



Guide to Practice Based Learning (PBL) for Allied Health Professional (AHP) Students in Leadership

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Definitions

Leadership

The Chartered Institute of Professional Development (CIPD) acknowledge that the term 'leadership' can be used in a variety of different ways but define it as the 'ability and capacity to lead and influence others, by means of personal attributes and/or behaviours, to achieve a common goal'. It is vital that we equip our future workforce with the necessary leadership experience and skills, to ensure they can operate effectively within and across the health and care system of the future.

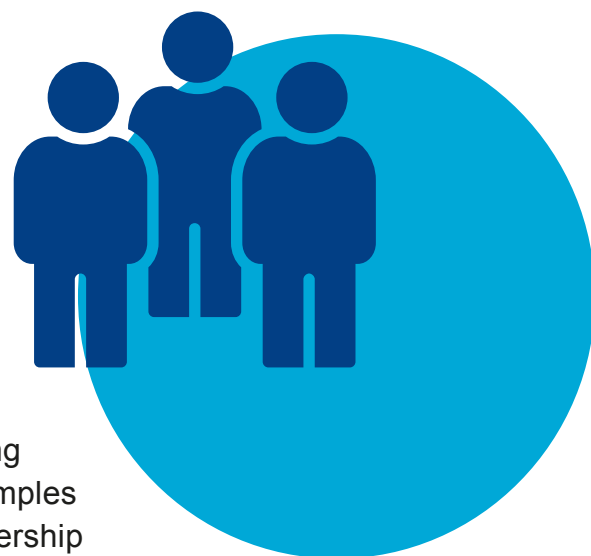
Leadership is one of the pillars of practice and is embedded in each allied health profession's curricula.

Practice Based Learning

PBL involves a range of learning opportunities to support the student's development where students apply and consolidate their learning. Such opportunities bring together academic theory, workplace practices and knowledge around culture of an organisation that accelerates their skills and development towards competences required for professional registration (HEE 2020). PBL is a supervised and structured process with support to progress towards a co-produced set of learning outcomes and usually involves a summative element.



Picture Credit: Priscillia Du Preez / Unsplash



Introduction

This guide details the possibilities and benefits of offering PBL in leadership for AHP students. It includes key examples that we hope will be helpful in enabling you to host leadership PBL for AHP students, to achieve their learning outcomes and enhance their professional skills and employability.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for those working in leadership roles across different sectors, including but not limited to:

- voluntary organisations
- social care
- private companies
- arm's length bodies
- higher education institutes

The guide is iterative and will be updated as and when we hear of new and innovative PBL leadership examples.

This guide will benefit those who:

- may not be aware of the benefits of hosting AHP students on practice based learning.
- are considering offering innovative practice based learning for AHP students and would like some guidance on where to begin.
- already offer leadership practice based learning opportunities to students and are looking for ideas to improve the experience.
- Are students involved in leadership practice based learning who want to know what to expect.

Background

Research suggests that exposure to leadership development should start early in a healthcare professional's career, ideally when they commence their educational training (HEE 2018). As detailed by the NHS Long Term Plan (2019), the NHS faces many challenges over the next 10 years, so new and innovative solutions are required to deliver safe and effective healthcare. This will mean new and innovative ways of working, new roles and new behaviours. It is helpful to consider PBL in relation to the 4 pillars of advanced practice. PBL is changing to meet these requirements and AHP students are encouraged to experience PBL that extends beyond pure clinical work to encompass wider areas of AHP practice. It is helpful for AHP students to be exposed at an early stage to opportunities across each of the pillars. Additionally, students may want to build up more experience in one pillar to support their future career aspiration.

In 2017 Health Education England, in partnership with NHS England and NHS Improvement, developed a multi-professional framework for advanced clinical practice in England, which includes a national definition and standards to underpin the multi-professional advanced level of practice.

This framework details the requirements for AHP's working as Advanced Practitioners. Within this framework the four pillars that underpin this practice are:

1. Leadership and Management
2. Education
3. Research
4. Clinical Practice

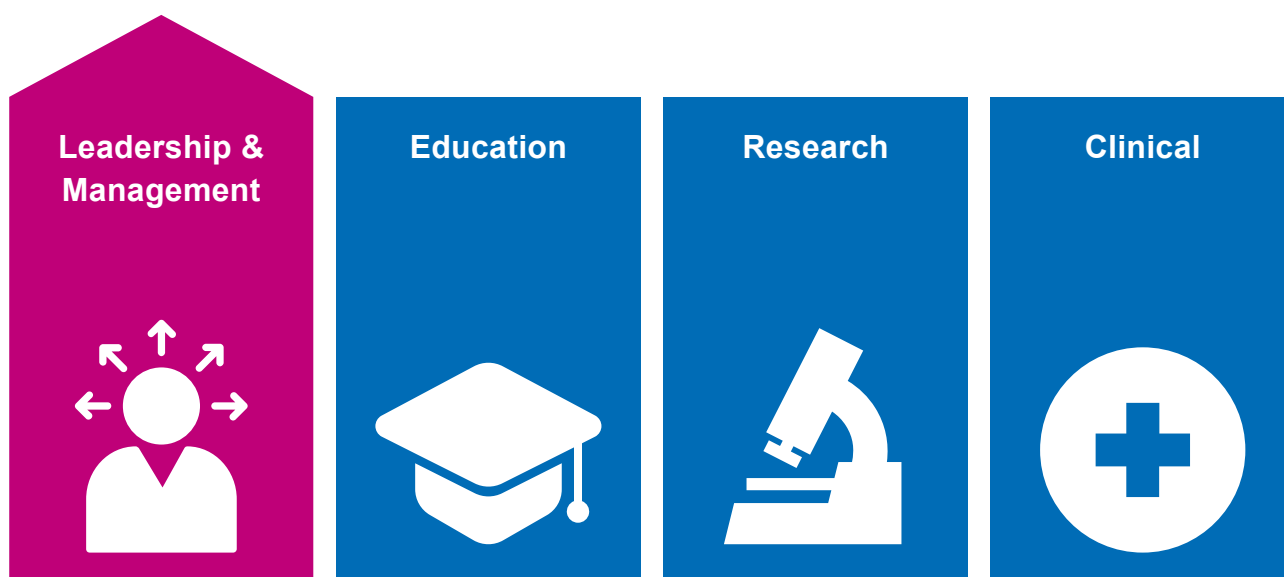


Fig. 1 Four pillars of practice

Providing AHPs with wide and diverse career pathways benefits the health and care system by creating more opportunities and aiding job retention and satisfaction preventing AHP's becoming too specialised and in a vulnerable position. So, the benefits of diverse career pathways include:

- Increased exposure to a variety of experiences, settings and care delivery
- Increased perspectives and lenses on the health and care system
- Increased staff engagement, leading to better retention and less attrition

Underpinned by the fact that we know diversity in leadership teams improve care for patients and populations.

The availability of adequate opportunities to support AHP practice based education has been an ongoing challenge. These opportunities are required so that we can deliver the required number of PBL opportunities/hours across England regardless of any external challenges such as social distancing. The NHS Long Term Plan (2019) and the NHS People Plan 2020/21 both signal the need for significant growth in numbers of AHPs for the workforce, requiring a substantial increase in the availability of PBL opportunities.

The Importance of Leadership in Practice Based Learning

High-quality leadership is essential for the NHS to deliver on the ambitions set out in the NHS Long-Term Plan (2019) and it is good practice to incorporate leadership development right from the start of any undergraduate programme (HEE 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the effectiveness of leadership PBL for AHPs, fostering the development of key skills such as communication, negotiation, influencing, working with others and project work. We all have our part to play in shaping the future of health and care, by supporting students to gain the necessary leadership and management skills during their training, so that we can ensure our future workforce, across the AHP professions, have the right skills and experience required to make them effective leaders in the future.

“Our future AHPs will be operating within an increasing complex and yet enabling system, it is all our duty to prepare them to deliver optimally with populations and to thrive. The skills learnt within leadership practice based learning will enable our future AHP clinicians, leaders, educators, and researchers to unleash the full benefit of the allied health professions to population health. So let them see everything, go everywhere, run an improvement project, and tell the world what they found - they will delight and surprise you!”

Beverley Harden AHP Lead Health Education England, Deputy Chief Allied Health Professions Officer and Visiting Professor University of Winchester.

AHP professional bodies are increasingly embracing this approach:

The Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) is committed to ensuring occupational therapists are appropriately prepared for their professional careers. The [Learning and development standards for pre-registration education \(2019\)](#) identify leadership practice based learning as one of a wide range of PBL opportunities appropriate for learners to experience within their pre-registration studies. Recent events, impacting so significantly on PBL capacity, have further broadened the range and number of PBL learning opportunities within non-frontline settings and have been well received by learners who are able to develop early career awareness and application of leadership skills.

RCOT continue to encourage those looking to develop new and innovative PBL opportunities to liaise with their local occupational therapy education provider and consult the [Learning and development standards for pre-registration education \(Standard 5.2\)](#) to ensure the requirements continue to be met.

The Society of Radiographer (SoR) are piloting a five week leadership practice based learning for third year diagnostic and therapeutic radiography students. As part of the programme four students will be attending high level strategic meetings, gaining an understanding of how a membership organisation functions within the health care setting and undertaking specific project work. The SoR want to role model leadership practice based learning and encourage students to develop leadership skills at an early stage in their career. Outcomes from the project will be presented internally, shared on social media and published in the SoR professional magazine. Students will be encouraged to apply to present their work at a national conference the following year.

Considerations and tips for practice based learning in leadership for educators, leaders, education providers and service providers

- Students can learn from any leadership activities - projects, service improvements, evaluations, audits, design of resources and so on.
- Enable students to get started by being clear about the aims and scope of a project, introducing them to key people, giving them freedom to be creative and arranging regular supervision. Help students to develop their own style by observing leadership qualities in others.
- Depending upon professional body requirements, the educator may not have to be a registered AHP; the learning outcomes are focussed on developing leadership qualities, rather than clinical knowledge. Students can be supervised by staff of any grade from support workers to advanced practitioners. The education provider may support with additional professional supervision if there is a requirement.

- Leadership PBL should be treated in the same way as student in clinical settings; students must abide by their standards of professional conduct and follow the local information governance and safety protocols of the organisation. See the HEE AHP Technology Enabled Care Services (TECS) Practice Based Learning Guide for more details.
- Leadership PBL may be a new experience for both student and practice based educator. Allow for errors; it is a learning opportunity for all involved.

“Don’t over-think and think you have to have a plan. Have a spirit of adventure – it’s learning in action – co-production”.

Helen Lycett, Strategic AHP Lead, West London NHS Trust. Worked with four Occupational Therapy students from three different universities.

David Marsden, Regional Allied Health Professions Workforce Lead, Health Education England developed a PBL approach for several students from a variety of professions across the North East and Yorkshire Region.

Students used peer supervision and the GROW model to support each other on a weekly basis. All students from a variety of universities and professions led specified projects and contributed to the development of the student welcome pack helping to improve the quality of learning experience for our future leaders. Feedback from educators, students and universities has been extremely positive and throughout this collaborative approach we have certainly improved and enhanced the learning experience for all.

- Consider hosting more than one student. Many different models have been found to work well including 2:1 (2 students supervised by 1 educator) and 4:1. Feedback suggests that this promotes peer learning and student autonomy and may reduce supervision time.

“Work with more than 1 student so they can plan, share, help and support each other – which is what would happen in practice after all”

Alison Jones, Physiotherapy Practice Education Lead, Kingston University & St George’s University of London. Worked with 4 physiotherapy and 4 Occupational Therapy students.

NHS Leadership Academy offers useful resources for students to build a strong foundation of leadership skills, for example, the [Health Leadership Model](#), the [Clinical Leadership Competency Framework](#), and the [Edward Jenner programme](#).

- You are a leader at any level with some professional development skills then there will be a way to set up this type of PBL experience, speak to an AHP education provider, they will be happy to discuss this with you.
- The Leadership Learning Model identifies 3 stages of leadership development and this can help you design practice based learning opportunities for AHP students. See figure 2.

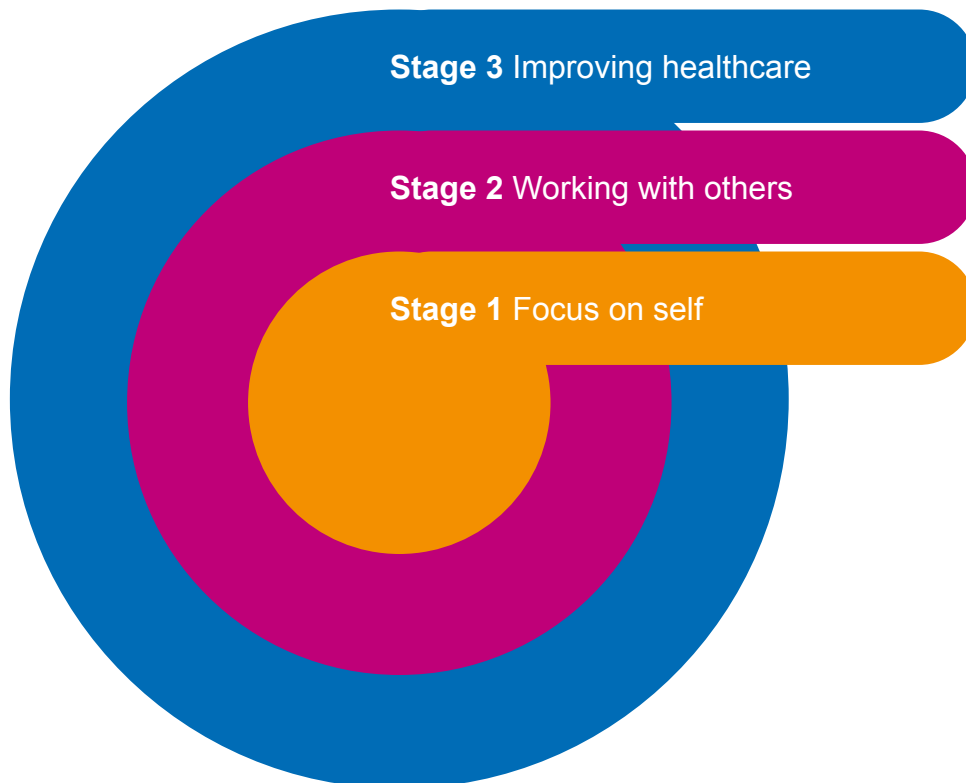


Figure 2. The three stages of Leadership Development (HEE 2018)

- Stage 1: Focus on self: developing self-awareness and self-efficacy to foster understanding of one's own beliefs, attitudes, values, knowledge, attributes and skills to build and develop leadership behaviours.
- Stage 2: Working with others: understanding how one interacts and connects with the diversity of other people in organisations and learning how to develop positive team working in a multi-professional and complex clinical environment.
- Stage 3: Improving healthcare: developing and leading teams to instigate and action positive change in practice based to assure quality, safety of care and continuous improvement of services through evidence-based approaches.

Read the full guidance on integrating leadership development into undergraduate courses and practice based learning at [Guidelines - Maximising Leadership in the Pre-reg Healthcare Curricula_0.pdf \(hee.nhs.uk\)](https://www.hee.nhs.uk/~/media/Assets/HEE/Leadership/2018/04/20180404_Guidelines_Maximising_Leadership_in_the_Pre-reg_Healthcare_Curricula_0.pdf)

- Work closely with PBL providers to prepare students prior to the learning experience—the expectations for all parties, use creative thinking to meet their learning outcomes with learning opportunities that are not clinical. Embrace the fact that this is new for everyone.

“Why would you not expose AHP students to this way of working? It offers students a rounder understanding of the profession, how things work beyond the clinical ‘front line’. With their peers, the students considered ways of meeting their learning outcomes and designed additional activities where necessary”

Alison Jones, Physiotherapy Practice based learning Education Lead, Kingston University & St George’s University of London. Worked with 4 physiotherapy and 4 Occupational Therapy students

- Practice based learning in leadership is suitable for students from BSc year one through to final year MSc students with projects being adapted to suit different stages of learning.

“Match the learner with the environment. Whether you are working with a first year or a third year student it should not matter”.

Gareth Cornell, AHP Faculty Lead, South Yorkshire & Bassetlaw Integrated Care System, Worked with a MSc Physiotherapy student

- Focus on the quality of the education and not the quantity. Students’ experience is enhanced by completing a real world project

“Give students a meaningful project valuable to the team and the organisation – so the project gets done with students at the heart of it.”

Dr. Channine Clarke, Head of Practice based Learning and Development, Brighton University. Worked with 2 OT students.



Tips for educators

- One way students can meet their learning outcomes by doing a PBL experience that is 100% leadership or one that is split with another area of work e.g.: 2 days clinical, 3 days leadership. Think what opportunities you might be able to offer and start from there.

The Kent and Medway AHP faculty have just started offering leadership practice based learning for AHP students and this encourages and introduces effective leadership at the early point of their career journey. These opportunities have given me great insight into a student's perspective of workforce issues

Maria Trotman, podiatrist and AHP Coordinator, Kent and Medway AHP Faculty Lead

- Meet with your students before the start of PBL to ease any anxieties and provide a welcome pack and an induction period. Acknowledge that the students may be apprehensive about not doing clinical work and working online. They will need time to become familiar with the structure of the organisation and meet key colleagues.

Non-clinical should be part of everyone's CPD, not just students. Remote practice based-based learning encourages students to be more in control of their learning and time-management. Being a senior AHP can be quite lonely, so great to chat through stuff with students and it is great to see them grow throughout their time with you.

Victoria Dickens, chief AHP at Northern Care Alliance. Worked with 2 physiotherapy students.

- Design a structure for the PBL and review and refine it as you go along. Involve the students in the design and review process. See figure 1.

I would advocate a coaching approach, multiple students, project- based work all supported by formal leadership training. This provides an enabling and collaborative approach where students can synthesize their learning from different sources.

David Marsden, Regional Allied Health Professions Lead, Health Education England worked simultaneously with an BSc OT student and BSc and MSc physio students.

Pre-registration AHP Student Practice Learning Based Learning at HEE

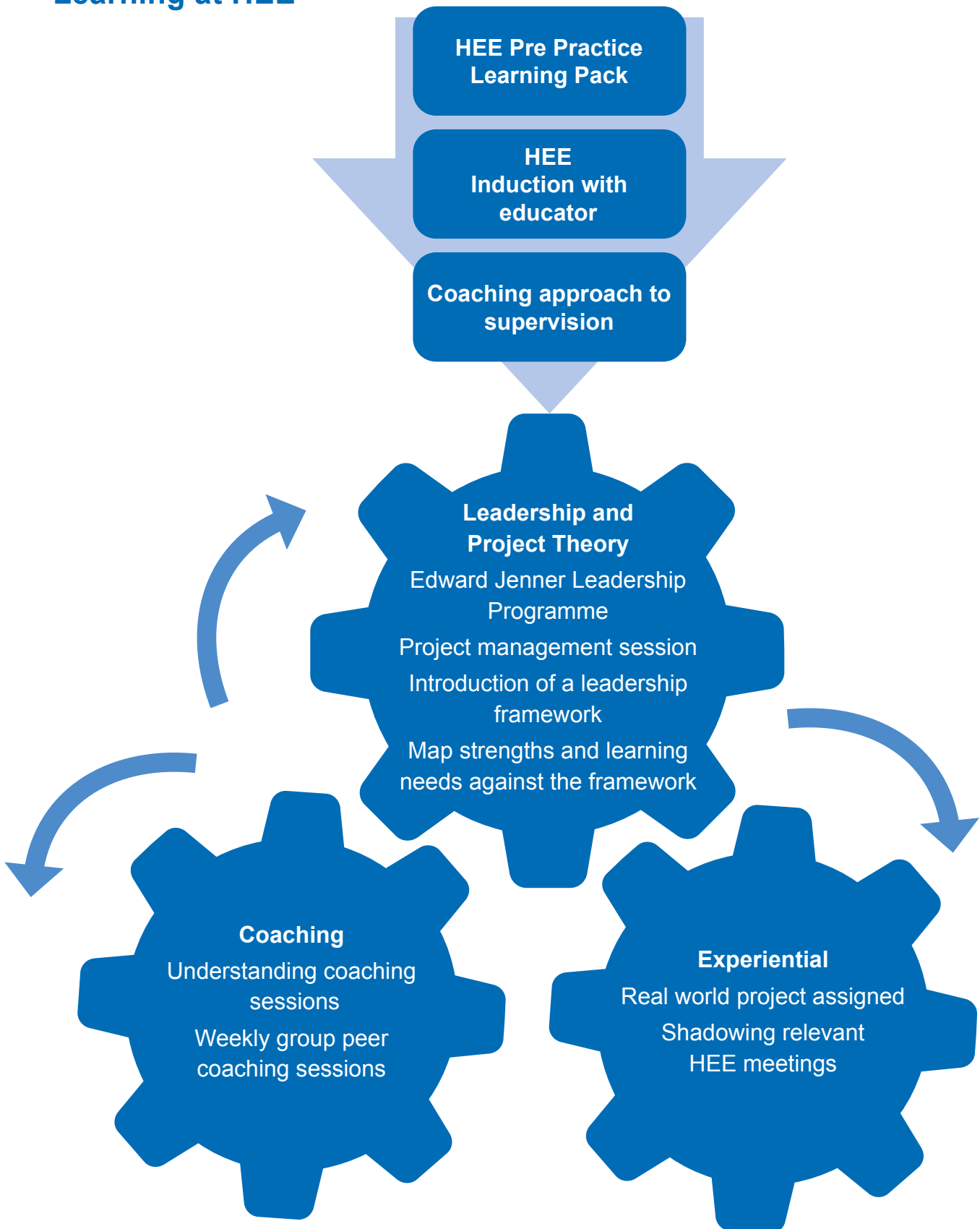


Figure 3. A practice based-based learning process developed by David Marsden Regional AHP Workforce Lead

- Equality versus Equity, as an educator please be mindful that not all students have an environment which enables them to work daily in their home environments and not all students have the same resources or needs.

Some students could be juggling their education with being a parent or others may have caring responsibilities. Other students may be living with a disability. Be open to having a conversation with your student and university to see what supportive measures can be introduced.

**Samantha Nolan, National Programme Manager, Health Education England.
Worked simultaneously with a BSc OT student and BSc physio student.**

Case Study: Leadership practice based learning at the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP)

In September 2020 we had the pleasure of welcoming four students onto a four-week PBL with us at the CSP. While we had previously hosted PBL, we had never taken four students at a time, delivered practice based learning remotely or integrated peer learning and remote supervision into their design.

As we urge our members to think differently about student PBL, it seemed only right that we challenge ourselves to do the same.

The other 'new' here was me. My experience in creating quality learning environments was predominantly in patient-facing settings and, having only joined the CSP in March, I am a relatively new member of the workforce and education team.

Now the PBL has finished it is time to reflect on our learning:

1. Allow yourself to learn (and to make mistakes as you go)
2. Create a sense of belonging within a team.
3. Empower the learner – do not give them all the answers.
4. Embrace the differences between us all.
5. Pause for thought.
6. Evaluate as you go.

**Tamsin Baird, Professional adviser, Chartered Society of Physiotherapy.
Worked with four students from four different universities.**

Read the full article at

<https://www.csp.org.uk/frontline/article/csp-practice-based-learning-what-they-taught-us>

Tips and considerations for students

- Being on a leadership PBL learning experience does not mean you will be leading a team or managing people, it means that you will be developing your leadership qualities such as problem-solving, effective communication and negotiation skills. We are all leaders, and it is important to remember that when you are perhaps the only AHP from your profession within an MDT meeting. We need to start our career as we mean to go on, leading by example and improving the patient experience.
- You may be apprehensive that being in a non-clinical setting may mean you will not develop the skills you need to become a fully rounded and competent AHP. The opposite is true! Leadership skills are what future employers want to see when you start your first role after qualifying and you will be able to utilise these skills in any setting you work in, unlike some of the clinical skills you may learn. This is a great opportunity to see the world beyond the 'front line' clinical experience!

"I was very apprehensive when I found out I would be doing a non-clinical PBL as a physiotherapy student. However, once I understood what my role was on PBL I was able to appreciate the opportunity as it allowed me to develop key skills such as communication, leadership and organisation"

(MSc physiotherapy student)

- Take time to link with other students in similar settings - you may appreciate the peer support. Peer-learning and regular reflection sessions can be valuable. The GROW model (Mindtools, 2020) https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_89.htm is a great framework to develop coaching and communication skills.
- Approach PBL opportunities with a 'can do' attitude. Embrace the opportunity to learn in new and different ways; although you are not working with patients, these experiences will give you ample opportunity to hone your clinical reasoning, communication, and professional skills, demonstrate your flexibility and potentially enhance your employability.

"One in a life-time experience to be able to develop your leadership skills and take charge of a project that you know will have a nationwide impact"

(3rd year BSc Occupational Therapy student)

- If your PBL is digital, this may mean long periods of sitting down. Make sure you take regular breaks away from screens and follow practice based advice for your mental wellbeing. <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing/>

- If you are doing this at home will reduce your travel time, use this time to look after yourself. You may need a quiet working space if working from home. If this is not available to you, highlight this to your university at the earliest possibility opportunity.
- Remember your regulatory and professional body code of conduct/standards for meetings still applies if you are attending a meeting on-line. Follow your educators in terms of dress code and try and engage in meetings to gain the most value from the experience. It is sometimes helpful to organise a de-brief session with your educator to reflect on the experience.

Reflections from students

My leadership placement was a brilliant way for me to gain confidence in presenting to clinical and team leads within an NHS trust, in turn improving my research skills and a general understanding of the managerial process within the NHS

My leadership placement gave me the opportunity to explore areas I found challenging and uncomfortable

Gave me a safe and supportive environment to develop personal and professional skills

Great networking opportunities and have further developed my own understanding of my self and my strengths

It has empowered me to understand my importance in service development as a student

Figure 4. Practice based-based learning student reflections from the E-resource toolkit developed by Kent and Medway AHP Faculty.



Case studies

Leadership practice based learning in a mental health service:

'In June 2020, I undertook a PBL experience within Forensics Mental health services at The Newsam Centre, Seacroft. This PBL involved me and four other students working together as Dietetic Assistants during COVID-19 to gain an overview of staff and service users' attitudes and opinions on food and lifestyle in a low secure forensic setting. We spent time getting to know the service users and staff on the wards which allowed us to collect views on the catering system through conversations and questionnaires. This experience allowed me to build upon my communication skills, a key skill needed as a Dietitian, to collect diet histories and use of health screening tools. This experience led to us five students presenting the data we had collected on the catering system to the clinical governance which has led to a new Trust-wide Dietetic post which has been recruited into. This was able to spark interests into the impact dietetics has within a healthcare setting and allow this profession to be better recognised.

From my experience I was able to explore an area I never would have considered working within. Dietetics can have a great impact for service users within Mental Health and I could see how rewarding working within this field as a Dietitian could be from the short period of time I spent with service users within the forensic setting. I believe if more students had the opportunity to work within Mental Health, in particular Forensics, not only could this influence how AHP roles are shaped in the future but this could contribute to a better recognition of our role and the benefits we provide to the mental and physical health of service users.'

Naomi, 3rd year BSc Dietetic student

Leadership practice based learning at Public Health England:

“In my final elective placement, I am working at Public Health England with another Year 3 Occupational Therapy student from our cohort. We worked a lot together during this PBL in Sport for Confidence projects, interviews, supervisions, social media takeover weeks, meditation session for staff etc. We also have separate work at the same time - I was working on the HCP table and Better Health Concordat, while the other student was working on a social prescribing case study (health inequalities toolkit). We met a few times a week to catch up with each other and make sure we were on the same page.

Year 3 Occupational Therapy student reflecting on their leadership PBL at Public Health England, delivered virtually via a 2:1 supervision model. While one student was based in the UK, the other was in Hong Kong and had the additional challenge of an 8-hour time difference to navigate!

In addition to the expected learning outcomes of this placement, the students have been exposed to a range of additional skills such as social media takeover, professional networking, and promotion of the profession. Being virtual in nature, the students have had their first encounter of working from home. They have demonstrated themselves to be highly organised, self-directed and self-governing – again adding to the development of their professional skills. The breadth of experience they are gaining is wide and exciting – as their educator, it has been an enjoyable and interesting opportunity.

Whilst direct clinical contact is limited due to the setting, the client contact that has been possible has enabled both students to develop and appreciate Occupational Therapy at both individual and strategic levels. This PBL has enhanced their understanding of policy development and the impact upon PBL at both clinical and strategic levels.

Linda Hindle, Deputy Chief AHP Officer for England, Public Health England, supervised two Year 3 Occupational Therapy students.

Split leadership/clinical practice based learning:

We have had a joint PBL that lasted six weeks shared between Health Education England and Winchester Hospital in the Orthopaedic team. This is an insight into what we have been able to be a part of and achieve whilst with HEE.

Our main project with HEE has been working on a research project with the University of Winchester looking into the motives and barriers to becoming an AHP. The end goal of the PBL was to present the research idea to the professional bodies. We have had to be very flexible on this placement, sometimes having four days clinical a week at the hospital to achieve our clinical objectives, sometimes having three days with HEE and two days at the hospital.

Dan, 3rd year Physiotherapy student, University of Winchester

One area of input I was so grateful to be involved in was when I met up with an AHP Lead focusing on Diversity, this helped to drive home the importance of undertaking a project like this, discussing things such as the barriers and challenges faced by people of minority backgrounds when wanting to become a physiotherapist or a podiatrist. I know my own personal experience is a rare one, being the only student from my cohort from a BAME background. I am aware of the growing importance to ensure that the AHP workforce is diverse and full of opportunity for others like me who have barriers that may stop them from becoming an AHP student.

TJ, 3rd year Physiotherapy student, University of Winchester.

Read Dan and TJ's full blog at [AHP Student practice based learning- origin stories | Health Education England \(hee.nhs.uk\)](https://www.hee.nhs.uk/news/2019/07/19/ahp-student-practice-based-learning-origin-stories)

Case study: Nonclinical Leadership practice based learning at Healthcare Improvement Scotland

It was not surprising to find out that our two students were just as apprehensive as we were. For them, as physiotherapy students, they were nervous at being on a PBL that was not clinical. For us, it was more about how we could make a PBL effective when it was being conducted virtually, as well as how much time it might take on top of the day job. On top of that, it was whether supervising students from a different profession would work. To mitigate this, we decided to adopt a 2:2 model of PBL so that the two practice based educators could support each other and the two students could also support each other.

Given the virtual, project-based nature of the placement, we had to consider how the students could achieve their learning outcomes to fulfil University standards. This included subject matter specific teach-back sessions, a case study example, a hypothetical physiotherapy quality improvement project and an evidence summary of their learning.

Lynn Flannigan, Improvement Advisor with the Focus on Dementia Team of Healthcare Improvement Scotland.

Read the full story at [Training the AHP workforce of the future – Lynn Flannigan | Healthcare Improvement Scotland Blog](#)

References and Resources:

- Health Education England (2017) Multi-professional framework for advanced clinical practice based in England. Online. Available at: <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Multi-professional%20framework%20for%20advanced%20clinical%20practice%20based%20in%20England.pdf>
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- [Healthcare Leadership Model: The nine dimensions of leadership behaviour: 2013](#)
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- NHS Leadership Academy [The Health Leadership Model](#)
- NHS Leadership Academy [Clinical Leadership Competency Framework](#)
- NHS Leadership Academy [Edward Jenner programme](#)
- The GROW model (Mindtools, 2020) https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_89.htm
- NHS UK Five Steps to Mental Wellbeing at: <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing/>
- National wellbeing support at: <https://www.nhsemployers.org/-/media/Employers/Documents/Retain-and-improve/Health-and-wellbeing/HWB-brochure-Jan-2021.pdf?la=en&hash=8E26BA368DF32A2E54C713C70232DE712A888AC5>

- **How are you feeling NHS?** toolkit is an easy-to-use resource that was developed with NHS staff to encourage conversation in the workplace and enable us to talk openly and regularly about emotional health.
- **Health Education England's** e-Learning for Healthcare (HEE e-LfH) team has worked with Carers UK to develop a free online resource to support the vital care that unpaid carers provide.
 - The Supporting Unpaid Carers [e-learning resource](#) is for everyone who provides care and support to a family member or friend due to their disability, health condition, frailty, mental health problem or other health and care needs.
 - HEE National Guide for Self-Care for Learners based on the South West Self-care Guide for Learners: [SW Self Care Guide For Students April 2021.pdf](#)
 - Link to national self-Care Guide for Learners – to be added to website and copied in)

