

Advanced Nurse Practitioners (ANPs) in General Practice

About Advanced Nurse Practitioners

Advanced Nurse Practitioners are registered nurses who have completed extra training and academic qualifications to be able to clinically assess, diagnose, refer and treat patients who present with undiagnosed or undifferentiated problems.

Advanced Nurse Practitioners are highly-trained health professionals that can undertake complex reviews of patients, similar to GPs. They can assess symptoms and build a picture of a patient's condition, treat minor health problems, infections, minor injuries and prescribe medication where necessary. They can also often manage more complicated problems, for instance, patients presenting with long term health conditions, such as diabetes and COPD.

What can Advanced Nurse Practitioners help with?

- ✓ **Complex patient reviews/assessments**
- ✓ **Diagnosing acute and chronic conditions**
- ✓ **Treatment of minor illnesses**
- ✓ **Prescribing and reviewing medication**
- ✓ **Advising on prescribed medication**
- ✓ **Evaluating treatment plans**
- ✓ **Managing conditions holistically**
- ✓ **Ensuring joined-up care for all patients.**

How are GP practices benefitting?

Advanced Nurse Practitioners have an important role to play in supporting and enhancing primary care service provision. Advanced Nurse Practitioners have been shown to improve patient satisfaction, alleviate pressure on GPs and provide high-quality care where it is needed.

In the NHS Long Term Plan, NHS England explains that it aims to increase the number of additional healthcare professionals and develop multidisciplinary teams to give GPs more time to focus on complex cases. In addition to increasing the skill mix in primary care, healthcare teams can also realise the potential of the roles of Advanced Nurse Practitioners and other advanced clinical professionals.

How does the role of an Advanced Nurse Practitioner differ from that of a Practice Nurse?

Advanced Nurse Practitioners usually come from a range of different clinical routes – this includes via primary care or even secondary care. This means that the skills and training acquired will be varied and often, no two Advanced Nurse Practitioners are the same.

Advanced Nurse Practitioners have a broad scope of practice, having undertaken advanced clinical training to be able to manage and assess patients more expertly (similar to a GP), as well as usually having more generalist skills (depending on the background). Advanced Nurse Practitioners will often have an area of special interest, such as undertaking assessments and planned reviews of patients with long term conditions, like diabetes.

If the individual was formerly a Practice Nurse, then they will be able to do a mixture of things such as blood tests, cervical screening or child immunisation in addition to advanced practice clinics. This will depend on the individual and the training that has been undertaken to be able to perform various roles, and it will also depend on the practice and their needs.

Advanced Nurse Practitioners are able to assess the history of a patient and interpret the results of different investigations in order to make a diagnosis, and plan and deliver care. Advanced Nurse Practitioners are often able to substitute for GPs, which is highly relevant in view of over-stretched primary care teams.

Can Advanced Nurse Practitioners prescribe medication?

All fully qualified Advanced Nurse Practitioners can prescribe medication for any condition within their competence. If they can't prescribe medication, then they are usually trainee Advanced Nurse Practitioners.

They can see patients with undiagnosed, undifferentiated medical conditions and make treatment decisions, including referring patients for any necessary follow-up consultations or referrals – both in primary and secondary care.

Advanced Nurse Practitioners are able to utilise the wider multidisciplinary team if they are unsure about making a clinical judgement – for instance, gaining advice from a GP if they require further expertise.

What can patients see Advanced Nurse Practitioners for?

Patients can see Advanced Nurse Practitioners for both minor and long term conditions. This ranges from the treatment of common illnesses, such as infections or more complicated or chronic conditions, such as diabetes and COPD.

Common minor illnesses include problems such as sore throat, ear ache, cold and flu, cough, chest infection, thrush, athlete's foot, wounds, emergency contraception, conjunctivitis, infections, diarrhoea and vomiting, headaches, joint pain, musculoskeletal problems (back, hip and shoulder pain) and minor injuries.

How can patients book to see or access advice from an Advanced Nurse Practitioner?

If a surgery employs an Advanced Nurse Practitioner, patients can book an appointment by contacting the surgery in the usual way.

With an increasing number of GP practices working together to deliver services, there might also be an option to see an Advanced Nurse Practitioner on the weekend. Check local Clinical Commissioning Group websites for more information.

Patients will see an Advanced Nurse Practitioner in the same way they would usually see their GP, e.g. in a private room.

If a patient sees an Advanced Nurse Practitioner and requires further clinical expertise, they will still be able to see a GP if they need to.