

# The Good, The Bad and The Future of OT and Physio Student placements

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## Introduction

### Background

Lincolnshire Community Health Services (LCHS) offers a range of student practice based learning opportunities for therapy learners. A review of Adult Occupational Therapy (OT) and Physiotherapy (PT) placements was undertaken for 2017-18 to review capacity, the quality of learning experiences and identify ways to increase placement capacity.

### Aims

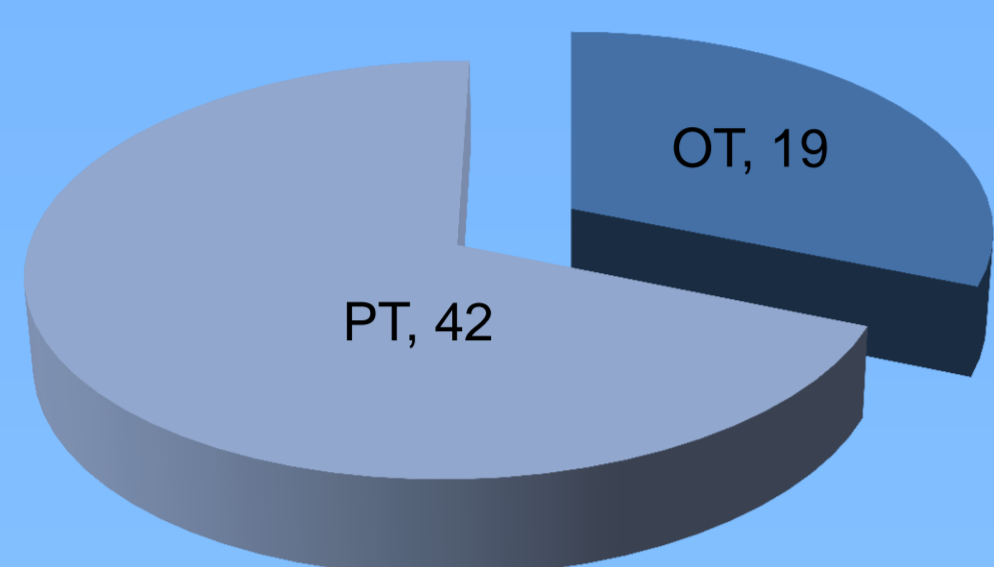
The aims of this project are to understand current placement capacity and identify ways to enhance and develop a robust placement model for the future within OT and PT to meet rising demand for practice based learning opportunities.

### Project Design

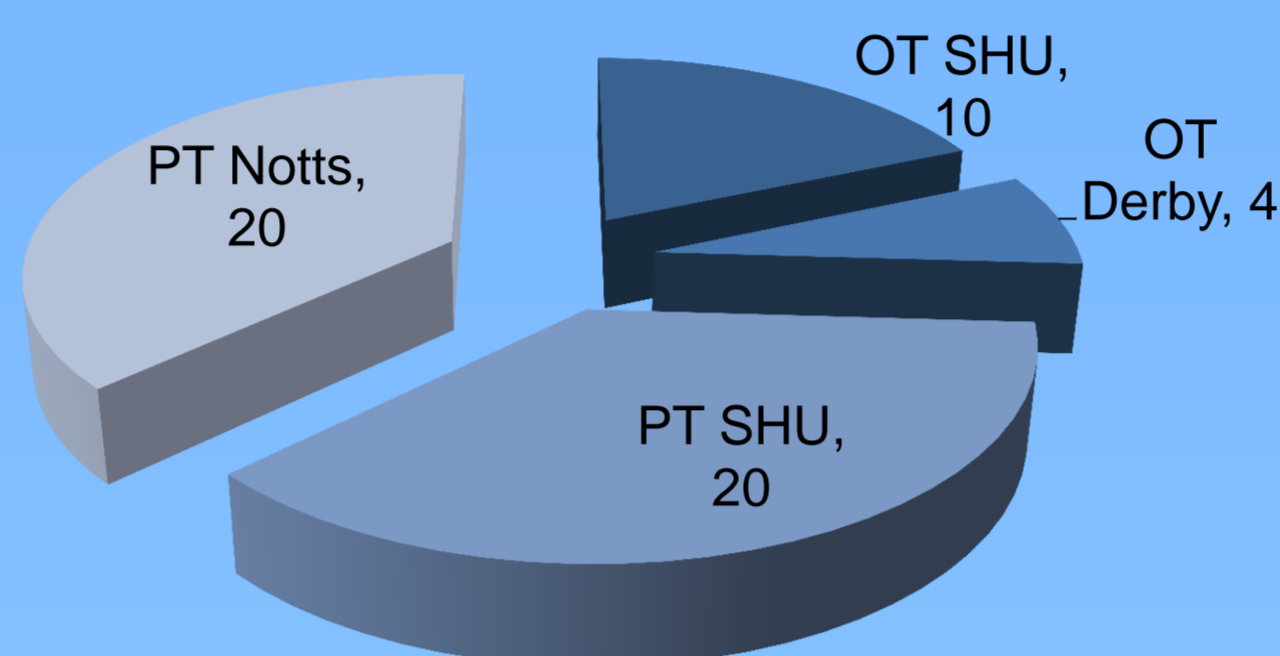
A review of placement data and student placement feedback was undertaken for the 2017-18 financial year. A mapping exercise was used to identify common themes from the placement data available and all placement educators were identified across the organisation. Consideration of feedback from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as to reasons for poor uptake and barriers was also given.

## Results:

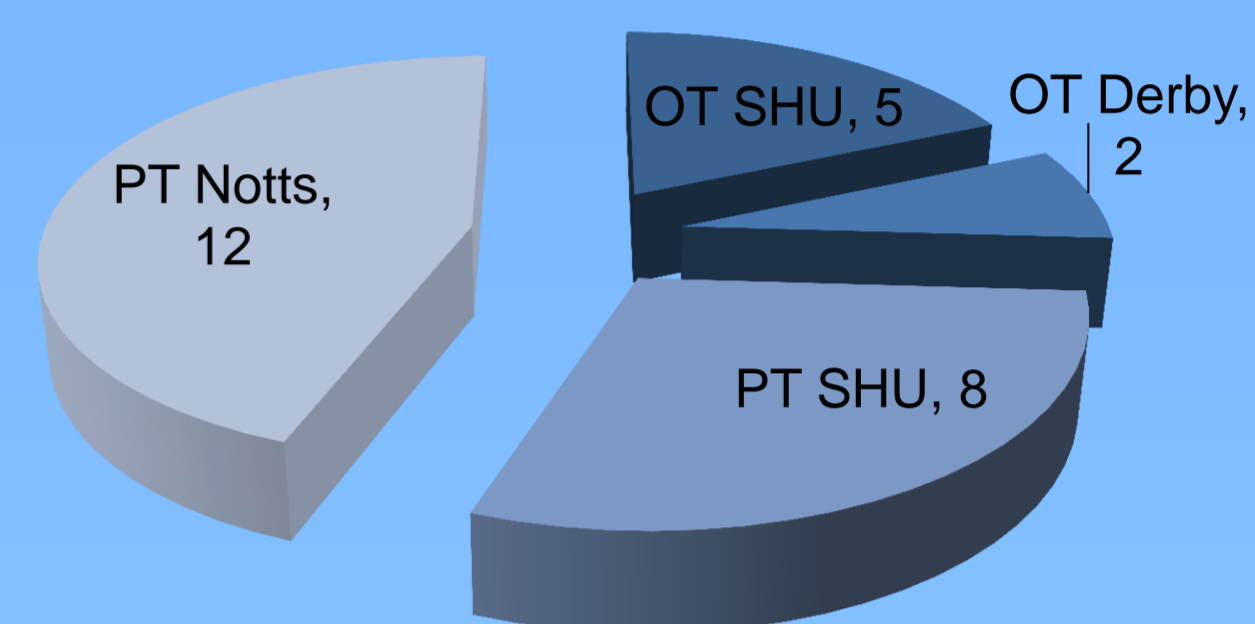
### Available Student Educators -



### Placements Offered by LCHS -



### Placements Accepted -



Data Analysis demonstrated that of all placements offered by LCHS only 50% were taken by the universities. Many of our educators were not offering the agreed amount of two offers per year. If all available student educators offered the two offers a year capacity would be PT 84 and OT 38. However, it could not be proved in this analysis if an increase in offers would have changed the amount of placements taken. Both clinical demand and reduced staffing in specific teams were given as reasons for lower offer rates.

### Strengths

- Capacity to increase students practice based learning opportunities
- Positive feedback from students on placements
- Educators/Mentors qualified to accept students
- Potential to invest in own staff development
- Current offers exceed demand

### Weaknesses

- Different allocation systems for each HEI and student profession group
- Mentor/Educator requirements not consistent
- Accommodation to support students when away from HEI or home environment
- Multiple contact points to arrange student placements
- No consistent expectations for educators/mentors

### Opportunities

- Piloting new Neighbourhood team student model
- Potential influence and engagement with new workforce
- Change mentor/educator student ratio models
- Interdisciplinary placements
- Apprenticeships courses including Assistant Practitioner, OT and PT
- Emerging placements within: acute in-reach, staff MSK physio service.
- Securing employment for newly registered staff
- Implement a hub and spoke placement model
- Improve relationships with partner organizations and HEI providers

### Threats

- Potential loss of experienced mentors/educators who are retiring or reducing hours
- Reduced student numbers coming into Lincolnshire from non -Lincolnshire HEI's
- Professional body requirements for qualification/registration
- Not enough students to allow educators/mentors to remain active and compliant

....'What we want is a modern, flexible workforce which can adapt to different and developing healthcare needs'... (Trueland, 2010)

## The Future:

A number of options are to be explored to address capacity and attraction of students into Lincolnshire:

**Hub and Spoke model** – To investigate a neighbourhood team approach to placements where students follow patients through their pathway shadowing a number of professionals in their chosen clinical area. This model reflects changing health and social care ways of working to ensure a student is prepared for practice when qualified and having a systems wide approach, reflecting our local sustainability and transformation plan (STP).

**Student to educator ratios** – To explore and evaluate the potential to increase the number of placements which only host one student at a time to reduce isolation of students, increase peer support and capacity within the organisation.

**LCHS educator policy** – Ensure all educators are making their two offers per year to student placements. To host a LCHS educator day with our main HEI providers to dispel some of the barriers to placements and what our educators can do to increase capacity.

**Links to HEI's** – Work with local and wider HEI providers to ensure Lincolnshire maximises their placement capacity.

**Student Ambassadors** – Develop a scheme for students to share their experience of placement in Lincolnshire and champion others coming.

**Student forum** – LCHS are developing a monthly forum for all students being hosted by the organisation to come and seek peer or placement support from the Clinical practice team in a friendly open environment. Explore social networking.

Current research indicates students want their educators to be open, feel valued and supported and be provided with graded learning opportunities (Rodger et al., 2014). LCHS has the opportunity to become the students first choice for placement by being innovative and provide the student with a quality practice placement that allows the student to prepare for practice.