4. A DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR ASSESSING COMPETENCE

4.1 What is a diagnostic tool for assessing competence?

A diagnostic tool for assessing competence is a standardised and reproducible means of examining an individual's performance in a particular competency or attribute (see section 2.1) and identifying whether that individual is currently demonstrating competence when measured on a pre-defined scale.

> *"Each of these competencies has a number of statements or attributes which indicate how individuals who have that competency may be behaving in practice"*

This diagnostic tool has been designed to assess the eight competencies in the competency framework (listening, communicating, context, knowledge, understanding, exploring, deciding, supporting). Each of these competencies has a number of statements or attributes which indicate how individuals who have that competency may be behaving in practice. A four-point rating scale (always, usually, sometimes, never) is provided to assess competence for each attribute.

4.2 Who can use this diagnostic tool?

This diagnostic tool was principally developed for the professions of medication, pharmacy and nursing, although it will also be of relevance to other health professions that are involved in medication adherence. Specifically, it can be used by:

Education and training providers

- In the initial education of health professionals
- In competency-led postgraduate training programmes
- To provide training linked to service provision

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Individual students and health professionals

- To assess own performance and identify gaps in knowledge and skills
- To identify education, training and professional development needs
- To demonstrate requirements for service delivery

Employers

- As an aid to appraisals and setting personal development plans
- To provide opportunities for employers to work collaboratively to deliver training for staff
- To support retention and recruitment

Commissioners

- To set standards and monitor service delivery
- To identify and remedy poor performance

4.3 How to use the diagnostic tool

In the context of managing and supporting medication adherence with patients, consider how you or the individual whose competence you are assessing demonstrates each attribute using the four-point rating scale of Always, Sometimes, Usually or Never. Definitions of these ratings should be determined in advance of the assessment. The following table gives example definitions for the assessment ratings:

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RATING	DEFINITION	PERCENTAGE EXPRESSION
Always	Demonstrates the expected standard of practice with occasional lapses	85-100
Usually	Demonstrates the expected standard of practice but with frequent lapses	50-84
Sometimes	Fails to demonstrate the expected standard of practice more often than the expected standard is demonstrated	16-49
Never	Only demonstrates the expected standard on occasions	0-15

It may be helpful to collate evidence of how these attributes are demonstrated in one or more of the following ways, which can form the basis of discussion about the individual's level of competence:

- Maintaining an activity log
- Self-reflection
- Critical incident analysis
- Day to day observations by another individual
- Specific consultations with patients observed by another individual
- Simulations or case studies

Once a decision has been reached, a tick should be placed in the appropriate box to indicate the chosen rating for each attribute.

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4.4 A diagnostic tool for assessing competence in managing and supporting medication adherence

COMMUNICATING WITH PATIENTS ABOUT MEDICATION					
	ATTRIBUTE	RATING (tick ONE box only for each attribute)			
		ALWAYS	USUALLY	SOMETIMES	NEVER
1. LISTENING	Helps patients feel at ease and feel that you have time for them				
	Gives the patient the opportunity to express their views				
	Listens to the patient's views and discusses any concerns				
	Encourages the patient to ask questions about their condition				
	Allows time for questions				
	Treats the patient as an equal partner				
	Respects diversity				
	Expresses willingness to be flexible				
2. COMMUNICATING	Identifies barriers to communication and responds appropriately				
	Shares knowledge and information in a way that the patient understands				
	Explores and confirms the patient's understanding				
	Checks own understanding of the patient's viewpoint				
	Uses aids to help understanding (e.g. decision aids and question prompts)				
	Recognises the importance of non verbal communication and responds appropriately				
	Uses questions to elicit information				
	Maintains appropriate eye contact				
	Displays a non judgemental attitude				

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	ATTRIBUTE	RATING (tick ONE box only for each attribute)			
		ALWAYS	USUALLY	SOMETIMES	NEVER
3. CONTEXT	Reviews patient information prior to the consultation				
	Introduces and explains own role				
	Establishes how involved the patient wants to be in decisions about their treatment				
	Clarifies the timing, boundaries and expectations of the consultation				
	Ensures that the consultation takes place in an appropriate setting and minimises interruptions				
	Keeps focused on the agreed aims of the consultation				
4. KNOWLEDGE	Knows own limitations				
	Maintains up-to-date professional knowledge and skills appropriate to own role				
	Knows when and how to seek further advice				
	Refers on to other health professionals and social services as required or as requested				
	Works in partnership with colleagues				
	Shares up-to-date information with patients about specialist support and community resources				
	Is aware of practical resources to help patients				

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MANAGING AND SUPPORTING MEDICATION ADHERENCE					
	ATTRIBUTE	RATING (tick ONE box only for each attribute)			
		ALWAYS	USUALLY	SOMETIMES	NEVER
5. UNDERSTANDING	Seeks to understand the patient's current circumstances and previous experiences (see list in section 2.5)that may impact on treatment				
	Is aware of whether the patient's cultural, religious or societal beliefs impact on treatment				
	Explores what the patient thinks about medication in general				
	Respects the patient's expertise and knowledge of their condition				
6. EXPLORING	Explores what the patient has been doing to deal with symptoms / illness and what the patient understands about their treatment				
	Discusses with the patient their expectations and concerns about their illness and treatment				
	Provides full, accurate and understandable information about the patient's symptoms / illness and the benefits, effects, risks (e.g. side effects) and uncertainty of all treatment options				
	Discusses prognosis and likely health outcomes				
	Establishes whether the health professional and the patient have similar or different views about the patient's symptoms / illness				
	Discusses any misunderstandings about illness or treatments				
	Encourages the patient to express positive and negative views about treatment and no treatment options				

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7. DECIDING	Discusses the patient's preferred option for treatment, negotiates treatment goals and decisions, but accepts the patient's final decision				
	Gives the patient time to consider the information before making a decision, if appropriate				
	Maintains appropriate professional records about decisions that are made and their outcomes				
	Explores the patient's ability to undertake the agreed plan				
	Checks that the patient knows what medication they are taking and why				
	Discusses when treatment will be reviewed (and what this entails), changed or stopped				
	Ensures that the patient knows what to do if their symptoms change, do not improve, or if a problem arises (e.g. a side effect)				
8. SUPPORTING	Recognises non-adherence (identifies patients at risk of non-adherence, assesses patients' adherence, for example by asking if they have missed any doses of their medication, and recognises the effects of non-adherence)				
	Identifies reasons for / causes of non-adherence, and barriers to future adherence				
	Manages adherence by providing effective practical support where the patient needs / wants help with adherence				
	Supports patients by providing ongoing information and feedback (including encouraging patients to come back with any questions), and monitors adherence				

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