practice policy and process is the protection of the public and of registered practitioners. SoHPS website: <https://sohps.org.uk>.

Human Rights - 'Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person in the world, from birth until death. They apply regardless of where you are from, what you believe or how you choose to live your life. They can never be taken away, although they can sometimes be restricted – for example if a person breaks the law, or in the interests of national security'. 'These basic rights are based on shared values like dignity, fairness, equality, respect, and independence. These values are defined and protected by law'. 'In Britain our human rights are protected by the Human Rights Act 1998.' (Equality and Human Rights Commission 2019)

Mental Capacity - 'Mental capacity' means being able to make your own decisions. 'Someone lacking capacity – because of an illness or disability such as a mental health problem, dementia or a learning disability – cannot do one or more of the following four things: • Understand information given to them about a particular decision • Retain that information long enough to be able to make the decision • Weigh up the information available to make the decision • Communicate their decision.' (Mental Health Foundation 2019)

Mental capacity, or a lack thereof, may be time-limited and context specific. Consider that it may be possible to explain risks and benefits by an alternative means or with the assistance of family members who have experience of communicating with the individual concerned.

Play - The importance of play during hospitalization of children. Koukourikos, K., Tzeha, L., Pantelidou, P. and Tsaloglidou A. (2015), *Mater Sociomed*, 27(6):438-41. doi: 10.5455/msm.2015.27.438-441.

Professional Standards – The standards reflect the minimum standard that can be expected of a given professional based on fitness to practice standards that protect the public. (The standards for NHS Scotland)

Scope of Practice – HCPC standards identify scope of practice – You must keep within your scope of practice by only practising in the areas you have appropriate knowledge, skills, and experience for (3.1)

You must refer a service user to another practitioner if the care, treatment, or other services they need are beyond your scope of practice (3.2). (HCPC Sections 3.1 and 3.2)

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https://www.starlight.org.uk/assets/documents/Starlight_ImpactOfPlay_Report_Oct20.pdf. (Accessed 27th October 2023)

A Common Purpose: Report on the Taskforce on children's play in healthcare. Available at:
https://www.starlight.org.uk/assets/documents/Starlight-Taskforce-Report_Sept-2023.pdf (Accessed 27th October 2023)

UNICEF

United Nations Rights of the Child. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/unicef-convention-rights-child-uncrc.pdf> (Accessed 9th October 2023)

Article 12

States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child’.

Article 31

1. States ‘Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts’.

2. States ‘Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity’.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child General comment no. 17 Article 31: Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/778539?ln=en>. (Accessed 9th October 2023)

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