

Hannah Downey, Podiatrist, discusses her journey from student to registered professional during the COVID-19 pandemic

Transition from student to registered professional?

Despite becoming a qualified practitioner during the Covid-19 pandemic, the transition from university was a very positive experience for me. Any new adventure can be a daunting experience although I had a lot of support and guidance from my line manager and colleagues. I had an induction period where I was able to get comfortable and confident in my surroundings to ensure that I was settled and ready to begin practice. One of the main challenges that I faced was adapting to all of the new rules and guidance with regard to Covid-19, as a lot of these had changed from when I had left university to beginning my career. I was fortunate to have a very supportive team who ensured that I had all the guidance and knowledge of the new regulations. There were new additions to the practice to adjust to the pandemic too, such as New Patient telephone triaging which was something that I had not been involved with prior to this. As always I had all the relevant training and supervision to help me to complete these roles with confidence.

Impact, learning and support – joining NHSGGC during pandemic

My experience so far has been very positive. The transition from university to a newly qualified professional can be challenging in itself without the addition of the ever changing rules and regulations of COVID-19. However this pandemic has allowed me time to develop my skills and knowledge and increase my confidence in my practice. I have had increased exposure to high risk wounds and had longer appointment times to enable me to spend time improving my practice and increase my confidence in this area. Due to the increased appointment time slots I have had the opportunity to practice many clinical skills such as Posterior Tibial Block with 1-1 mentoring by a colleague. I believe this would have been much more difficult if Covid has not been in place, due to busy clinics and reduced appointment times. I have also had access to many teams meeting to keep up-to-date with knowledge and developments in areas such as pressure relief and dermatology.

I think overall something that has impacted me most is the continued support of my colleagues. Knowing that I can approach them at any time with any questions or queries that I have had. They are always willing to discuss these with me to ensure full understanding and so that I can develop my knowledge. Due to the increased exposure to high risk wounds I was quite cautious at the beginning of my career but through development and guidance I feel a lot more confident in this area.

During the first week I had an induction period where I was introduced to all the staff and had a tour of the location where I would be based. Following this I was treating patients with the supervision of a colleague who was on hand if I ever required further guidance or support.

I was fortunate that my time at university prepared me for the transition to a newly qualified health practitioner and I required very limited support however, my colleagues and line manager were always there if I required assistance.

I personally feel that I have had the most support and guidance to help me develop as a newly qualified practitioner. However due to COVID many things have changed and have been unable to take place. I feel that exposure to wider clinics such as the Multidisciplinary Foot Clinic (MDFC), biomechanics and hospital rotations would have been of a great benefit to me.

When relating my learning to Flying Start, at first I found the Flying Start modules difficult to understand and complete due to the 4 separate modules. However, after meeting with my Facilitator and discussing each module separately I felt a lot more understanding of what was expected of me. I have started evidencing my learning and building my Flying Start portfolio, however, I have found this difficult to complete due to having a dressing clinic or being on domiciliary visits daily.

The Flying Start learning outcomes, I feel I have achieved at this time are:

- Delivering safe care
- Enhancing person centred care
- Engaged in professional development
- Effective self-leadership
- Evidence based learning

These outcomes help to ensure that I am developing my clinical practice and knowledge throughout my career and providing a high quality of care which is safe, effective and person centred. It allows me to ensure that I am adhering to the NHS core values and applying these to my daily practice.

Having a clear knowledge and understanding of these outcomes has helped to develop my confidence as a newly qualified health practitioner. They have developed my knowledge and provided guidance and support to ensure that I am providing a high standard of care at all times. They have highlighted the importance of developing clinical skills and knowledge throughout my practice to ensure that safe, effective and person-centred care is being delivered.