

# Advanced Skills Enrolled Nurse

Toolkit for Implementation of the  
ASEN role in South Australia



**Government  
of South Australia**

SA Health

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## Introduction

The Nursing/Midwifery (South Australian Public Sector) Enterprise Agreement 2010 provides for the introduction of the Advanced Skills Enrolled Nurse (ASEN) in the South Australian nursing and midwifery career structure. The ASEN position is a merit based appointment as determined and required by the health unit/service. The ASEN classification is operative from 1 December 2011<sup>(1)</sup>.

This Toolkit is designed to assist health services/units to facilitate the successful implementation of ASEN role within South Australian health services.

## Background

### Benefits of the ASEN role to health services/units

It is acknowledged that today's health care is provided in a complex and continually changing environment. The South Australian Government is reforming the state's public health care system with an aim to promote health and well being to all South Australians and reduce hospital attendance. The SA Health Care Plan 2007-2016 sets the strategic direction of health reform in South Australia, with its key elements incorporated in all major service planning and clinical service planning across primary health care services and major hospitals.

The two major challenges ahead for the SA Health system are:

- > Enabling the health system to respond more adequately to the rise in demand for services.
- > Developing out of hospital services, including health promotion, early intervention and expansion of primary health care, to reduce the rate of growth in hospital demand.

The changing South Australian healthcare landscape requires care and service responses that build on modern, evidence-based practice and innovation in thinking and design. Approaching health reform in a comprehensive and integrated way is essential if we are to meet the challenges of delivering the right care, at the right time, by the right person, first time.

The ASEN role represents an opportunity to respond to these issues by providing a nursing model of care that embraces advanced skills and knowledge within a collaborative nursing framework. Enrolled Nurses can increase the capacity of the Australian health workforce to meet these increasing demands in areas of strategic relevance to workforce development and clinical care.

The introduction of the ASEN role has been guided by agreed competency standards for enrolled nursing practice<sup>(3)</sup> and directly aligns to the Australian Qualifications Framework<sup>(7)</sup>.

## Definition of the Advanced Skills Enrolled Nurse

The ASEN is an Enrolled Nurse who will either:

- > **Hold an Advanced Diploma of Enrolled Nursing and have three years full time equivalent experience in the relevant clinical area; OR**
- > **Have five years full time equivalent experience in the relevant clinical area and have demonstrated advanced skills and knowledge in client/patient assessment, care management and leadership responsibilities.**

In addition to fulfilling the duties of an Enrolled Nurse, an ASEN has:

- > High level of specialisation in an area or field of practice.
- > A higher level of clinical knowledge and skills informed by further education and on the job experience.
- > A greater level of delegated responsibility in the management of client/patient care which may include clinical and non-clinical roles.
- > More indirect levels of supervision<sup>(1)</sup>
- > A leadership role within the ASEN scope of practice.
- > The ability to network and develop partnerships.
- > A commitment to life long learning and inquiry.

An ASEN is an Enrolled Nurse who is registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia. The ASEN supports the Registered Nurse/Midwife in the provision of client/patient-centred care. Employees at this level work under the direction and supervision of the Registered Nurse/Midwife. However at all times, the ASEN retains responsibility for their actions whilst remaining accountable to the Registered Nurse/Midwife for all delegated functions.

The ASEN is able to perform within their full scope of practice in a spectrum of roles, functions, responsibilities, activities and decision-making capacities within which the Enrolled Nurse is educated, competent and authorised to perform<sup>(4)</sup>. The ASEN scope of professional practice is influenced by legislative requirements, professional standards such as competency standards, codes of ethics and conduct addressing public need, demand and expectations<sup>(2)</sup>.

It is recognised that to ensure successful implementation of new roles, there needs to be a collaborative, systematic and evidence based approach<sup>(2)</sup>. The ASEN role is grounded in nursing values, knowledge, theories and practice and provides innovative and flexible health care delivery that complements other health care providers. The Decision Making Framework will assist nurses and midwives at all levels to determine scope of practice issues.

## Guiding principles for ASEN role implementation

The guiding principles have been developed to assist Nursing and Midwifery (N&M) leaders in the process of planning, determination and implementation of the ASEN role across SA Health sites.

The following four stages contribute to the successful implementation of the ASEN role:

- > Initiation – ‘Establish the need’;
- > Strategic Service Planning;
- > Implementation; and
- > Evaluation.

This Toolkit aims to provide practical information to promote consistency and role clarity. The ASEN role will contribute to the service model of care that has been aligned to strategic national and state priorities<sup>(6)</sup> as well as supporting new workforce and health reform models for healthcare service development.

Specifically, an ASEN position may be established where:

- > A gap in service provision has been identified by the health service/unit; and where
- > The position will contribute to the efficiency of service delivery.

## **Stage 1 – Initiation ‘Establish the need’**

### **Principle 1**

The N&M leaders are responsible for aligning service planning to the strategic direction of health reform in South Australia<sup>(6)</sup>. The N&M leaders are responsible for identifying and facilitating the introduction of the ASEN role in line with service needs. In developing the service plan, N&M leaders need to be aware of the requirement of the ASEN role to maintain a relationship with Registered Nurses/Registered Midwives for supervision and collaboration.

Nursing and midwifery leaders are responsible for identifying areas for development of ASEN roles. In undertaking the analysis, focus should be on workforce planning requirements to meet current and future service needs. In doing this, N&M leaders should give consideration to EN positions whose responsibilities may have expanded over time and determine whether the role should be an ASEN in line with service requirements.

### **Principle 2**

A business case proposal is required for additional FTE if the ASEN position is in addition to the established staffing model. In these cases, the relevant business case template must be completed as per local health network (LHN) procedures.

### **Principle 3**

The Scope of Practice of the ASEN role is determined by the context in which the Enrolled Nurse is authorised to practice<sup>(4)</sup>. N&M leaders are to identify areas in which an ASEN role can practice to their full scope. Examples of the ASEN roles are described in the accompanying frequently asked questions and role examples document.

### **Principle 4**

Workforce planning is the mechanism to be used in identifying where and when positions are available as determined by health service/units.

## **Stage 2 - Planning**

### **Principle 5**

It is important that there is an agreed, consistent and transparent process across SA Health to establish the ASEN role in the health service/unit.

N&M leaders are responsible for ensuring the ASEN role is considered for inclusion when the models of care and new services are planned. Service planning elements include, but not limited to, the following:

- > Identifying organisational aims, objectives, strategic direction and service delivery priorities.
- > Access to professional and competency guidelines and standards relevant to the ASEN role.
- > Considering all vacancies as providing an opportunity to consider the ASEN role in staffing models and mix.
- > Meeting skill mix requirements as per the Nursing and Midwifery (South Australian Public Sector) Enterprise Agreement 2010.

Strategic service planning ensures adequate preparation for the appointment of the ASEN position as detailed in Example 1 on Page 8.

### **Principle 6**

The cost effectiveness of the role should be considered. Staffing models and skill mix should be reviewed to consider the ASEN role. All nurse vacancies provide an opportunity to consider the ASEN role and may provide for opportunity to explore introducing ASEN roles proposed by the health service/units.

### **Principle 7**

Health services/units will develop strategies to achieve implementation of the identified ASEN positions within the agreed timelines as indicated on the Strategic Service Planning Template included in Appendix 1.

### **Principle 8**

Health services/units should clearly identify the advanced scope of practice of the ASEN prior to implementation through the:

- > Development of a job description.
- > Facilitation of practice standards.
- > Updating of health services/units policies/procedures where required to support the practice of the ASEN role.

### **Principle 9**

The ASENs scope of practice is influenced by the:

- > Context of the practice setting;
- > Level of competence, education, qualifications and experience required for the role; and
- > Health service/unit policy, quality and risk management framework and organisational culture.

N&M leaders are responsible for ensuring the nursing and midwifery workforce at all levels have a clear understanding of:

- > The Enrolled Nurses Scope of Practice including the extension of that scope to advanced skills level.
- > The way in which the ASEN should operate in the health service/unit.

## **Stage 3 - Implementation**

### **Principle 10**

It is essential that the health service/unit, through the N&M leaders, consider the impact of the role introduction on the broader workforce (including but not limited to the nursing/midwifery workforce) as any new roles and/or new practice models under consideration cannot be implemented in isolation.

N&M leaders should clearly and consistently communicate the ASEN:

- > Role definitions;
- > Working relationships;
- > Decision making tools to assist in role implementation.

### **Principle 11**

N&M leaders are responsible for the review of existing procedures to align with the implementation of the ASEN role in the Health service/unit.

### **Principle 12**

N&M leaders are responsible for the development education and communication strategies for the existing workforce in relation to implementing the advanced skills and scope into practice of the ASEN.

### **Principle 13**

The advertising of positions in SA Health is in accordance with the LHN human resource procedures. Further information can be sourced in Appendix 3 and 4 of this Toolkit.

## **Stage 4 - Evaluation**

### **Principle 14**

N&M leaders are responsible for initial evaluations of the implementation of the ASEN role (refer to Strategic Service Planning Template in Appendix 1). This should focus on issues and processes pertaining to:

- > The workforce planning identified in the Template;
- > Achievement of the number of ASEN roles which support the service plan;
- > Whether the positions were identified for immediate introduction at the time of implementation or identified need and/or identified for introduction as positions are available through natural attrition;
- > Achievement of timeframes for implementation of the ASEN role;
- > The cost effectiveness of the role; and
- > Impact evaluations, clinical effectiveness and acceptance of the new role.

## **Summary**

The documented aims and principles are a guide for N&M leaders on the requirements in relation to the implementation and support for the integration of the ASEN role into South Australia's nursing and midwifery workforce.

## **Governance**

To establish the governance required for the introduction of the ASEN role across SA Health services/units, LHNs through the Executive and Directors of Nursing and Midwifery are responsible for all the processes outlined in the guiding principles and toolkit.

## Example 1- Strategic Service Planning

### Stage 1 Initiation 'Establish the need'

- Identify areas of priority for the ASEN role
- Build the Business Case if required
- Identify opportunities for developing the scope of ASEN practice in line with service need
- Commence workforce planning for a merit based selection process

### Stage 4 Evaluation

Outcomes to workforce planning:

- Roles available
- Planning for future roles/models
- Time
- Cost effectiveness

As identified in Strategic Service Planning Template in Appendix 1.

### ASEN role and scope of practice

Health service/units encourage the use of the ASEN work level descriptors, competencies, standards of care and broadened scope of practice for the role

### Stage 2 Planning

- Determine workforce and strategic plans
- Identify and confirm infrastructure and support
- Commence Strategic Service Planning Template
- Develop generic J&PS
- Ensure clear understanding of EN and ASEN scope of practice

### Stage 3 Implementation

Communication with all levels of Nursing and Midwifery:

- Role definitions,
- Working relationships
- Decision-making tools

*Supportive information can be sourced in the Appendices contained in this toolkit.*

## Domains of ASEN practice

There are a variety of clinical settings in which the ASEN roles would be able to effectively contribute to service delivery and thereby meet organisational need. The factors that enable successful implementation of the ASEN role in a service/area include:

- > Establish clear systems for appropriate delegation and supervision for Enrolled Nurse practice including that of the ASEN.
- > Recognise the competencies of an ASEN.
- > Ensure that the Scope of Nursing Practice and Decision-Making Framework are implemented <sup>(4)</sup>.
- > Awareness of artificial limitations placed on the scope of practice of Enrolled Nurses in the clinical setting.

The ASEN role is defined in the Nursing/Midwifery (South Australian Public Sector) Enterprise Agreement 2010 as an Enrolled Nurse who demonstrates advanced skills and knowledge within each of the following three domains:

- > Client/patient assessment;
- > Care management; and
- > Leadership responsibilities.

These three domains do not imply the ASEN is able to take sole responsibility and accountability. However the ASEN contributes at a level commensurate with the advanced skills and knowledge requirements of the role, in collaboration and consultation with a Registered Nurse/Midwife. The ASEN supports the Registered Nurse/Midwife in the provision of patient-centred care. Employees at this level work under the direction and supervision of the Registered Nurse/Midwife. However at all times, the ASEN retains responsibility for their actions while remaining accountable to the Registered Nurse/Midwife for all delegated functions. The principles of delegation, decision making and supervision remain in accordance with Enrolled Nursing practice<sup>(4)</sup>.

### **Advanced skills and knowledge in client/patient assessment**

In addition to the Enrolled Nurse role, the ASEN is able to:

- > Contribute to client/patient assessment by using advanced skills and knowledge to produce a holistic assessment; and to
- > Contribute to determining the health status and nursing needs of a client/patient or group in consultation/collaboration with a Registered Nurse and the health care team.

The ASEN is able to formulate (in collaboration with the Registered Nurse) appropriate care plans within their scope of practice, discussing assessment data with the Registered Nurse and health care team. The ASEN contributes to nursing care delivery, using their advanced knowledge and skills and understanding of best practice.

### **Advanced skills and knowledge in the provision of care management**

In addition to the Enrolled Nurse role, the ASEN is able to contribute to care management and planning using their advanced skills and knowledge.

The ASEN collaborates with Registered Nurses and liaises with other members of the health care team regarding alterations in conditions of the client/patient. Examples of practices that the ASEN may contribute to includes assisting the client/patient in discharge preparation; ongoing assessment of individual needs; or delivering ongoing education and support for the client/patient and their significant others.

The ASEN implements best practice nursing interventions for the client/patient in consultation/collaboration with the Registered Nurse and health care team. They are able to perform more complex clinical and nursing interventions as delegated by the Registered Nurse and supported by local policies and procedures to assist the client/patient to attain and maintain optimal health.

The ASEN in consultation/collaboration with a Registered Nurse is able to prioritise, plan and implement nursing interventions for the client/patient according to the individual's needs and to re-prioritise, as required, to address changes in the client's/patient's condition and/or in nursing workload.

The ASEN is able to recognise alterations in psychological and physiological status, respond appropriately and promptly and report to a Registered Nurse and the health care team as appropriate. For example the ASEN, using their decision making skills within their scope of practice and delegated responsibility, is able to identify the deteriorating client/patient, implement interventions as supported by local policies and procedures and evaluate outcomes for clients/patients and others.

The ASEN is able to perform nursing interventions utilising evidence based practice. This may include the use of more complex client/patient monitoring systems. The ASEN is able modify interventions in consultation/collaboration with the Registered Nurse in line with organisational policies/procedures/guidelines and evidence based practice that support the role. Documentation of the evaluation of outcomes will be in line with organisation policies/procedures.

In relevant practice settings, the ASEN uses their knowledge of principles of drug actions and side effects, in accordance with health unit/service policies, procedures and legislation.

The ASEN uses their advanced skills and knowledge to effectively assist in the patient journey across the continuum of care. For example, the ASEN working in patient journey roles, in collaboration/collaboration with the Registered Nurse, is able to establish links and form partnerships between the acute sector and other health service providers and put into place strategies to improve the client's/patient's journey to avoid further hospital admissions.

### **Advanced skills and knowledge in leadership responsibilities**

In addition to the Enrolled Nurse role, the ASEN has an increased level of knowledge and understanding of how research can be applied to nursing practice within the scope of the Enrolled Nurse.

The ASEN demonstrates a greater depth of knowledge and skills in a speciality area with more effective integration of theory and practice than the Enrolled Nurse and is able to apply this to their leadership responsibilities. The ASEN is able to undertake additional leadership responsibilities using their advanced skills and knowledge to (but is not limited to):

- > Contribute to and support team leadership roles, educate others, provide mentorship and preceptorship for others; thereby acting as a resource to others in clinical practice;
- > Contribute to the performance appraisal of others;
- > Be actively involved within the professional committees and working parties within and beyond the work unit.

## ASEN links to Performance Review & Development and the Nursing and Midwifery Capability and Self Development Framework

The Nursing and Midwifery Capability and Self Development Framework establishes the processes and systems used by health services and the nursing and midwifery workforce in developing knowledge, skills and competencies that will meet the needs of clients/patients now and in the future. The Nursing and Midwifery Capability and Self-Development Framework can be used to guide Enrolled Nurses on how to continue their professional development within the context of life long learning.

The Framework can provide direction and supporting structures to enable the planning and implementation for the Enrolled Nurses professional development opportunities for career enhancement. The Framework encourages individual Enrolled Nurses to be active in career development, to plan life long learning activities, to undertake self-reflection and to utilise regular practice/performance assessment to identify areas for self-development and professional growth.

Managers are responsible for assisting Enrolled Nurses to identify development opportunities in line with individual and organisational goals. Planning of learning and development activities are undertaken as part of the performance review and development (PR&D) process.

## ASEN links to PR&D and the Nursing and Midwifery Capability and Self Development Framework

