

# Allied Health Professions (AHP) Pre-preceptorship – supporting transition to the workforce



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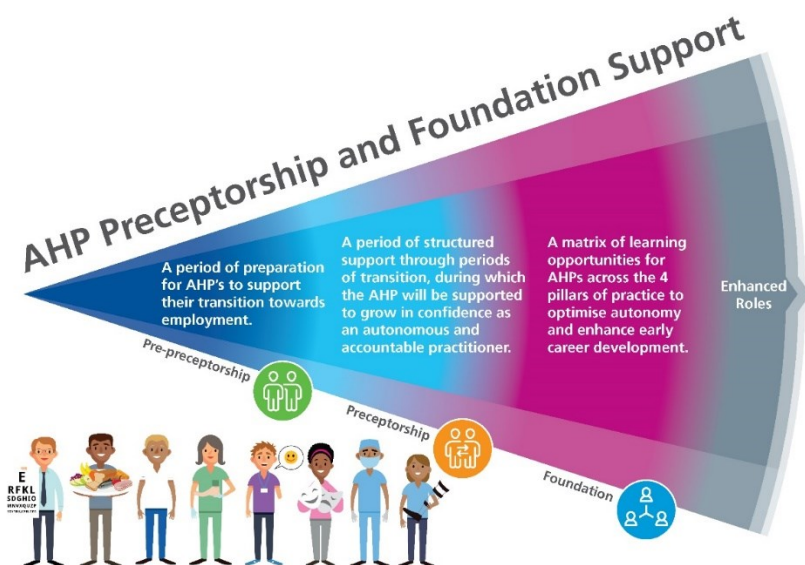
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## Part One: Background and Context

### Introduction to AHP Pre-preceptorship

AHP Pre-preceptorship is a period of preparation to support AHPs to transition towards employment ([NHS England, 2023](#)). Pre-preceptorship introduces and continues into preceptorship, which ensures a period of structured support at key points of career transition.



In 2023 the [NHS England AHP Preceptorship Standards and Framework](#) highlighted the [Step to Work](#) eLearning as an element of pre-preceptorship best practice to support the transition into employment.

The recommendations in this document identify further pre-preceptorship opportunities for learners, Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) and employers to support career transition and retention. The term learner is used throughout this document to refer to pre-registration student and apprentice AHPs who are preparing to join the workforce for the first time.

The scoping, research and subsequent recommendations outlined in this document are primarily focused on Newly Qualified Practitioners (NQP). However, some elements would also be applicable for those preparing for other workforce transitions, such as returning to work after a long period away (including being re-admitted to the register), working in the UK for the first time, taking up a new role, or moving to a new organisation. It may also be useful for other professional groups outside of AHP.

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## Part Two: AHP Pre-preceptorship; the evidence base for change

### Why is AHP Pre-preceptorship important?

Bridging the gap between education and work, whilst optimising the confidence of AHP learners, are key components to attracting and retaining a highly engaged AHP workforce ([AHP Strategy for England: 2022-2027 AHPs Deliver](#), 2022).

The [NHS Long Term Workforce Plan](#) (2023) highlights the importance of a comprehensive programme of support for the workforce, and preceptorship is one element of this. Providing pre-preceptorship prior to employment, through collaboration and engagement with learners, HEIs and employers, enables a smooth transition into the workforce.

Research indicates that NQP's experience 'reality shock' (Hsiao et al 2021), describing the experience of entering the workforce as 'being pushed off a cliff' (Harvey-Lloyd 2019) and 'feeling out of my depth' (Kennedy et al 2015). Pre-preceptorship can help build confidence, enhance preparedness for work, and optimise readiness for preceptorship.

A consistent approach to AHP Pre-preceptorship support, and a clear understanding of the key components of effective early career support, are essential to the retention of the future AHP workforce. Well-constructed and delivered pre-preceptorship support can build the confidence of individual professionals as they prepare to transition into the AHP workforce.

[Step to Work](#) eLearning was launched in 2022 as a first step to address transitional concerns, prepare a learner for employment and introduce the concept of preceptorship. Further scoping and research were commissioned by NHS England in 2023 to explore the pre-preceptorship experiences of AHPs and additional opportunities were identified for learners, HEI, and employers during the pre-preceptorship phase.

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## Development of AHP Pre-preceptorship recommendations

The development of AHP Pre-preceptorship recommendations utilised commissioned research and widespread stakeholder engagement including the following groups:

- Regulatory and professional bodies
- Pre-registration AHP students and apprentices
- AHP preceptees and preceptors
- Members of SSHINE (Sharing Student Healthcare Initiative for Neurodiversity and Equity)
- Practice Educators and AHP Leads
- HEIs within the Midlands delivering AHP programmes

The findings included a consistent lack of understanding of the terms pre-preceptorship and preceptorship, as well as a perceived lack of support from education providers during transition into employment.

Several reoccurring themes were identified as being imperative to support effective transitioning to employment.

## Themes on transitioning into employment

### Feeling of belonging and confidence

- Learners want to feel part of a team and that they belong within an organisation.
- Learners can experience imposter syndrome during the transition into employment.
- Some learners find that local dialect and use of language can be a challenge, especially where English is not their first language.

### Preparedness for practice

- A number of learners feel that the gap between reality in the workplace and learning within the education environment can cause them to feel unprepared.

### Career progression

- Learners want to understand how they can progress and develop in their chosen place of work.
- Clearly defined training and support programmes are seen as an incentive when applying for roles.

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## **Employment pathways**

- Some learners feel unprepared for NHS job application and interview processes.
- Learners consider workplace environment and culture when applying for employment.

## **Financial concerns**

- Learners are often concerned regarding work-related costs such as relocation costs, commuting, paying for parking, and professional body and regulator fees.

## **Caring responsibilities**

- Learners with caring responsibilities are often concerned about balancing shift working patterns alongside their caring responsibilities, which may prevent them applying for certain roles within organisations.

## **Discrimination**

- A proportion of learners are concerned about discrimination in the form of micro aggressions and language used, by both staff and service users. Learners feel unprepared to challenge such discrimination.
- Learners can be concerned and reluctant to disclose physical and mental health issues in the workplace due to judgement and/or perception of being incapable of fulfilling a AHP role.

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## Part Three: AHP Pre-preceptorship Recommendations

These recommendations for learners, HEIs and employers aim to ensure that AHPs have access to high quality pre-preceptorship support as they transition into employment for the first time. The AHP Pre-preceptorship Recommendations are supported by the [AHP Pre-preceptorship Toolkit](#) which provides resources to support implementation.

Pre-preceptorship is a continuous process in the development of skills, self-awareness, and confidence as preparation for employment. Throughout the research process three elements were identified as being key to the pre-preceptorship process: normalisation, collaboration, and connection.

### **Normalisation**

During the transition to NQP, it is normal to feel anxious and worried. HEIs can support learners to acknowledge, recognise and reflect on this to prepare for their transition to employment.

### **Collaboration**

Employers and HEIs working together can establish clear and consistent support during the transition period. Regulatory and professional bodies can further support by working with HEIs to promote the benefits of pre-preceptorship for the AHP workforce.

### **Connection**

It is important for the employer to establish regular communication with the learner from the point of job offer. These conversations can help to support the challenges that can accompany workforce transitions and ensure individual support needs are discussed.





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guidance, support, and practical tools to help reflect on pre-existing experiences and knowledge to help in future roles.

- Engage with HEI employability activities. This may include support with CV writing, application forms, preparing for interviews and opportunities to meet employers.
- Explore additional experiences to build confidence; this may include voluntary and/or work experience, gaining employment in support worker roles and volunteering in a healthcare setting.
- Refer to guidance and resources within the [Safe Learning Environment Charter](#) which support learners to become well-rounded professionals with the right skills and knowledge to provide safe and compassionate care of the highest level.
- Speak to potential employers about their AHP Preceptorship offer. Read the [Health and Care Professions Council \(HCPC\) Principles for Preceptorship](#) and the NHS England [AHP Preceptorship Standards and Framework](#). Look for profession specific information on preceptorship and early career support provided by professional bodies.
- Take responsibility for the preparation for transition to the workforce. Prior to commencing employment read the [Preceptee checklist](#) provided as part of the [AHP Preceptorship Toolkit](#), and the [AHP Preceptorship Standards and Framework](#) webpage.
- Prior to starting a new role, discuss expectations of the role with employers. Consider completing a [SLOT \(Strengths, Learning Needs, Opportunities and Threats\) analysis](#) prior to the first day, to support initial conversations.
- Become familiar with requirements for HCPC or General Osteopathic Council registration and practice.
- Enquire about any [mentorship](#) or buddying schemes offered by future employers or professional bodies.
- Use reflective models, templates and resources such as [AHP Preceptorship reflection document](#) to support the reflective thought process throughout the pre-preceptorship

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and preceptorship period. This develops transitional awareness and supports confidence.

- Utilise the [Guide to Practice-Based Learning for Neurodivergent Students](#). Although primarily aimed at students, this guidance contains useful tips for neurodivergent learners regarding communication, disclosure and reasonable adjustments which are transferrable to the pre-preceptorship and preceptorship period. The use of this guide is also helpful when working with team members or patients who are neurodivergent.

## Recommendations for HEIs

These recommendations are provided for HEIs supporting pre-registration learners to prepare for their transition into the AHP workforce.

- Collaborate with placement providers to ensure that placements are as reflective of real working life as possible, to build the learner's confidence. This could include for example, shift, weekend and on-call working.
- Scenario based learning can prepare learners for real-working life experiences and bring awareness to Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDI&B) and the learner's role in actively addressing ED&I issues.
- Regularly include clear and consistent reference to pre-preceptorship and preceptorship within pre-registration programmes. This can include involvement of AHP preceptors, preceptees and service leads to explain what preceptorship looks like in a workplace setting, as well as explaining the recruitment process and expectations of NQPs. This will build the learner's confidence by supporting them to recognise what the transition period will look like.
- Signpost learners to the [HCPC Principles for Preceptorship](#), NHS England [AHP Preceptorship Standards and Framework](#) and [Step to Work](#), as well as resources from professional bodies, to build their confidence further and help them to understand what to expect as they transition to the workplace.
- Ensure access to 'employability' development within the university setting, including the creation of a CV, completing job applications, and interviews. Collaborate with local employers to support these sessions. Consider including employability sessions prior to the final year, to avoid overwhelming learners.

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- Explore opportunities to set up pre-preceptorship peer networks for AHP learners. HEIs in the same region could consider linking together to create wider peer networks.
  - Signpost learners to available support within the HEI setting, to challenge and call out discriminatory behaviours. This should include signposting to Freedom to Speak up Guardians during placement within NHS organisations.

## Recommendations for Employers

These recommendations will help employers to provide support for learners in the pre-preceptorship period, to build their confidence and prepare them to transition to the workforce.

- Signpost learners to support worker roles within your organisation to develop their confidence working in a healthcare setting.
- Collaborate with HEIs and speak to learners to explain the recruitment process and expectations for NQPs.
- Ensure that final year learners are aware of job opportunities within your organisation, with careful consideration of the best timing to communicate this.
- Keep in regular communication with new starters and offer orientation opportunities, such as attending team meetings and relevant training before they start their new role.
- Provide a named contact or buddy to support the learner during the pre-employment period.
- Ensure NQPs are aware of speaking-up processes to raise concerns, such as contacting the Freedom to Speak Up Guardians
- Ensure that the expectations for the first day/week/month are clearly communicated prior to commencing employment. A new starter booklet including information regarding what to wear, where to park, where to be and who to contact, alongside guidance on disclosure of mental and physical disabilities, reasonable adjustments and flexible working policies can be a useful resource for learners.

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- Utilise the toolkits from the [NHS England Overhauling Recruitment Futures NHS Collaboration Platform](#) to support the development and embedding of good recruitment practice to help retain newly recruited staff.
  - Utilise the [Guide to Practice-Based Learning for Neurodivergent Students](#). Although primarily aimed at placement providers, this guidance contains useful tips for supporting neurodivergent learners in the workplace and are transferrable to the pre-preceptorship period.
  - Refer to guidance and resources within the [Safe Learning Environment Charter](#) to support the development of positive safety cultures and continuous learning across all learning environments in the NHS.

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## Glossary

### **EDI&B**

Equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging.

### **HEI**

Higher Education Institution

### **NQP**

Newly Qualified Practitioner

### **Professional Body**

a group that seeks to further a particular profession, the interests of individuals and organisations engaged in that profession, and the public interest. The professional bodies for AHPs are:

[The British Association of Art Therapists](#)

[The Association of UK Dietitians](#)

[The British Association of Dramatherapists](#)

[The British & Irish Orthoptic Society](#)

[The British Association for Music Therapy](#)

[British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists](#)

[The College of Operating Department Practitioners.](#)

[The College of Osteopaths](#)

[College of Paramedics](#)

[Chartered Society of Physiotherapy](#)

[Royal College of Occupational Therapists](#)

[Royal College of Podiatry](#)

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[Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists](#)

[The Society of Radiographers](#)

### **Workforce Transition/s**

changes in an AHP's situation that can benefit from support, such as being a newly qualified trainee, returning to work after parental leave, coming to work in the UK from abroad, taking up a new role, or moving to a new organisation.

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- Steven Bettles, Policy Manager, General Osteopathic Council
- Victoria Harris, Head of Learning, Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists



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