

Job description

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| Position | Assistant Practitioner - Nutrition and Speech & Language Therapy |
| Grade | Band 4 |
| Location | Princess Alexandra Hospital |
| Hours | 37.5 hours per week |
| Responsible to | Lead for SLT / Dietetics |
| Accountable to | Head of Therapies |

Our Organisation

The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust (PAHT) provides a full range of general acute, outpatient and diagnostic services at The Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow, the Herts and Essex Hospital in Bishop's Stortford, and St Margaret's Hospital in Epping.

We employ 3,500 staff and serve a local population of around 350,000 people living in west Essex and east Hertfordshire, centred on the M11 corridor and the towns of Harlow, Bishop's Stortford and Epping. Our extended catchment area incorporates a population of up to 500,000 and includes the areas of Hoddesdon, Cheshunt and Broxbourne in Hertfordshire.

Our Values

The Princess Alexandra Promise to our patients as identified by our 3 values which will contribute to improving our patient experiences:

Patient at heart – Always holding the patient and their wellbeing at the centre of our thoughts and efforts

Everyday excellence – Sharing and celebrating our successes, being honest when we get it wrong, giving us the ability to learn from both

Creative collaboration – Knowing strength comes from diversity, we combine our experiences, skills and talents, working together to find new and better ways to care

The Trust believes in investing in all our staff and rewarding high standards of care whilst building for excellence and in return we expect our staff to uphold the Trust values to the highest level.



Job summary

- To be an integral part of OPAL Unit, ensuring the unit delivers a high standard of nutritional care through indirect supervision and guidance of a qualified Dietitian
- To be an integral part of OPAL unit, ensuring the unit delivers a high standard of care to Patients with swallowing and communication needs through direct supervision and guidance of a qualified SLT

Scope and range

- To provide skilled routine, and some non-routine, clinical and non-clinical support to OPAL unit, following guidelines which have been agreed and set by the Dietitian and SLTs to assess and manage patients with nutritional, communication and swallowing needs.
- To accept new patients from OPAL / Dietitians / SLTs and treat according to protocols and guidelines, monitoring patient progression and making minor alterations to patient treatment programs as required
- To be able to work with direct or indirect supervision dependent on the complexity of patient/task and recognise limitations of practice and appropriately feedback to the Therapy team. To maintain close communication with the Therapy team to facilitate patient care.
- To carry out other duties deemed necessary by the OPAL Ward Manager/Therapy Team in discussion with the post holder to ensure adequate provision of service
- To help facilitate a safe and timely discharge of patients receiving Dietetic and SLT care from hospital, and to be involved with the organisation and safe discharge of Patients to community
- To hold responsibility for own caseload with access to and support from a qualified Therapist.
- To demonstrate own duties to other support workers, students and to provide practical training and education to staff, patients, carers and external agencies.
- To use the Trust values at all times as a framework for own behaviour and encourage others to do likewise, ensuring the values underpin all that is done by the Therapy teams.



Duties and responsibilities

- To undertake basic nutritional assessments, basic nutritional screens, swallow screens, communication screens and case histories.
- To work collaboratively as part of the multidisciplinary team with the Dietitians and SLTs to deliver care.
- To attend nursing hand over/board rounds and multidisciplinary team meetings, as required.
- To have an understanding of normal physiological values e.g. blood pressure, O2 saturations, and temperature in order to be able to identify deviations from the norm and the implications for treatment.
- To ensure the patients comfort needs are met after input e.g. drinks and snacks available as appropriate, means to contact nursing staff identified etc. Seek assistance from an appropriate source as required
- To assist with Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool (MUST) / malnutrition risk screening implementation, facilitating compliance with care plans, and seeing and reviewing patients as indicated by protocol.
- To understand the food service, modified food/fluids, and menu systems, supporting and advising ward staff/patients/carers on menu completion.
- To liaise closely with the Catering Department regarding provision of appropriate meals, snacks, drinks, cutlery/crockery.
- To liaise closely with the Pharmacy regarding provision of thickening agents, and nutritional supplements.
- To maintain competence to demonstrate the safe use of dysphagia management strategies, to patients and carers as appropriate to role.
- To participate in the coordination and running of educational programs delivered to therapists and other disciplines under the guidance of the qualified therapists.
- To be able to take and make telephone calls, messages, bleeps, and emails at the request of OPAL and ensure they are followed up.
- To monitor mealtime process and provide advice, recommendations and demonstration to improve the patients swallow function and ability to communicate at mealtimes.
- To be responsible for administration tasks in keeping own statistics, monitoring and collation of data.
- To liaise with/refer to members of the multidisciplinary team and external agencies as appropriate
- To liaise with relatives/carers to gain their opinions and views as part of the overall assessment process.
- To be aware of and comply with the legislation regarding patient confidentiality.
- To participate in the departmental staff development and performance appraisal scheme as an appraisee and to be responsible for complying with agreed Personal Development Programmes (PDP) to meet set knowledge and competency levels.



- To be responsible for maintaining own competency to practice, through Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities, following Therapy Department guidelines, and maintaining an accurate portfolio reflecting personal development
- To attend, and participate in, all mandatory training relating to Trust and departmental policies, procedures and guidelines
- To adhere to all Trust and departmental policies, procedures and guidelines
- To keep updated on evidence based practice and government policies related to care.

This job description may be subject to change according to the varying needs of the service. Such changes will be made after discussion between the post holder and the manager. All duties must be carried out under supervision or within Trust policy and procedure.



Person specification

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| Position | Assistant Practitioner - Nutrition and Speech & Language Therapy |
| Grade | Band 4 |

Evidence for suitability in the role will be measured via a mixture of application form, testing and interview. Essential: E Desirable: D

| Trust values | |
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| Patient at heart – Always holding the patient and their wellbeing at the centre of our thoughts and efforts | E |
| Everyday excellence – Sharing and celebrating our successes, being honest when we get it wrong, giving us the ability to learn from both | E |
| Creative collaboration – Knowing strength comes from diversity, we combine our experiences, skills and talents, working together to find new and better ways to care | E |

| Education and qualifications | |
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| Registered Member of Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists | D |
| Achieved Level A RCSLT Dysphagia Competencies / or equivalent level of experience in carrying out swallow screens independently | D |
| English and Maths to Grade C / Level 4 – GCSE or equivalent. | E |
| BTEC/NVQ Level 3, diploma, A levels one of which should be science or food related or experience deemed to be equivalent e.g. HCA trained or experience in another Therapy assistant role. | E |
| Basic Food Hygiene certificate. | D |
| Further qualification at degree level in related field | D |

| Experience | |
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| Experience of working within a healthcare setting with Dietetics / Speech and Language Therapy | E |
| Experience of general nutrition and/or food service. | D |

| Skills and knowledge | |
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| Good understanding of the roles of Dietitians and Speech and Language Therapists | E |
| Good communication skills - both verbally and in writing. | E |
| Ability to simplify technical information to support patient understanding | E |
| Understanding/sensitivity to the variations in cultures/ages, people from different backgrounds and range of disabilities | E |
| Able to make accurate and legible entries into patient documentation. | E |



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| Knowledge of typical medical conditions found in a frail population | E |
| Ability to work on own initiative and have problem solving skills | E |
| Basic IT skills – email, word processing, file management, internet search, etc | E |
| Awareness of the roles of other professionals within the multi-disciplinary team e.g. OTs, physios, consultants, nurses etc | E |

Personal qualities

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| Welcoming and caring | E |
| Ability to recognise own limitations and seek advice when necessary. | E |
| Self-motivated, confident and well organised | E |
| Demonstrates ability to be a good team member | E |
| Mutual respect – Treats others with courtesy and respect at all times | E |
| Fit to undertake the physical duties of the post | E |

