

NSW Health chronic wound management capability framework: Development report

July 2023

PRIMARY, INTEGRATED AND COMMUNITY HEALTH

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Title	NSW Health chronic wound management capability framework: Development report		
Published	July 2023		
Next review	2028		
Produced by	Primary, Integrated and Community Health		
Preferred citation	NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation. NSW Health chronic wound management capability framework: Development report. Sydney: ACI; 2023.		
TRIM ACI/D23/2157	SHPN (ACI) 230409	978-1-76023-559-8	ACI_6156

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Foreword from the clinical leads

When the NSW Chronic Wound Management Taskforce convened in 2020, one of our priorities was to enhance the capability of the workforce. In NSW, we are fortunate to have clinicians with expertise in wound prevention and management in diverse settings. The Taskforce aimed to build on this expertise to improve wound prevention and management, and outcomes for consumers across the system.

The Capability Building Working Group was formed to progress the building of wound capability. I'd like to thank the working group, taskforce members, clinicians and NSW Health staff who contributed to the activities of the group and the development of the chronic wound management capability framework (the framework). Many have shared their time and expertise to create this document, which is a three-level model that builds knowledge and skills. Every consumer has skin, and all health workers have a role to play in maintaining skin integrity. For people living with a wound, healthcare workers need to ensure timely and evidence-based management either from themselves or by escalating to a clinician with higher proficiency.

The Framework describes the knowledge, skills and actions required for wound prevention, assessment and diagnosis, care planning and management, consumer partnership, interdisciplinary collaboration and lifelong learning. We hope the Framework is a starting point for workforce capability and growing expertise through the development and sharing of educational resources and professional development pathways.

Sue Monaro (PhD, RN), Chronic Wound Management Taskforce Co-Chair and Capability Building Working Group Clinical Lead

As a wound management clinician in regional NSW, I am especially pleased about the launch of the chronic wound management capability framework. The framework can play a valuable role in helping health organisations understand how to move forward with strengthening comprehensive chronic wound management across their services.

The framework will support health services to identify knowledge gaps and deliver appropriate education to their workforce. For the first time in NSW, chronic and complex wound care is defined as a specialty – something many of our community nurses have known for a long time. It deserves recognition of the specific knowledge and skills required to provide effective care to our community members who experience a chronic wound.

The framework clearly acknowledges and articulates the complex nature of chronic wounds, and hence the need for multi-factorial, interdisciplinary chronic wound management services.

The framework also recognises the distressing and debilitating impacts that having a chronic wound can have for consumers, and the importance that health providers address these impacts and don't exacerbate them for chronic wound consumers through sub-optimal management, experience and outcomes.

I know that we will be using these chronic wound management capabilities as we plan and develop new education for our staff in Northern NSW.

Laura Mattocks, Wound Management Project Lead, Northern New South Wales Local Health District

Background

Purpose

The [chronic wound management capability framework](#) (the framework) describes the capability required in NSW Health to deliver evidence-based wound prevention and management to the community of NSW.

Chronic wounds are wounds that do not progress as expected through the stages of healing. Wounds may become chronic if they heal at a slower rate, heal only partially, or recur after partial or complete wound closure.¹

The contextual, complex, and multi-factorial nature of managing chronic wounds requires a workforce that can respond and adapt to unpredictable scenarios. Capability is an extension from task and technical-focused competencies to an ability to problem-solve and continuously improve performance in complex and changing situations. Capability is particularly relevant for integrated care, advanced clinical practice and solving context-specific problems. Capability approaches also align with adult learning principles and lifelong learning.²⁻⁴

The framework describes the knowledge, skills and management practices needed to reduce the risk of chronic wounds (where possible) and to provide effective and collaborative management for consumers living with a chronic wound.

Consumers in NSW have described the impacts of a chronic wound on their quality of life, including their mental health and wellbeing, as well as that of their carers and families. Consumers have described the psychological distress of living with a chronic wound and not receiving the support they need for their mental health. Consumers have also shared how self-conscious they feel having a chronic wound and described the care for the wound as tedious, embarrassing, and relentless. Other issues that consumers have identified include inadequate pain management, limited consumer information, poor access to wound care products and a lack of comprehensive, coordinated care.⁵ The framework contributes to improving consistent delivery of comprehensive and evidence-based chronic wound management across NSW Health that aims to improve the outcomes and quality of life for people living with a chronic wound.

While chronic wounds have significant impacts for the consumer and their families, they also have ramifications for the whole health system. Chronic wounds result in large numbers of outpatient and community health occasions of service, emergency presentations and hospital admissions, with a high rate of re-admission within 28 days.⁶ Many chronic wounds are managed in primary care settings.

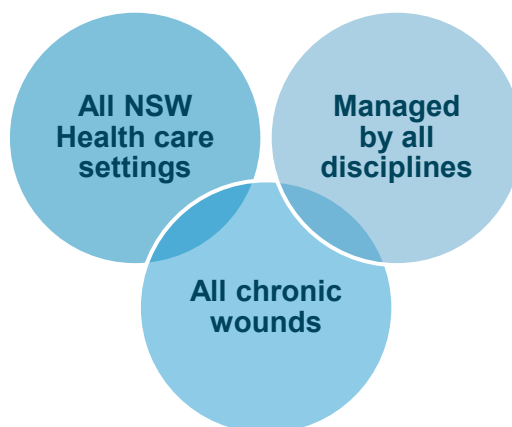
As consumers with chronic wounds can present to any part of the health system, it is important that all healthcare workers understand their role in wound prevention and management, the roles of other team members and how to use clinical pathways effectively to achieve optimal outcomes for consumers. The framework describes the roles of the healthcare team and the need to collaborate to deliver timely and effective wound management.

Scope

The framework has a broad scope, describing capability for management:

- of all types of chronic wounds on all parts of the body, regardless of cause
- in any setting where NSW Health staff provide clinical or personal care
- by healthcare and other workers from all clinical disciplines and with varying levels of experience.

Figure 1: Scope of the framework



The framework:

- provides guidance to NSW Health organisations relating to essential capabilities required in preventing and managing chronic wounds. Organisations can determine the most appropriate way to develop these capabilities within their services.
- seeks to complement the requirements of professional registrations, scopes of practice, and policy directives.
- **does not** replace local clinical procedures, business rules, professional standards or other compliance and legal requirements.
- **does not** describe the specific multidisciplinary scope of practice requirements for each capability; however, it does indicate where there are likely to be scope of practice considerations related to discipline, education level or competence that need to be determined within services.

Efforts were made to align this framework and its progress to the implementation of other key chronic wound management and consumer engagement resources, including but not limited to:

- [Leading Better Value Care Standards for Wound Management](#)¹
- [Leading Better Value Care Chronic Wound Management Clinical Priorities Brief](#)⁷
- [Wounds Australia Standards for Wound Prevention and Management \(2016\)](#)⁸
- [NSW Health Services Aboriginal Cultural Engagement Self Assessment Tool](#)⁹

It is acknowledged that there are many other clinical practice guidelines and policies that crossover with chronic wound management, for example the [NSW Health Pressure Injury Prevention and Management Policy](#)¹⁰ and the [Infection Prevention and Control Policy](#).¹¹

Audience and uses

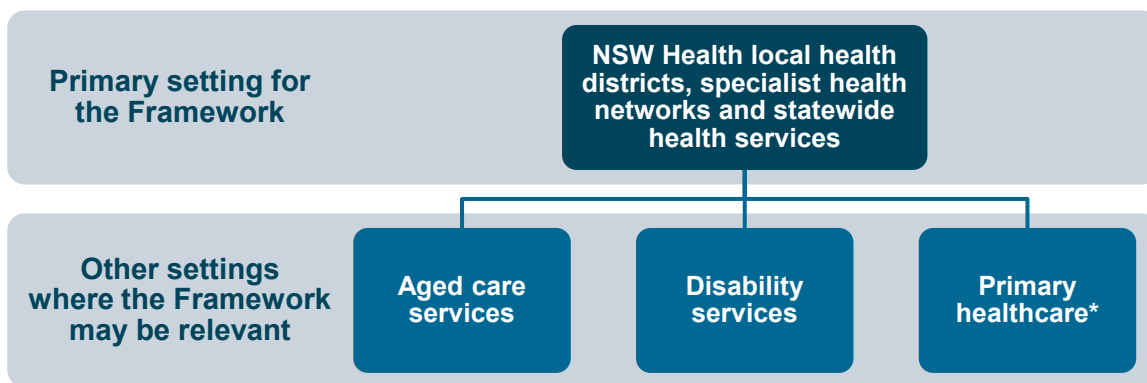
NSW Health clinicians, consumer and carer representatives, educators and managers worked together to develop the framework for use by the NSW Health healthcare workforce who provide clinical and personal care to consumers with, or at risk of developing, chronic wounds.

As chronic wound management occurs in, and across, many healthcare and home settings, this framework may also be relevant for healthcare workers and organisations in other parts of the health system in NSW. Other health and care settings are invited to adapt the framework to apply to their context and workforce.

This framework was developed for all healthcare workers providing clinical or personal care to consumers at risk or with chronic wounds.

Table 1 describes the primary audiences and how they can use the framework to support their needs.

Figure 2: Applicable health settings for the framework



* Primary healthcare includes general practice, Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations, allied health services, private nursing and health services and pharmacies.

Figure 3: Applicable audience of healthcare and other workers for the framework

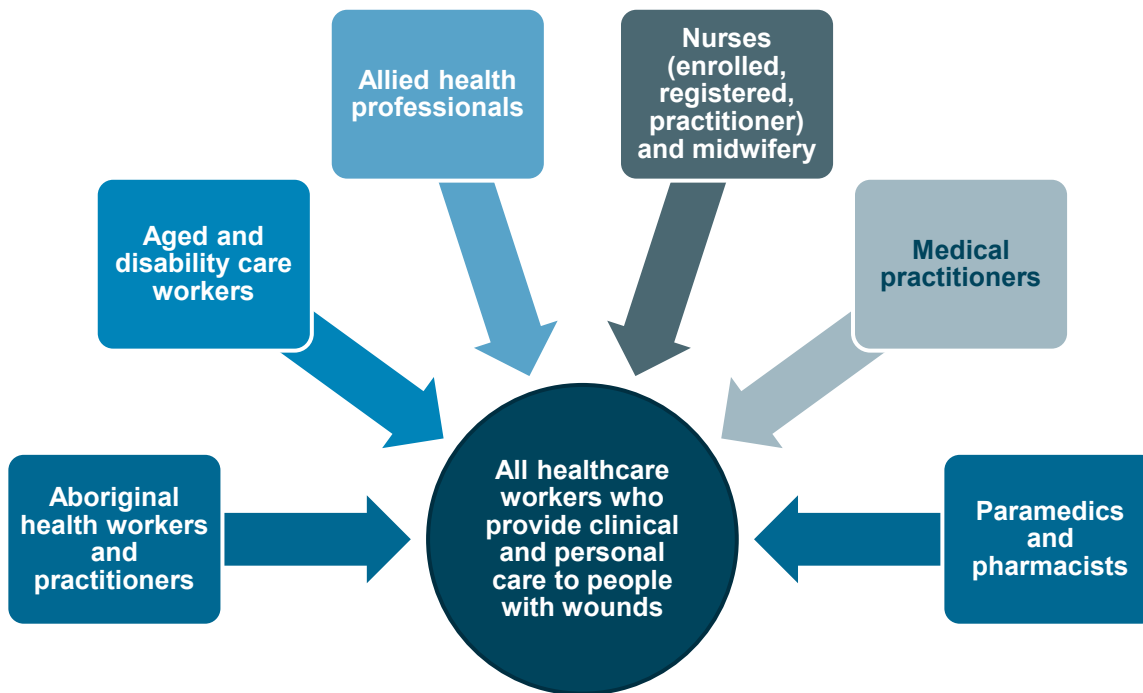


Table 1: framework audiences and uses

Who is it for?	Ways to use the framework
<p>Healthcare and other workers who provide clinical and personal care to consumers with chronic wounds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify current level of knowledge and skill to manage chronic wounds and consider how proficiency aligns with the needs of current role and consumers. To identify areas for professional development, set new learning goals, and monitor progression.
<p>Managers and organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a service-level analysis tool to map the level of capability required to meet local chronic wound management needs against current workforce capability, including identifying gaps and strengths. To determine workforce education needs, plan development opportunities for staff, or identify the need for new or modified positions. As a performance development tool with individual clinicians.
<p>Education and training providers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify learning outcomes and design curricula for chronic wound management education and training. This can include the provision of learning in pre-service education courses, clinical post-graduate courses, workplace clinical assessment and professional development programs.

Guiding principles

Value-based healthcare

The framework was developed as part of the [Leading Better Value Care Chronic Wound Management](#)⁶ initiative, which is part of NSW Health's commitment to [value-based healthcare](#). The framework seeks to contribute to the guiding principles of value-based healthcare, namely, to improve:

- Health outcomes that matter to patients
- Experiences of receiving care
- Experiences of providing care
- Effectiveness and efficiency of care.

Value-based principles

The framework applies the value-based principles of person-centredness, interdisciplinary collaboration and evidence-based practice.

Person-centredness

Person-centredness is an approach that includes the whole person – from a biological, psychological, and social perspective – as the focus of healthcare organisation and delivery. This approach recognises that consumers often have needs that go beyond those that relate to illnesses and conditions that they live with or for which they present to health services. It also seeks to empower the consumer to participate in shared decision making about their care.

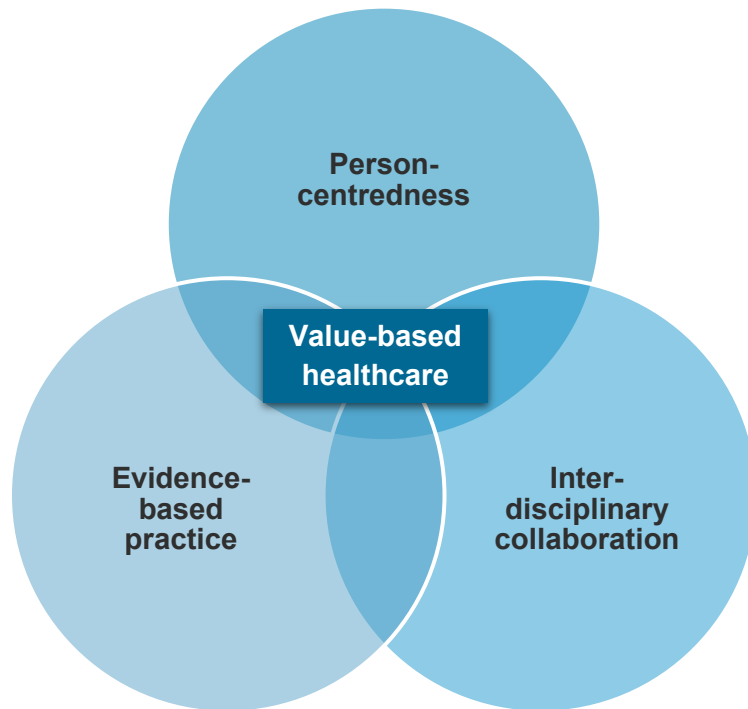
Interdisciplinary collaboration

Effective chronic wound management requires input and coordination from multiple clinicians, disciplines, and services. This framework promotes collaboration across the whole healthcare team and engages the consumer to mutually identify goals, create a management plan, deliver services and ensure effective and timely communication within the team. It promotes interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary collaboration as available and suitable for the consumer's needs.

Evidence-based practice

The complex and context-specific nature of chronic wounds means that there is not one right way to manage wounds in all situations. However, consistent application of evidence-based care can significantly improve chronic wound outcomes and quality of life for consumers. This framework applies an evidence-based approach, combining the best available clinical evidence with the clinical reasoning of healthcare workers and the preferences and values of consumers.

Figure 4: Principles underpinning the framework



Development

The NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation (ACI) collaborated with a working group of chronic wound management experts, consumer representatives and the Health Education and Training Institute (HETI) to develop the framework. Chronic wound management clinicians, consumers and education experts provided direction and content for the development of the capability framework, which was progressed by the ACI chronic wound management project team.

Figure 5: Iterative approach to developing the framework



Strategies

Capability Building Chronic Wound Working Group

The ACI formed a statewide, multidisciplinary working group including consumer representatives, wound care nurses, allied health professionals and health education professionals. Please see [Acknowledgements](#) for a list of the working group members.

The working group met regularly between 2021 and 2023 to develop the framework. Members also undertook actions between meetings and participated in additional consultations, workshops, and surveys.

Review of other capability frameworks and chronic wound literature

Other capability frameworks addressing similar clinical areas were reviewed. The common elements of capability frameworks were assessed for features which would be beneficial for the framework. Other literature that focused on the core knowledge, skills and clinical priorities required to provide quality chronic wound management were also reviewed. See [Appendix](#) for the capability frameworks that were reviewed and informed the development of this framework.

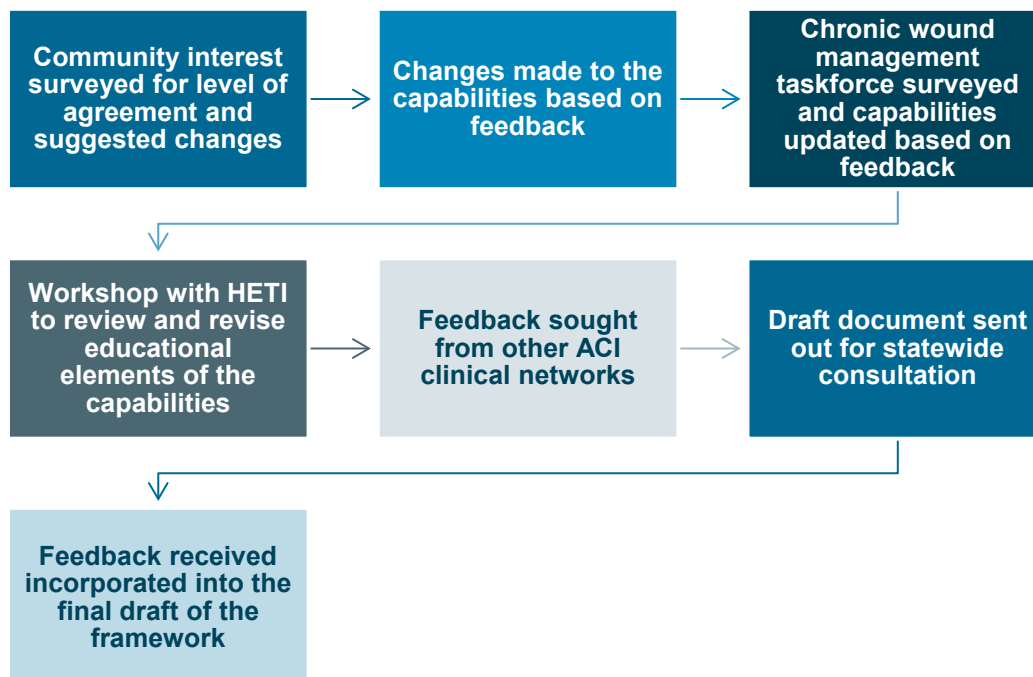
Consultation with wound prevention and management experts and stakeholders

A series of consultation activities were conducted with wound prevention and management experts and other stakeholders to develop and confirm the capability descriptions and the whole framework. The steps taken in this process were:

1. The first draft of the capability statements were put into a survey asking respondents about their level of agreement with the capability descriptions and feedback about changes. The survey was presented at several ACI chronic wound management forums and emailed to the chronic wound management community of interest. All responses were anonymous.

2. The survey feedback was reviewed, and suggested changes incorporated into a second draft of the capabilities.
3. The second draft of the capability framework was sent to the Chronic Wound Management Taskforce for a further round of feedback. This feedback was incorporated into a third draft of the capability framework.
4. A workshop with working group members was facilitated by HETI to review and revise the educational elements of the framework, including the use of language that would support the development of learning objectives. Suggested changes were made to the capability statements.
5. Elements of the capability framework were reviewed by other ACI clinical networks including mental health, pain management and Aboriginal health. See [Acknowledgements](#).
6. The revised draft framework was sent to all NSW Health local health districts (LHDs), specialty health networks (SHNs), relevant NSW Health pillars, branches and offices of the Ministry of Health, and other partners for review and feedback. Twenty-two feedback submissions were received (see [Acknowledgements](#)). The consultation process for the development of the framework is represented in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Consultation process to develop the framework



Endorsement

The final draft of the framework was reviewed and endorsed by the:

- The Chronic Wound Management Taskforce Clinical Solutions Workstream
- ACI Executive Team

Structure of the framework

For the full matrix of domains, capabilities and proficiencies, refer to the [Chronic wound management capability framework](#).

Domains and capabilities

There are six domains of practice of the framework, four of which incorporate the [clinical priority areas of the Chronic Wound Management Initiative](#).

There are a total of 26 capabilities across the six domains.

Domain 1: Skin anatomy, physiology and wound pathophysiology (3 capabilities)

Domain 2: Risk screening and wound prevention (4 capabilities)

Domain 3: Comprehensive assessment (3 capabilities)

Domain 4: Chronic wound management (7 capabilities)

Domain 5: Enablement and partnerships (5 capabilities)

Domain 6: Learning and service improvement (4 capabilities)

Proficiency levels

Each capability is described across three levels of proficiency: Foundational, Adept and Advanced. The three levels indicate increasing knowledge and skills, ability to manage complexity and autonomy of practice. The proficiency levels are cumulative and developmental, with each level incorporating the preceding capability statement plus additional capability.

Foundational: All healthcare and other workers who provide clinical or personal care to people with, or at risk of, skin injury (prevention) and chronic wounds (management).

Adept: Clinicians who can independently manage impaired skin integrity and chronic wounds.

Advanced: Clinicians with advanced and/or specialist ability to manage complex chronic wounds.

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Appendix: Other capability frameworks reviewed and referenced in development of the framework

Capability frameworks and documents reviewed	Referenced in first draft of capability descriptions
Allied Health Capability framework: Disability and Complex Support Needs . Vic Dept of Health; 2020.	Yes
Capability framework For Integrated Diabetic Lower Limb Care: A User's Guide . Wounds UK; 2019	
Digital health capability framework for allied health professionals . Vic Dept of Health; 2021.	
Frailty: A framework of core capabilities . Skills for Health, NHS England & Health Education England; 2021.	
Healthcare Safety and Quality Capabilities: An Occupation-Specific Set for Healthcare Workers in NSW Health . Clinical Excellence Commission; 2021.	
Musculoskeletal core capabilities framework for first point of contact practitioners . Health Education England, NHS England and Skills for Health; 2018.	
National Competency Standards framework for Pharmacists in Australia 2016 . Pharmaceutical Society of Australia; 2016.	
National Wound Care Core Capabilities framework for England . Skills for Health; 2021.	Yes
NSW intensive care unit (ICU) nursing clinical pathway . NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation; 2022.	
Standards for Wound Prevention and Management (Third Edition) . Wounds Australia; 2016.	Yes

Acknowledgements

Members of the Chronic Wound Management Capability Building Working Group

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Kiel Hennessey, Aboriginal Chronic Conditions Network Manager

Deb Howe, Mental Health Network Manager

Lea Kirkwood, Director System Transformation Enablement and Patient Partnerships

Susan Rogers, Pain Network Manager

Statewide feedback submissions received

Bungendore Medical Centre

Central Coast LHD

Hunter New England LHD

Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network NSW

Illawarra Shoalhaven LHD

Mid North Coast LHD

Murrumbidgee LHD

Nepean Blue Mountains LHD: consolidated and Occupational Therapy Department

Northern Sydney LHD: consolidated and Beaches Rapid Access care of the Elderly (BRACE) team

NSW Ambulance

NSW Clinical Excellence Commission

NSW Health Education and Training Institute

NSW Ministry of Health, Health and Social Policy Branch

NSW Ministry of Health, Nursing and Midwifery Office

South Eastern Sydney LHD

Southern NSW LHD

St Vincent's Health Network Sydney

Sydney LHD

Western Sydney LHD