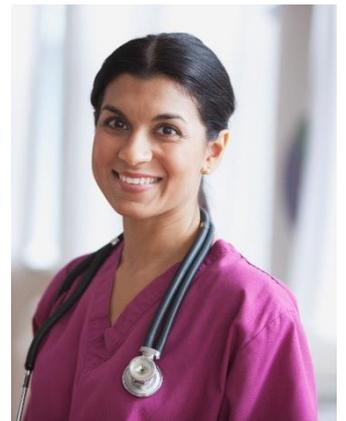




Who's Who at the Local Medical Centre?



The primary healthcare system in England is ever changing. The primary healthcare system acts as the 'front door' to the NHS and includes community pharmacies, dental, optometry services and **local medical centres (which may also be known as local medical practices, general practices or general surgeries)**. The ongoing rise in demand for primary care services, especially local medical centres, has led to the Government and NHS England introducing new healthcare professional roles into this setting. These new roles aim to improve patient experience and ensure they are getting the best quality care from the most appropriate healthcare professional. This may not necessarily be a GP/Doctor.

Not all local medical centres will employ all these different professionals, but patients may encounter them as they access health services.

This document describes these healthcare roles and also explains the difference between primary, secondary and acute care services (Appendix 2).

This document will be reviewed regularly to ensure all the roles are up to date.

The roles are not listed in any particular order.

Who's Who at the Local Medical Centre?

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Medical Staff

Doctors/GPs

A **General Practitioner**, also known as a **GP** or generalist, is a physician who does not specialise in one particular area of medicine. GPs provide routine health care (e.g. physical examinations and immunisations) and assess and treat many different conditions, including illnesses and injuries.

What does a GP do?

- Consults with patients on the telephone, online and face to face at the local medical centre
- Performs physical examinations
- Diagnoses and treats illnesses/ailments
- Performs minor surgery, such as removal of skin tags
- Provides health education, such as how to manage a health condition or make healthier lifestyle choices
- Helps with practice management and administration
- Liaises with other healthcare professionals and/or hospitals

Physician Associate

A **Physician Associate** is a healthcare professional who has completed an undergraduate degree in the health/life science field and an intensive two-year postgraduate medical training degree. They support doctors in the diagnosis and management of patients.

What does a Physician Associate do?

- Takes medical histories from patients
- Performs physical examinations
- Diagnoses illnesses
- Sees patients with long-term chronic conditions
- Performs diagnostic and therapeutic procedures
- Analyses test results
- Develops management plans
- Promotes health promotion and disease prevention advice for patients

A physician associate cannot prescribe medication or request CT scans.

Advanced Nurse Practitioner/Nurse Practitioner

An **Advanced Nurse Practitioner** also known as a **Nurse Practitioner** is educated at a master's level in clinical practice, has been assessed and is competent in practice using their expert clinical knowledge and skills. They can make decisions in relation to assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of a patient without the need to consult a doctor.

What does an Advanced Nurse Practitioner/Nurse Practitioner do?

- Prescribes medication
- Examines patients
- Diagnoses illnesses
- Provides treatment
- Manages most common and many chronic illnesses
- Orders and interprets diagnostic tests
- Provides counselling and education
- Performs some invasive treatment procedures

Practice Nurse

A **Practice Nurse** can provide a range of routine services. Most local medical centres will have at least one **Practice Nurse**.

What does a Practice Nurse do?

- Performs phone or in person consultations
- Treats small injuries
- Performs health screening, such as smear tests
- Interprets and answers queries on blood tests or smear test results
- Changes surgical dressings
- Performs blood pressure checks
- Offers immunisations and travel vaccinations
- Provides family planning advice
- Provides information and support to those who wish to stop smoking

In addition to this, practice nurses may run their own clinics on a specialised condition such as diabetes, high blood pressure or asthma.

Diabetes Specialist Nurse

A **Diabetes Specialist Nurse (DSN)** also known as a **Community Diabetes Specialist Nurse**, is a Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) registered nurse, who has undertaken additional training in diabetes management. They work with individuals with all types of diabetes and at every stage of the disease. Their primary goal is to help people manage diabetes.

What does a Diabetes Specialist Nurse do?

- Helps patients monitor their blood sugar, administer insulin and control spikes in blood sugar levels
- Prevents, helps monitor and manage complications
- Performs physical examinations and routine screening
- Identifies symptoms and complications
- Provides information on preparing a nutrition plan, exercise routines and how to make healthy lifestyle choices
- Refers individuals to additional specialist support

There may also be other types of specialist nurses in a local medical centre. These nurses are on the NMC register but have undertaken additional specialist training in areas such as mental health, community nursing or public health.

Nursing Associate

A **Nursing Associate** has completed a level 5 foundation degree and a Nursing Associate Apprenticeship programme. A **Nursing Associate** works with registered nurses and healthcare support workers such as social prescribers, care navigators/coordinators and health visitors to deliver care for the patient and the public.

What does a Nursing Associate do?

- Undertakes clinical tasks such as the taking of blood samples, administering intra-veinous injections and ECGs
- Supports individuals and their families and carers when faced with unwelcome news and life-changing diagnoses
- Performs and records clinical observations such as blood pressure, temperature, respirations and pulse
- Assists with performing routine screening
- Discusses and shares information regarding a patient's condition with other members of the team

Paramedic

A **Paramedic**, sometimes called a **Community Paramedic or Emergency Care Practitioner (ECP)**, is trained in nursing and advanced emergency care. Their background in pre-hospital care means they are used to assessing individuals with a variety of health conditions from coughs or minor injuries to more serious conditions like heart attacks or asthma.

What does a Paramedic do?

- Works alongside GPs to help manage routine or urgent appointments
- Assesses patients over the phone, in person at the local medical centre or via home visits
- Diagnoses and treats a range of health conditions
- Works with patients in the community who have long-term health conditions
- Is involved in anticipatory care planning
- Advises patients on general healthcare and promotes self-management
- Performs specialist health checks and reviews
- Performs and interprets ECGs
- Undertakes investigatory procedures and performs blood tests
- Prescribes medication, if they are qualified to do so and, if not, consults a doctor to do so

Specialist Teams

A **Specialist Team** may include nurses, dermatologists, a GP at the local medical centres practice, or one from a neighbouring centre who can perform minor operations. They have extra qualifications and training to perform such operations.

What does a Specialist Team do?

- Removes moles, cysts, lipoma, keratosis, skin tags and chalazion (eyelid cyst)
- Administers injections
- Draws fluid from a vessel or cavity (aspiration)
- Makes incisions to drain abscesses or excisions of fat or cysts
- Takes biopsies

Physiotherapist (First Contact Physiotherapist)

A **Physiotherapist (may be referred to as a First Contact Physiotherapist)** helps to restore movement and function when an individual has been affected by injury, illness, or disability. They can also help reduce the risk of injury or illness in the future.

What does a Physiotherapist do?

- Performs and recommends exercises to improve strength in specific areas of the body, general health, and mobility
- Provides education and advice about a range of issues including posture and correct lifting and carrying to prevent injury
- Provides manual therapy, where the physiotherapist uses their hands to help relieve pain, stiffness and promote better movement of the body
- Undertakes home visits
- Makes referrals for further physiotherapy or other appropriate services such as podiatry

Mental Health Practitioner

A **Mental Health Practitioner** offers urgent mental health appointments and provides initial and long-term support to people with mental health conditions. They can deliver counselling services to adults who have been referred by their GP. They focus on common mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression, especially when these occur alongside other long-term physical conditions such as diabetes or heart problems. They can conduct assessments and make referrals to other services for extra support.

A Healthcare Assistant

A **Healthcare Assistant (HCA)** works under the guidance of other healthcare professionals such as a doctor or nurse. **HCAs** support the delivery of treatment, preventative care, provide health promotion and patient education.

What does a Healthcare Assistant do?

- Performs health checks
- Takes temperature, blood pressure, pulse, respiration, and weight measurements
- Communicates with patients and carers
- Performs an ECG (if additional training has been completed)
- Provides information around healthy lifestyles

Pharmacist/Clinical Pharmacist

A **Pharmacist** may work in a pharmacy or in a local medical centre, with the latter being referred to as a **Clinical Pharmacist**. **Pharmacists** have a wide knowledge of all matters in relation to medications, from their uses to side effects.

What does a Pharmacist do?

- Helps manage long-term conditions including asthma, type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure
- Improves access to health checks
- Provides support and advice for those on multiple medications
- Prepares medications by reviewing and interpreting clinicians' orders and detecting therapeutic incompatibilities
- Dispenses prescriptions by compounding, packaging and labelling medications
- Controls medications by monitoring drug therapies and advising interventions
- Reviews prescriptions
- Evaluates suitability of medication
- Advises on drug interactions including side effects

Dispenser

A **Dispenser**, also known as a pharmacy assistant or advisor, works with the pharmacist.

What does a Dispenser do?

- Deals with queries from patients regarding their prescriptions
- Provides information on potential side effects and how best to take prescribed medication
- Consults patients' records and discusses with GPs about appropriateness and requests for medication
- Dispenses and checks prescriptions
- Deals with repeat prescriptions
- Checks patient exemption statements
- Orders, checks, and stores stock
- Handles over-the counter sales
- Liaises with patients face to face

Pharmacy Technician

A **Pharmacy Technician** works alongside pharmacists and dispensers. A **Pharmacy Technician** has undertaken additional training to that of a dispenser and is registered with the General Pharmaceutical Council. This further training allows them to perform many additional roles to that of a dispenser including providing patient counselling, medication reviews, accredited checking and assembles medication for prescriptions.

Occupational Therapist

An **Occupational Therapist** helps people overcome difficulties caused by physical or mental illness, disability, accidents or ageing. They do this by considering the impact of the physical, psychological, social and environmental needs of a patient.

What does an Occupational Therapist do?

- Provides physical rehabilitation
- Advises on the use of assistive equipment or technology to make life easier for those with disabilities or other difficulties
- Assists with self-care in children and young people such as helping them with eating, using the toilet and going to school or nursery
- Supports care management
- Promotes self-care, the uptake of leisure or everyday activities to improve wellbeing
- Supports patients to manage permanent physical disabilities
- Helps people with learning disabilities to live independently
- Suggests ways to adapt an office so that an employee injured in an accident can return to work
- Keeps notes about clients' progress
- Advises and supports clients, their families and carers

Care Navigator/Coordinator

Care Navigators/Coordinators provide a proactive link between different parts of the care system. A **Care Navigator/Coordinator** could be a receptionist or clerical worker at a local medical centre or an external worker. They ensure individuals get the right support at the right time to manage their range of needs. They provide a free service and aim to identify any gaps in support and link individuals to other helpful services. To do this, care navigators work closely with GPs, NHS, mental health and social services (local councils), charities, voluntary groups, and housing associations.

What does a Care Navigator/Coordinator do?

- Helps arrange personal care, mealtimes, and shopping
- Identifies and plans the support for an individual's needs
- Provides free, impartial advice and support
- Uses specific local knowledge to find services which meet individuals' needs
- Informs individuals of activities, events, and leisure opportunities to reduce social isolation
- Advises individuals on financial matters relating to care
- Helps individuals manage their money and benefits
- Supports individuals to live safely within their own home
- Helps adapt an individual's home to their needs
- Assists with transport; for example, blue badges, taxi card or hospital transport
- Helps with filling in forms and going through the assessment process

Social Prescriber

A **Social Prescriber** is someone who links people to sources of support within the community. Their role is very similar to that of a care navigator and the two terms may be used interchangeably depending on geographical location. However, a **Social Prescriber**, unlike a care navigator, is not a receptionist or a member of the clerical staff at a local medical centre; they are independent, external individuals.

A **Social Prescriber** recognises that an individual's health and wellbeing is determined by social, economic and environmental factors and seeks to address people's needs by taking these factors into consideration.

What does a Social Prescriber do?

- Refers patients to non-clinical services provided by the voluntary and community sector
- Reduces health and wellbeing inequalities
- Reduces isolation and raises self-worth
- Equips people for self-care
- Connects individuals with volunteering, art groups, befriending services, healthy eating advice and sports

Health and Wellbeing Coach

A **Health and Wellbeing Coach (HWBC)** works with patients to help them achieve personal fitness and lifestyle goals. They work closely with care navigators/coordinators and social prescribers to help increase levels of physical activity, support healthier lifestyles, and implement long-term behaviour change.

What does a Health and Wellbeing Coach do?

- Offers one to one or group sessions with patients to support their health and wellbeing needs
- Provides information and support in relation to: stress, sleep, mindfulness, exercise, confidence, independence, food and nutrition
- Defines achievable and realistic goals, develops resources and confidence to allow patients to manage their health and wellbeing
- Prescribes tailored physical activity and healthy living advice to help patients manage better and reduce the impact of existing long-term conditions
- Motivates patients through education and plans which are easily integrated into their daily routines
- Implements preventive interventions aimed at improving physical and mental wellbeing to reduce the risk of developing long-term conditions

Health Visitor

Upon the birth of their baby, a family will be allocated a named **Health Visitor**. A **Health Visitor** is an NMC registered nurse who has undertaken additional training in community public health nursing. The role of a **Health Visitor** is to promote healthy lifestyles, prevent illness, and deliver the Healthy Child Programme for those under five years of age. Within this programme they conduct health reviews and child health clinics and offer parenting, nutrition and breastfeeding support.

What does a Health Visitor do?

- Provides support throughout baby or child growth and development
- Helps manage conditions, allergies, and infections
- Provides support with teething, bottle feeding and weaning
- Provides support for postnatal depression
- Spots and helps manage behaviour issues; for example sleeping, eating, potty training and tantrums
- Supports family planning, family health, and relationships
- Identifies more serious health concerns
- Promotes individual and community health and development

They are also involved in safeguarding and child protection, child and adolescent mental health, emotional wellbeing and preventing/detecting domestic abuse.

The support of a **health visitor** can be accessed through home visits, clinics or at a local medical centre.

Community Midwife

A **Community Midwife** provides care during pregnancy and then to new-born babies and their families outside of the hospital. They work in partnership with other community midwives, hospitals, GPs, health visitors and social workers. Their support can either be accessed at home or at a clinic.

What does a Community Midwife do?

- Provides antenatal care to expectant mothers to ensure the wellbeing of mother and baby
- Assists during home births
- Offers postnatal support including breast and infant feedings (regardless of where the baby was born)

Their support is provided for up to 14 days after the birth of a baby; after this period, care is transferred to a health visitor.

Dietician

A **Dietician** is a regulated nutrition healthcare professional. Dieticians are able to assess, diagnose and use the latest science to treat dietary and nutritional problems. They provide practical and personalised advice to patients. Unlike nutritionists, dieticians are regulated by law, accountable to the Health & Care Professionals Council and have a minimum of a bachelor's degree or related higher degree in dietetics.

What does a Dietician do?

- Considers all the facts associated with diet such as relationship with food and wider health such as age, gender physical and mental health, environment, and physical activity
- Helps manage food allergies, intolerances, digestive problems and coeliac disease
- Understands how any existing medical conditions or medicines interact with diet
- Provides support on how to manage diet to improve symptoms of conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure
- Provides support to promote weight gain or lose in a safe and sensible way
- Provides support with feeding babies or children
- Helps motivate a healthier relationship with food
- Works in both the local medical centre and in the community
- Provides both individual and wider public health support

Chiropodist/Podiatrist

A **Chiropodist/Podiatrist** is healthcare professionals who has been trained to treat abnormal conditions of the feet and lower limbs. They help prevent and correct deformity, keep people mobile and active, relieve pain and treat infections.

What does a Chiropodist/Podiatrist do?

- Provides advice on how to look after your feet and what type of shoes to wear
- Helps alleviate sports injuries
- Treats a range of day-to-day foot problems including:
 - Toenail problems such as thickened toenails, fungal nails infections or ingrown toenails
 - Corns and calluses
 - Verrucas
 - Athlete's foot
 - Smelly feet
 - Dry and crackled heels
 - Flat feet
 - Bunions
 - Heel pain
 - Aging feet
 - Blisters
 - Gout

Non-Medical Staff

Practice Manager

A **Practice Manager** is the individual responsible for overseeing the administrative and business functions of a local medical centre. Should an individual wish to pay a compliment or make a complaint about the centre, this is the individual to contact.

What does a Practice Manager do?

- Oversees daily operations
- Recruits, trains, and supervises non-medical staff
- Deals with compliments and complaints
- Enforces industry health and safety regulations
- Liaises with local health organisations; for example, clinical commissioning groups
- Monitors systems and security

Business Manager

This term in some local medical centres is used interchangeably with practice manager. However, at some centres the role of practice manager and **Business Manager** are two separate roles. The role of a business manager is very similar to that of a practice manager but may more specifically focus on developing strategy, monitoring and evaluating performance against internal and external targets, and dealing with financial issues.

Receptionist

A **Receptionist** is the first line of patient contact. They work in a team with clerks, health record staff and other administrative staff. When making an appointment, they may ask about the nature of the health problem to ensure the appointment is with the most appropriate clinician.

What does a Receptionist do?

- Books patients in for appointments with the most appropriate member of the clinical team
- Answers patient queries or signposts them to a member of staff who can help
- Provides information on how to register with the local medical centre
- Enters patients' details onto the IT systems
- Directs patients where to go within the centre
- Manages patient flow
- Ensures clinical staff receive accurate and up to date medical records
- Ensures repeat prescriptions are generated accurately and efficiently
- Receives specimens from patients
- Explains practice arrangements and requirements to those who are newly or temporarily registered with the centre

The receptionists are part of the **Administration Team** which also comprises of: **Medical Secretaries, Clerks, Clinical and Data Administrators.**

What does the Administration Team do?

- Deals with test results, patient paper records, letters and reports coming into the local medical centre
- Manages the waiting list of patients
- Types letters and clinical reports
- Updates patient records and deals with confidential information

- Handles questions from patients and staff
- Organises a GP's diary, books consulting rooms and meetings
- Creates and updates databases

Patient Participation Groups

A **Patient Participation Group (PPG)** is a voluntary group comprising of staff, patients, and carers who wish to be involved in developing their local health services. The group allows for patients and staff to work together to share ideas on how to improve services offered at the centre and connect with other community services. All local medical centres are contractually obliged to have a **PPG**. The overall aim of a **PPG** is to help empower patients to take more responsibility for their health.

What does a PPG do?

- Improves patient experience of attending the local medical centre
- Helps prioritise services
- Provides a patient's view of the quality of the services provided
- Acts as a channel to communicate with patients; for example, by sharing information relating to how changes in the NHS will impact service provision
- Helps patients understand more about their medical conditions
- Empowers patients to take control of their health
- Promotes healthier lifestyles and provides tangible support for this
- Develops self-help groups to meet the needs of fellow patients such as helping with transport and bereavement support

Appendix 1 – Quick Look Comparison Table

Whilst a health professional may offer a service, it does not necessarily mean they are the best person to help you with an issue. For example, whilst many different professionals could offer you advice on healthy lifestyle choices, the best person to discuss this with would be a Social Prescriber and/or Care Navigator/Coordinator, as this is one of their main areas of expertise. Similarly, a pharmacist would be the most appropriate person to offer information and advice to those on multiple medications.

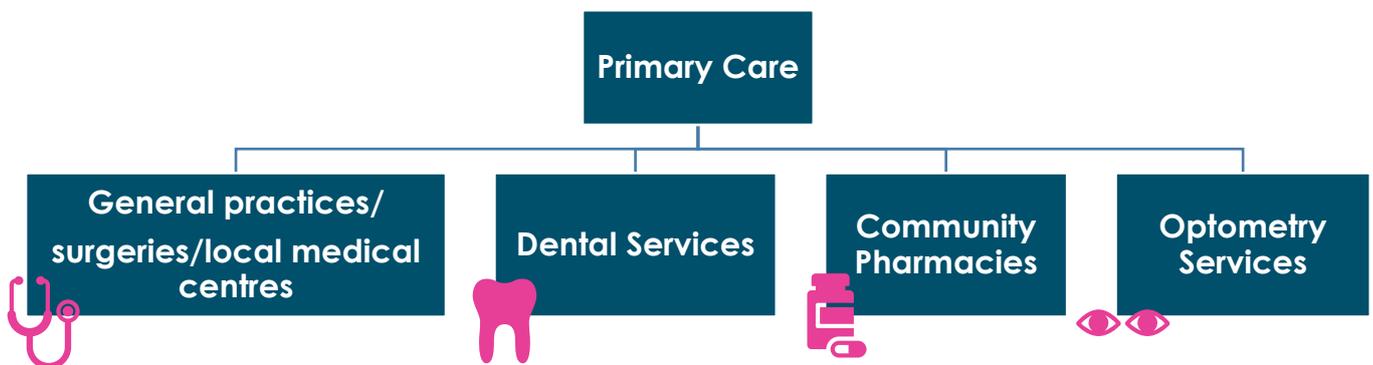
Issue	Doctor/ GP	Physicians Associate	Advanced Nurse Practitioner	Practice Nurse	Nursing Associate	Paramedic	Pharmacist	Social Prescriber	Care Navigator /Coordinator
Diagnose and treat a range of health conditions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
Provide advice for minor illnesses	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Provide support for long-term health conditions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Request and interpret diagnostic tests	✓	*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Perform clinical observations such as blood pressure checks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Perform physical examinations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
Performs routine screening or immunisations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Prescribe medication	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	▲	■	✗	✗
Answer questions around prescriptions and medication	✓	✗	✓	○	✗	▲	✓	✗	✗
Provides support and advice to those on multiple medications	✓	✗	✓	○	✗	▲	✓	✗	✗
Provides information and support on how to live a healthy lifestyle	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Refer patient to community and voluntary services to meet an individual's needs	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	●	✓	✓

- * Physicians Associates cannot request tests which involve ionising radiation e.g., a CT scan
- Depends on the knowledge of the individual – some may be able to offer advice surrounding medications, others may not
- ▲ Some paramedics may be able to prescribe medication and have in depth knowledge about medications but only if they have completed additional training
- Pharmacists can offer information and advice on over-the-counter medications
- Pharmacists can connect you to a social prescriber or care navigator who can then connect you to community and voluntary services

Appendix 2 – Definitions

Primary Care services

Primary care services act as the 'front door' to the NHS. The services include general practices/general surgeries/local medical centres, community pharmacies, dental and optometry services.



Secondary Care services

Secondary care services, also referred to as 'hospital and community care' provide more specialist support to patients. The support and treatment offered by secondary care services can include diagnostic tests such as CT scans, operations, or medication such as chemotherapy. Healthcare professionals who work in secondary care services tend to have more detailed information on certain healthcare conditions, for example, a cardiologist would diagnose, assess, and treat patients with problems of the heart and blood vessels. Treatment in a secondary care service may be planned (also known as elective) or urgent/emergency. Primary care services can refer patients to secondary care services.

Acute services

Acute services provide both planned and emergency treatment within a hospital or Minor Injuries Unit. Unlike secondary care services, acute services refer to care provided by a hospital only.