

## Allied Health Professions careers awareness strategy 2021 – 22

### 1. Introduction

This strategy sets out a vision for how best to promote allied health professional (AHP) careers to those aspiring to work in health and social care.

### 2. Background

The [NHS Interim People Plan](#) describes a need to ensure that there is a workforce ready for the future, and provides HEE with a clear aim of developing a pipeline of AHPs by increasing applications to undergraduate AHP education, identifying how to expand clinical placement capacity, and widening participation via increasing access via all routes to professions including apprenticeships, return to practice and international recruitment.

[We are the NHS: People Plan 2020/21 – action for us all](#) articulates that the NHS needs more people now to address current and future NHS needs with a specific focus on ‘growing for the future’. In 2021 we have a window of opportunity, harnessing the renewed interest and high-profile public support health and social care workers have received through the covid-19 pandemic response to expand and develop our workforce to meet the ambitions to deliver a workforce fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century by 2024/25.

HEE has an important role to play in attracting the right people with the right skills, values and behaviours into health and social care roles. The HEE AHP team has a part to play in promoting AHP careers and collaborates on national healthcare career promotion campaigns to showcase AHP Careers coordinated by the Health Careers Team e.g., National Careers Week and National Apprenticeship Week.

In recent years, the HEE AHP team has invested in a suite of [career resources](#) aimed at increasing the awareness of AHP careers for those interested in pursuing AHP careers. They have also supported wider initiatives such as the Office for Students’ [Iseethedifference.co.uk](#) campaign which shone a positive light on the allied health professionals, and collaborated on targeted career projects with the world of work ([WOW](#)) show, the Academies Enterprise Trust to create [meaningful learning experiences](#) that integrate AHP careers learning into curriculum, using subject curriculum requirements as the ‘driver’ and allied health professions as the underpinning context, and the [Health Careers Live](#) Conference in 2020 with a core focus on

widening participation, diversity and inclusion. In 2020 the HEE AHP team has also invested in collaboration with Macmillan Cancer Support to fund two fellowships to provide targeted interventions to raise the profile of role and a career in therapeutic radiography.

Because of COVID-19 it is anticipated that due to changes in employment circumstances, people may be looking for a new of direction, a change career. The HEE AHP national team has a range of [career change to AHP](#) promotional resources including the [motivations for changing to become an AHP](#) animation, and advice and support to ensure that we promote a career as an AHP as a rewarding career at any stage of your working life. The HEE AHP national team has also provided targeted support to attract those leaving the armed forces who have a great set of transferable skills showcased via case studies and sharing live experiences illustrated in the promotional video making the step into health - [could an AHP be your new career?](#)

The [HEE AHP Return to Practice \(RtP\) Programme](#) is designed to give opportunity for former Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) registrants to go back to the register. The programme is run by the National RtP team that sits in the HEE Nursing Directorate and covers all 15 HCPC professions inclusive of AHPs. It enables returners to update their knowledge and skills by providing clinical, academic, and financial support and guidance to any former HCPC registrant who meets the programme eligibility criteria to meet [the HCPC RtP requirements](#). There is a national process for delivery in place. The national RtP team plan to review and set objectives and priorities regionally for RTP on 2021/22 to make RtP a priority as part of the workforce optimisation agenda including AHP Councils and Faculties to further shape and develop RTP according to local need. Within the HEE AHP career promotion portfolio there is an interdependency of work to attract individuals back to the profession with the AHP career changer workstream.

### 3. Context

National trends suggest significant shortages exist in several AHP professional groups, including radiography (both diagnostic and therapeutic), prosthetics and orthotics, orthoptics, operating department practitioners and podiatry. The impact of leaving the EU and changes to the funding arrangements for allied health professional education appears to have affected applications for some AHP professions.

COVID-19 has raised the awareness of health inequalities for those from ethnic minority backgrounds, and the wider benefits of the health and care workforce reflecting local populations to improve care and reduce health inequalities for the future. There is an opportunity for HEE to further promote equality, diversity and inclusion as started via the successful AHPs Day 'people like me' campaign in 2020.

Many people do not have awareness of the allied health professions and do not connect what they are learning in school, their interests, hobbies, and values with potential application in these professions.

During the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the NHS Health Careers website experienced a massive increase in hits on NHS careers. During 2020, there was a 48% increase in traffic to information about the AHP professions on the NHS Health Careers website. This included a 152% increase in interest in careers in diagnostic radiography, 77% increase in becoming a therapeutic radiographer, 68% increase in becoming a dietitian, and 103% increase in becoming a paramedic. University acceptances to study for the allied health professions (AHPs) in England rose by an encouraging 17.5% last year compared with 2019. Acceptances rose in all regions, and for all the AHP subjects except one, where the numbers remained static. Acceptances from clearing routes were at their highest since 2011.

We believe that our current workforce, including our workforce in training (students) play a critical role in inspiring our future workforce. Through sharing lived experiences and stories relating to their own career choices and values, AHP Career Ambassadors are key connectors who can positively promote the range of career options available and provide further information and links on how to become an AHPs. There are opportunities for us to support student AHP career ambassador activity via non-clinical leadership placements and providing incentives for students to volunteer in career events to support their professional portfolios.

### 4. Scope

#### In scope

- Primary School: Key Stage 2 - ages 7-11 (Years 3-6)
- Secondary School: Key Stage 3 - ages 11-14 (Years 7-9), Key Stage 4 – ages 14-16 (Years 10-11)
- People in Further Education/College
- School/College aged leavers
- University degree level leavers
- Career Changers / Return to Practice
- Volunteering as a AHP Career Ambassador within existing role

#### Out of scope

- Volunteering (using or gaining skills in own time to explore roles and career options).
- International recruitment

#### Interdependencies

- Talent for Care Widening participation diversity and inclusion agenda including work experience
- AHP support Workforce promotion
- Apprenticeships

### 5. Evidence base

The Gatsby Good Career Guidance (2014) which forms part of the government's careers strategy for schools and colleges states that 'good career guidance is important for social mobility because it helps open pupils' eyes to careers they may not have considered'.

The Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) publication "Envisioning the Future of Education & Jobs" (2019) states that evidence was found that career choices are heavily influenced by parents and carers. It also highlights that the career aspirations of 7–11year-olds are heavily influenced by a very narrow view of the world of work and preferences did not match with demand in the labour market. It is therefore crucial to open their minds to roles in health and social care that are harder to recruit to and where there are skills shortages in order to build a more robust workforce in the future.

A HEE literature review was conducted in Dec 2019 to discover the evidence pertaining to the approaches and successful mechanisms to attract people to allied health professions and wider health professions, both new to profession and returning to practice across England. It revealed that is a lack of evidence available that supports methods to attract people into AHP careers, however there are some key messages that can be taken from wider healthcare career promotion initiatives that included:

- A need to widen the recruitment lens across a range of protected characteristics.
- The need for focussed interventions to attract and recruit to positively support inclusion and diversity.
- Career influencers include clearly defined career pathways and family, work experience and mentorship.
- Using students or new graduates to promote careers in schools.
- Newly qualified/early career professionals are effective in promoting specialist areas.
- For students, early career professionals and specialist area changers, access and contact time to trained and experienced professionals have proven to be beneficial.

A more detailed summary of the findings from the HEE literature review is available in Appendix 1.

### 6. Vision statements

Individuals seeking a career in health and social care will be aware of the 14 Allied health professional careers, be able to relate their interests, hobbies, strengths and values with the professions and understand that there are different entry routes to joining the AHP workforce.

AHP Career Ambassadors will be confident and equipped to engage with children, young people and adults about a range of allied health professions and use their personal stories and experience to shine a light on their profession of choice to inspire others. AHP Career Ambassadors can be anyone in unregistered and registered AHP roles who choose to volunteer and engage in career promotion activities at a local, regional and/or national level.

## 7. Our strategic approach

- To support strategic, co-ordinated, and sustainable career promotion activity that is inclusive of all AHPs and aligned to the 'Future Supply' priority objectives within the National AHP Workforce Implementation Plan.
  1. Stimulate demand - make AHPs a career of choice.
  2. Increase capacity – increase applications to AHP programmes and acceptance on courses.
  3. Support and pathways – explore and support different entry routes to AHP roles.
- To create a matrix model AHP careers plan combining a profession based national approach with a placed based regional/system multi-professional approach to promote AHP careers. This subsidiary approach will increase the visibility of AHP careers in national, regional and system career promotion interventions and campaigns. Where applicable workforce needs/priorities will inform focus relating to AHP workforce supply needs and aligned the NHS long term plan and NHS people plan.
- To understand the evidence base of what works, where to target interventions and evaluate funded projects and initiatives to ensure we are getting the best value/impact for our investment.
- To include an equality diversity and inclusivity assurance assessment to project approval requests and continue to adopt a 'AHPs are people like me' stance to external career promotion materials and events.

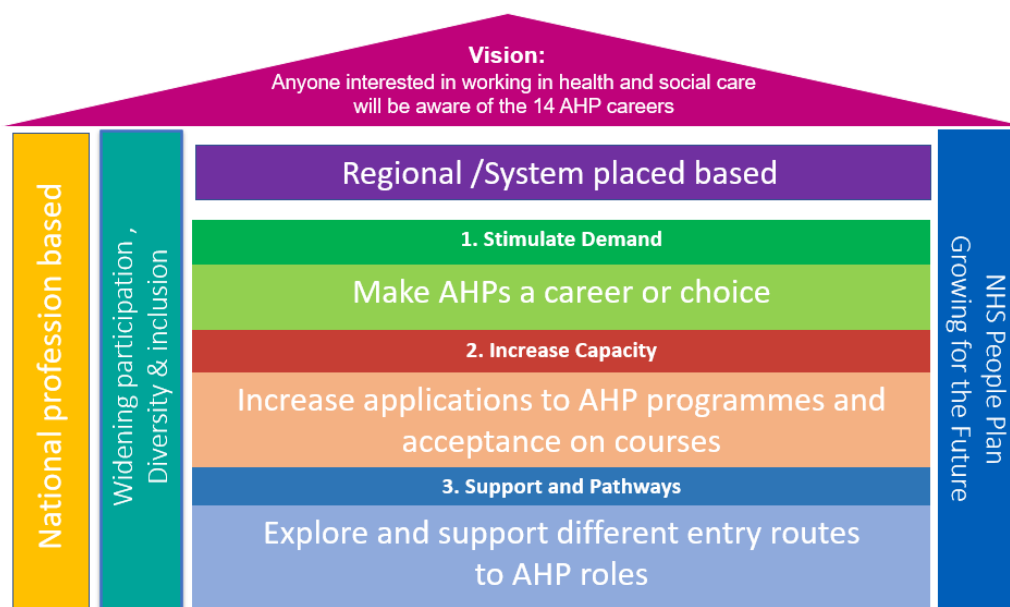


Figure1: HEE AHP Career Awareness Strategic Approach

### 8. Making it happen - Implementation of the AHP career awareness strategy

We have created a HEE AHP Career workplan to take forward a planned and co-ordinated approach to AHP career activities during 2021/22.

- The HEE AHP team will work collaboratively with the 14 professional bodies, the Health Careers Team, the HEE Widening participation, diversity and inclusion team and other key stakeholders at a national, regional and system level to take a multi-professional approach inclusive of the allied health professions to promote working in health, education and social care settings.
- We will promote and value the role of the AHP Career Ambassador within professional development, as an opportunity to support reflexivity on skills, professional behaviours and values.
- We will ensure that HEE AHP career promotion resources are best placed to be accessible and easily discoverable by the general public and those supporting careers work in education.
- We will provide guidance, support and signpost to existing resources for those engaging in aspiring AHP career promotional events and activities.
- We will identify gaps in AHP career promotion resources and seek opportunities to be innovators within this field.
- We will promote all routes to profession.
- We will integrate targeted interventions aligned to the widening participation agenda and positively promote diversity and inclusion within HEE AHP career campaigns.
- We will engage, listen and learn from our system, regional and national career engagement experiences where best to target our interventions to achieve the best impact/return on intent.
- We will engage, listen and learn from AHP faculties working on targeted aspiring AHP careers projects aligned to our strategy and encourage sharing of success via case studies and adoption of approached used.
- We will utilise existing mechanisms and career tracking initiatives supported by the HEE health careers team to gauge and monitor increased interest in training to become an AHP.
- We will use data to inform focussed promotion and to target career activity to areas of greatest need (by profession, diversity, regions) based on the matrix model outlined above.

- We will use data for learning and improvement that can be shared with others to support future projects/initiatives.

The delivery of this strategy will depend on communication, co-ordination and regular monitoring at a national, regional and system level.

- National HEE AHP comms and engagement.
- Implementation progress, project monitoring and risk management will be reported via the AHP HEE programme board and shared with HEE Health Careers Team via planned meetings/updates.
- Regional level: HEE Regional Heads of AHPs.
- Communication, support and guidance to Regional AHP Councils
- System level: Communication, support and guidance to support and guidance to STP/ICS AHP Faculties via Regional AHP Councils and AHP Faculties Lead network.
- Projects and related deliverables will be monitored and reviewed on a quarterly basis.
- Updates will be reported into the NHS People Plan Workforce and Education Strategic Oversight Forum.

### 9. Resource implications

Designated budget to support the implementation of this strategy has been agreed by the national AHP programme lead. Resources will be accessed via funding requests to national or regional HEE teams as appropriate and will be approved based on how the interventions meet the aims and objectives aligned to the strategy. Resources will also be utilised to continue to build infrastructure and maintain existing material on the e-LfH platform.

### 10. Challenges and risks

- Career promotion is a shared responsibility between the ALBs, professional bodies, HEIs, and local systems. There is a risk of duplicated effort and therefore it is essential that the strategy and objectives important to HEE can be clearly defined with well articulate deliverables and that we seek opportunities to align actions and interventions with others so that together we achieve more.
- AHP Career promotion actions are for long term gain. It is very difficult to demonstrate a return on investment in the short term therefore it is important to consider appropriate metrics that will demonstrate return on intent and the benefit and impact in meaningful ways aligned to workforce supply optimisation plans.

### 11. Acknowledgements – stakeholders involved

This strategy was produced with the support of the SW HEE AHP Clinical Fellows. It has involved consultation with the following stakeholders:

- National HEE AHP programme board
- HEE AHP Regional Head of AHPs
- HEE Health Careers Team

- HEE Diversity Inclusion and Participation Team (leading in work experience)
- HEE SW Clinical Fellows working on regional careers strategy
- AHP National Faculty Leads Network
- HEE Macmillan Therapeutic Radiographer Clinical Fellows
- HEE AHP London Clinical Fellows working on AHPs Careers (ED&I)

### Appendix 1 Literature Search Results

Research question or topic: *What evidence there is around approaches and successful mechanisms to attract people to health professions/ allied health professions both in terms of new to professions and also returning to practice across England?*

A literature search was conducted in December 2019, to discover the evidence pertaining to the approaches and successful mechanisms to attract people to allied health professions and wider health professions, both new to profession and returning to practice across England.

Healthcare Databases Advanced Search (HDAS) was used to search the following databases: Medline, Amed, BNI, CINAHL, EMBASE, EMCARE, HMIC, and PsycINFO. Google was also searched for grey literature.

A limited number of articles were returned, and none were available for Allied Health Professionals.

### Recruitment

A qualitative study with case studies from Germany, Finland and the UK, highlighted healthcare sector workforce challenges are similar (1). Organisations tended to recruit younger workers and/or migrant workers. A lack of awareness and/or popularity of recruiting ageing workers, led the authors to surmise, organisations were missing out on commitment, enhanced productivity, work ability and career length from this workforce opportunity. Research focussing on purposeful recruitment strategies to increase diversity (2) reported data to support the need for different strategies, focussed interventions and tailored recruitment of URM (underrepresented minorities) students into physical therapy education programs.

### Career influencers

Clearly defined career pathways are needed to attract candidates to public health careers (3).

Family, work experience and mentorship has been shown to be most influential, in attracting 58% of undergraduate psychology students to gerontology (4). Informal or formal mentorship as part of a structured longitudinal curriculum, with a mixture of professionals, supports medical students to consider neurology careers (5).

A Psychiatry promotion film to Malaysian medical students (6) found it most successful in career preference in year 5's (compared to year 3's), but only 27.2% of Year 5 students found it influential in career choice.



In 2016, an American study highlighted three approaches to attracting and recruiting perioperative nurses (7). A training course for new nursing graduates or those with no experience, an introductory course for junior and senior nursing students, and an intraoperative learning experience for high school students were produced and deemed successful.

University Hospital Southampton increased their research nursing capacity, by using an innovative workforce development (8). Most notable was the formation of a career pathway for research nurses to pursue clinical academic careers, as well as integrating research into clinical roles.

### Profession specific careers

#### Medical careers

Trainee doctors from a medical school and a professional education body promoted medical careers by creating engaging activities for primary school children (9).

Knowing there was a national deficit in GP recruitment, Nottingham Medical School ran a GP training scheme to address the issue (10). A multi-faceted approach was taken; students got regular sessions with GP's with special interests, each interested student was assigned a GP buddy who supported them through medical school and with applications. A medical school admission panel included GP's, a Widening Access project for local secondary school students, doubling of contact time in Primary care placements, open day sessions, and First 5® young GP's developed presentation for F1 Dr's.

#### Non-Medical careers

Students from pharmacy schools and colleges attended an explorative clinical pharmacy career event. It raised knowledge, awareness and interest, and promoted the use of local, regional and national organisation membership to potential future pharmacists (11).

### Summary

A literature review conducted in Dec 2019 revealed that is a lack of evidence available that supports methods to attract people into AHP careers, however there are some key messages that can be taken from wider healthcare career promotion initiatives. Success has been found with defining careers pathways and using students or new graduates to promote careers in schools. Newly qualified/early career professionals are effective in promoting specialist areas. For students, early career professionals and specialist area changers, access and contact time to trained and experienced professionals, has proven to be beneficial.

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This summary has been collated by Sarah Ashley-Maguire (HEE SW AHP Clinical Fellow) Feb 2021.

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