

Kirsty Tamburrini, Podiatrist, discusses her journey from student to registered professional during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Transition from student to registered professional?

The idea of transitioning from student to being a qualified podiatrist was daunting due to COVID. This was because the job itself was different due to podiatry only seeing high risk patients with wounds or acute infection and there was the added learning curve of introducing telephone clinics. However, I was lucky that I was part of a very supportive team that made that transition as smooth as it possibly could have been – everyone made sure I was comfortable with the work I was doing and I was given the opportunity to increase skills in areas I may not have had, so early into my podiatry career. Confidence was a big challenge for me. I found it hard to trust I was doing the right thing at times and would be constantly be looking for reassurance/second opinions – I do think that's part of the transition and the confidence does come in time, the more you do any job the more comfortable you get making decisions. I think it's important to know that you aren't always going to have all the answers and that's why you lean on your local team as well as the wider healthcare team as a whole. We all have the same goal to ensure patients have the best care.

Impact, learning and support – joining NHSGGC during pandemic

Commencing employment during the pandemic was overall a positive experience for me as I had so much support. However, the job itself was difficult at times as you would be dealing with vulnerable patients who were isolated from their families as well as having lost loved ones to COVID – I found it hard to switch off at times but think this was the case with people working in the healthcare service as a whole, rather than being due to me being a newly qualified practitioner. As a newly qualified practitioner I believe I've learned something new every day – I'm still learning new things daily nearly a year on. It's amazing because I have been surrounded with knowledgeable clinicians every day that made me feel at ease with any questions I've had, as well as being able to contact them via email/telephone and receive support in a group setting via video meetings with usage of Microsoft Teams. There have been online webinars for developing learning which you can access from home – I don't think these would have been as easily accessible prior to the pandemic.

The pandemic has been an experience itself – I think the biggest impact it's had on me is how important teamwork is and knowing that you can rely on members within your team, everyone pulled together to support each other, both in and out of the work setting, during this difficult and stressful time. I admire everyone within the healthcare team as a whole as all have had to pull together to ensure patients are receiving the best care in challenging circumstances. Adaptability is something that I will take forward into my career, the situation has been ever changing for everyone and although adaptability isn't really a 'learned' skill I think it has had to be developed during this time and something I also believe with learning is that you can't know everything, but you can seek out those who do know and learning from them has impacted me positively – being aware of the support network around you is something I have found to be important. I had a great support network within my team; there are opportunities to take part in shadowing with specialist clinicians, as well as being safe in the knowledge that all members of the team are contactable if you need help or advice. There isn't anything else I can think of that would have made a difference to me as a newly qualified practitioner at the moment, I believe the transition was made as easy as it could have been.

Flying Start NHS and learning outcomes

When I became aware of the Flying Start Programme and looking through the units I can definitely relate to the learning outcomes. It's great to look over these as it does make you think of what you are currently doing as a clinician, as well as giving you goals to achieve/complete. I have laid out all the units and their outcomes on a document within my Flying Start portfolio folder – when I think of something relating to the outcomes I have been adding them to the document to allow me to further discuss with my Flying Start facilitator. At the moment I've not fully achieved the learning outcomes as I have not discussed with my Flying Start facilitator. However, I do have notes at each of the outcomes within the units in my portfolio, these just need to be discussed with my Flying Start facilitator to ensure they have been achieved/are appropriate.