

Let's talk about...

Professional Accountability: what's it all about?

Professional accountability is about taking responsibility for your actions, always ensuring you are competent to do the activity you've been asked to perform. Professional accountability systems not only maintain standards of practice but also help professionals improve their practice.

The development of evidence-based practice is driven by the increasing public and professional demand for accountability in safety and quality improvement in health care.

Hospital Play Specialist are part of the New Zealand Allied Health workforce. The Allied Health workforce is made up of health professionals who are not part of the medical, dental or nursing professions. There are approximately 47 professions that are classed as Allied Health professions in New Zealand. Allied health professionals are autonomous practitioners who work in a variety of health care settings and often work in multidisciplinary teams.

Link to <https://www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/leadership-ministry/allied-health>
<https://www.alliedhealth.org.nz>

Allied Health Workforce Regulation

The allied health workforce is regulated in two ways, national regulation under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCA Act) or are self-regulated by a professional body.

Allied health professions each have a distinct, specialised body of knowledge and skills, and actively work with people accessing health and disability services across a range of settings. Allied health professionals have a relevant tertiary (or equivalent) education qualification (*a helpful definition is provided in s12 (2)(a-e) of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003*), have a professional association, an appropriate code of ethics and standards of practice, and a recognised system for monitoring ongoing competence.

The New Zealand Hospital Play Specialist Association of Aotearoa/New Zealand is the professional body for hospital play specialists in New Zealand. In 2003 the professional body established a Registration process.


The Hospital Play Specialist Registration Council (HPSRC), a standing committee of the professional body, was established to:

- foster consistency in standards of practice and ethical conduct
- enhance the status and credibility of the profession
- validate professional knowledge and provide a sense of professional pride and achievement
- provide assurance for the public that hospital specialists have achieved professional competency requirements for their profession and are maintaining professional development.

There are three potential accountability processes that Hospital Play Specialists (HPS) may desire or be required to meet:

Hospital Play Specialist Registration: NZHPSReg

A voluntary process of accountability of professional competence of an individual against requirements defined by the professional body through the New Zealand Hospital Play Specialist



Registration Council: a standing committee of the Hospital Play Specialist Association of Aotearoa/New Zealand Registration documents and guidelines can be found at:

[Links -Hospital Play Specialist Association of Aotearoa New Zealand official documents.](#)

[Link - Registration process – The Registration Handbook](#)

[Link – Registration Resources](#)

Teacher Registration/Practicing Certificate:

Most Hospital Play Specialist Services in New Zealand have an early childhood education component within their programmes. These are licensed as Hospital Based Early Childhood Centres. The practising certificate enables you to be lawfully employed in a teaching position. A current practising certificate is required for most teaching positions in early childhood centres.

It is essential that requirements for the teacher practicing certificate are incorporated into hospital play specialist services annual performance review processes as it ensures compliance if audited for the Ministry of Education.

Criteria requirements and guidelines for Induction and mentoring and Mentor Teachers can be found at www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz

[Information on Hospital Based Early Childhood Centres <https://www.education.govt.nz/early-childhood/licensing-and-regulations>](https://www.education.govt.nz/early-childhood/licensing-and-regulations)

Annual Performance Objectives and Review:

A District Health Board (DHB) or employer specific process completed with your direct manager that defines the growth objectives for an individual, an annual review process incorporates a professional development plan to achieve identified outcomes. It is important that within this process the requirements for Teacher Registration and Hospital Play Specialist Registration professional development requirements are identified.

Health professionals may desire, or be required to achieve accountability across several operational processes. It is important that the requirements of each are examined and aligned as often there is overlap between them; in some instance examples of work or evidence will fulfil more than one criteria/objective in more than one accountability process.

Encouraging the development of national networks for HPS Workforce Development

Several Hospital Play Specialist Services have documents that align HPS professional competencies, Teacher Registration and HPS Registration requirements.

There is recognition within DHB shared workforce development programmes that there is value in sharing knowledge and resources across DHB to support discipline groups and specialist work areas.

Where Hospital Play Specialist Services currently do not have Registered HPS staff who can assist with requirements for accountability in professional practice, individual HPS, team leaders/professional leader, Directors of Allied Health and their Line Managers may find collaboration across the various DHB's required in developing sound professional practices within their service/DHB.