



CHARTERED
SOCIETY
OF
PHYSIOTHERAPY

*Accountability
and Delegation to*
**SUPPORT
WORKERS**

*A quick reference guide for the
physiotherapy workforce*

Registered physiotherapists and other registered health care professionals are in charge of a patient's care but it is not necessary for them to undertake every aspect of care themselves. This is where support workers play a crucial role in a healthcare team and in the effective provision of high quality physiotherapy.

Support workers are non-registered staff who work alongside registered physiotherapists and other registered healthcare professionals to provide delegated interventions and responsibilities. They bring a range of knowledge, skill and experience to physiotherapy and multi professional teams, enhancing care to patients and local working practices.

A physiotherapy support worker is anyone whose role includes providing delegated physiotherapy interventions. This might be all or part of their role and typically this applies to physiotherapy assistants, rehabilitation or therapy assistants, technical instructors and therapy or AHP assistant practitioners.

A physiotherapy support worker may have physiotherapy interventions delegated to them by any registered healthcare professional but will usually have support from a registered physiotherapist. The principles of accountability and delegation outlined in this leaflet are applicable to any registered healthcare professional and any support worker.



1. Accountability

Both registered healthcare professionals and support workers have a duty of care. This means they are accountable for their acts and omissions and there is a reasonable expectation that healthcare workers provide safe treatment to patients.

It is important therefore that registered healthcare professionals and support workers are able to perform competently in their roles; work within the limit of their roles and work within policies and protocols of their organisation.

Registered healthcare professionals are also accountable to their regulatory body. For physiotherapists this is the Health and Care Professions Council and they are required to meet the Standards of Conduct Performance and Ethics (this includes standard 4 which stipulates that a registrant must only delegate work to someone who has the knowledge, skills and experience needed to carry it out safely and effectively and they must continue to provide appropriate supervision and support to those they delegate work to), and the Standards of Proficiency for Physiotherapists.

2. Delegation

Delegation is the process of establishing at a particular point in time, in a particular context, the tasks, activities and responsibilities which may be safely and appropriately allocated to another individual to undertake.

When considering delegating a task or accepting a delegated task both registered healthcare professionals and support workers should work through the following questions together:

- Is it in the best interests of the patient to delegate the task? Delegation should not occur because a suitable registered healthcare professional is not available
- Does the task to be delegated fall within the support worker's role?
- How complex is the task and what is the context in which the task is to be delegated? Consider, for **this** patient, presenting in **this way** at this point in time, needing **this intervention** is it appropriate for a support worker to undertake the task?
- Is the support worker competent and confident to undertake the task? Do they have the necessary knowledge, skills and training? Can both the registered professional and the support worker evidence this competence if required?
- Is there a system in place for the support worker to contact a registered physiotherapist if required and to discuss the outcome of the delegated task?

3. Putting it all together

Accountability and Safe and Appropriate Delegation

The registered healthcare professional must be sure

- **it is appropriate to delegate** the task or responsibility to a support worker (risk has been assessed)
- **the task or responsibility is appropriate** to the role of the support worker
- **the task or responsibility is within** local policies and protocols of what might be delegated
- **the support worker has been assessed** as competent to undertake the delegated task or responsibility
- **the support worker can access** support and advice from a registered healthcare professional if needed
- **the support worker has ongoing supervision** in place that provides assurances that they are supported to remain competent.

The registered healthcare professional is **accountable** for their decision to delegate.

Accountability and Safe and Appropriate Delegation

The support worker must be sure

- **they only accept tasks and responsibilities** that are appropriate to their role
- **they only accept tasks and responsibilities** that are within local policies and protocols
- **they only accept tasks and responsibilities** that they are competent to undertake
- **they can access a registered** healthcare professional for support and advice if needed
- **they have arrangements in place** that ensure they maintain competence.

The support worker is accountable for agreeing to undertake a task or responsibility and once they have done this they are then accountable for their acts and omissions relating to that task or responsibility.



4. What does this look like in practice?

Carole, a physiotherapist, wants to delegate supporting Mr Shah with an exercise and mobility treatment plan to **Sean**, a support worker.

- ✓ **Carole** knows this activity is in the scope of **Sean's** role
- ✓ **Carole** is following department protocols
- ✓ **Carole** knows **Sean** has been assessed as competent to undertake this activity and knows he has had his competencies regularly reviewed as part of his ongoing supervision and support arrangements
- ✓ **Carole** ensures **Sean** knows how to contact her and what to report if needed
- ✓ **Sean** is clear this activity is in the scope of his role
- ✓ **Sean** is clear he is competent to undertake this activity, he has been assessed and this has been reviewed regularly as part of his supervision arrangements
- ✓ **Sean** knows the limits of his competence and knows when and how to report back to **Carole** if needed
- ✓ It is safe and appropriate for **Carole** to delegate this activity
- ✓ It is safe and appropriate for **Sean** to accept this activity
- ✓ **Carole** is accountable for her decision to delegate the activity
- ✓ **Sean** is accountable for accepting the activity and accountable for the treatment he provides and decisions he makes after this.



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References

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy; 2013. Duty of care available from: <http://www.csp.org.uk/publications/duty-care>

Health & Care Professions Council; 2016. Standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

Available from from <https://www.hcpc-uk.org/standards/standards-of-conduct-performance-and-ethics/>

Health and Care Professions Council; 2016. Standards of Proficiency – Physiotherapists.

Available from <https://www.hcpc-uk.org/resources/standards/standards-of-proficiency-physiotherapists/>

For further guidance on Accountability and Delegation see our full paper <https://www.csp.org.uk/publications/supervision-accountability-and-delegation-activities-support-workers-guide-registered>

**Or contact our professional advice team:
enquiries@csp.org.uk or **020 7306 6666****

THE CHARTERED SOCIETY OF PHYSIOTHERAPY

is the professional, educational and trade union body for the United Kingdom's 58,000 chartered physiotherapists, physiotherapy students and support workers.