

Updated standards of proficiency:  
themes of the key changes

## Registrants must:

**6.5:** recognise that the concepts of confidentiality and informed consent extend to all mediums, including illustrative clinical records, such as photography, video and audio recordings and digital platforms

**7.7:** use information, communication and digital technologies appropriate to their practice

**9.3:** use digital record-keeping tools where required

**13.1:** change their practice as needed to take account of new developments, technologies and changing contexts

## Registrants should consider:

The impact of new technologies on **confidentiality**. For example, if digital recordings or illustrative records are made, or notes are stored electronically, has data storage and security been considered? Are telehealth appointments being conducted in a physical environment that is secure and sufficiently private?

The impact of new technologies on **informed consent**. Registrants should clearly explain to service users how the technology could impact their privacy and confidentiality, to ensure they can obtain valid consent.

The relative **risks and benefits** of any new technology. For example, can digital data be stored securely enough to prevent loss, damage or inappropriate access? Consider all options available and seek advice where necessary.

Using digital tools for **record keeping**, according to their professional judgement. This may allow more accurate, legible records to be kept and may assist with efficient and safe sharing of information.

Conducting regular **horizon scanning**. This may help registrants prepare for new developments in their field and how their practice may need to be adapted. Professional networks, digital champions and other colleagues can help with this.

## What does this mean for registrants?

Keeping up to date with digital skills and new technology is vital in providing safe and effective care. It continues to play an important role in the work of HCPC registrants, one that is always developing, and the updated standards embed this principle into practice.

The standards do not require registrants to be aware of or use all digital skills and technologies in their field, as what is appropriate and possible will depend on what is required and available across a range of factors, including their role, workplace and employer.

However, registrants should be proactive in learning about and adopting new digital skills and technologies that relate to their practice. Registrants should use their professional judgement to assess the risks and benefits of these and integrate them into their practice to where appropriate.

In order to use or adapt to a new technology or process, registrants may need to upskill. Most registrants will do this naturally when they encounter a gap in their skills or knowledge, such as rapidly upskilling to provide telehealth services during the Covid-19 pandemic.

There is no mandated or approved way to meet these standards, and they are applicable to all professions and professional settings.

Registrants should use their **professional judgement** when applying these standards.

Every individual on the HCPC Register is required to meet the standards of proficiency as far as they relate to their scope of practice

The updated standards are in effect from  
**1 September 2023.**

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## Case study

Freya is the clinical lead for a multi-disciplinary neurology rehabilitation team at an NHS clinic, providing patient treatment in the clinic and in patients' own homes. Freya makes it her responsibility to be aware of the digital skills and new technologies that could be relevant to her role.

In order to do this, she gets in touch with a local digital champion who is based in the local hospital, and a digital innovation network suggested by her professional body. As a result, she can benchmark her own practice and the digital skill level of her staff, and her understanding of the risks inherent in using digital platforms and technologies is expanded.

Freya plans training sessions to help her team look at their own practice from this perspective. She asks them think about gaps or issues in their service, and staff identify that some patients struggle to complete their online referral forms. This may mean that some groups of people find it harder to access the service than they should.

As a team, they decide to nominate and train up a digital champion in the office. The champion's responsibility is improving the referral forms and integrating flexibility in how patients can refer themselves to the service. This lowers barriers and improve access for all groups.

Freya is aware that data security is just as important as accessibility. She liaises with the clinic's IT department to check that the form software is sufficiently secure. Freya and her team also map out how the data is used after it is submitted and conduct research into the risks in this journey. They agree that additional data security is needed, and as a result they set up document encryption, provide staff training around it and add appropriate checks into the process.

These updates to the standards of proficiency were made after a detailed review process, to ensure they reflect the reality of current practice.

## Resources

**AI and digital regulations service: guidance for NHS and social care adopters and digital health innovators**

<https://www.digitalregulations.innovation.nhs.uk>

**Guidance for digital adopters**

<https://www.digitalregulations.innovation.nhs.uk/adopters-guidance>

**Supporting digital inclusion in health and care: King's Fund reports**

<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/projects/digital-equity>

**King's Fund report: 8 technologies that will change health and care**

<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/digital-revolution>

**HCPC's gap analysis tool: identify and address gaps in your current practice**

<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/gap-analysis-tool>

**HCPC's webinar on digital skills and new technologies**

[https://www.youtube.com/the\\_hcpc](https://www.youtube.com/the_hcpc)

**Further information in the updated standards of proficiency around digital skills and new technologies**

<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/updated-sop/digital-skills>

For full information on the updated standards of proficiency, see the HCPC website.

The key changes in the updated standards of proficiency can be grouped into a number of themes, of which this is one. The other themes are: digital skills and new technologies, equality, diversity and inclusion, leadership, registrants' mental health, and promoting public health and preventing ill-health.

**The changes in the updated standards extend beyond these themes.** The full standards for all professions can be downloaded from the HCPC website.