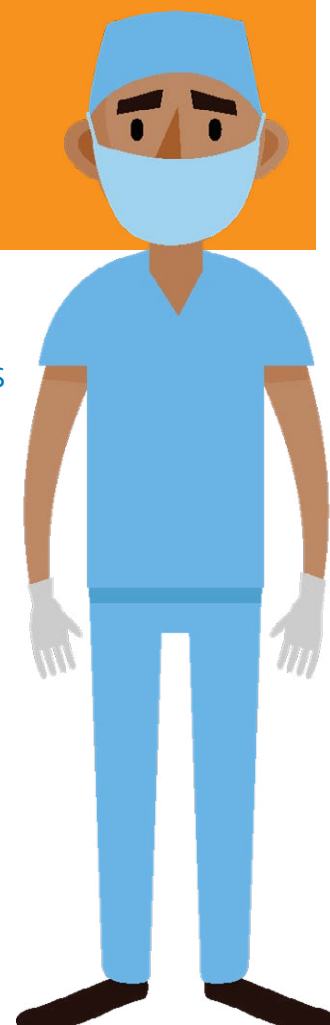


Allied Health Professions support workforce: readiness toolkit 2021

Realising potential to deliver confident,
capable care for the future



Introduction



This Toolkit is designed to help regions, integrated care systems (ICSs) and employers to prepare for the implementation of **HEE's Allied Health Profession (AHP) Support Worker Competency, Education and Career Development Framework**, and develop high-quality, innovative training, education and careers for support workers across AHP services.

The Toolkit will help AHP leaders, practice education leads, human resources (HR) and people teams, and workforce leads to ensure the right numbers of clinical support staff are in place with the right training, education, skills and competencies to improve care.

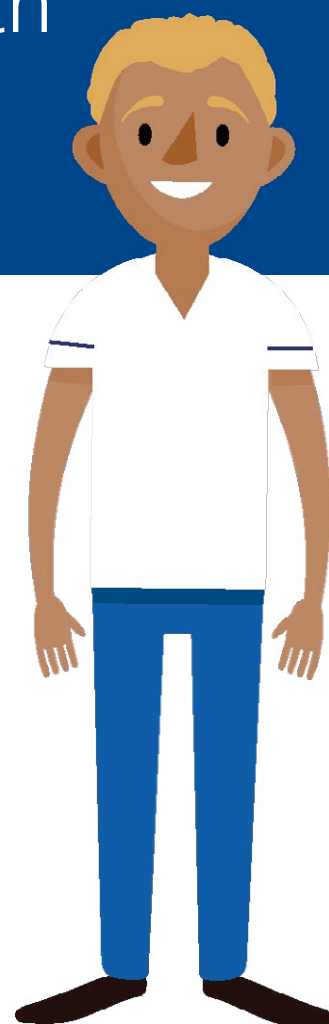
Using this Toolkit will enable you to work with a range of partners to **accelerate workforce improvement** by:

- considering current AHP workforce supply
- identifying priorities for upskilling the AHP support workforce
- developing new roles, including Assistant Practitioners
- progressing new ways of working to support service transformation
- providing leadership that better supports the AHP support workforce, improving AHP support workforce diversity, and developing support workers as leaders.

It has been designed to enable coordinated objectives and approaches at regional, ICS, and local organisational level.

HEE is working with partners, including NHS England and NHS Improvement, and professional bodies to ensure support workforce capacity and capability is maximised and services are supported to deliver this. This Toolkit is one element of the approach and further guidance and support will be available throughout 2021.

About the Allied Health Professions support workforce



The Allied Health Professions are: art therapists, dramatherapists, music therapists, chiropodists/podiatrists, dietitians, occupational therapists, operating department practitioners, orthoptists, osteopaths, prosthetists and orthotists, paramedics, physiotherapists, diagnostic radiographers, therapeutic radiographers, and speech and language therapists.

Across all the allied health professions, support workers make a significant contribution for service-users and service delivery.

The support workforce is defined as qualified but unregistered staff that provide care and support for patients and clients, working under supervision and within agreed guidelines and protocols. In the NHS they are typically employed in Agenda for Change bands 2, 3 and 4.

Support workers should be able to work at the top of their scope of practice safely and effectively, be integrated into teams, and be able to progress their careers. However, support staff can face several barriers to their effective development and deployment.

Further information from HEE is available on [our website](#).

How to use the Toolkit



The Toolkit will help systems and organisations prepare to implement [HEE's AHP Support Worker Competency, Education and Career Development Framework](#) and support wider workforce priorities.

It sets out a series of questions to consider as regional, system and local organisational stakeholders, as well as a comprehensive curation of relevant [supporting guidance and resources](#).

The information that the Toolkit will help you to gather will aid you in understanding your current support workforce and the qualifications, competencies, and skill mix to meet patient and service needs.

It also includes some prompts to help you consider next steps; this is not an exhaustive list, nor a set of 'must do' actions, but will help you to consider what to do next. Your next steps should therefore be reviewed, agreed, and prioritised by individual systems and organisations.

Involving key stakeholders

In addition to support workers and AHP leads, this work should involve other workforce stakeholders in ICSs and localities, such as practice education leads, HR, apprenticeship leads, colleges and universities, as well as local professional body and trade union representatives. Regional and local leads for widening participation and equality, diversity and inclusion will also be able to contribute.

You may also wish to involve colleagues who have experience leading related work on the [maternity support workforce](#) and Health Care Support Workforce.

For best results, the following approach is recommended:

- 1. Regional:** Regional implementation led by HEE Regional Head of AHPs/Regional AHP Workforce Lead, in partnership with NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE&I) Regional Chief AHP where relevant, and/or Chair of the regional AHP council or board.
- 2. Integrated care system (ICS):** Agree a senior leader who will lead and oversee this work, for example the ICS AHP lead or strategic workforce lead, Chair of AHP Council, or Chair of the AHP Faculty.
- 3. Organisation (employers):** Agree a strategic leader who will lead and oversee this work for the organisation. This should be the Chief AHP, organisational AHP lead or equivalent.

You can also use this Toolkit to help agree business plans, delivery objectives and personal objectives for the year ahead.



Practical steps



Start out

Define
& scope

Measure &
understand

Design
& plan

Implement

Handover
& sustain

Using the Toolkit will allow you to take a planned approach to supporting and developing the local AHP support workforce:

1. Start out:

- Convene a steering group, involving a wide range of stakeholders. This group will need to meet regularly over an agreed period of time.
- Ensure that support workers from across professions and service-user representatives are involved.
- Share the Toolkit with steering group members for review.
- Bring the group together to discuss and agree the relevant section of the document.

2. Define and scope:

Use the Toolkit to help you review and identify priorities for the AHP support workforce in your region or organisation. This includes:

- Review baseline workforce data and intelligence, including current workforce numbers, vacancy rates, workforce diversity, and staff satisfaction.
- Complete the relevant section of the Toolkit.
- Identify examples of good practice that could be shared and more widely adopted.

3. Measure and understand:

- Review current data on your AHP workforce to agree priorities for change. This should include workforce numbers, vacancy rates, diversity, staff satisfaction, patient feedback and apprenticeship start numbers.
- Using the [model for improvement](#), agree measures to determine improvements – including baseline data. Measures should be clear and specific so that the same information can be collected before and after any changes.
- You also need to decide how to present your data and how to share it.

4. Design and plan:

- Agree a clear and shared understanding of the future, and prioritise actions suggested in the Toolkit to get there. A [driver diagram](#) can be a useful tool to help you to do this.
- You may also need to develop a business case or bid to secure additional workforce development funding to progress your proposed project(s).

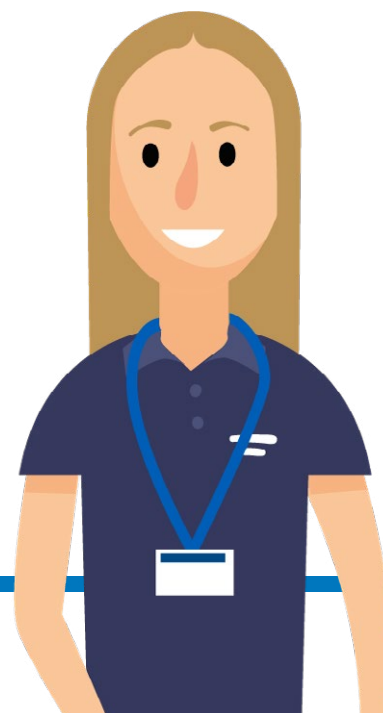
5. Implement:

- Design an implementation plan and share it with stakeholders.
- Use a plan, do, study, act (PDSA) process to help you.

6. Handover and sustain:

- Your aim at this stage is that the improvements you have made to support the AHP support workforce become 'business as usual', with [benefits realised](#) and a plan for sustainability in place.
- You should also plan to share your learning and outcome more widely. This could be via a professional conference or publication, a local or national award, or writing a case study. The Council of Allied Health Professions Research (CAHPR) [Top Ten Tips series](#) offers summary advice on developing these and more.

Further advice on a range of quality, service improvement and redesign (QSIR) tools is available from [NHS England and NHS Improvement](#).



Section 1: Regional readiness - questions for regional teams and AHP Councils/Boards

Question	Y/N	Response	Prompts for next steps
1. Do you have a collective ambition for developing the AHP support workforce across the region?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-create shared ambition and vision using resources from HEE and professional bodies.
2. Have you identified key service drivers for change linked to NHS policy and local ICS plans?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review national policy drivers. Work with ICS AHP councils and partners to review local system plans for non-registered workforce. Consider opportunities across care pathways from prevention and early intervention through to tertiary care.
3. Are there strong local partnerships in place to support the development of the AHP support workforce? Does this include support workers and service-user representatives?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current membership of the regional AHP council or board and relevant subgroups. Agree associated governance with the Regional People Board.
4. Do you provide leadership and support to local ICSs to help develop their AHP support workforce?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement engagement with ICS leads and clear cascade of information from and to relevant forums and leaders. Consider targeted regional communications plan and activity.
5. Have you reviewed regional workforce supply data for the AHP support workforce for all professions?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use this data to help shape AHP support workforce priorities in your region.

Question	Y/N	Response	Prompts for next steps
6. Do you understand the diversity of the AHP support workforce in your region, including fair access to career opportunities?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review regional data against local demographic data and identify areas for improvement. Review the resources in workforce diversity and widening participation
7. Does regional careers promotion activity support all routes into the AHP professions, including support worker roles?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the routes into the NHS resource from NHS Employers and relevant career development frameworks to identify and consider additional approaches.
8. Do you understand current education provision for AHP support workers in your region, including apprenticeships at levels 2, 3, 4 and 5, and T-levels?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map out current provision in your region with support from regional apprenticeship lead and HEIs. Identify current gaps in provision.
9. Have you identified best practice examples for recruitment, deployment, education, and progression of AHP support staff?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use CAPHR top 10 tips on Writing Service Improvement Case Studies to collect and share regional exemplars. Include relevant examples of clinical practice, public health, and secondary prevention.
10. Do you provide opportunities to share best practice and foster improvements for support workers across the region?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider a regional event focusing on AHP support workers. Organise a HEE Star workshop.

Section 2: System readiness - questions for ICSs

Question	Y/N	Response	Prompts for next steps
1. Do you have a collective ambition for developing the AHP support workforce across organisations in your ICS?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share HEE resources with relevant partners. • Ensure support workforce is considered in yearly priority setting and planning. • Review resources under workforce planning.
2. Is this plan aligned with broader ICS workforce strategies such as Grow your Own, apprenticeships, and work experience?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review your ICS strategic workforce plans (via local People Board).
3. Do you have access to data on the AHP support workforce across your ICS?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access this data via your regional HEE team and/or ICS strategic workforce lead.
4. Do you understand the diversity of the AHP support workforce in your ICS, including age, disability, race and sex; and fair access to career opportunities?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage widely with the local support workforce. • Review the resources in workforce diversity and widening participation. • Identify and agree priorities and action.
5. Have you identified local priorities for the support workforce linked to the NHS Long Term Plan and local population needs?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review your ICS strategic plans to identify priority care pathways. • Review resources under policy drivers. • Consider opportunities for support workers to reduce service demand and improve health and wellbeing of service users and local population.

Question	Y/N	Response	Prompts for next steps
6. Are strong partnerships in place, including further and higher education providers?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review membership of current ICS AHP Faculty and associated sub-groups.
7. Do you have strong connections, and governance in place where appropriate, with the ICS People Programme and board?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and develop relationships and relevant reporting processes.
8. Are you aware of local education providers for relevant level 2, 3, 4 and 5 apprenticeships, and uptake by local organisations?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify current providers via find apprenticeship training. Map current uptake via AHP Faculty leads.
9. Are AHP support worker job descriptions and person specifications consistent with the Framework and between organisations?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support employer-led scoping activity. Organise a local workshop. Develop a proposal for local People Board funding.
10. Have you identified and shared local best practice examples in terms of the recruitment, deployment, education and progression of AHP support staff?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider a local survey or workshop.

Section 3: Employer readiness - questions for NHS trusts and other employers

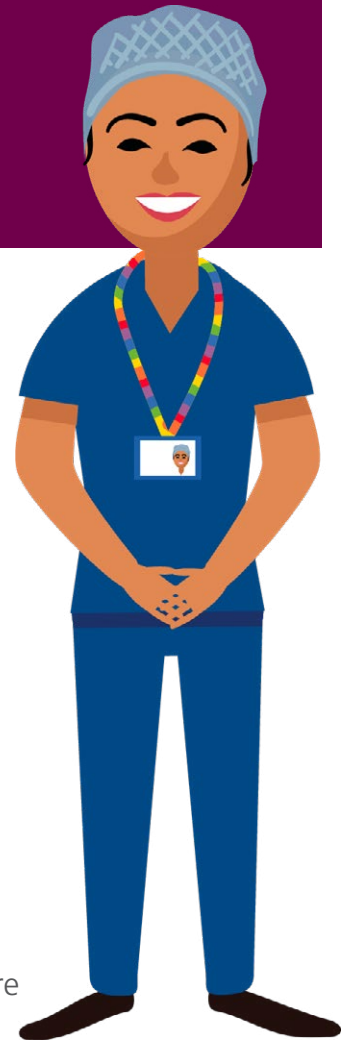
Question	Y/N	Response	Prompts for next steps
Strategy			
1. Do you have a collective ambition for developing the AHP support workforce in your organisation?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review resources under workforce planning. Set objectives for support workforce for professional and team leaders.
2. Have you identified key drivers for change, linked to organisational and service priorities?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure support workforce is considered in yearly business planning. Consider how the support workforce could help you meet Long Term Plan commitments on prevention and reducing health inequalities.
3. Have you reviewed current guidance and information on support workforce development?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the resources section of this Toolkit and HEE website.
Workforce planning			
4. Have you reviewed workforce data for the support workforce for all professions in your organisation, and identified associated risks and issues?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review ESR data, including supply and diversity. Identify main areas for action. Consider targeted regional communications plan and activity.
5. What pay bands are your AHP support staff employed on across teams and areas of work? Is this consistent across teams/sites/professions?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use this data to help shape AHP support workforce priorities in your region.

Question	Y/N	Response	Prompts for next steps
6. Do you understand the diversity of the AHP support workforce in your organisation, including fair access to career opportunities?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage widely. Review the resources in workforce diversity and widening participation. Identify and agree priorities and action.
7. What is the turnover rate of your AHP support workforce, and how long on average do staff remain employed in your services?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review local data and identify areas of potential concern or where further retention support may be needed.
8. Do you gather regular feedback from your support staff?			<p>Review how you currently use and act on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> exit interviews staff satisfaction surveys focus groups outputs from yearly appraisals.
Roles and responsibilities			
9. Have you used the AHP Support Worker Competency, Education and Career Development Framework and ' state of readiness for future care ' framework to identify tasks and activities that could be delegated to support workers?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Framework. Consider change of skill mix and use of other tools to support this, e.g., Calderdale Framework.
10. Does everyone within your teams have a clear understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and scope of practice for support workers across bands 2-4?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider updating sessions across teams. Include in standard induction programme for new staff. Review job descriptions.

Question	Y/N	Response	Prompts for next steps
11. What processes are in place to ensure safe and effective delegation of tasks in line with HCPC standards ?			Consider for all staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • induction • mandatory training • in-service training • regular supervision.
12. What processes are in place to review and assure the quality and safety of skill mix in your services?			Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • patient feedback • benchmarking across teams • service audits.
Recruitment and retention			
13. Do you regularly review the effectiveness of your current support worker recruitment, selection, and induction processes?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure processes are in place to review effectiveness. • Implement inclusive recruitment practices.
14. Are job descriptions and person specifications up to date (for example, do they require up-to-date qualifications)?			Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmarking across teams/organisations • Ensure all are up to date.
Training and education			
15. Does organisational training needs analysis include the AHP support workforce?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current approach to training needs analysis across the AHP workforce and ensure support workforce is included.
16. What percentage of your support workforce at bands 3 and 4 hold relevant formal qualifications at level 3 and above?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current content and consider content, accessibility, and range of offer.

Question	Y/N	Response	Prompts for next steps
17. What formal qualifications are AHP support staff currently able to access in your organisation?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current qualification levels in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Liaise with your learning and development team to review current offer.
18. What in-house training and education programmes are AHP support staff able to access?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider development of a skills passport to enable formal recording and recognition of this learning. Consider clinical, public health and non-clinical training and development opportunities.
19. Are AHP support staff included in the trust's apprenticeship planning and delivery, including allocation of the apprenticeship levy?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review past apprenticeship levy allocation for organisation. Identify suitable apprenticeships for AHP support staff and current update.

Supporting resources



Core Standards

[HCPC Standards of conduct, performance and ethics](#) (section 4)

National policy drivers

[Our NHS People Promise](#)

[NHS Long Term Plan](#)

[Diagnostics: Recovery and Renewal - Report of the Independent Review of Diagnostic Services for NHS England](#)

Workforce planning

[The Calderdale Framework – a tool for reviewing the skill mix within your service](#)

[HEE Star: accelerating workforce redesign](#)

[Allied Health Professions into Action](#): The 'state of readiness for future care' tool (page 43) can be used to review the skills and knowledge of your allied health workforce.

Workforce diversity and widening participation

[Workforce Race Equality Standard](#)

[Workforce Disability Equality Standard](#)

[NHS Employers: Diversity and inclusion](#)

[Talent for care and widening participation](#)

Quality of training and education

[NHS Digital – Education and Training Standards and self-assessment](#)

Training and Education

Care Certificate

[Care Certificate and Toolkit](#)

[Skills for Health – The Care Certificate](#)

Apprenticeships

[Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education](#)

[Skills for Health – Apprenticeship standards](#)

[HEE – Apprenticeships](#)

[Gov.UK – Apprenticeships](#)

[NHS Employers – NHS Apprenticeships](#)

Further resources

Further guidance and resources are available via the [HEE website](#).



Acknowledgements



The toolkit was developed by Health and Society Knowledge Exchange (HASKE), University of Cumbria, King's College London, and Health Education England.

Grateful thanks are due to the following people and organisations for their contributions to the development of the toolkit:

Paula Breeze, Greater Manchester AHP Workforce Programme Lead, Programme Management Office, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Victoria Dickens MBE, Director of AHPs, Northern Care Alliance NHS Group, Salford Care Organisation

Dr Tom Grimwood, Associate Professor in Social Philosophy, Health and Society Knowledge Exchange (HASKE), University of Cumbria

Professor Richard Griffin, Professor of Healthcare Management, King's Business School, King's College London

Michael Francis, Physiotherapy Student, University of Salford

Nick Lane, Chief AHP, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Naomi McVey, Regional Head of AHPs – North West, Health Education England

Harry Reynolds, Physiotherapy Student, University of Salford

Dr Laura Snell, Research Fellow, Health and Society Knowledge Exchange (HASKE), Centre for Research in Health and Society, University of Cumbria

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