

Career Pathways for Clinical Nurse Specialist/Clinical Midwife Specialist (CNS/CMS) Information Leaflet

1. Background

From a Nursing & Midwifery workforce perspective, there has been a significant investment in Clinical Nurse/Midwife Specialist (CNS/CMS) posts across all services including acute, community, mental health, children's and intellectual disability services. More recently in order to support the implementation of Sláintecare, with the focus on the rollout of the Community Health Networks (CHN)/Enhanced Community Care (ECC) model, there has been substantial additional resourcing and a requirement for recruitment of CNS posts within community services.

In response to requests for additional CNS/CMS posts from National HR, the ECC Programme and wider organisational services, the Office of Nursing and Midwifery Services Director (ONMSD) in collaboration with key stakeholders, has developed the following career pathways for CNS/CMSs that will support services in achieving the recruitment needs of the organisation.

The CNS/CMS career pathways were developed in line with the DoH (2019) *A Policy on the Development of Graduate to Advanced Nursing and Midwifery Practice*. The proposed development pathways will provide additional career opportunities and enable nurses and midwives to gain the required competences through clinical exposure in the specialist area of practice, and progress towards CNS/CMS while undertaking the appropriate postgraduate qualification.

2. CNS/CMS post holders employed prior to May 2023 were required to meet the following eligibility criteria:

- *A minimum of five years post registration experience including a minimum of two years' experience in the specialist area*
- *have acquired a minimum of a level 8 post-registration NQAI qualification relevant to his/her area of specialist practice*

Existing CNS/CMS post holders: For those already permanently employed as a CNS/CMS prior to May 2023, there is no requirement to change the academic qualification level.

3. Interim CNS/CMS Career Pathway - valid from May 2023 to September 2026

The ONMSD has incorporated successful elements of previous and existing HSE sponsorship programmes into the proposed Candidate CNS/CMS Pathway in this option. Nurses/Midwives currently employed as Staff Nurses/Midwives (SN/SMs) and Enhanced Nurses/Midwives (EN/EMs) and any other nursing/midwifery grades who have a minimum of 1 years clinical experience and who express an interest in CNS/CMS roles could be supported to progress on a Candidate CNS/CMS Pathway as follows:

- (a) The individual Community Healthcare Organisations (CHO)/Acute Hospital Group (HG) will identify the numbers of CNS/CMS posts approved for recruitment for their area. A recruitment campaign will be organised by the CHO/HG between local HR and services.
- (b) Nurses/midwives who are successful at interview for candidate CNS/CMS post will:
 - be offered a contract for a *Candidate CNS/CMS post (identify specialist area)* at CNM1/CMM1 grade with a job description outlining the CNS/CMS competencies to be achieved.
 - be required to demonstrate their specialist experience or if they do not possess the relevant specialist experience, they will be supported to attain one year's clinical specialist experience
 - be required to demonstrate that they have completed the required postgraduate education, or agree and are supported to undertake the required postgraduate education, at level 9 qualification (equivalent to 60 ECTS or above) relevant to the specialist area.
 - be required to demonstrate that they have continuing professional development (CPD) relevant to the specialist area or will be supported to obtain the required CPD.
- (c) All of the above must be achieved within 2 years for this pathway.

4. Interim Career Pathway for those who hold a level 8 educational qualification in the specialist area (equivalent to 60 ECTS or above) - valid from May 2023 to September 2026

For Nurses/Midwives who express an interest in CNS/CMS roles and who currently hold a level 8 educational qualification in the specialist area (equivalent to 60 ECTS or above), this qualification will be recognised up to September 2026. The clinical experience requirements for this cohort of nurses/midwives remain consistent with the DoH (2019) *A Policy on the Development of Graduate to Advanced Nursing and Midwifery Practice* i.e. a minimum of 1 years' experience in practice and a minimum of one year's experience in the specialist area and they could be supported to progress on a Candidate CNS/CMS Pathway as outlined in point 3 above.

5. Reporting Arrangements

Job descriptions will be updated for consistency outlining the following reporting arrangements:

- The reporting relationship on professional Nursing and Midwifery matters must be to a Nursing/Midwifery Line Manager
- The clinical reporting relationship is to the senior clinical decision maker who has responsibility for the patient/service user

6. Development of skill mix to support the CNS/CMS role in acute and community services

- In line with the DOH (2019) policy, create a patient-centred nursing and midwifery model of care delivery that encompasses the Graduate and Enhanced Nurse/Midwife, Clinical Specialist Nurse/Midwife (CNS/CMS) and the Advanced Nurse/Midwife practitioner (ANP/AMP). This model will enable a broader nursing/midwifery skill mix development, succession planning and the opportunity for clinicians to practice to the top of their licence.
- Similar to the acute services, implementation of a nursing/midwifery model of care delivery can be applied to develop community services and deliver population-based care across healthcare networks in line with Sláintecare.

7. From September 2026 onwards CNS/CMS post holders will be required to meet the following eligibility criteria:

A Policy on the Development of Graduate to Advanced Nursing and Midwifery Practice (DoH, 2019) outlines a pathway to support a change for specialist practice to develop and meet service need and in line with the policy from September 2026 it is proposed that the following eligibility criteria for CNS/CMS will apply:

- From September 2026 onwards all applicants for CNS/CMS roles will require a minimum of 1 years' clinical experience and one year's experience in the specialist area, together with a level 9 educational qualification in the speciality (equivalent to 60 ECTS or above).

8. Available Supports

Funding support for academic fees for post graduate education is provided by the ONMSD (*ONMSD SoP 2021 - 016*) subject to available budget. On meeting the CNS/CMS eligibility criteria and in consultation with Directors of Nursing/Midwifery/Services (DoN/M/Services), the nurse/midwife will be deemed eligible to transfer to a CNS/CMS post with associated job description and contract. DoN/M/Services apply to the NMPDU/ONMSD to enter the nurse/midwife onto the CNS/CMS interim database (until the database is transferred to its' permanent location).

Support for nurses/midwives on the above pathways include:

- ONMSD CNS/CMS Support Network members liaise with DoN/M/Services and relevant healthcare stakeholders to provide advice/guidance on eligibility criteria in the development and processing of CNS/CMS applications.
- The ONMSD CNS/CMS Support Network have developed a CPD webinar series for CNS/CMSs designed to provide CPD on strategic and professional aspects of the role, as well as promoting professional networking.
- The ONMSD National Clinical Leadership Centre (NCLC) provides a 3-day clinical leadership programme which will benefit and enhance the leadership capability of CNS/CMSs.