

# Chartered Society of Physiotherapy:

## Policy briefing statement on advanced practice



### Terminology

The terms advanced practice and advanced clinical practice differ across the four UK countries. Advanced practice is commonly used in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and advanced clinical practice is used in England. Both terms, often used interchangeably describe a level of practice rather than a role. For the purpose of this paper the term advanced practice\* will be used to denote a level of practice that registered healthcare professionals from a range of professional backgrounds and areas can achieve by fully meeting the four pillars of practice: clinical, leadership, education and research.

### Purpose of this briefing statement

The purpose of this statement is to inform members and CSP staff as they engage with, and influence, the advanced practice agenda nationally and locally and develop advanced practice within the profession. It applies to all parts of the United Kingdom and Crown Dependencies (referred to as the UK throughout the document).

### Introduction

Across the UK, policy makers are seeking to encourage the development and recognition of a non-medical, multi-professional advanced practice workforce. As a result, multiple national allied healthcare professions (AHP) frameworks for advanced practice have been developed.

Further work in this area is needed to ensure definitions, standards and recognition of levels of practice are consistent across country boundaries. Actions to achieve this are set out below.

#### **1. The CSP supports an expansion in the number of physiotherapists at advanced practice level**

The numbers of physiotherapists working at advanced practice level, and their proportion within the physiotherapy profession as a whole, will need to grow significantly in the next 10 years.

This is necessary to meet population needs and to deliver services in safe and effective ways, and enable physiotherapy's value and impact to be seen across the health and social care system.

Growing numbers of physiotherapists are already using their experience and comprehensive knowledge and skills to move into existing advanced practice roles. This trend needs to be supported and facilitated to address current workforce pressures.

Achieving growth in numbers of physiotherapists working at advanced practice level, relies on the growth of the physiotherapy workforce at all levels of practice.

- **Actions for policy-makers: set targets and monitor growth of physiotherapists in advanced practice. Establish baseline figures of physiotherapy workforce and use available levers to increase the supply of registered physiotherapists.**
- **Action for employers: Review existing advanced practice roles and ensure that they are open to all professionals that have the right capabilities; increase physiotherapy staffing numbers.**

## **2. The CSP is calling for more opportunities for physiotherapists to develop advanced practice level capabilities**

There should be multiple and flexible routes through which individuals can develop capabilities and progress through career levels. These include work-based learning, access to high-quality courses and modules, along with higher-level apprenticeship programmes and traditional master's degree programmes.

A robust postgraduate educational framework is essential to enable and guide physiotherapists to develop from a new graduate level towards advanced practice level.

- **Actions for employers: encourage physiotherapists to develop advanced practice capabilities and actively support quality workplace learning and advanced practice apprenticeships. Influence HEIs to ensure advanced practice postgraduate provision is fit for development of AHP and specialty advanced practice.**
- **Actions for local workforce planners and policy makers: increase opportunities for physiotherapists to develop advanced practice capabilities through deployment of continuing professional development (CPD) budgets and job planning.**
- **Actions for the Council of Deans for health and higher education institutes: Increase opportunities for AHP to gain advanced practice level capabilities for their roles via flexible and appropriate routes.**
- **Actions for the CSP: To ensure a career framework for Physiotherapists provides a clear route towards advanced practice level.**

## **3. The CSP proposes a shared definition and consistency of capability frameworks for different areas of advanced practice**

The CSP believes consistent and comparable advanced practice capability frameworks across the countries are essential for quality patient care and safety. Employers and the public need this to be assured that clinicians have the capability required to perform at advanced practice level.

Clinicians with advanced practice level capabilities need to be enabled to move around the system from one post to another, with a common understanding of capability requirements and the expectations upon them.

Currently there are multiple national frameworks to describe the level and range of capabilities needed in the workplace. These need to be aligned.

**Action for policy makers across the UK: work with professional bodies to adopt a single shared definition, an accepted means for recognition of advanced practice capabilities and consistency across national advanced practice frameworks**

#### **4. The CSP supports the use of title advanced practice physiotherapist**

Many new 'titles' are emerging as the advanced practice agenda progresses, and this can add to the confusion for employers and the public.

For advanced practice in physiotherapy, the CSP proposes the title '*advanced practice physiotherapist*'. In the CSPs view this supports patient safety and accountability to the public. At the same time, it recognises the level of capability, promotes the value that physiotherapists contribute.

- **Action for CSP members: if you are in an advanced practice role, use the title 'advanced practice physiotherapist'**

#### **5. The CSP opposes the separate regulation of non-medical practitioners at advanced practice level.**

There has been a suggestion by some other sectors that advanced level practitioners across professions should be regulated separately from other registrants of the same profession.

The CSP opposes this, for the following reasons:

- Separate regulation is not necessary for patient safety
- Registered physiotherapists practicing at advanced practice level are still physiotherapists.
- Separate regulation would erode professional identity and create unhelpful ambiguity for patients, the public, employers and other professions and practitioners. Ultimately it would undermine what physiotherapy has to offer as a profession.
- It would be inappropriate and confusing for advanced level practitioners to be subject to two sets of regulatory requirements (relating to their 'root' profession and level of practice).
- Dual regulation would impose unacceptably high costs of regulation on practitioners, and create disincentives to professional development, as well as increasing costs to the system of regulation.

- **Action for policy makers: work with existing regulators to develop a common approach to the regulation of advanced level practitioners across professions and rule out requiring advanced practice level practitioners to be regulated twice.**

\*advanced practice will be used which includes advanced clinical practice, advanced clinical practitioners, advanced practice physiotherapy, and advanced physiotherapists.