

Dilemmas about job role and titles

There is considerable variability in job titles. The project group considered whether to suggest adoption of a single title and finally agreed that with such diverse roles this was not realistic.

However, for consistency, the title of **assistant/associate practitioner** is used in this Hub and throughout the resources included and developed by the RCSLT.

Throughout the development of this project please see a summary of some of the titles which were collected, collated and considered.

The title of this role needs to reflect the duties and contribution within a service. It is also important that service users understand this is an unregistered role and practitioners work with support and supervision from a therapist.

A variety of titles for wide ranging roles

There was a 'general consensus' in the project group that the term 'worker' is not preferred. Within the project the following job titles were discussed:

- SLT assistant/Associate Practitioner
- Senior SLT assistant/Associate Practitioner
- Specialist SLT assistant/Associate Practitioner
- Advanced/Highly Specialist Assistant/Associate Practitioner (Band 5)

Assistant and associate can be used as appropriate. Both are possible for example, Karen is an Associate Speech and Language Therapist Assistant, and Hanif is a Senior SLT Assistant Practitioner.

The names used were not without considerable discussion. The information below gives insight into what was considered with some of the wide range of titles used in different national frameworks.

Over time the following titles have been used in learning or career frameworks:

In RCSLT Competency model (2002)

- Entry
- Established
- Advanced Support Practitioner

There was no link to grading and differentiation was about experience accrued within the role.

AHP titles/NHS career progression information

- Entry level
- Intermediate Practitioner
- Clinical Support Practitioner (established)
- Senior Clinical Support Practitioner
- Supervisor

Profile Titles from AFC Bandings

(May 2006)

- Clinical Support Worker (Speech and Language Therapy)
- Clinical Support Worker Higher Level (Speech and Language Therapy)
- Speech and Language Therapy Assistant/Clinical Support

There is no profile or title for Band 5.

NES (NHS Education Scotland)

The umbrella term of Healthcare Support Worker (HCSW) is used and includes all non-registered clinical staff across nursing, midwifery and the AHP professions, approx. 3800 are AHP Support Workers. This project documented 160 different titles for non-registered staff across all AHPs.

Titles used by the APPF Project Group

In the project group the preferred options were:

- SLT Assistant/Associate Practitioner
- Senior SLT Assistant/Associate Practitioner
- Specialist SLT Assistant/Associate Practitioner
- Advanced/Highly Specialist Assistant/Associate Practitioner (Band 5)

The decision was made to use the title associate/assistant practitioner in this project with an indication of experience and grading. This was shortened for ease to AP (Assistant or Associate Practitioner)

Another message was confusion about why people have become referred to as a pay scale rather than a job title e.g. 'the Band 4, the Band 2'. In the Survey APs fed back that they would prefer to be called job titles. SLTs".

When discussing names for the role of different levels of Clinical Support Practitioner one of the group related how their actual job title was Associate Practitioner. However, when introduced by therapists she was invariably introduced as 'an assistant'. This practitioner did not mind, but still noticed every time this happened. It does make differentiation between level of practitioner and influences perceived identity in a role.

I think this was one of my 'ouch' moments as a therapist. I needed to value assistant practitioners more and be careful about the words I chose when describing their role to carers and colleagues.

As a profession we know about language and the impact of semantics and yet I might habitually say "I'll ask our assistant to do some work with you on that", rather than "I'll ask our Assistant Practitioner or Senior Assistant Practitioner to contact you and arrange to offer some support with that". There is definitely 'something in the semantics and reflecting on how we are referred to as therapists and whether terminology in a team values colleagues can lead to that 'ouch' moment.

Below are examples of the wide range of titles which reflect a diversity of roles under the umbrella title of Assistant /Associate Practitioner. Increasingly some practitioners are working in specific areas of support, with enhanced skills which are different to the core skillset of the SLT e.g. in family/carer support. An example is in universal/health promotion services where the practitioners describe how their work is set up and supported by SLTs, but they are not **assisting in an ongoing therapy process**. In these settings some practitioners preferred SLT Support Practitioner. Some services have changed the title totally. For example, to 'Developmental Lead', or 'Communication and Language Specialist' (CALs).

Suggestions the project group considered

Using the term Clinical Support Practitioner, rather than Worker becomes:

- B2: Clinical Support Practitioner
- B3: Clinical Support Practitioner (Senior)
- B4: Associate Practitioner (Specialist)
- B5: Associate Practitioner (Highly Specialist)

Using the Term Associate Practitioner or Associate Clinical Practitioner or Assistant Practitioner. Some of us rather liked including Clinical, BUT if SLT is also added at the end then it becomes a long unwieldy title.

- B2: Associate Clinical Practitioner or SLT Associate Practitioner
- B3: Associate Clinical Practitioner (Senior) or SLT Associate Practitioner (Senior)
- B4: Associate Clinical Practitioner (Specialist) or SLT Associate Practitioner (Specialist)
- B5: Associate Clinical Practitioner (Highly Specialist) or SLT Associate Practitioner (Highly Specialist)

Using Assistant Practitioner

- B2: SLT Assistant Practitioner
- B3: SLT Assistant Practitioner (Senior)
- B4: SLT Assistant Practitioner (Specialist)
- B5: SLT Assistant Practitioner (Highly Specialist/Advanced)

Using SLT Assistant – SLTA

- SLT Assistant
- SLT Assistant (Senior)
- SLT Assistant (Specialist)
- SLT Assistant (Highly Specialist/Advanced)

OR

- Clinical Support Practitioner (Speech and Language Therapy)
- Senior Clinical Support Practitioner (Speech and Language Therapy)
- Associate/Assistant Practitioner
- Associate/Assistant Practitioner (Specialist)

OR

Assistant Clinical Practitioner or SLT Assistant Practitioner

Assistant Clinical Practitioner (Senior) or SLT Assistant Practitioner (Senior)

Assistant Clinical Practitioner (Specialist) or SLT Assistant Practitioner (Specialist)

Assistant Clinical Practitioner (Advanced) or SLT Assistant Practitioner (Advanced)