

# Allied Health Professional (AHP) Pre-Preceptorship and Preceptorship Support Scoping

Claire Carter and James Challender

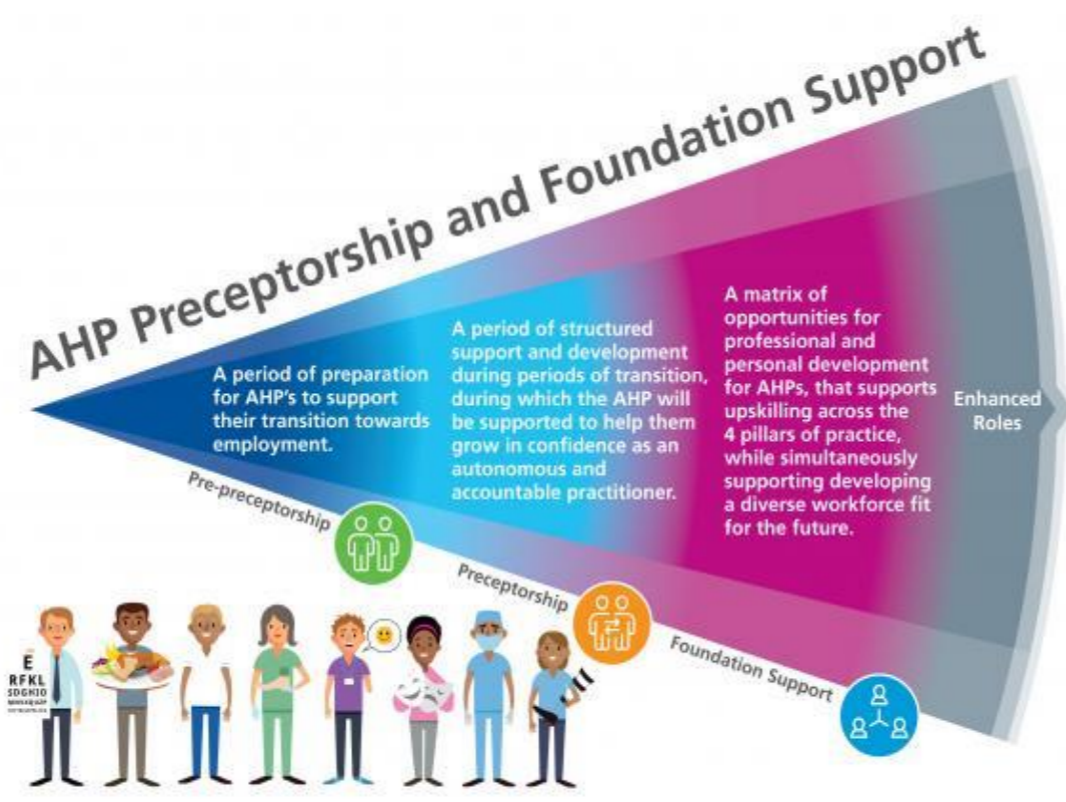
University of Derby

## Introduction

Pre-preceptorship is a newer concept and has been defined as a period of preparation for AHPs to support their transition towards employment (NHSE, no date). It was thought that inconsistencies across the AHPs in pre-preceptorship and preceptorship support may be due to the different needs of each profession. It has been suggested that many of the preceptorship programmes offered to AHPs have not always been adapted to suit the individual needs of the profession (Salt et al., 2022). These needs will be discussed below along with a discussion of existing pre-preceptorship and preceptorship within each profession. As a result of this literature, the AHP pre-preceptorship and preceptorship scoping project was commissioned by NHS England Workforce, Training and Education (NHSE WT&E) with The University of Derby to undertake a scoping exercise. The project aims were:

1. To understand the specific needs of each AHP professional group concerning pre-preceptorship and preceptorship support.
2. To link into and influence NHS E WTE commissioned project work on pre-preceptorship best practice guidance and the AHP preceptorship implementation framework.

The project planned live surveys for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) AHP academics and students across April 2023. Followed by scheduled interviews with several HEI academics across the AHP professions and with the AHP professional bodies. In addition to these, we have also interviewed both regulatory bodies – The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) across May and early June 2023.



## Design Method

Scoping was undertaken of the specific needs of each AHP group with regards to pre-preceptorship and preceptorship by undertaking a survey with AHP students and academics; and undertook interviews with academic teams across the AHP professions and professional bodies.

## Discussion

The inconsistency of terminology and lack of understanding of what pre-preceptorship and preceptorship are and aren't is a fundamental issue. There have been discussions about activities, modules, frameworks and expectations; but understanding what activities would constitute pre-preceptorship and preceptorship experiences what it doesn't cover, and how it aligns with other processes such as induction would be useful for all parties. Clear messaging and dissemination with HEIs, professional bodies, regulators and employers as a system will be important in the first instance to arrive at some consistency and conformity.

What has been consistent to date across all AHPs, HEIs, professional bodies, and regulators is that some newly qualified students/employees are struggling with confidence and preparedness, and experience anxiety at the point of any transition period. The need to develop the skills, knowledge and competence to become autonomous practitioners, who in some professions work entirely unsupervised, compound the situation and exacerbate the sense of anxiety.

Further pressures on clinical services were often highlighted and there was a consistent view from the interviews who expressed concern for the numbers leaving the AHP professions.

### HEIs

There are differences across the AHP professions, such as placement hours and duration of the programme. The scope of each curriculum is varied from the AHP professional bodies; however, all identified a similar concern over issues of student confidence and anxiety in making the transition into employment (employed or self-employed).

There were common themes such as formal learning and enrichment activities (within or out of any academic credited module) which supported students' transition into employment in areas such as preparedness for practice, developing autonomous practice, interview techniques, confidence building, business acumen and entrepreneurship, particularly when students consider self-employment and are self-employed within the preceptorship model. Whilst there are undoubted benefits that result from these opportunities, what is clear is that at present there is no consistency.

### AHP Professions

There are large differences in the overall size and scope of employment of each of the AHP professions and this creates differences in how registrants can be supported. The largest concern is around employment and how preceptorship could be or is delivered. Some employers have preceptorship frameworks in place, for others, this is not the case, and for some preceptorship is offered on an ad hoc basis.

There is diversity of opinion of the approach to frameworks for pre-preceptorship and preceptorship across the professions, though most would welcome clarity from NHS England.

## Regulators – HCPC and GOsC

The regulators of AHPs have oversight of programmes of study and HEIs via standards of education and training (in the case of the HCPC) and the profession itself, they are instrumental in addressing and guiding pre-preceptorship and preceptorship within the professional bodies. Across the two regulators, there are different geographical areas and several professions, some have competency-based preceptorship / some linked to pay (SLT and paramedics) but others have no support around the preceptorship and pre-preceptorship subject matter.

As the regulators oversee the different pathways into their professions, the individual needs of those studying an apprenticeship, undergraduate and masters level student are different to one another. Then exploring the needs of those returning to practice and international recruitment is very diverse.

### Pre-Preceptorship and Preceptorship support for AHP professions

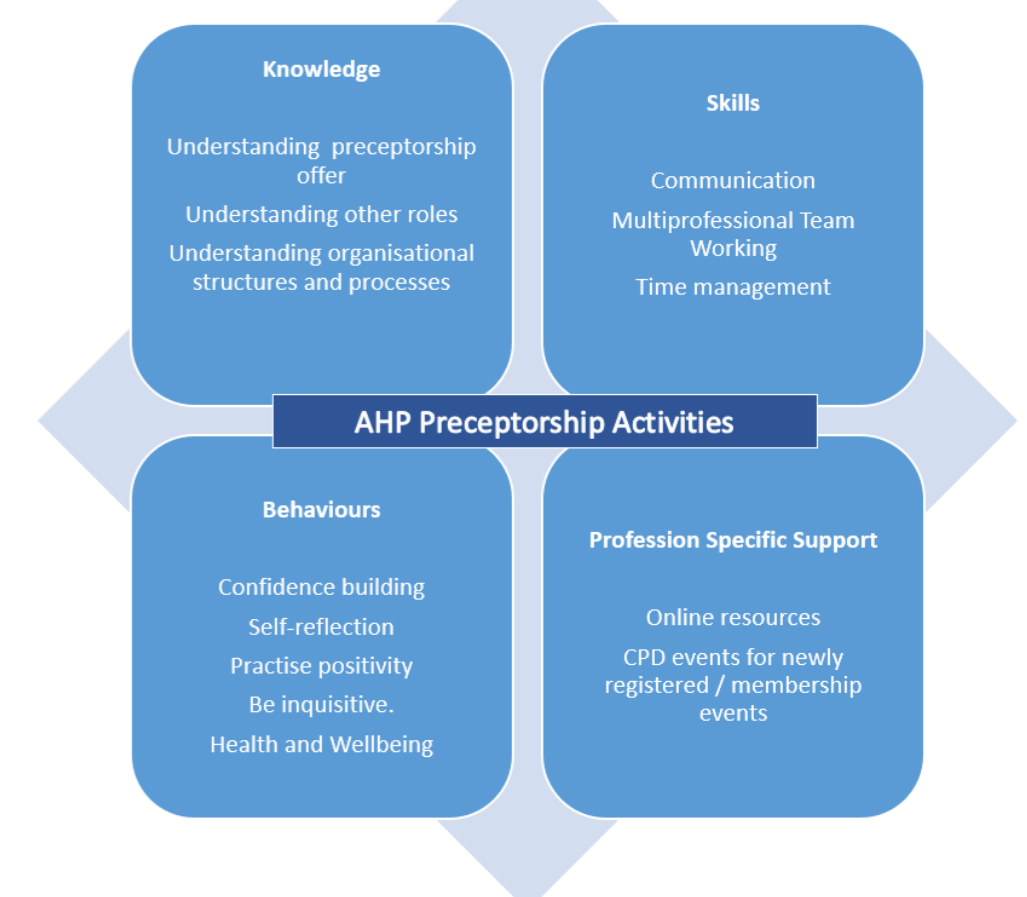
Creating a set infrastructure which can be put in place is challenging but providing an overview (pick and mix style) of activities associated with pre-preceptorship and preceptorship should assist in the next stage of development to support individual's transitions.

Pre-preceptorship and preceptorship activities for consideration by HEIs, organisations and professional bodies from this scoping project are described below.

Pre-Preceptorship Activities for consideration:



Preceptorship Activities for consideration:



## Conclusion

The project has scoped through several avenues to understand the AHP needs, differences and commonalities. There are several commonalities and differences due to size, employment and profession. But one consistency is the focus on supporting individuals in becoming autonomous practitioners.

Pre-preceptorship and preceptorship support are about the preparedness and supportive infrastructure to enable the practitioners to be successful and feel valued, part of a team and feel embedded. There is a wide acceptance (and support) that this infrastructure and direction will be of assistance. This also has the potential to provide a positive impact on recruitment and retention for organisations and professions.

The recommendations are based on the literature review; surveys; interviews; and conversations around the needs, challenges and barriers of each profession. Further development would be endorsed to develop and deliver these recommendations as part of the pre-preceptorship best practice guidance to support individuals, employers and professional and regulatory bodies. However, further research will need to be undertaken with employers and those self-employed to seek their views directly. There requires to be an evidence-based research project on the impact of the frameworks in place on students' anxiety and preparedness for practice.

## References

NHS England (no date) About AHPs. Available at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ahp/about/> (Accessed: 16 June 2023)

Salt, E., Jackman, K. and O'Brien, A. (2022) 'Evaluation of current Allied Health Professional (AHP) preceptorship programmes: A mixed method UK study', Research Square [Preprint]. Doi:10.21203/rs.3.rs1870710/v1.

