Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB DETAILS	
Job Title	Principal Genetic Counsellor
Reports to	Lead Genetic Counsellor
Band	Band 8a
Department/Directorate	Clinical Genetics, Specialist Services

JOB PURPOSE

As Principal Genetic Counsellor (GC), the post holder will support the Lead Genetic Counsellor to provide professional leadership and day-to-day management to the genetic counsellor team, to provide a high-quality genetic counselling service at regional specialist level. As part of the senior leadership team, they will contribute to the organisation and development of priority areas within the genetic counselling team helping to deliver key strategic, business and national objectives, supporting the development of the Clinical Genetics service.

The post holder will apply advanced genetic counselling skills to undertake professional duties consistent with those of a registered genetic counsellor. The post holder will provide a genetic counselling service to a mixed caseload which can include cancer, general and prenatal genetics. This will include adult and paediatric referrals. They will also be encouraged to develop an area of special expertise, in line with the needs of the department.

The post holder will act as a significant educational resource, both to the wider health care system and trainees in clinical genetics and genetic counselling. The post-holder will provide advice, support and education to other specialties. They will be responsible for identifying clinical research, audit and data collection priorities to drive departmental clinical development strategy.

Additionally, the role will typically include line management of pre-registration and registered genetic counsellors and clinical support roles such as Genomic Practitioners. The post holder may act as a Training Officer for the trainees in the Scientific Training Programme (STP).

KEY RESULT AREAS/PRINCIPAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Provide autonomous, specialist genetic counselling to patients and families, enabling understanding of diagnosis, inheritance, risk of recurrence and available management options.
- Support patients in making informed decisions and adjusting to diagnoses or genetic risk.
- Develop and maintain knowledge of the scientific, medical and psychosocial aspects of clinical genetics in order to manage an autonomous specialist caseload.
- Take a lead role in providing support, guidance and specialist training to students, genetic counsellors and other health professionals.
- Take a lead role in developing and managing patient pathways in area of specialism.
- Provide clinical case supervision to less experienced team members and trainees and discuss cases with ethical complexity with colleagues where appropriate.
- Accept, prioritise and triage referrals from GPs, hospital clinicians and, where appropriate, self-referrals. This includes undertaking triage responsibilities for GC led patient pathways.
- To carry out or coordinate cover of duties as may be required, which are commensurate with the grade and nature of the post, to meet the needs of the service. This will include cover of appropriate duties such as additional on-duty cover and management of urgent prenatal referrals or other urgent cases during the absence of colleagues.

KEY WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Areas of Responsibility: The post holder will deliver clinical genetic care to adults and paediatric patients across the Southwest region, providing genetic counselling in person or through virtual/remote consultation. They will develop and manage patient pathways in their area of

specialism, and provide support and line management to colleagues and trainees, within clinical genetics and in mainstream pathways.

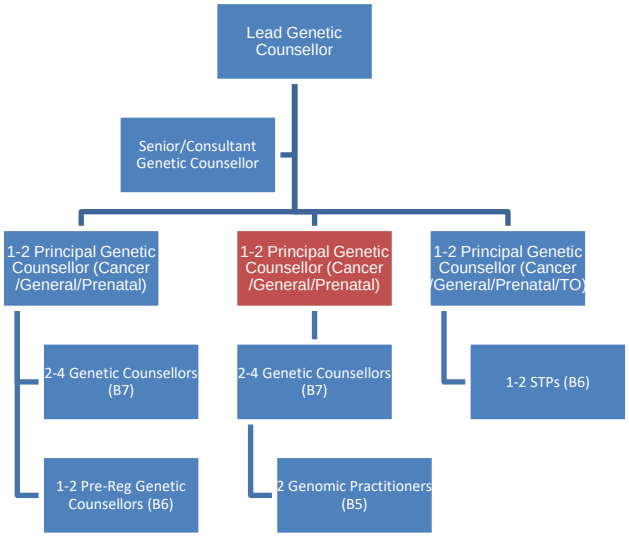
No. of Staff reporting to this role: 4-6 including registered and pre-reg genetic counsellors, STPs and genomic practitioners.

The post holder is required to deal effectively with staff of all levels throughout the Trust as and when they encounter on a day-to-day basis. There are very strong links with specialists in related disciplines across the region. Joint clinics and multidisciplinary meetings are held in many of these subspecialties. In addition, the post holder will deal with the wider healthcare community (including non-NHS healthcare providers), external organisations and the public.
This will include verbal, written and electronic media.

Of particular importance are working relationships with:

Internal to the Trust	External to the Trust
• Lead /Principal Genetic Counsellors • Genetic Counsellor and Genetic Nurse Counsellors (registered and pre-registration) • Scientist Training Programme (STP) trainees • Genomic Practitioners • Senior Operations Manager • Lead Clinician(s) • Consultant Clinical Geneticists • Specialist Registrars in Clinical Genetics • Operations Manager • Admin Service Manager • Family History Team • Admin/Clerical/Secretarial team • Clinical Scientists and Laboratory team • Consultants, SpRs, Clinical Nurse Specialists and Allied Health Professionals across other specialities • Research team • Governance manager • Care Group Directorate	• Patients and their families • Other members of the public • Consultants, SpRs, CNS and AHPs across other Trusts • GP and GP surgery staff • Genomic Medicine Service Alliance colleagues • Genomic Laboratory colleagues • Patient support organisations and charities for rare disease patients

ORGANISATIONAL CHART



FREEDOM TO ACT

- Take responsibility for their work; managing and prioritising an individual caseload autonomously, in line with national and service led policies, guidelines and standard operating procedures. Appropriately seek advice from colleagues in line with effective MDT working.
- Develop and maintain a specialist area of expertise, providing expert genetic counselling and management of complex cases, demonstrating advanced knowledge and skills including the integration of research evidence and up to date literature into practice.
- Take a lead genetic counselling role in specialist MDTs and in some circumstances act as the named genetics clinician thereby acting as a conduit between clinical genetics and other specialties.
- Be responsible for the development of patient pathways within their area of specialism and managing their cases to an established standard of care, in line with national and service led policies.
- Take an active role nationally in genetic counselling related work and policy development, by participating in national meetings, membership of relevant organising bodies or professional committees.
- Maintain active registration with AHCS (formerly GCRB), HCPC or NMC as appropriate, and adhere to relevant codes of professional conduct and ethics.

COMMUNICATION/RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

- Expertly communicate complex and highly sensitive genetic information clearly to patients and families, often in emotionally charged situations such as abnormal prenatal results, bereavement and terminal illness.
- Receive and provide highly complex and possibly conflicting information, including review of genetic test reports with consultant and laboratory colleagues, for example in cases of variants of uncertain significance (VUS).
- Identify and respond to emerging issues for the patient or family. This may include managing conflict within families created by sensitive genetic information.
- Expertly communicate highly sensitive and potentially psychologically damaging information, which may cause high levels of distress e.g.
  - ➢ *Telling a patient a test has revealed unexpected non-paternity*
  - ➢ *Giving a patient or couple an abnormal prenatal result*
  - ➢ *Telling a patient they have inherited an untreatable condition such as Huntington's disease, or a condition that causes a high risk of developing various cancers*
- Use advanced counselling skills to communicate sensitively in the presence of language, cultural and/or medical issues, or when dealing with cases where there is antagonism and/or a highly sensitive atmosphere, e.g.

    - in the presence of a complex ethical, cultural or psychiatric issue,
    - when there is need for an interpreter, or when patients have learning difficulties or psychiatric illness.
- Take responsibility for communicating and applying new scientific information for the benefit of the family over an open-ended time frame.
- Present findings of research, audit and clinical practice to large groups of staff or members of the public, within the trust, regionally, nationally or internationally.
- Liaise regionally and nationally with other health care professionals to obtain and provide information, and laboratory scientists to order and communicate about genetic tests and to discuss complex test results that are difficult to interpret.
- Discuss cases with ethical complexity with colleagues, local ethics board or national meetings (Genetics) where appropriate.
- Prepare and present scientific articles in clinical and departmental journal clubs.

ANALYTICAL/JUDGEMENTAL SKILLS

- Elicit patient's concerns and expectations in every consultation.
- Elicit and accurately document patient's detailed family history.
- Interpret medical, family and psychological history in every consultation.
- Confirm diagnostic information through review and interpretation of medical records including histopathology, biochemical and genetic reports.
- Identify changes of risk within the family and implications for management, using validated risk assessment tools and best practice guidelines.
- Calculate risks of patients and families being affected by various genetic disorders, the risks of recurrence and the carrier risks. This can involve making decisions where expert opinion differs or some information is unavailable. In order to do this, source and interpret complex scientific papers and genetic test results.
- Interpret and communicate highly complex and possibly conflicting information, including review of genetic test reports with consultant and laboratory colleagues, for example in cases of variants of uncertain significance (VUS).
- Assess patients to determine where there is need for referral to specialist therapeutic counselling, psychiatric assessment or screening, and make appropriate referrals.

PLANNING/ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS

- Provide an efficient and supportive genetic counselling service by managing a specialist individual caseload autonomously.
- Prioritise work, particularly assessing the urgency of clinical work.
- Organise and support on-call and urgent rota.
- Organise and participate in co-counselling with GC, SpR and consultant colleagues (e.g. as part of predictive testing).
- Organise and chair GC meetings, along with lead GC, to facilitate implementation of service delivery decisions.
- Liaise with medical colleagues about issues that have diagnostic or clinical complexity.
- Arrange for blood/other samples taken outside the Trust to be transported to South West Genomic Laboratory (or elsewhere) as appropriate.
- Attend and contribute to departmental seminars/teaching sessions, and national meetings equitably within the team after discussion with supervisor and Senior/Lead Genetic Counsellor.
- Refer patients for appropriate prenatal diagnostic procedures including chorionic villous sampling (CVS), amniocentesis or non-invasive prenatal diagnosis. Make onward referrals for couples' requesting a termination of pregnancy or other specialist follow up subsequent to receiving results from prenatal testing.
- Undertake or coordinate cover of duties, within the context of this job description, necessary for the changing needs of an effective and efficient patient service such as cover of additional on-call or urgent cases, particularly during the absence of colleagues.

PATIENT/CLIENT CARE

- Undertake genetic counselling consultations in person, by video or telephone as appropriate and required as part of regular scheduled clinics and ad hoc consultations for urgent cases (e.g. prenatal referrals).
- Use advanced counselling skills to counsel patients about available options and facilitate decision making, to manage distress, conflict and cultural or ethical challenges, by providing highly specialised advice in their area of expertise.
- Take a role in the provision of predictive genetic counselling.
- Support patients who have difficulty accepting a clinical diagnosis or a genetic test result.
- Act as patient advocate in appropriate situations.
- Based upon each family member's specific risk of developing/carrying a condition, develop a programme of care for the patient. This may involve referring to multiple specialities.
- Undertake an equitable and appropriate proportion of the total genetic counsellors' workload whilst maintaining the necessary quality of work, in line with agreed job plan.
- Make onward referrals to specialist services (e.g. for very high-risk breast cancer surveillance) as appropriate following a positive genetic test result.
- Ensure that best possible standards of work are maintained and that effective procedures exist to assess and review the quality of services offered regularly.
- Ensure that the views of patients, or those speaking on their behalf, are well received; and that complaints, both formal and informal, are received courteously and responded to promptly according to Trust guidelines.
- Undertake phlebotomy and/or referrals to appropriate phlebotomy services.

POLICY/SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

- Review and update departmental and trust policies as relevant to role.
- Develop, establish and implement evidence-based guidelines, policies and GC led initiatives in the management of patient care.
- Develop and implement appropriate clinical audit tools to evaluate pathways and clinical effectiveness within area of specialism.
- Design protocols and information leaflets in line with up-to-date evidence and national guidance within areas of specialism.
- Propose changes to working practices within the genetic and genomic services in the South West, where appropriate including development of standard operating procedures, leading on their implementation and audit. Take a lead role in implementing agreed changes in collaboration with other relevant personnel.
- Contribute to national genetics audits and SWOB (South West of Britain genetic services) audits, in addition to identifying and contributing to departmental audit.
- Attend and contribute to departmental meetings, and to divisional or governance meetings as required.
- Incorporate national and international standards into local practice, including new research into clinical care, in relation to own specialist caseload.
- Develop, establish and implement evidence-based guidelines, policies and GC led initiatives in the management of patient care.
- Take a lead role in supporting mainstreaming of genomic medicine, including MDT meeting attendance, provision of expert advice, pathway development and education provision or training support within area of individual specialism, in line with the regional and national mainstreaming strategy.
- Contribute to the effective implementation of the Clinical Governance Structure within Clinical Genetics, to include contribution to the identification and writing of risks to be added to the departmental risk register, investigating incidents that arise within their area of clinical or service expertise, contributing to the investigation and management of complaints, undertaking duty of candour and ensuring learning from incidents and complaints is shared within the team and appropriate training is provided.

FINANCIAL/PHYSICAL RESOURCES

- Observe personal duty of care in relation to equipment and resources used in course of work.

- Manage requests for funding of study leave in line with departmental and trust policies and budgets.

HUMAN RESOURCES

- Act as a line manager and mentor for registered and pre-registration genetic counsellors, genomic practitioners and STP trainees.
- Take personal responsibility for own continuing professional development.
- Undertake regular PDR and appraisal, job plan review and performance management for specific members of the team.
- Plan and co-ordinate continuing professional development opportunities for genetic counsellors in the service in collaboration with the Lead Genetic Counsellor, Lead Clinician and Senior Operations Manager as required.
- Carry out recruitment and selection processes as required, and ensure that appropriate and comprehensive induction programmes are completed with new staff.
- Lead and facilitate clinical case supervision and peer case support with genetic counsellor team and trainees that does not require consultant medical input.
- Professionally and compassionately address performance issues within the Genetic Counselling team in line with Trust policy.
- Support pre-registration colleagues to achieve appropriate registration (AHCS or HCPC) and hold the qualification, or be willing to work towards Sign-Off Mentor (SOM) status if required.
- Act as a SOM and/or Assessor for GCRAB/AHCS or HCPC Assessor/STP Final Assessments.
- Attend and actively participate in regular clinical counselling supervision sessions to discuss difficult cases with group and facilitator.
- Lead on the delivery of training and development programmes to other healthcare professionals in primary, secondary and tertiary care.
- Contribute to the development of undergraduate and postgraduate training programmes for STPs, SpRs and medical students and teaching of genetics.
- Take a lead role in management and coordination of shadowing, training and assessment for mainstream nurse colleagues, medical students, MSc Genomic Counselling placement students and trainee colleagues.
- Deputise for Lead Genetic Counsellor as main point of contact for the genetic counselling team when Lead Genetic Counsellor is on leave.
- Lead and support education of colleagues as part of mainstream initiatives, including consent, communication and genetics training.
- Represent the Genetic Counselling team in meetings involving departmental and senior managers where either the Lead Genetic Counsellor is not available or where an individual's knowledge or expertise means the Principal Genetic Counsellor's attendance would be beneficial.
- Maintain Basic Life Support skills through mandatory training.

INFORMATION RESOURCES

- Maintain a full and accurate record of own work undertaken (including pedigrees, clinic, telephone and (rarely) home visit reports, correspondence and other notes) in the EPR and preserve their confidentiality.
- Accurately record patient data such as details of genetic variants on patient information systems including trust electronic patient record, in-house databases and national patient registers.
- Ensure all clinical documents and resources are up to date and accurate.
- Develop, update and utilise patient information resources.
- Use voice recognition software and word processing to send standard and non-standard (individualised) letters and other communications as appropriate.
- Use video conferencing software (such as Microsoft Teams) as directed by the Trust, to contribute to the management of patient care.
- Use validated risk algorithms such as CanRisk to provide individualised risk assessments for breast and ovarian cancer risk.
- Act as an information resource on genetics for primary and secondary care colleagues.

- Maintain patient registers and ensure patients are added to appropriate national portals (e.g. Lynch Syndrome NDRS system).

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

- Participate in reflective practice in all areas of patient care and have an understanding of current research within the speciality.
- Facilitate participation and recruitment to approved research studies (at most weekly), this may include acting as lead or senior investigator and coordinator.
- Keep GCP training up to date.
- Participate in original research where appropriate to extend knowledge and understanding of genetic conditions and their impact on families.
- Collate clinical and educational development opportunities towards the portfolio of evidence required for Genetic Counsellor registration.
- Design and implement audit of clinical genetics to maintain clinical governance and audit profile of department.
- Develop and implement appropriate clinical audit tools to evaluate pathways and clinical effectiveness within area of specialism.

PHYSICAL SKILLS

- Word processing via desk top computer and laptop.
- If phlebotomy trained, undertake venepuncture in clinical settings to obtain suitable blood samples for genetic testing. Phlebotomy training desirable but not essential for role.
- Rare requirement to physically support moving and handling of patients in clinic.

PHYSICAL EFFORT

- Combination of sitting (with extensive VDU use), standing and walking between office and clinic
- Limited manual handling (transport and review of paper hospital notes from other trusts not using EPIC when undertaking a clinic at a peripheral site).
- Ability to travel independently to peripheral clinics current driving licence or use of public transport.

MENTAL EFFORT

- Frequent (daily) periods of intense concentration, in clinic with patients while providing genetic counselling. This applies to both virtual (video and telephone) and in-person work, in scheduled clinics and responding to on-call urgent duties which are unpredictable. The nature of the clinical conditions affecting our patients may lead to anxiety and/or aggressive behaviour.
- Frequent (daily) periods of prolonged concentration, when assessing genetic reports, risk assessments and interpreting information.
- Frequent (daily) periods of concentration when completing and checking letters and other written correspondence.
- Regular/moderate (weekly) periods of prolonged concentration when contributing to multidisciplinary meetings (MDT).
- Regular/moderate (weekly) periods of concentration as part of line management of team.

EMOTIONAL EFFORT

- Frequent exposure to potentially highly distressing and emotional circumstances, including delivering genetic results confirming a terminal prognosis, unexpected or uncertain findings that may affect treatment and management of patients. This may include termination of pregnancy.
- Provide support e.g. around termination of pregnancy or loss of a family member to a genetic condition. Refer to primary care services, talking therapies or psychiatry to facilitate coping and grief resolution.
- Frequent (weekly) provision of genetic counselling e.g. to the terminally ill or recently bereaved patients, where there is a need for genetic testing.
- Occasional (at most monthly) challenging family situations including misattributed paternity, safeguarding issues (identification of incest, disclosure of abuse) and estrangement.

WORKING CONDITIONS

- Frequent (daily) VDU use.
- Frequent (weekly) handling of blood or bodily fluids if collecting samples (blood or saliva) from patients in clinic. This will include uncontained samples (when performing phlebotomy and saliva collection).
- Clinical contact with patients and members of the public may result in exposure to challenging behaviour, including violence or aggression (rare).
- Option to partly work from home as part of flexible working policy may mean working in relative isolation (moderate).

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

Take part in regular performance appraisal.

Undertake any training required in order to maintain competency including mandatory training, e.g. Manual Handling

Contribute to and work within a safe working environment

You are expected to comply with Trust Infection Control Policies and conduct him/herself at all times in such a manner as to minimise the risk of healthcare associated infection

As an employee of the Trust, it is a contractual duty that you abide by any relevant code of professional conduct and/or practice applicable to you. A breach of this requirement may result in action being taken against you (in accordance with the Trust's disciplinary policy) up to and including dismissal.

You must also take responsibility for your workplace health and wellbeing:

- When required, gain support from Occupational Health, Human Resources or other sources.
- Familiarise yourself with the health and wellbeing support available from policies and/or Occupational Health.
- Follow the Trust's health and wellbeing vision of healthy body, healthy mind, healthy you.
- Undertake a Display Screen Equipment assessment (DSE) if appropriate to role.

APPLICABLE TO MANAGERS ONLY

Alongside fellow Principal and Lead GC, the post holder will contribute to leading the team effectively and supporting their wellbeing by:

- Championing health and wellbeing.
- Encouraging and support staff engagement in delivery of the service.
- Encouraging staff to comment on development and delivery of the service.
- Ensuring during 1:1s / supervision with employees you always check how they are.

DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE CHECKS

This post has been identified as involving access to vulnerable adults and/or children and in line with Trust policy successful applicants will be required to undertake a Disclosure & Barring Service Disclosure Check.

GENERAL

This is a description of the job as it is now. We periodically examine employees' job descriptions and update them to ensure that they reflect the job as it is then being performed, or to incorporate any changes being proposed. This procedure is conducted by the manager in consultation with the jobholder. You will, therefore, be expected to participate fully in such discussions. We aim to reach agreement on reasonable changes, but if agreement is not possible, we reserve the right to insist on changes to your job description after consultation with you.

Everyone within the Trust has a responsibility for, and is committed to, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable adults, children and young people and for ensuring that they are protected

from harm, ensuring that the Trusts Child Protection and Safeguarding Adult policies and procedures are promoted and adhered to by all members of staff.

At the Royal Devon, we are committed to reducing our carbon emissions and minimising the impact of healthcare on the environment, as outlined in our Green Plan available on our website. We actively promote sustainable practices and encourage colleagues to explore and implement greener ways of working within their roles.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Job Title	Principal Genetic Counsellor

Requirements	Essential	Desirable
QUALIFICATION/ SPECIAL TRAINING		
• Current AHCS/GCRAB **OR** HCPC Registered Genetic Counsellor (MSc level) **OR** Genetic Counsellor Registration with a Board that has reciprocal arrangements with the GCRAB (see GCRAB website for details)	E	
• Approved GCRAB Sign Off Mentor		D
• Managerial or Leadership Qualification		D
• Appraisal, assessment or mentoring training		D
• Relevant teaching experience and qualification		D
KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS		
• Highly effective interpersonal, communication and people management skills, particularly when dealing with highly complex or sensitive information	E	
• Able to problem solve and make decisions	E	
• Ability to offer expert clinical opinion on a range of inherited diseases and genetic issues	E	
• Ability to take responsibility for the clinical care of patients	E	
• Ability to analyse complex information, including research findings, to inform practice	E	
• Ability to work well within a multi-disciplinary team	E	
• Ability to manage own workload, prioritise appropriately and respond to urgent or unexpected situations	E	
• Understanding of governance, quality assurance, audit and risk management	E	
• Competent IT skills and familiarity with databases, spread sheets, word processing, voice recognition software, and electronic patient records	E	
• Phlebotomy		D
• Research recruitment and selection		D
EXPERIENCE		
• Significant professional experience as a Genetic Counsellor, in a regional clinical genetics service	E	
• Experience of working in the NHS or genetic based healthcare and knowledge of the way the NHS works and is developing	E	
• Experience of communicating highly complex and sensitive information to patients	E	
• Experience of working across a diverse group of staff and skill mix	E	
• Experience of active involvement with innovative practice and service developments and evidence of significant achievements gained	E	
• Experience of training and mentoring junior staff	E	
• Experience of teaching	E	
• Involvement in research	E	
• Experience of supporting the mainstreaming of genomic medicine	E	
• Experience of leadership within a clinical setting		D
• Experience of a managerial role or responsibilities (such as line management, staff appraisals, managing annual leave/staff sickness)		D

• Experience in staff recruitment		D
• Experience as a GCRB Sign off Mentor (SOM) and/or Assessor (D)		D
PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES		
• Enthusiastic, highly motivated and committed to the provision of a high-quality service	E	
• Confidence to work autonomously, including as a lone worker	E	
• Reflective, with recognition and awareness of own level of competence and willingness to seek advice and input as needed	E	
• Committed to continuing professional development and the requirements of clinical governance and audit	E	
• Excellent attention to detail	E	
• Innovative	E	
• Emotional resilience and ability to copy with sensitive and distressing situations with patients and colleagues	E	
• Willingness to fit in and work well with existing team	E	
• Work within the GCRB Code of Conduct, Scope of Practice and AGNC Code of Ethics	E	
• Demonstrate aptitudes in line with the Royal Devon Trust Values	E	
OTHER REQUIREMENTS		
• The post holder must demonstrate a positive commitment to uphold diversity and equality policies approved by the Trust.	E	
• Ability to travel to other locations as required.	E	

WORKING CONDITIONS/HAZARDS		FREQUENCY (Rare/ Occasional/ Moderate/ Frequent) R	O	M	F
Hazards/ Risks requiring Immunisation Screening					
Laboratory specimens	Y		X		
Contact with patients	Y				
Exposure Prone Procedures	Y	X			
Blood/body fluids	Y		X		
Hazard/Risks requiring Respiratory Health Surveillance					
Solvents (e.g. toluene, xylene, white spirit, acetone, formaldehyde and ethyl acetate)	N				
Respiratory sensitisers (e.g. isocyanates)	N				
Chlorine based cleaning solutions (e.g. Chlorclean, Actichlor, Tristel)	N				
Animals	N				
Cytotoxic drugs	N				
Risks requiring Other Health Surveillance					
Radiation (>6mSv)	N				
Laser (Class 3R, 3B, 4)	N				
Dusty environment (>4mg/m3)	N				
Noise (over 80dBA)	N				
Hand held vibration tools (=>2.5 m/s2)	N				
Other General Hazards/ Risks					
VDU use (> 1 hour daily)	Y				X
Heavy manual handling (>10kg)	Y	X			
Driving	Y		X		
Food handling	N				
Night working	N				
Electrical work	N				
Physical Effort	Y				X
Mental Effort	Y				X
Emotional Effort	Y				X
Working in isolation	Y		X		
Challenging behaviour	Y	X			