



**CIMSPA PROFESSIONAL STANDARD:
POPULATION SPECIALISM**

Working with Antenatal and Postnatal Clients

(FULL STANDARD)

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Working with Antenatal and Postnatal Clients

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ABOUT THIS STANDARD

This document is a CIMSPA professional standard (full version).

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1. Overview

Professional Standard: Population Specialism Working with Antenatal and Postnatal Clients

This Professional Standard: Population Specialism, Working with Antenatal and Postnatal Clients outlines the essential knowledge and skills that are needed to meet the requirements of the sector minimum deployment standards.

Note: “Professional Standard: Population Specialism” will be abbreviated throughout this document to “Population Specialism”; the reader should understand this abbreviation as the full title.

It provides guidance for the development of education products that will be endorsed by CIMSPA.

The Working with Antenatal and Postnatal Clients Population Specialism covers job roles that sit within the sport and physical activity sector as part of all industries.

This CIMSPA Population Specialism allows you to demonstrate your expertise in working with antenatal and postnatal clients in a sport and physical activity setting specific to your occupation.

This Population Specialism can be used as follows:

1. Combined with an occupation standard to form an educational product: e.g., Occupation: Coach, Gym Instructor, Personal Trainer, Swimming Teacher, Group Exercise Instructor, Population Specialism: Working with Antenatal and Postnatal Clients.
2. Combined with an occupation standard and additional specialism(s) to form an educational product: e.g., Occupation: Coach; Population Specialism: Working with Antenatal and Postnatal Clients; Environment Specialism: Working in the Community Environment.
3. As a standalone product that can be completed as continuing professional development: e.g., working with Antenatal and Postnatal Clients in a Sport and Physical Activity setting. *
4. This professional standard should not be used in lieu or as a replacement for the working with women and girl’s professional standard. The standards have been designed to be complimentary, this standard focuses specifically on the life stage of Ante and Post-natal with it being very significant.

*Further Specialised Training may be required.

Endorsed qualification logo

Qualifications that meet the requirements of this CIMSPA professional standard will display this official CIMSPA endorsement logo.



2. Scope of the Working with Antenatal and Postnatal Clients Population Specialism

This Population Specialism supports practitioners to work within their current occupational scope/role with antenatal and postnatal individuals and groups:

- Core population: antenatal clients with uncomplicated pregnancies and postnatal* clients

*Postnatal clients refer to those without indications of abdominal wall and pelvic floor dysfunctions.

Individuals that meet this standard will:

UNDERSTAND:

- The fundamental anatomical, physiological, and biomechanical changes affecting the ability of antenatal and postnatal clients to safely engage in physical activity.
- How to adapt physical activity sessions for antenatal and postnatal clients.
- The need to stay up to date with evidence-based research and guidance for this population group.

HAVE DEMONSTRATED:

- An understanding of how to work safely with antenatal and postnatal clients to develop physical programmes/sessions.
- The ability to develop programmes/sessions to engage clients in physical activity during pregnancy and after childbirth.

Activities could include:

- Supporting clients to continue being active during pregnancy and the postnatal period.
- Ensuring antenatal and postnatal clients have a greater understanding of the benefits of regular engagement with physical activity
- Delivering safe and effective physical activities for fun and enjoyment.

3. Summary of knowledge and skills

Working with antenatal and postnatal clients

Topic	Knowledge	Skills
Health and well-being for antenatal and postnatal clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand the terms, perinatal, antenatal, and postnatal and the importance of physical activity for the clients (definitions in appendix).• Know how, when (contraindications) and where to signpost and refer clients to.	
Benefits, barriers, and enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand the evidence-based benefits of being active during pregnancy and the postnatal period.• Understand the enablers that can support antenatal and postnatal clients in participating in physical activity.• Understand the actual and perceived barriers that prevent antenatal and postnatal clients from participating in physical activity.• Understand the common challenges and potential risks associated with physical activity participation during pregnancy, birth, and the postnatal period, including an awareness of warning signs necessitating to withdrawal from a physical activity programme/session.	
Plan, prepare, continuously evaluate, and review sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Know when and how to appropriately screen a client to assess suitability, readiness for physical activity and identifying risks requiring signposting or referral.• Know how to use a disclaimer where activities are delivered online (whether live or recorded) and where screening is not always possible face-to-face.• Know how to plan, adapt, prepare and deliver physical activity programmes/sessions specific to antenatal and postnatal clients' needs and within own occupational scope.• Know how to review the programme /session to ensure the client's goals have been met and to adjust accordingly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan, adapt and prepare programmes/sessions for antenatal and postnatal clients within own occupational scope.• Use client information to select and adapt appropriate activities to meet the needs of antenatal and postnatal clients.

Topic	Knowledge	Skills
Professional responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand what best practice is when working with antenatal and postnatal clients including continuous professional development and staying up to date with research and developments in the topic area.• Understand the circumstances during which information may need to be exchanged with a healthcare professional, in line with consent from the client.	

4. Product development guidance

This section is aimed at organisations developing formal educational products mapping to this Population Specialism. The guidance should be considered in the development of all educational products seeking CIMSPA endorsement.

The CIMSPA Professional Development Board (PDB) has agreed any of the formal educational products listed in the table below can be developed for the Population Specialism, Working with Antenatal and Postnatal clients. Where evidence that all elements of the Population Specialism are included, CIMSPA endorsement can be sought.

Educational product	Mapping requirements	Professional standard achieved on attainment?
Regulated vocational qualification	Fully mapped	YES
Apprenticeship programme	Fully mapped	YES
HE programme/modules	Fully mapped	YES
CPD	Partial Mapping	NO

All formal educational products that are seeking CIMSPA endorsement must be submitted to CIMSPA and should include all elements outlined in the Population Specialism and assessed in line with the intention of the standard.

Education providers seeking CIMSPA endorsement for a product against this Population Specialism are asked to consider the following:

- a) They determine and justify the level of the product they have developed, in line with regulator guidance. To ensure parity, the level for all educational products that fully map to this Population Specialism should be the same.

The level assigned is determined by leading awarding organisations currently offering qualifications in the sector in which this specialism resides.

This is not a first-to-post exercise but one in which education providers are invited to submit their levelled units/full qualification for review as part of the CIMSPA endorsement process.

Once agreed by CIMSPA, all subsequent fully-mapped educational products must conform to the level set for this Population Specialism.

Level descriptors set out the generic knowledge and skills associated with the typical holder of a qualification at a given level and it should be ensured that educational products fully mapping to this Population Specialism are a 'best-fit' for the level assigned.

- b) They determine the total qualification time for the qualification/unit and outline the minimum requirements for practical assessment.
- c) Their quality assurance meets the appropriate regulator's guidance, including: internal and external quality assurance, staffing requirements and assessment generation and evidence.

5. Learning and development requirements (LDRs)

The LDRs outline the key areas of learning and assessment that should be contained within any educational product seeking CIMSPA endorsement against a professional standard. There are 4 key areas of learning and development for an individual working with Antenatal and Postnatal clients, of which all areas are interconnected and mandatory. The key areas are:

1. Health and well-being for antenatal and postnatal clients
2. Benefits, barriers, and enablers
3. Plan, prepare, continuously evaluate, and review sessions
4. Professional responsibilities

N.B. Examples are given within the LDRs to provide an overview of the knowledge and skills most relevant to the role; it is not mandatory to assess learners against 100% of the examples provided, however, sufficient coverage to ensure occupational competence on achievement must be ensured. This will be reviewed as part of the CIMSPA endorsement process.

1. Health and well-being for antenatal and postnatal clients

Ref	Knowledge and understanding:	Those working with antenatal and postnatal clients must:
K1.1	Antenatal and postnatal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define the terms perinatal, antenatal, and postnatal. Know the terms Breech, Preterm birth and Vaginal Birth After Caesarean (VBAC). Be familiar with the maternal care pathway in the United Kingdom. Know the different types of births to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spontaneous vaginal birth. Assisted vaginal birth (ventouse/forceps). Caesarean section. Know the impact of birth experience (including birth trauma, pelvic floor, and abdominal wall dysfunctions) on postnatal recovery. Know the effects of lactation and considerations when planning a programme/session for a client that is breastfeeding. Know how to respond to an individual who has experienced fertility problems and baby loss (miscarriage, stillbirth, infant death) whilst also acknowledging that individuals may not wish to disclose this information.
K1.2	Health and well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know the potential warning signs when it may be necessary for a client to withdraw from a physical activity programme/session. Know how to respond if a client shows signs or symptoms that their mental health has been impacted and where to signpost them. Know the importance of nutrition, hydration and dramatic or sudden weight change. Have an awareness of which foods, drinks and supplements help to support a healthy pregnancy and birth. Have an awareness of the calorie requirements during the three trimesters of pregnancy and the postnatal period, with reference to the different requirements of breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding mothers.
K1.3	Advice and guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know the importance of regularly reviewing and staying up to date with current evidence and guidance. Know the appropriate professional and/or support service to signpost or refer to when contraindications are identified, or concerns relate to issues beyond the occupational scope of practice. Know the appropriate and up-to-date screening tools to employ, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get Active Questionnaire for Pregnancy - UK version (Available in Appendix).
K1.4	Anatomical, physiological and biomechanical changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know the fundamental anatomical, physiological, and biomechanical changes associated with pregnancy and the postnatal period to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cardiovascular system Respiratory system Musculoskeletal system Metabolic system Endocrine system Know the anatomical, physiological, and biomechanical changes that persist after childbirth.

2. Benefits, barriers, and enablers

Ref	Knowledge and understanding:	Those working with antenatal and postnatal clients must:
K2.1	Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know the benefits of regular engagement with physical activity during pregnancy and the postnatal period in accordance with national (Chief Medical Officers, 2019) and international (World Health Organisation, 2020) guidelines. • The evidence-based benefits of physical activity for pregnant women to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reduction in hypertensive disorders – Improved cardiorespiratory fitness – Helps to control gestational weight gain – Reduction in risk of gestational diabetes – Improves mood – Improves sleep • The evidence-based benefits of physical activity for women after childbirth (birth to 12 months) to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Helps to control weight and return to pre-pregnancy weight – Improves cardiovascular fitness – Improves tummy muscle tone and strength – Reduces worry and depression – Improves mood – Improves sleep
K2.2	Barriers and Myths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know types of real and perceived barriers to physical activity that antenatal and postnatal clients may experience, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Safety concerns – Health conditions – Musculoskeletal pain – Body confidence – Accessibility (cost/time/location). • Know the myths that are associated with participating in physical activity during and after pregnancy. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Do not lift over your head – Eat for two – Put your feet up
K2.3	Common problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know common antenatal problems relevant to physical activity participation and how to respond to them. To include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Posture and balance issues – Musculoskeletal pain – Fatigue and interrupted sleep patterns – Concentration and memory – Morning sickness, constipation, bloating, etc. – Health conditions including gestational diabetes, High blood pressure problems e.g., preeclampsia. – Pelvic floor – Pregnancy related pelvic girdle pain and pelvic floor - stress incontinence. – Abdominal wall e.g., separated abdominal muscles (diastasis recti)
K2.4	Motivation and enabling factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how to encourage individuals, within scope of practice, to be physically active during pregnancy and after childbirth. • Know about appropriate and up-to -date initiatives and campaigns to promote physical activity and engage antenatal and postnatal clients. Examples include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – This Mum Moves (in Appendix)

Ref	Knowledge and understanding:	Those working with antenatal and postnatal clients must:
K2.5	Contraindications and warning signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Active Pregnancy Foundation – Find Your Active (in Appendix) - Couch to Fitness – Prenatal Programme (in Appendix) - Couch to Fitness – Postnatal Programme (in Appendix) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know which contraindications are relative and absolute during pregnancy in accordance with recent evidence including: • Relative contraindications (Meah, Davies & Davenport, 2020): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mild respiratory disorders - Mild congenital or acquired heart disease - Well-controlled type 1 diabetes - Mild pre-eclampsia - Preterm premature rupture of membranes (PPROMs). - Placenta previa after 28 weeks - Untreated thyroid disease - Symptomatic, severe eating disorder - Multiple nutrient deficiencies and/or chronic undernutrition - Moderate–heavy smoking (>20 cigarettes per day) in the presence of comorbidities. • Absolute contraindications (Meah, Davies & Davenport, 2020): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Severe respiratory diseases (e.g., chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, restrictive lung disease and cystic fibrosis) - Severe acquired or congenital heart disease with exercise intolerance. - Uncontrolled or severe arrhythmia - Placental abruption - Vasa previa - Uncontrolled type 1 diabetes - Intrauterine growth restriction (IUGR) - Active preterm labour - Severe pre-eclampsia - Cervical insufficiency. • Know the signs and symptoms of pelvic floor and abdominal wall dysfunction and understand that if any of these factors are present, high intensity activity should not resume and referral to a pelvic health physiotherapist is warranted. These include (Goom, Donnelly & Brockwell, 2019): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Urinary and/or faecal incontinence - Urinary and/or faecal urgency that is difficult to defer - Heaviness/pressure/bulge/dragging in the pelvic area - Pain with intercourse - Obstructive defecation - Pendular abdomen, separated abdominal muscles and/or decreased abdominal strength and function - Musculoskeletal lumbopelvic pain • Know the warning signs when to stop and activity, what to do, and where to refer a client to. <p>Warning signs to stop an activity include (ACOG, 2020):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vaginal bleeding - Abdominal pain - Regular and painful contractions - Amniotic fluid leakage - Dyspnea before exertion - Persistent excessive shortness of breath that does not resolve with rest - Persistent dizziness or faintness that does not resolve on rest - Headache

Ref	Knowledge and understanding:	Those working with antenatal and postnatal clients must:
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Chest pain- Muscle weakness affecting balance- Calf pain or swelling- Severe pelvic girdle pain that do not improve within a week or two, or interfere with normal day-to-day living <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Know the importance of keeping up to date with up to-date with research and best-practice guidelines.

3. Plan, prepare, continuously evaluate and review sessions

Ref	Knowledge and understanding:	Those working with antenatal and postnatal clients must:
K3.1	Pre-activity screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand the importance of pre-activity screening.• Know when it might not be appropriate to take on a client and when to refer a client to a healthcare professional or more suitably qualified exercise professional (e.g., clinical exercise specialist).• Know the key areas to ask when pre-screening an antenatal client (refer to screening tools in appendix) to include but not limited to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Activity levels: type, amount and intensity of activities engaged in (pre-pregnancy and currently).– Estimated date of birth– Multiple pregnancy.– Previous pregnancy history including miscarriage, early delivery or other complications.– Medication.– Contraindicators– Medical contacts (Emergency contact or midwife contact)• Know the key areas to ask when pre-screening a postnatal client to include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Activity levels: type, amount and intensity of activities engaged in (during pregnancy and currently)– Whether they have had a 6–8-week postnatal check with a healthcare professional– Guidance or information advised from a specialist– Type of birth– Birth trauma and complications– Postnatal bleeding (lochia)– Signs and symptoms of abdominal wall and/or pelvic floor dysfunction– Lactation– Pelvic girdle and back pain– General well-being (including psychological)• Understand the importance of a disclaimer where activities are delivered online (live or recorded) and when screening is not always possible face-to-face.
K3.2	Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Know the importance of tailoring activities to the needs of antenatal and postnatal clients.• Know how to plan safe and effective modifications/adaptations and alternative activities for antenatal and postnatal clients within scope of occupational practice. <p>Know the types of activities that should be avoided and the reasons for this based on current evidence and guidelines Activities could include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Contact sports (e.g., ice hockey, martial arts, rugby)– Activities with a high risk of falling (e.g., downhill snow skiing, water skiing, surfing, off-road cycling, gymnastics, horse riding)– Scuba diving– Sky diving– "Hot yoga" or "hot Pilates". <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Know the importance of correct technique and regression of the activities.

Ref	Knowledge and understanding:	Those working with antenatal and postnatal clients must:
K3.3	Goal setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how goals for antenatal and postnatal clients may differ from those of the general population. • Know the importance of reviewing your analysis of the client's needs and motivation to inform goals and session outcomes. • Know the importance of a flexible approach whilst goal setting and supporting antenatal and postnatal clients' goals to be active.
K3.4	Recommended guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know the recommended national (CMO) and international (WHO) physical activity guidelines for antenatal and postnatal clients. • Know the importance of the 6–8-week postnatal check by a healthcare professional as an opportunity to discuss physical and mental wellbeing. • Understand why the guidelines are in place and the importance of keeping up to date with evidence-based research and guidelines.
K3.5	Assessing risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how to assess and manage the risks to antenatal and postnatal clients prior, during and post physical activity. • Know the importance of dynamic risk assessment of activities including when babies are present in the facility/environment. • Know the key warning signs and symptoms of when to advise the client to withdraw from physical activity.
K3.6	Considerations for planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know the different considerations that need to be accounted for when planning physical activity sessions for antenatal and postnatal clients to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Avoiding hot and humid conditions where appropriate - Regular hydration - Balanced nutrition - Appropriate clothing and footwear - Lactation - Type of births and stage of recovery - Adaptation of exercises (modification) - Using the correct technique
K3.7	Implications of planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know the key implications of the effects of pregnancy on programming to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consideration of altered biomechanics including a shift in gravity and postural imbalance - Current physical activity levels - Implications of performing exercises in the supine position after the first trimester - advise on time spent in this position and potential risk for long durations. - The need to re-educate the pelvic floor and abdominal muscles after childbirth. - Awareness of pelvic floor and abdominal wall dysfunctions and referral to an appropriately qualified professional as indicated. • Know the importance of safe functional transitions between activities both within a physical activity setting and everyday activities: e.g., getting in and out the car.

Ref	Knowledge and understanding:	Those working with antenatal and postnatal clients must:
K3.8	Planning and preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how to plan safe physical activity programmes/ sessions for antenatal and postnatal clients. • Know how to plan engaging physical activity programmes/ sessions for antenatal and postnatal clients. • Know the importance of the relationship between programme design and activity delivery in engaging antenatal and postnatal clients. • Know the importance of adapting physical activity sessions/programmes within a 1-1 and group setting to meet the need of the individual client. • Know how to deliver inclusive, safe and engaging physical activity sessions for antenatal and postnatal clients.
K3.9	Feedback/reflective practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know the opportunities to collate and use feedback from the clients regarding the activities delivered. • Know how to use feedback from clients to improve engagement and adherence. • Know how to reflect on own practice to inform future sessions.

Ref	Skills:	Those working with antenatal and postnatal clients must be able to:
S3.1	Session and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show clear insight and an evidence-based rationale for the session and activities used in the plan.
S3.2	Plan and evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a plan for a physical activity session that is safe and engaging, for antenatal and postnatal client(s). • Demonstrate the ability to adapt a physical activity plan that is specific to a client. • Evaluate inclusive, safe, and fun physical activity sessions that promotes the individual returning to physical activity after childbirth.

4. Professional responsibilities

Ref	Knowledge and understanding:	Those working with antenatal and postnatal clients must:
K4.1	Best practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Know in which special circumstances, in line with occupational scope and where appropriate, it would be best practice to obtain written consent from a client's healthcare provider(s).• Know when it is necessary to signpost or refer to a healthcare professional/service or more suitably qualified exercise professionals (e.g., clinical exercise specialist).• Know the benefits of working with other services to support the client.
K4.2	Exchange of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Know the circumstances in which information may need to be exchanged with a healthcare or qualified exercise professional and how to obtain consent from antenatal and postnatal clients.• Know the importance of client confidentiality and GDPR.• Know the importance of dealing with sensitive information that may be emotive for the client.
K4.3	First aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Know the importance of having an up to date first aid qualification when working with antenatal and postnatal clients.
K4.4	CPD	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Know the importance of engaging in regular CPD activities relevant to the scope of practice.• Know where to source specific information to enhance practice or engage in further education/development.
K4.5	Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Know the importance of checking insurance arrangements where babies are present in the facility/environment where physical activity sessions are delivered.• Know to inform insurance companies of the specialist qualification and to include cover of this population under existing policy.• Know the importance of working within the remit of the specific role being undertaken appropriate to the occupation scope of practice.

6. Acknowledgements

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7. Appendix

- K2.1 Benefits
 - [UK Chief Medical Officers' \(CMO\) Physical Activity Guidelines \(page 34\) \(7 September 2019\)](#)
 - [WHO guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour](#)
- K2.5 Contradictions and warning signs
 - [Meah, Davies & Davenport, 2020 Why can't I exercise during pregnancy? Time to revisit medical 'absolute' and 'relative' contraindications: systematic review of evidence of harm and a call to action](#)
 - Goom, T, Donnelly, G & Brockwell, E (2019) Return to running postnatal- guidelines for medical health and fitness professionals managing this population
 - ACOG, 2020 [Physical Activity and Exercise During Pregnancy and the Postpartum Period](#)
- K1.3 Screening tools:
 - CSEP Get Active Questionnaire for Pregnancy- UK version <https://csep.ca/2021/05/27/get-active-questionnaire-for-pregnancy-UK>
- K2.4 Motivation and enabling factors:
 - This Mum Moves <https://www.activepregnancyfoundation.org/thismummoves>
 - The Active Pregnancy Foundation – Find Your Active <https://www.activepregnancyfoundation.org/findyouractive>
 - Couch to Fitness – Prenatal Programme <https://couchtofitness.com/prenatal>
 - Couch to Fitness – Postnatal Programme <https://couchtofitness.com/postnatal>
 - Physical activity for pregnant women https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1054538/physical-activity-for-pregnant-women.pdf
 - Physical activity after childbirth https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1054567/postpartum_infographic.pdf

8. Definitions

- **Perinatal** is the period of time when you become pregnant and up to a year after giving birth.
- **Antenatal** or **prenatal** meaning the period 'before birth'.
- **Postnatal** or **postpartum** meaning the period 'after birth' (from birth up to 12 months). This is in line with the national physical activity guidance supporting a life course approach to physical activity.