

# Introducing an Allied Health Professions Education Fund to Support Career Development Across all Levels of Practice: Evaluating the Impact.

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## Background

Funding can be a barrier for Allied Health Professions (AHP) staff accessing education opportunities once in employment (Haywood et al, 2012, Kumar, 2013), yet research suggests that there is a direct correlation between workplace learning and job satisfaction in the NHS (Iliopoulos et al, 2018).

In 2021, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde's (NHSGGC) AHP Director identified funding to support AHPs to undertake learning and development opportunities, both accredited and non-credit bearing,

## Aim

The aim of the project is to enable staff to access funding to support career development and progression, and to measure the impact of this investment and learning. Investing in AHP staff development supports the current national NMAHP transforming roles agenda (NHS Education Scotland, 2020), links with our Quality Strategy and AHP Learning and Development Strategic Framework (NHSGGC, 2019; NHSGGC, 2023) and is desired to support AHPs to be able to work competently in advanced roles (Brandenburg & Ward, 2022).

## Methods

An AHP learning needs scoping exercise was undertaken and the results were themed. Local Further and Higher Education Institutions were approached and courses/modules available mapped to the learning needs themes. The funding application and review process was developed and managed by an AHP education fund group.

To gain an understanding of the impact of undertaking these courses/ modules, comprehensive evaluation has been undertaken.

Data from registered AHPs who commenced modules in late 2021 and early 2022 has been collated. For this group of staff, a focus group was conducted after module completion. This was in addition to a comprehensive feedback survey sent three months after completion of each of the Masters modules. The survey data was analysed by the sub group to identify themes.

The focus group was facilitated by members of the Education Fund group. The focus group followed recommendations by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (2021). Mentimeter and Microsoft White Board supported data gathering and share back of the collective information as definition was gained.

## Results

The focus group comprised five participants from four AHP professions. Survey responses were received from 40.2% of candidates and 25.8% of line managers from seven AHP professions. The participants reported impact of the fund to them personally 7.4/10, to service users 6.5/10, and to the services and teams they work with 6.9/10. The diagrams below give some direct quotes from respondents on their experience. The results are summarised in the word cloud (Fig 1.) and themes are expanded in the bullet points below.



Fig 1. Word cloud showing summary of themes when respondents described the impact of the AHP Education Fund (N=35 Trimester A&B)

“Can now prescribe analgesia to relieve treatment side effects. This provides a more streamlined service for the patient”

“Facilitating more digital work and reduced waiting times significantly. Influencing other staff to do the same”.

“This course has given me the confidence to make complex clinical decisions and discuss medical reasoning with medical staff”.

“I felt it improved my confidence as a leader, it has really promoted reflective practice which has been of benefit to both myself and the team”

### Emergent themes of personal impact of undertaking the modules

**Increased Confidence/Competence in:**

- Continuing learning at an advanced level.
- Undertaking research.
- Complex clinical decision making.
- Leadership skills.
- Advanced anticipatory care planning and non-medical prescribing.
- Career Progression/Development.
- Understanding of Four pillars of practice.

In addition to the above themes, participants reported they were motivated to continue their learning journey.

### Emergent themes of impact on the service users, service and team

**Increased Confidence/Competence in:**

- Service User Engagement to enable service user-centred design.
- Advocacy to support service users' rights.
- Understanding a broader perspective of the future of therapy provision.
- Care that is holistic, personalised and patient centred.
- Enabling a reduce Patient Journey and avoiding duplication:
- Facilitation of learning & Development.
- Clinical discussion & collaboration activity.
- Quality Improvement and research.
- Writing Funding Applications.

In addition to the above themes, participants reported an increased respect from colleagues.

## Conclusion

Findings demonstrate that undertaking MSc level modules, supported by the AHP education fund has had a positive impact on individuals, service users and services, supporting career progression, increasing motivation and enhancing patient care. This concurs with findings in the literature (Anderson et al, 2021). It is clear from the impact data gathered to date that ongoing investment is required to continue to support staff access funded learning and development opportunities. Further funding in 2022/23 enabled career development across all levels of practice, providing learning and development opportunities, supporting registered staff and AHP Healthcare Support Workers. Educational opportunities have been secured with other higher and further education institutions.

## References

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