

The implementation of Allied Health Professions Leadership Programmes in the United Kingdom



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Introduction

Prosthetists and orthotists are one of the 14 Allied Health Professions recognised by NHS England (NHSE 2021)¹.

Allied health professionals (AHPs) are the third largest clinical workforce in the National Health Service (NHS). AHP practice across organisational structures and boundaries and contributing to the transformation of healthcare². However, traditionally, strategic leadership positions for AHPs within the NHS have been low in number. In recent years, the NHS has increasingly focused on the importance of AHPs in transforming healthcare³.

The most critical resource in any organisation is its people. The cultural shift towards a more psychosocial model of care approach which considers the wider determinants of health; leadership will be key to realising this goal⁴. The need for diverse leadership has been recommended, with particular emphasis on the representation of the smaller allied health professions³.

Real Healthcare Solutions (RHS) was commissioned to develop, facilitate and measure the success of a bespoke leadership programme for the British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists (BAPO).

Method

The programme intends to support the next generation of leaders in prosthetics and orthotics. The funding provided by Health Education England, now part of NHS England, has supported two cohorts to participate in the programme. The funding has further supported the establishment of the BAPO leadership alumnus, developing links with other Allied Health Professions including podiatry and potentially speech and language therapy.

To be truly effective, leaders need to build a toolkit of knowledge, skills, and behaviours that will set them, their teams, and their organisations up for success. BAPO aims to develop a programme that fulfils the delegates' leadership expectations, from both an operational and strategic perspective.

The AHP Leadership Programme comprises a mix of theoretical and practical skills, all contributing to the development of each cohort's leadership toolkit.



Results

Cohort One's evaluation of the programme indicated that the participants deemed the programme to be a success. The success of the programme was assessed not only on content but how the cohort felt in being able to apply their knowledge into practice. Additional success measures that BAPO will be measuring for future cohorts will include how many participants go on to fill leadership positions within and outside of their current working environment.

There were 18 places available to all BAPO members that fulfilled the selection criteria for cohort two, which remained the same criteria used for Cohort One. This time BAPO received 34 applications for the 18 places, which showed an increase of almost 10% compared to Cohort one.



Discussion

Leadership starts with self-awareness, effective leaders must develop an awareness of their strengths and development areas, their preferred leadership style, and approach, and their emotional triggers. They must also learn how to manage, mitigate, and maximise these for the benefit of their teams.

To support the development of self-awareness each cohort on the BAPO Leadership programme will be invited to undertake profiling and personal assessment. This will take the form of a SpotlightPROFILE®. SpotlightPROFILE® is a personality profiling tool, designed with performance in mind. Spotlight has been used with thousands of individuals in a whole host of different contexts. These have included professional and Olympic sport, business, healthcare, finance, hospitality, education, government, along with many more.

Conclusion

Leaders are role models, and the example they set has an impact on the organisational culture. It is therefore critical that they first appreciate and then demonstrate the appropriate behaviours that build trust and promote a positive working environment and do so authentically and consistently. Underpinning all of this is excellence in communication: influencing, persuading, negotiating, collaborating, networking, engaging, and inspiring people to bring their best selves to work every day.

The AHP leadership programme will be further developed and is now offered to the Royal College of Podiatry (RCoP) and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT)



References:

- 1 NHS.UK. NHS England Allied Health Professions. NHS.UK. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ahp/role/>. Published 2021. Accessed September 27, 2024
- 2 Health Federation, England. A strategy to develop the capacity, impact and profile of allied health professionals in public health 2015-2018. 2015.
- 3 Eddison, Healy, Darke, et al. Exploration of the representation of the allied health professions in senior leadership positions in the UK National Health Service. *BMJ Lead*. August 2023; leader-2023-000737.
- 4 Eddison N, McKeown C, Woodward K. The complexity of leadership in the NHS. *Inst if Heal Soc Care Management*. 2022.