

Evidence Brief: Orthoptics

Contents

Key publications – the big picture.....	2
Case Studies	2
HEE Star	2
Statistics.....	2
HEE National Data Programme	3
Published Peer Reviewed Research	3
Leadership, coaching and education	3
Community, primary, secondary and tertiary care	4
Role progression and development	5
Workforce perspectives and mental health.....	7
Diversity and inclusion	7
Competency Frameworks	7
*Help accessing articles or papers	8

Produced by the HEE Knowledge Management team Evidence Briefs offer a quick overview of the published reports, research, and evidence on a workforce-related topic.

Date of publication: December 2022

Please acknowledge this work in any resulting paper or presentation as:

Evidence Brief: Orthoptics. Hannah Wood. 2022. UK: Health Education England Knowledge Management Team

There may have been an update to this Evidence Brief - to check you are reading the most current version please see the links below:

- [Complete Evidence Brief list – link for HEE staff](#)
- [Complete Evidence Brief list – link for External staff](#)

Key publications – the big picture

[Health and Social Care Committee inquiry – Workforce: recruitment, training and retention in health and social care Royal College of Ophthalmologists response](#), 2022

Ophthalmology is the largest outpatient specialty in the NHS, with 8 million appointments in England in 2020. It is vital that we have the workforce in place to meet the huge and growing level of patient need.

[The Allied Health Professions \(AHPs\) Strategy for England](#), NHS England, 2022

This strategy is a catalyst for change. Wherever you work, every member of our AHP community has a part in realising our collective ambitions through its delivery. I therefore encourage you to take a moment to consider how the AHP community can enable the change required to deliver future care today.

[Developing the Orthoptic Support Workforce](#), British and Irish Orthoptic Society (BIOS) 2020

This project looks to identify opportunities to support the development of the orthoptic support workforce across the UK and Ireland.

There are many terms used for the job roles for non-registered staff who are managed by orthoptists and who contribute so positively to patient care, patient pathways and treatment.

[Workforce Development Projects](#), BIOS

BIOS has been successful in securing significant funding from Health Education England to drive forward our education and professional practice workforce agenda, which will support our work across the UK and Ireland.

We've teamed up with our colleagues from the British Dietetic Association (BDA) to deliver these ambitious and exciting projects over the next 12-18 months.

Case Studies

[Highly specialist orthoptist — Prianka Gandesha](#), 2021

Working in a busy hospital, Prianka has developed her skills to become a highly specialist orthoptist. Find out more about how she has progressed from being a newly qualified orthoptist to mentoring new orthoptists herself

[Fatima Ahmed](#), 2019

My main role is patient care, making sure patients are looked after. Being a nursing assistant in my previous job has given me the experience in assisting patients with anything they need. I test patient's visual acuity, take various types of scans, visual fields testing and taking blood test of both adults and paediatric patients. I also coordinate the smooth running of clinics and assisting patients and other health care professionals with any enquiries.

HEE Star

More resources and tools are available in the AHP Quick Reference Guides Upskilling section of the [HEE Star](#). Alternatively, search for 'Allied Health' in the search bar.

Statistics

[British and Irish Orthoptics Society Orthoptic Workforce Survey 2022](#)

[Orthoptic service survey in the UK and Ireland during the interim recovery period \(summer 2020\) of the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

The initial UK and Irish recovery phase in summer 2020 allowed a glimpse at adjustments needed to reopen orthoptic clinics for in-person appointments. Teleconsultation remained in frequent use but with greater risk assessment and triage to identify those requiring in-person appointments.

[Orthoptist CPD audit 2017-2019](#) (HCPC)

HEE National Data Programme

HEE staff can look at the [National Data Warehouse \(NDL\)](#) SharePoint site to find out more about datasets and Tableau products.

Published Peer Reviewed Research

Leadership, coaching and education

[Allied Ophthalmic Personnel: Workforce, Education, and Training](#), 2022 *Abstract only**

Globally, approximately 43 million people are blind and 295 million people are moderate to severe visually impaired. Therefore, the prevention of blindness is a high-priority global agenda. The “VISION 2020: The Right to Sight” global initiative was launched with the aim of eliminating avoidable blindness by the year 2020. This ambitious goal can only be achieved through strengthening of health systems with improved provision of eye care delivery at all levels. This, in turn,

depends on the availability of appropriately trained eye care professionals.

[Development of a learning game for ophthalmic technicians: "Orthoptist Simulator"](#), 2022 *Abstract only**

To our knowledge, we have set up the first learning game for the training of future ophthalmic technicians, which is an innovative educational tool and complementary to traditional training. This game could also be used to train ophthalmology residents in ocular motility examination. This new instrument will require future evaluation to determine its real impact on training.

[Evaluation of eye animations developed to aid undergraduate student orthoptists](#), 2022 *Abstract only**

Results showed that students responded positively, valuing the visual element of the animation resource, the user friendliness and the flexible accessibility. The themes identified during exploratory analysis were similar from the questionnaires and the focus group. These themes highlighted that the students positively evaluated the animations and would like to continue utilising them further, commenting positively on the formatting and the ease of use of the animations.

[Orthoptist-led glaucoma monitoring: A pilot quality assurance audit of the reliability of orthoptists in glaucoma management decisions](#), 2021 *Abstract only**

Substantial agreement was found between orthoptists and an ophthalmologist in the management of patients who were suspected of glaucoma or diagnosed with stable primary open angle glaucoma or ocular hypertension. This suggests that there may be a role for trained orthoptists in the screening and monitoring of glaucoma patients.

[A qualitative study exploring experiences and challenges of combining clinical academic training with family life](#), 2021

Although people manage to find ways to successfully combine clinical academic roles with family life, findings highlight a need to identify ways of supporting and encouraging trainees with caring responsibilities to ensure that they remain on the clinical academic pathway.

[Who Coaches the Coaches? The Development of a Coaching Model for Experiential Learning](#), 2021 *Abstract only**

We recommend practices for coaching that can support gains for students and faculty in experiential, project-based, interdisciplinary courses.

[Clinical leadership – a framework](#), 2020

It is encouraging to see recognition of some of the major barriers to Orthoptists progressing to leadership positions and that steps being taken to tackle this. The framework has been developed through discussions with clinicians exploring some of the barriers and enablers they identify when moving into senior leadership positions, such as unhelpful career structures and lower expectations of clinicians making this step. See also [British and Irish Orthoptic Society definition of professional leadership](#).

[Students' Perception of E-Lectures from an Undergraduate Health Sciences Programme](#), 2020 *Abstract only**

The key findings highlighted an unexpected perception that e-lectures are not valued as highly as face-to-face lectures.

[A Randomized Trial to Increase the Assessment Accuracy of Glaucoma and Optic Disc Characteristics by Orthoptists](#), 2019 *Abstract only**

Orthoptists who received additional postgraduate online education based on principles of adult learning were more

accurate at assessing the optic disc for glaucoma. These results highlight the value of continuing education to optimize clinical practice in allied health professionals.

[What Do We Expect New Graduate Orthoptists to Do?](#), 2019 *Abstract only**

The survey confirmed that there is generally a good match between current undergraduate teaching and clinicians' expectations of newly graduated orthoptists. It is clear that training must prepare graduates for a high level of professional autonomy from the earliest stages of their careers.

[A Retrospective Study of Orthoptic Students' and Teaching Experience with the Introduction of Technology Promoting a Blended Learning Environment](#), 2018 *Abstract only**

Including online learning in the research module had a positive impact on the student experience, although more work needs to be done to improve peer support. Marks obtained by the orthoptic students have improved since the introduction of online learning suggesting that a mixture of teaching and learning methods is beneficial for students.

Community, primary, secondary and tertiary care

[Utilising Virtual Clinics and Orthoptists to Aid COVID-19 Service Recovery in Adult Strabismus](#), 2022

Virtual strabismus services offer flexible, safe and effective ways to meet fluctuating referral patterns and maximise limited time and resources. Orthoptists are uniquely essential and highly valued keyworkers to conservatively manage non-surgical strabismus.

[Utilising the Orthoptic Skill Set to Improve Access to Eye Care for Adults with Severe/Profound Learning Disabilities—A Service Evaluation](#), 2021

This service model has identified a clearly defined unmet need and illustrates the unique skill set orthoptists can offer to address this health inequality. Requiring minimal financial outlay and flexible enough to be integrated into any future national eye care framework, this service has ensured that access to eye care is truly equitable for all people with LD.

[The Accuracy of GP Referrals into Manchester Royal Eye Hospital Orthoptic Department](#), 2021

This study found orthoptic referral accuracy for GPs in Manchester to be similar to other areas of medicine. While acceptable compared to other areas of medicine, improving referral accuracy is essential to improve NHS spending, service delivery, and patient experience.

[Orthoptic Services in the UK and Ireland During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), 2021

We have reported information on the changing face of orthoptic clinical practice during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey has highlighted emerging tele-consultation practice and the importance of centralised profession-specific guidelines.

[Orthoptic Home Visits for Stroke Survivors: Results from a UK Professional Practice Survey](#), 2019

[Ten Years On – A Survey of Orthoptic Stroke Services in the UK and Ireland](#), 2019

There has been a positive increase in awareness of stroke-related visual impairment and a steady improvement in provision of eye care for stroke survivors. However, there remains a lack of provision of specialist vision services specifically on stroke units which infers a health inequality for stroke survivors who have visual impairment.

Role progression and development

[The need for research for the development of orthoptic visual rehabilitation](#), 2022

The application of Evidence-Based Optometry also allows us to identify and ban from clinical practice those procedures and techniques that have been used without scientific basis and that have not been able to demonstrate it. It is mandatory for a health professional not to recommend and even condemn this type of action, which also appears as the greatest threat to the progress of a scientific discipline and a robust professional body.

[AHPs in non-traditional and diverse roles](#), 2022

The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust (RWT) employs nine of the AHP groups (Chiropodists/podiatrists, Dietitians, Occupational therapists, Operating Department Practitioners, Orthoptists, Physiotherapists, Prosthetists and Orthotists, Radiographers, Speech and language therapists) totalling almost 600 members of staff. Although AHPs are allied to one another they are separate and diverse professions requiring a range of skills and providing a diverse range of opportunities.

[The Impact of Preceptorship for Newly Graduated Orthoptists on Clinical Confidence and Attitudes towards Public Health](#), 2022 *Abstract only**

The programme encouraged public health engagement among new graduates but barriers such as time pressure, lack of experience and patient understanding were challenges that often prevented the adoption of public health skills and behaviours within their practice.

[Bouncing off Each Other: Experiencing Interprofessional Collaboration Through Simulation](#), 2022

Three key themes emerged from participant narratives: (a) Learning to Speak the Same language: Working Together to Understand the Healthcare Team, (b) Progressing from Uncertainty to Collaborative Practice: Reflecting on Practice and Transition, and (c) Lessons Learned in Developing the Simulation: Barriers and Enablers to Learning.

[East of England Eyecare Workforce Transformation through increasing capacity and capability, integrating advancing practice initiatives and the Ophthalmic Practitioner Training programme \(OPT\):Phase 1: Final Report](#), 2022 *Abstract only**

A three phased project aims to address the integration of eyecare workforce development within wider initiatives (across population groups/specialties) and strengthen workforce capability and capacity to deliver eyecare on a whole-system basis across East of England. Phase 1 aimed to 1) build the foundation for growing capability and capacity of the whole workforce across different contexts to meet the needs of people with actual/potential eye conditions to optimise existing workforce 'assets', while taking a supportive approach to identifying and addressing learning needs and 2) make recommendations for Health Education England (Eastern); Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) and Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) to inform subsequent stages.

[Enablers and barriers to progressing a clinical academic career in nursing, midwifery and allied health professions: A cross-sectional survey](#), 2022 *Abstract only**

Nearly three quarters pursuing a clinical academic career indicated 'clearer career paths' and 'greater integration across clinical and academic departments' were desirable. Most common barriers related to research roles, availability of positions and funding.

[Characterising the outcomes, impacts and implementation challenges of advanced clinical practice roles in the UK: a scoping review](#), 2021

This review suggests a need for educational and role standardisation and a supported career pathway for advanced clinical practitioners (ACPs) in the UK. Future research should: (i) adopt more robust study designs, (ii) investigate the full scope of the ACP role and (iii) include a wider range of professions and sectors.

[Changing practice for the non-medical ophthalmic hospital workforce in the UK—a snapshot survey](#), 2020 *Abstract only**

Ophthalmology is developing many innovative roles for the non-medical workforce and, with the launch of the OCCCF training, this is likely to increase. Terminology is confusing and a categorisation suitable for ophthalmology is proposed.

[Capitalising on the transformational opportunities of early clinical academic career training for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals](#), 2020

The findings suggest that individuals, funders, and organisations may need to relinquish the notion that training is purely or largely a transactional exchange in order to establish collaborative initiatives.

[Relationship between labour force satisfaction, wages and retention within the UK National Health Service: a systematic review of the literature](#), 2020

Pay was found to influence satisfaction, which in turn affected retention. An increase in wages alone is unlikely to be sufficient to ameliorate the concerns of NHS workers.

[Developing a consolidated research framework for clinical allied health professionals practising in the UK](#), 2020

The consolidated framework was entitled 'Shaping Better Practice Through Research: A Practitioner Framework' by stakeholders, thus emphasising its ambition to embed research activity into practice.

Workforce perspectives and mental health

[Joining the workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic: views of Allied Health Profession students](#), 2022 *Abstract only**

Although the transition from student to practitioner continues to be a stressful period, only a minority of participants reported COVID-19 as an explicit stressor.

[Wellbeing and coping of UK nurses, midwives and allied health professionals during COVID-19-a cross-sectional study](#), 2022 *Abstract only**

This workforce would benefit from additional support/services to prevent further deterioration in mental health and wellbeing and optimise workforce retention.

Diversity and inclusion

["Raising the curtain on the equality theatre": a study of recruitment to first healthcare job post-qualification in the UK National Health Service](#), 2022

The Healthcare Workforce Equity + Diversity Lens we have developed can help to 'raise the curtain on the equality theatre' and inform more inclusive approaches to recruitment such as contextualised recruitment or effective allyship between employers and universities.

[The challenge of diversity in the allied health professionals](#), 2020 *Abstract only**

Although the Allied Health Professions (AHPs) are a diverse range of professions in terms of their skill set. The workforce

which makes up the professions lacks diversity, having been shaped by a set of distinct social forces, relics of a post-industrial era.

[BIOS Workforce Development Programme – Driving improvements in equality, diversity and inclusion \(EDI\) within pre-registration education](#), 2020

BIOS, along with all Professional Bodies are working to provide information on their webpages regarding Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) and ensuring EDI is a golden thread through all of the work we do.

Competency Frameworks

[The Ophthalmic Common Clinical Competency Framework – Curriculum](#), HEE

The Ophthalmic Common Clinical Competency Framework (OCCCF) provides standards and guidance for the knowledge and skills required for non-medical eye healthcare professionals to deliver patient care. It is well known that there is a need for a systematic patient-centred approach to multi-disciplinary education and training in order to ensure standardised and recognised competences across all ophthalmic secondary care locations in the UK.

[The standards of proficiency for orthoptists HCPC](#)

In August 2022, we updated our standards of proficiency for the first time since 2015. The changes, which will come into effect on 1 September 2023, have been made following an extensive period of engagement with a wide range of stakeholders.

[Development of a digital competency framework for UK Allied Health Professionals](#), 2020

This framework has been developed to support the enhancement of digital competence (knowledge and skills associated with digital technology in practice) for all allied health professions from band 3 to band 9. It is intended to be a developmental and supportive tool that can enable all staff to meet their digital potential.

***Help accessing articles or papers**

Where a report/ journal article or resource is freely available the link has been provided. If an NHS OpenAthens account is required this has been indicated. It has also been highlighted if only the abstract is available. If you do not have an OpenAthens account you can self-register here.

If you need help accessing an article, or have any other questions, contact the Knowledge Management team for support KnowledgeManagement@hee.nhs.uk