

Samantha Davidson, Practice Development Podiatrist, discusses her role as Flying Start facilitator for newly qualified allied health professionals (AHPs)

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the provision of practice placements. Learning has transitioned to virtual platforms and clinical placement hours were reduced due to restrictions. NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde (NHSGGC) is a primary placement provider for undergraduate podiatry at Glasgow Caledonian University, this had a dramatic impact upon all years with Level 4 showing lower confidence scores than previous years. To provide a seamless transition from student to Newly Qualified Practitioner (NQP) additional support was required. A new service model was introduced which provided each NQP with a Band 6 practice development mentor and protected time for learning and development.

Alongside corporate induction a “Structured Support Framework” was developed supporting the NQP with the clinical, technical and governance processes of the service. Mentors met weekly with their NQP to support their new role, providing structured learning opportunities across the wider podiatry team and facilitated initially a buddy structure to support development. NQPs completed the Support Framework which focuses on core competencies within their role and signing up to the Flying Start Programme. Protected time was set aside to allow for open discussions to support the NQP in several areas including clinical skills and clinical decision making. Feedback from the mentor was vital to enhance confidence in clinical practice. A peer support network was also initiated for the NQP to discuss case studies and reflect on learning experiences. NQPs are supplied with signifier badges highlighting them to the wider team in their first year of practice, this helps aid supportive discussions/opportunities allowing the NQP to grow in confidence. This benefits the entire team and in turn can assist with developing professional relationships whilst improving skills amongst the team. We can then share these experiences together to benefit our team, it encourages and inspires best practice which in turn will enhance patient care.

The Flying Start programme has allowed the NQP to reflect and analyse their clinical practice. It encouraged NQPs to become active learners using evidence based practice. The [NHSGGC: FlyingStartPortal](#) resources assists with identifying zones of discomfort which identifies areas requiring further development. It enables a space to evidence their learning and development and encourages the NQP to record their progress in keeping a professional portfolio, not only to meet HCPC requirements but trails the way to a commitment of lifelong learning throughout their career. It allows NQPs to seek their own learning opportunities to enhance their development and practice, allowing them to flourish into confident, safe, effective and patient- centred clinicians.

Both NQPs and facilitators have accessed the [NHSGGC: FlyingStartPortal](#) and found it to be very interactive which captures engagement. This can be accessed at home for convenience also.

Zones of discomfort template – highlights future development needs and this was useful to help identify and tailor support to specific areas. This allowed my NQP to take self-development steps to openly discuss with myself opportunities to fulfil this learning need at our weekly meetings.

Reflective case studies- allows for critical thinking about clinical decision making and reflection on future practice

The programme gives a thorough approach for what is expected throughout their career within their personal development plan for their Turas appraisal. It introduces the idea of various dimensions that NQPs can work through to develop themselves in future whilst meeting criteria for HCPC requirements.

The role of facilitator has been inspiring to watch the NQP grow in skills and confidence. It seemed somewhat a daunting task in the beginning to make up for the loss that COVID-19 has caused and also as I had never been a Flying Start facilitator. Using the Flying Start framework has really helped me in providing a structured approach. This role has proven to be very beneficial for the NQP, in a short time it has been demonstrated that this support is vital allowing the NQP to provide safe, effective, patient-centred care which is paramount. It has made me examine and reflect on my own practice. As part of the practice development team we have also submitted abstracts to several conferences to share our positive experiences in order to help other health boards in their service development.