

Quick Guide to Allied Health Professions Careers Awareness



Contents

Definitions	4
Allied Health Professions Careers Awareness.....	4
The AHP Workforce	4
Introduction	5
Background	6
The Importance of AHP Careers Awareness Activities	8
The Evidence Base.....	8
Literature Review Summary	9
AHP Careers Awareness Activities: Things to Consider	10
Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB).....	10
Interdependencies with Work Experience and Work-Related Learning	11
Factors that impact on application rate to study.....	11
The Role of Career Ambassadors.....	11
Promoting Careers in the Allied Health Professions	13
Experience of care	13
AHP Student Roadshows.....	14
AHP Awareness Toolkit	15
Top Tips for Careers Promotion	19
Make your offers attractive and easy to find	19
Find the right people to connect in careers campaigns.....	19
Be intentional with diversity and inclusion.....	20
Identify where to put your time and effort.....	20
How Will You Measure Your Success and Impact?	21
Case Study Examples	22
Using Technology to raise awareness in hard to access settings	22
Targeted Support for Small and Vital Professions – Podiatry	22
A Systems Approach to Careers Awareness	23
A Place-based Inclusive Approach to Careers Awareness	23
Appendix 1	24
NHS England (formerly Health Education England) Literature Search Results	24



Recruitment.....	24
Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB), Widening Access and Participation (WAP)	24
Career Development.....	25
Literature Search Reference List	25

Definitions

Allied Health Professions (AHP) Careers Awareness

AHP careers awareness can be defined as giving access to information, advice and career pathways knowledge across a range of health professions and roles within the AHP workforce. It involves having the opportunity to learn from the lived experiences of others in ways that enable people to make informed decisions about future personal career choices.

By profession the registered allied health professions are art therapists, dramatherapists, music therapists, podiatrists, dietitians, occupational therapists, operating department practitioners, orthoptists, osteopaths, paramedics, physiotherapists, prosthetists and orthotists, diagnostic and therapeutic radiographers and speech and language therapists.

The AHP Workforce

The term AHP workforce is used to describe a collective group of registered professionals and the non-registered support workforce working in health, social care, educational and social justice settings in the public, voluntary and private sector.

AHPs are registered and regulated by the health and care professions council (HCPC) except for Osteopaths who are registered with the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC).



The AHP community is made up of our:

- AHP support workers including assistant practitioners
- Future workforce in training including pre-registrant student learners and apprentices
- Current workforce of registered professionals
- AHP Leaders
- Educators
- Academics, researchers, innovators, and improvers
- Retired workforce
- Professional bodies

Introduction

This guide provides evidence-based information and advice for those wanting to promote AHP careers and to engage in AHP careers awareness activities.

It will benefit the following stakeholders participating in careers events, or considering developing AHP careers awareness resources for inclusion in wider careers promotion campaigns:

- Local AHP teams and service providers
- AHP Faculties working at a system level to attract people to the AHP workforce
- Integrated Care System (ICS) careers engagement teams
- Regional AHP workforce development and/or action groups
- Academic Educational Institutes (AEIs)
- Professional bodies working nationally to promote specific professions

Through this quick guide our intention is to share practices and principles that can be utilised to raise awareness of the professions, roles, and career pathways available. It covers a focus on first time career choices to career changes and raising the awareness of the opportunities for returners to practice.

It also includes signposts to a range of existing careers resources and examples of work to help inspire others to attract more people to come and join the AHP workforce.

Careers awareness and widening participation agendas overlap. Work experience and work-related experience provide important exposure and insights into the skills, attributes and the working lives of health and care professionals. We touch upon it in this guide, however the resource and expertise for work experience sits within the widening participation space.

This guide can be read in conjunction with other quick guides such as the Quick Guide to Work Experience and the Quick Guide to Volunteering. Both are available as quick guides to stimulate interest in AHP careers from the [stimulate demand](#) webpage.

Background

The [NHS Interim People Plan](#) described a need to ensure that there is a workforce ready for the future. We have a national strategic goal to develop a sustainable supply pipeline of AHPs by increasing applications to undergraduate AHP education and maximising the use of apprenticeships to increase the access to support worker, assistant practitioner, and registered professional roles. Interventions to grow our workforce also include encouraging previously registered colleagues to return to the HCPC register via the return to practice programme and welcoming overseas trained staff to register and work in England using ethical international recruitment processes.

[We are the NHS: People Plan 2020/21 – action for us all](#) articulated that the NHS needs more people to address current and future NHS needs with a specific focus on ‘growing for the future’. We have a key role to play in attracting the right people with the right skills, values and behaviours into health and social care roles.

The full implementation of the [NHS Long Term Workforce Plan](#) requires the AHP workforce to grow by 71,000 – 76,000. This will be achieved by growth in traditional direct entry pre-registration courses a greater use of apprenticeships as well as the expansion of support worker roles. In spelling out the case for change, the plan highlights the following (p.31)

“ **Demographic changes will present some opportunities when it comes to recruiting to the future healthcare workforce.** There will be a ‘bulge’ in the 18- year-old population over the next few years, which possibly will not be seen again for the rest of the century. As such, there is an imminent narrow window to offer as many routes as possible to school leavers into careers in healthcare. ”



[The Allied Health Professions \(AHPs\) strategy for England – AHPs Deliver](#) outlines the importance of developing robust deployment and development to ensure the system has the right workforce, with the right skills, in the right place to deliver high quality care.

Our key priorities include:

- **Securing the future sustainable supply pipeline** through stimulating demand for AHP careers and responding to this with more places on AHP courses
- **Bridging the gap between education and work** by optimising the confidence and capability of students and new registrants.

To fulfil this growth in numbers we will need to take a targeted approach to attract more people to come and join the AHP workforce. This will need to include all routes to develop the AHP support workforce and to grow our registered professionals, widening access which will require a ‘more and different’ approach to careers awareness interventions.

The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan names some specific AHP profession targets relating to apprenticeships to attract a wider diversity of applicants and people from local communities into the workforce.

People interested in joining the AHP workforce will be seeking profession specific careers e.g., an interest in becoming a Dietitian or Diagnostic Radiographer and/or pathway specific advice and information e.g., interest to work in cancer services, working with children and young people, mental health services or rehabilitation settings.

All the information and recommendations within this document must be filtered through a profession specific lens to have meaning, impact and be discoverable to those exploring potential future career choices.



The Importance of AHP Careers Awareness Activities

National vacancy data (NHS Electronic Staff Records March 2022) indicated significant current shortages exist in several registered AHP professional groups, including diagnostic and therapeutic radiography, operating department practitioners, orthoptists, prosthetists, and orthotists.

Paramedics, occupational therapists, diagnostic radiographers, speech and language therapists, and podiatrists are named as AHPs with highest supply concerns within the forecast workforce data in the [NHS Long Term Workforce Plan](#) (June 2023).

The [Diagnostics: Recovery and renewal](#) report; commonly referred to as the Richards Review (October 2020) also recognises the growing need and vital role of support workers in diagnostic service delivery.

Careers promotion is a shared responsibility of the AHP community working within the integrated care system as an [anchor institution](#) collaborating with local schools, academic educational institutions, and community groups to raise awareness of AHP roles and careers.

The Evidence Base

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

A shared language and use of recommended definitions and terminology across the NHS and social care, will assist those looking to enter a health and social care career.

The Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) publication "Envisioning the Future of Education & Jobs" (2019) shared evidence that career choices are heavily influenced by parents and carers. It also highlights that the career aspirations of 7–11 year-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 to build a more robust workforce in the future.

Literature Review Summary

An NHS England (formerly Health Education England) literature review (March 2022) discovered the evidence pertaining to the approaches and successful mechanisms to attract people to registered AHP professions and AHP support worker roles. It included those new to profession and returning to practice across England.

The review revealed there is a lack of evidence available that supports methods to attract people into AHP careers.

Key messages can be taken from wider healthcare career promotion initiatives that include:

- A need to widen the recruitment lens across a range of protected characteristics, embedding widening access and participation agendas.
- The need for focussed interventions to attract and recruit to positively support diversity, equity and belonging.
- The pivotal role of career influencers that provide exposure to career pathways, work experience and mentorship. Contact time with early career professionals and trained, experienced professionals are beneficial.
- The value of encouraging student learners, new registrants, and the wider health and care community members to promote careers in schools and local communities.
- Clear career pathways utilising the foundational care certificate and higher development award, both within the support workforce roles and moving into registered roles helps people to understand and visualise career options.

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

AHP Careers Awareness Activities: Things to Consider

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB)

It is important to ensure equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB) are embedded within all careers promotion activities and that widening access and participation (WAP) leads are involved in careers activities and aware of resources available to support them. A workforce that reflects local populations is vital to improve care and reduce health inequalities. There should be a clear interconnection between EDIB and WAP with the two working synergistically within the career awareness arena.

There has been an increase in the number of racially minoritized workers within the NHS Workforce Race Equality Standards (WRES) data 2023 published in the [NHS Workforce WRES Report](#) (March 2024). Since 2018 the number of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) staff has increased by over 100,000 (with BME representation increasing from 19.1% to 24.2%). National figures demonstrate that this increase is linked to those areas where demographically there is a more diverse population and that local increases do not necessarily represent the national demographic. The male to female ratio of staff in the NHS has remained static for the last 3 years with 70% being female and 30% being male.

An important aspect of careers awareness is to challenge gender profession stereotypes.

In the North East and Yorkshire region, the [Aspiring Allies](#) campaign demonstrates the importance of AHP careers promotion through the lens of diversity, equity and belonging that reflects the local population. The Aspiring Allies website includes information across the range of AHP careers and a library of 'inspirational stories' which give real life examples of staff and student experiences. System wide, inclusive approaches add value to the implementation of careers awareness campaigns.

The Aspiring Allies AHP team have also worked with Bradford College on a unique virtual work experience programme. In June 2023, 80 students at Bradford College had the opportunity to learn more about the allied health professions that support patients in the NHS. Students participated in six modules to learn the practical skills needed to progress into one of the allied health professions. Following the success of this pilot with Bradford College, the virtual work experience programme has since been shared across the West Yorkshire system. Further development of profession specific modules has been initiated, with Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy completed, and Dietetics and Diagnostic Radiography in development.



Interdependencies with Work Experience and Work-Related Learning

Work experience and work-related learning play a pivotal role in widening access and encouraging participation in health careers. Work led by the national Talent for Care Team interfaces with several Government agendas, such as the 'Levelling Up' initiative and the State of the Nation 2021 report, 'Social Mobility and the Pandemic'.

The NHS England (formerly Health Education England) response to recommendations outlined in 'the future of healthcare work experience: discovery report' (March 2021), states:

“...national collaboration to encourage and foster inclusive systems will reduce inequalities of access to work experience, work-related learning (both online and physical), champion fully accessible, fair, equitable and transparent provision”.

Factors that impact on application rate to study

There are several contributing factors that impact on the application rate to study for the allied health professions which include socio-economic and cultural factors as well as professional awareness, clear career pathways and progression opportunities. Particular attention needs to target professions showing a slower rate of increase of applications or a decline in applications.

The Role of Career Ambassadors

There are a range of national and local [NHS Ambassador](#) and [I Care Ambassador](#) schemes e.g. the [Proud to Care Ambassadors](#) that encourage individuals working in health and social care to inspire others and consider a career in health and care.

There are also wider ambassador schemes e.g. the science, technology, engineering and mathematics [\(STEM\) ambassador schemes](#) that help to raise awareness and educate through schools and communities via positive role model volunteers of the rewarding career pathways available relating to STEM subjects.

Sharing lived experiences and stories relating to their own career choices and values, career ambassadors are key connectors who promote the range of career options available and provide further information and links on how to become registered professionals and AHP support workers.



AHP career ambassadors can be anyone in the AHP Community who chooses to volunteer and engage in career promotion activities to inspire others at a local, regional and/or national level. There are opportunities for us to engage with student AHP career ambassadors via practice-based learning activities e.g., leadership placements and encouraging students to volunteer at career events to fly their profession flag whilst on placement within provider organisations and AEs via student representative roles.

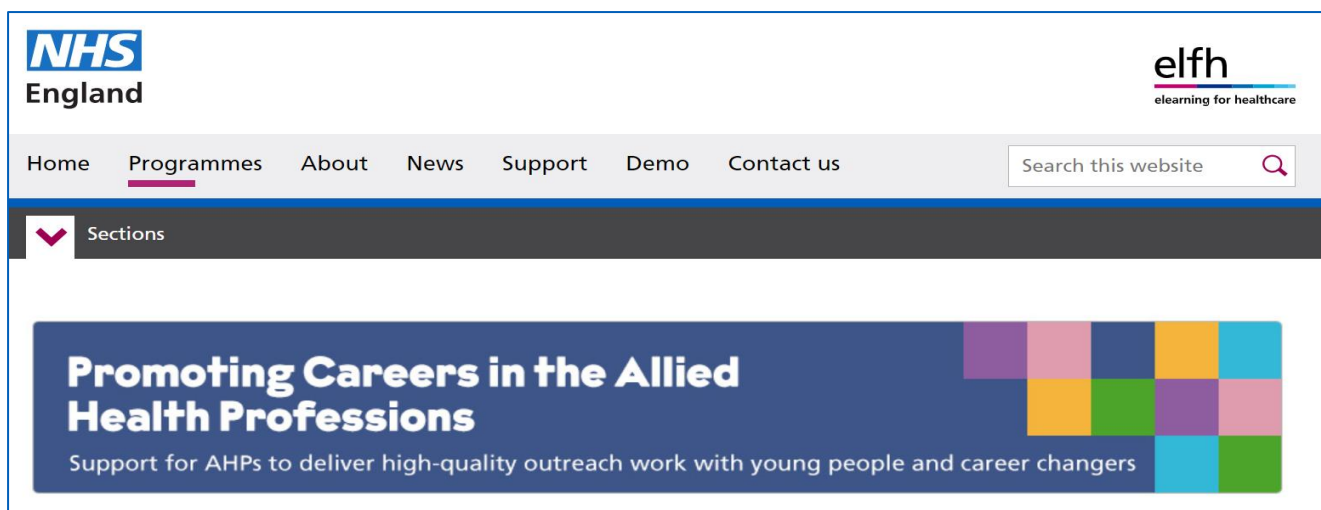
Becoming a careers ambassador provides opportunities for professional development, supports reflexivity of skills, and evidences professional behaviours and values for continuous professional development portfolios. Time volunteered as a career ambassador could be included within preceptorship programmes to support early career AHPs to gain confidence in sharing their professional identity with others and to develop skills aligned to the education professional pillar of practice.

Promoting Careers in the Allied Health Professions

In this section we have included several examples of different resources and approaches that can be used to promote careers by profession and setting.

[Promoting careers in the allied health professions](#) is an eLearning programme that comprises three e-learning sessions created to support AHPs undertaking voluntary outreach work with young people and career changers, in schools or other settings.

The resources teach learners about the context for outreach work and its importance, developing content that is relevant to different audiences, and delivering compelling content that will help to inspire the next generation of AHPs. It supports AHPs to create promotion materials to undertake career awareness activities.



The screenshot shows the NHS England website. The top left features the NHS England logo. The top right features the elfh logo with the tagline 'elearning for healthcare'. A navigation menu includes 'Home', 'Programmes', 'About', 'News', 'Support', 'Demo', and 'Contact us'. A search bar is located on the right. Below the navigation menu, there is a 'Sections' dropdown menu. The main content area features a large blue banner with the text 'Promoting Careers in the Allied Health Professions' and a subtitle 'Support for AHPs to deliver high-quality outreach work with young people and career changers'. The banner is decorated with a colorful grid of squares in shades of purple, pink, blue, orange, green, and cyan.

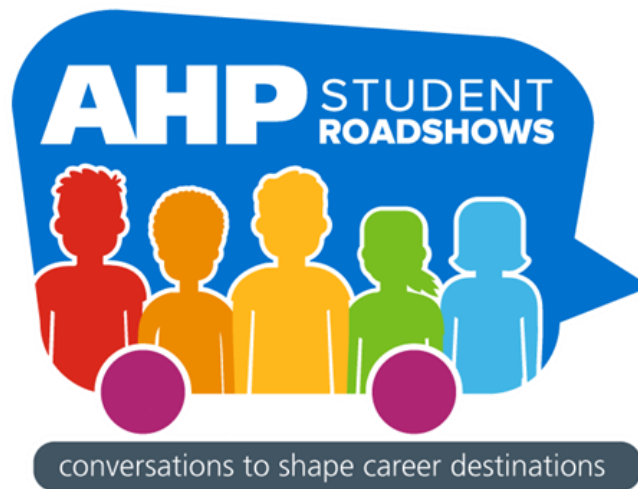
Experience of care

Experiences of care provide the opportunity to leave an all-important inspirational imprint on people and family members. This can often motivate people to consider a career in health and social care for themselves.

We believe that our current workforce, including our workforce in training (students, trainees, apprentices), plays a critical role in inspiring our future workforce, along with hearing directly from people who have been the direct recipients of care.

AHP Student Roadshows

In the South West, the [AHP Student Roadshows](#) provides an example of a coproduced careers awareness campaign involving current AHP professionals working with students and experts by experience to provide insight into [The Value of AHPs in Mental Health Services](#). Designed and delivered in 2022/23 by Carly Atkinson (Dietitian working in mental health), Chloe Edgar (Occupational Therapy Student) and Martha Hall (Expert by Experience) to increase understanding of the role and value of a variety of Allied Health Professionals within mental health services and hence increase our ability to collaborate and advocate for each other within services going forwards.



AHP Awareness Toolkit

The national NHS England AHP Workforce Training and Education (WT&E) programme team (formerly Health Education England) has invested in a suite of career resources in recent years which have been collated into the [AHP Careers Awareness Toolkit](#). The webpage has been developed to provide a helpful point of access aimed at those in our AHP community wanting to engage in careers awareness activities, to access career information intelligence, examples of good practice and access to a useful AHP careers directory which contains details of existing profession specific promotional media, signposts to further sites and a list of awareness raising dates/opportunities throughout the year to help with campaign planning.

The table below provides further examples of resources and signposts depending on which audience you may be looking to connect and engage with.

Target Audience	Signposting to information and resources
<p>First time career choices</p>	<p>In recent years the national NHSE AHP WT&E programme have had a range of successful collaborations providing targeted AHP career awareness resources that include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The world of work (WOW) Show AHP special edition. • The Academies Enterprise Trust to create meaningful learning experiences that integrate AHP careers learning into the curriculum and Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. • Macmillan Cancer Support to raise the profile of role and a career in therapeutic radiography. <p>People can sign up to receive a free step-by-step guide the AHPs and find additional support around routes to professions and how to write a stand out application from the Health Careers website AHP webpage https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/we-are-the-nhs/allied-health-professionals</p>

Virtual and in person careers fairs and talks in schools, colleges and wider community events continue to provide important opportunities to interest and awareness in AHP careers.

- The national [Health Careers Live](#) Conference with a core focus on widening participation, diversity and inclusion which has produced a library of reusable AHP career video resources.

Since 2020 there has been an increased use of social media and online platforms to promote AHP careers.

- The [Discover the AHPs](#) heroes of health and care interactive resource provides a great resource to support the 'Step into the NHS' careers campaign schools competition aimed at primary aged children.
- The [AHP VR360](#) experiences provide a virtual reality immersive 'day in the life of' experiences for six AHP professions. Aimed at secondary aged young people, it enables them to be transported to workplace settings, gain insights and come alongside health professions and hear personal stories of career choices.

Many parents and schools utilise readily available careers resources from outside the NHS such as [BBC Bitesize Careers A to Z](#) to share with school aged children for example:

- [How to become an occupational therapy technical instructor: Amy's story](#)
- [How to become an orthotist: Karrie's story](#)
- [How to become a paramedic](#)

AHP Support Workers

AHP support worker roles provide a range of rich and rewarding career choices, with opportunities for development. Support workers play a crucial and growing role in delivering safe and effective care across the allied health professions.

The AHP support workforce are highly valued members of our AHP community and for many the support worker role is a career of choice. Individuals may also

	<p>be motivated to step onto career pathways into the registered AHP workforce offering end to end progression routes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The national AHP Support Worker programme have produced an AHP support workforce – grow your own workforce strategies guide that provides an overview of workforce strategies designed to attract, train and retain the allied health professions’ (AHP) support workforce.
<p>People seeking to explore new career options ‘Career Changers’ to AHP</p>	<p>The AHP support worker and AHP career changer agendas can sometimes overlap.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career changer to AHP promotional resources include the motivations for changing to become an AHP, promoting AHPs as a rewarding career choice at any stage of working life. There is targeted support to attract those leaving the armed forces illustrated in the step into health - could an AHP be your new career? video.
<p>Returners to Practice</p>	<p>Return to practice is included in this quick guide appreciating that colleagues will know the professions but need to support when it comes to raising awareness of changes with new roles and ways of working that may attract them back to the workforce.</p> <p>The HEE AHP Return to Practice (RtP) Programme is designed to give the opportunity for former HCPC registrants to return to the register. AHP Returnees have on average nine years of clinical experience when they leave and 60% were working at agenda for change (AfC) Band 7 or above when they left to register. Working at AfC Band 7 means they have been working at a specialist level, generally with more than 5 years’ experience and may have had a leadership responsibility. This means they are coming back to the workforce with previous experience, skills and attributes that may be highly valued.</p> <p>Targeted promotion of AHP career opportunities, and resources that support navigation to return to practice is essential to help fill existing workforce vacancies.</p>

The [NHS People Promise](#) includes the promise to work flexibly. These policies support people to have a greater say in their working patterns and hours that didn't always exist before.

- The return to practice [Mythbuster document](#) provides a useful collation to respond to myths and frequently asked questions related to returning to the HCPC register.

Top Tips for Careers Promotion

Make your offers attractive and easy to find

Careers awareness support needs to be easily discoverable to the intended audience you are trying to reach.



People need to be able to relate their interests, hobbies, strengths, and values with the specific professions.

It is important that people understand that there are different ways to join the AHP workforce.

It is critical that you identify your target audience and match your style and approach of communication and engagement to meet their needs. Parents/carers can often have a great deal of influence on career paths for their children. The places to seek information and sources of information that will be important to them may differ from their children.

Don't rush to create new content. Do your research and invest in making more resources where you have found a gap or identified need that will add more and different resources to what is currently available. Seek advice from your organisation and/or ICS careers engagement and outreach teams.

Find the right people to connect in careers campaigns

Think carefully about who the best people are to engage depending on your audience. The evidence tells us young people want to hear from other people in a recently similar, one step ahead of them situation e.g., newly qualified staff or pre-registration learners on programmes over senior leads and heads of service.

Our current workforce and workforce in training are well placed to share their personal stories and experience to shine a positive light on their profession of choice to inspire others. Managers need to find ways to recognise the value of these activities to develop the leadership and education pillars of professional practice.

AHP career ambassadors need to be confident and equipped with the right up to date information to engage with children, young people, and adults about a range of allied health professions and AHP support workforce roles.

It is a good idea to promote and value the time, support, and engagement of AHP career ambassadors. If they have a positive experience, they will be more likely to volunteer again and share their experience with other colleagues to get involved.

Be intentional with diversity and inclusion

Positively promoting people with a range of unique individual and protected characteristics matters. We would encourage you to adopt an AHPs are 'people like me' stance when developing and delivery careers campaigns.

The Careers and Enterprise company have an [employer's guide](#) to support careers awareness support for working with young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

It is important that we continue to be intentional in raising the profile of AHP professions not traditionally considered career choices by some communities, genders and to myth bust stereotypes. If you are creating your own resources, consider completing a diversity equity and belonging assurance/impact assessment.

Identify where to put your time and effort

You may choose to focus on local workforce needs or national priorities to help inform and target profession specific careers promotion. There are several AHP professions considered to be small and vital. These include Therapeutic Radiography, Podiatry, Orthoptics, Prosthetics and Orthotics. The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan encourages ICSs to tailor careers campaigns to promote roles and job opportunities that are in greatest need locally.

There are a range of different times throughout the year that lend themselves to careers awareness e.g., the start of the UCAS application window in the autumn, the period of UCAS clearing between July and August each year, school work experience weeks, and profession specific celebration days/weeks.

Connect with local widening participation and inclusion leads for their expertise and support.

Spend time understanding what will best meet the needs and preference of your audience. There is a vast amount of careers information available in a variety of communication formats e.g., leaflets, videos, animations, and podcasts.

How Will You Measure Your Success and Impact?

Being able to demonstrate return on investment is notoriously difficult in careers awareness and promotional campaigns. It is often considered a long game and so you need to think carefully about this in relation to short term measurables. It is important to consider appropriate metrics that will demonstrate return on intent, show the visible benefits and impact in meaningful ways aligned to workforce supply optimisation plans.

- What data will you collect?
- How will you evaluate the success of your campaign/project?
- What will success look like?
- What might some of the benefits to your team be?
- How might your service benefit?
- How might the Profession benefit?
- Where can you share your experience and outcomes?
- Could you produce a case study to share with others for them to learn from?

Case Study Examples

Using Technology to raise awareness in hard to access settings

The 350+ NHS careers project is an education outreach programme across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight aimed at students aged 5–18 years. The programme gives young people the opportunity to gain insight to the opportunities that a career in our NHS can offer and has included a targeted support offer to get behind the closed doors of an operating theatre in action.

In a day of immersive learning, students took part in a pilot project to raise awareness of the operating department practitioners. They watched live surgery being performed at University Hospital Southampton and learnt about the critical role played by the Operating Department Practitioner (ODP) while mirroring the tasks performed by the ODPs before, during and after surgery in the simulation suite. You can find out more about this project [here](#).

Targeted Support for Small and Vital Professions – Podiatry

Over the past decade there has been a steady decline in the number of podiatrists entering university and particularly seen entering the National Health Services (NHS) after registration (Health Education England, 2020).

This has had a negative effect on the Podiatry workforce and the delivery of patient care, resulting in longer waiting times and an increase in foot ulcerations and amputations (Diabetics UK, 2020). The Saks report (2021) made recommendations to increase the supply of podiatrists by making every effort to recruit more students and improve the way we publicise the profession and use areas such as sport to make it more attractive.

Colleagues in the South East region to targeted action to improve the awareness podiatry to people coming to the end of their sporting career working in partnership with Life After Professional Sports (LAPS) and to increase the uptake into the two local universities delivering the podiatry programme within the region.

Their activities included:

1. Working with sporting professionals who have transitioned into a new career of podiatry sharing their journey via blogs, round table videos and communicating this to sporting professionals coming towards the end of their careers.
2. Podiatrist working in the sporting area sharing their 'Day in a life' and how they work with sporting professions to ensure they perform to the best of their ability. This was shared via the LAPS website and monthly newsletter.

3. Information on Podiatry careers and educational pathway options being hosted on the LAPS website.
4. Face-to-face LAPS exhibition to deliver podiatry career and educational pathway options information to sporting academies.

A Systems Approach to Careers Awareness

The Humber and North Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership has taken a multi-professional approach in their careers support offer which includes a section on AHPs that connects people living in their system with opportunities to explore a range of jobs and career pathways and is supported by Health and Social Care Ambassadors. You can find out more [here](#).

A Place-based Inclusive Approach to Careers Awareness

The North East London Health and Care Partnership took a creative approach to AHP careers promotion through a mural wall art careers promotion project. Adopting the 'AHPs are people like me' stance to be intentionally diverse and inclusive and reflecting a commitment to providing jobs to people in their local community. You can find out more about the project to reach out and connect with people in their local community. [Watch this video](#) to find out more.

Appendix 1

NHS England (formerly Health Education England) Literature Search Results

Research question or topic: “What evidence is there around approaches and successful mechanisms to attract people to health care support worker professions/ allied health care support worker professions both in terms of new to professions and also returning to practice across England”.

A literature search was conducted in March 2022 by NHS England (formerly Health Education England) AHP Fellow Mandy Tuckey and collated by Mandy Tuckey, Gaby Ford, and Vicky Gill, 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. 23 articles were returned and limited specific to Allied Health Professionals.

Recruitment

Recruitment initiatives for support workers are key drivers in much of the reviewed literature (1-14). There is a focus on values-based recruitment and a need to ensure a wide range of sectors are included in any recruitment initiatives.

NHS England and NHS Improvement: Maximising the effectiveness of recruiting new people to the NHS (2) recognise that the impact of Covid-19 and the “Nightingale effect” has seen growing numbers of individuals from many different sectors seeking career change (11).

Work experience and work-related learning also play a pivotal role in widening access and encouraging participation in health careers (15). Ensuring support worker career roles are publicised and marketed effectively is key to supporting the recruitment of the workforce (5).

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) and Widening Access and Participation (WAP)

EDIB must be a key golden thread throughout the careers awareness strategy (16). Kendall-Raynor (17) recognised the problem of discrimination against black and minority ethnic (BME) nurses and healthcare support workers in the (NHS) and the subsequent publication of the NHS workforce race equality standard (WRES) (18) indicates that there has been a minimal increase in the last 4 years in the number of staff from minority ethnic backgrounds in employment within the NHS.

Whilst some regions may have seen an increase in the number of minority ethnic workers, they should not be complacent when viewed in conjunction with the national figures. The highest percentage of ethnic minority workers are seen in bands 2-6. Careers promotion activities should be targeted across all levels of study and ensure that those with protected characteristics are equally represented.

The widening access and participation agenda aims to tackle health inequalities and improve social mobility by championing social justice, raising awareness of career/job possibilities. Education and training help to remove systemic and individual barriers to empower and encourage access to and participation in employment. It is vital that the careers awareness strategy promotes equity of access to opportunities (19).

Career Development

There was evidence of the need to ensure a clear pathway framework for support workers entering health and social care roles with a dedicated induction and onboarding process required (1, 12, 16, 20, 21).

Readiness toolkits and “grow your own” strategies are some of the initiatives being implemented to attract, train, and retain the workforce (4). Recognising transferable skills and experiences are important aspects of the recruitment and career development process (1).

Ensuring supportive learning cultures within health, social care, and educational development (including e-learning) such as the Care Certificate (22) increase the attractiveness of support worker roles for those seeking to start their career and further enhance their professional development activities (9, 14, 23).

Literature Search Reference List

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