

Allied Health Professional (AHP) Education: Broadening Horizons for AHP Students: A Pilot One Day Digital Placement

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Background:

Healthcare is increasingly using technology to deliver care. **The NHS 10-Year Plan** sets out three major shifts:

1. Moving care from hospitals into community settings
2. Shifting from analogue to digitally enabled services
3. Focusing on preventing illness rather than treating it

- The goal is to create a more accessible and sustainable system by modernising infrastructure, empowering patients, and freeing up clinicians to focus on care.
- AHPs are key to this shift as they are central to prevention and community-based care so they must be competent and confident in using technology. Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust (GSTT) is aligning with this through the Apollo Programme.

The Apollo Programme at GSTT:

- In 2023 the Trust launched a new Electronic Patient Record (EPR) system after years of planning; securely moving patient information from multiple old systems and paper records onto one platform. This is known as the Apollo Programme.
- The system gives staff a complete, unified view of each person's care.
- The Apollo Delivery Team is a multi-disciplinary group of clinical, operational and analytical staff who work together before, during and after the EPR 'Go Live'.
- The multi-professional approach ensures a thorough and balanced approach to this massive organisational change.

AHP Strategy:

Alongside the Apollo Programme, the Trust AHP Workforce & Education Team are progressing our AHP strategy to build a sustainable workforce that meets modern healthcare demands. We are:

- Supporting AHP students to be competent and confident delivering technology-enabled care.
- Offering broader learning experiences beyond direct clinical care, mapped against the four pillars of practice.
- Showcasing the breadth of roles available to AHPs

We identified an opportunity to align the two team's visions to deliver a high-quality student learning experience.

The Apollo Delivery Team had already delivered placement opportunities for nursing students but not AHPs. **Therefore a pilot one-day Digital Placement was trialled over three days with six AHP students in November 2025, and January 2026.**

Aim:

To strengthen AHP students' understanding of how digital systems enhance patient safety and support effective care, and how technology shapes their practice.

The learning objectives for this placement were:

- By the end of the day, students will be able to*
1. Articulate the importance of technology-enabled care and apply this understanding to the use of [the new electronic patient record system]
 2. Identify how and why technology-enabled care enhances patient safety
 3. Reflect on the impact of digital transformation on AHP roles and MDT collaboration
 4. Articulate how the wider healthcare system collaborates outside of their direct clinical area

Methods:

The opportunity was offered to six pre-registration AHP students, attending in pairs across three days. After feedback from the first cohort a placement workbook with pre-placement reflective questions was introduced to help students link the learning to their clinical practice. Before arriving, students were asked to consider questions such as:

Are there any challenges with use technology in your clinical area?

What technology have you used in your studies outside of clinical placement (e.g. generative AI, simulation)?

How has this technology impacted your studies (both positively and negatively)?

During the day itself the students utilised their workbook to support their learning. Some questions students were asked to consider were:

What does the word "transformation" mean?

What is the role of the MDT in the Apollo Team? Can you draw any parallels to the MDT in clinical care?

What do you need to do as an AHP to ensure that you can deliver on the 10-Year Plan?

Results & Discussion:

Following the day the students feedback was positive, rating the placement '4.3' out of '5' for overall experience. Students commented on how the placement had increased their knowledge of the new EPR system but also highlighted the role of AHPs in digital transformation.

“[I learnt] what happens beyond my input on EPR [and that] clinicians are not bound to patient-facing roles – being curious and open to change can support career progression...”

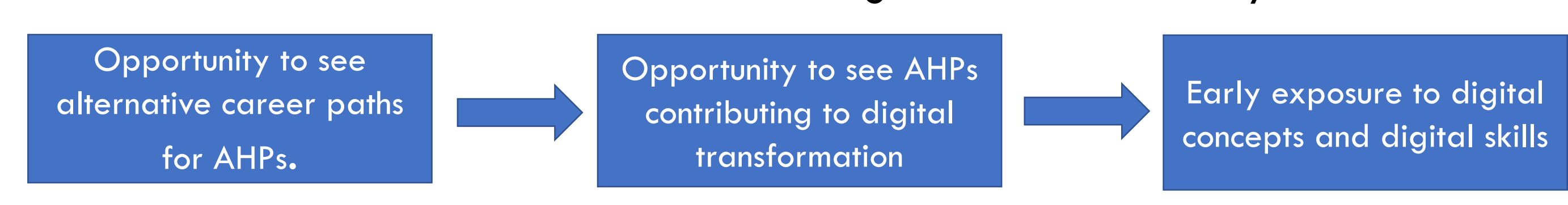
“The placement met my expectations but also surprised me as I was expecting it to be more technical-based...”

“I thought I would gain insight into [EPR] and how it runs but the experience was more about roles within digital teams...”

“I learnt that you don't have to stay doing the same job for the rest of your life and that there is a lot going on in the NHS behind the scenes...”

“Going into it I didn't really have any expectations, but it widened my knowledge of scope available within an AHP profession...”

Student feedback demonstrated the following benefits of the day:



Which in turn supports



Feedback demonstrated that management of expectations before placement remains a challenge to be addressed. Some students came to placement with a different idea of what this learning opportunity involved. However feedback showed that once understood, the opportunity was well received.

Conclusions:

- This pilot shows how non-clinical teams like the Apollo Delivery Team can contribute to AHP workforce growth and strategic development.
- It demonstrates that student learning and workforce development can happen beyond traditional clinical settings, with non-clinical teams acting as valuable partners.
- It also emphasises the need for early digital skills development in AHP training, helping students navigate an increasingly digital healthcare system with confidence.
- The aim is to continue offering this placement on a rolling basis, with ongoing refinement and evaluation.

References:

Department of Health and Social Care (2025) *Fit for the future: 10 Year Health Plan for England*. London: GOV.UK. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/10-year-health-plan-for-england-fit-for-the-future/fit-for-the-future-10-year-health-plan-for-england-accessible-version> (Accessed: [23/02/2026])

