

# Evidence Brief: Physiotherapy

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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.

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

## Key publications – the big picture

[Workforce not available to make new backlog plans viable](#),

Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, 2022

The Department of Health and Social Care unveiled plans to expand the use of community diagnostic centres (CDCs) into an additional 19 areas while announcing the formation of a elective recovery task force chaired by a minister.

However, Karen Middleton, chief executive of the CSP, raised concerns about how the centres would be staffed given the ongoing workforce crisis.

[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.

[Consultation on proposed amendments to the list of controlled drugs that physiotherapists can independently prescribe across the United Kingdom](#),

2020 NHS England

This consultation is on proposals to enable physiotherapists to independently prescribe four additional controlled drugs.

[Hospital Outpatient Activity 2019-20](#), NHS Digital

Ophthalmology, Trauma & Orthopaedics and Physiotherapy specialties have recorded the highest levels of attendances in 2019-20 with 7.9 million, 7.4 million and 5.2 million attendances respectively.

## Case Studies

[The role of leadership in implementing and sustaining an evidence-based intervention for osteoarthritis \(ESCAPE-pain\) in NHS physiotherapy services: a qualitative case study](#), 2022

*Abstract only\**

Managers need to utilise dispersed leadership to empower and enthuse frontline clinicians to participate fully in the work to refine and sustain interventions, because it cannot be achieved by lone individuals.

[Development, implementation and evaluation of a bespoke, advanced practice musculoskeletal training programme within a clinical assessment and treatment service](#), 2020 *Abstract only\**

This programme describes the competencies and experiences of three individuals progressing to Advanced Practice Physiotherapists. This paper may assist those who manage and commission such services.

## 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' or 'physiotherapy' in the search bar.

## Statistics

[Chartered Society of Physiotherapists facts and figures](#)

Find out more about physiotherapy and the CSP, including our demographic profile of over 60,000 members.

[How many physiotherapists work in the NHS?](#) Nuffield Trust, 2021

[HCPC Diversity Data Report 2021: physiotherapists](#)

[Number of physiotherapists registered - May 2018](#), 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

[To dictate or collaborate? A phenomenological exploration of physiotherapists' leadership styles](#), 2022 *Abstract only\**

The framework identified gives insight into a group of clinical leaders not yet explored and provides a foundation for the development of leadership behaviours throughout physiotherapy. These clinicians should be supported by senior leaders to develop more transformational styles which have the potential to impact on staff well-being and patient care.

[Employing a coaching model of supervision during physiotherapy placements: Charting the student experience](#), 2022

*No abstract available\**

[Expanding physiotherapy placement capacity: Clinical educators' experiences of implementing a coaching approach to supervision](#), 2022 *No abstract available\**

[Light-touch mentorship of physiotherapists in face to face and digital consultations supports development of clinical expertise](#), 2022

*No abstract available\**

[Professional diversity in leadership – Inclusion of the smaller professions.](#), 2022 *Abstract only\**

There are 14 Allied Health Professions (AHPs) in England with approximately 170,000 AHPs working within the NHS. Physiotherapists represent the largest group of AHPs with approximately 61,000 registered with the Health and Care Professions Council, whilst Prosthetics and Orthotics represent the smallest profession with approximately 1000 registrants.

[Supervision models in physiotherapy practice education: student and practice educator evaluations](#), 2021 *Abstract only\**

While the 1.1 model remains the most widely used supervision model in physiotherapy practice education, other models also score positively, offering choice to placement providers when determining the model that best suits their service.

[Telehealth e-mentoring in postgraduate musculoskeletal physiotherapy education: A mixed methods case study](#), 2021

Telehealth e-mentoring is a valuable alternative to face-to-face mentored physiotherapy practice to support development in advanced musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice. Findings indicate that technical and professional skills are required, high levels of communication skills were valued, there is a need for reconceptualisation of musculoskeletal physiotherapeutic interventions.

### [Digital learning designs in physiotherapy education: a systematic review and meta-analysis](#), 2021

The current findings from physiotherapy education indicate that digital learning designs in the form of blended learning and distance learning were equally or more effective compared to traditional teaching.

### [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.

### [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. academic pathway.

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

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

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

Stakeholders need to recognise that a cultural shift about the purposes of research training from a transactional to transformative approaches is required to facilitate the development of NMAHPS clinical academics, to enable them to contribute to innovative health and patient care.

### [Evaluating a specialist education programme for nurses and allied health professionals working in older people care: A qualitative analysis of motivations and impact](#), 2020 *Abstract only*\*

Understanding the motivations to undertake a specialist gerontological programme and the impacts on practitioners and older people care and services will help inform the continuing professional development agenda for nurses and allied health professionals working in this field of practice.

### [An evaluation of the effect of peer mentoring on assessment preparation and performance in students new to undergraduate physiotherapy education](#), 2019

Peer mentoring from experienced students can play a positive role in assessment preparation for students new to higher education and its inclusion should be considered in undergraduate programmes. Students who engaged with mentoring report it was beneficial, offered reassurance and was associated with higher assessment performance.

### [Leadership capabilities of physiotherapy leaders in Ireland: Part 1 physiotherapy managers](#), 2019 *Abstract only*\*

Physiotherapy managers work predominantly through the structural and human resource frames. To successfully meet the leadership requirements of their roles physiotherapy managers may benefit from specific leadership development training to develop leadership capabilities in the political and symbolic frames.

[Leadership capabilities of physiotherapy leaders in Ireland: Part 2. Clinical specialists and advanced physiotherapy practitioners, 2019 Abstract only\\*](#)

here are many similarities in the self-reported leadership capabilities of managers and clinical specialists/APPs. However, differences were also noted. Both cohorts of physiotherapy leaders may benefit from specific development programs to develop leadership capabilities associated with the political and symbolic frames.

[Characterising the research profile of the critical care physiotherapy workforce and engagement with critical care research: a UK national survey, 2018 2020 Abstract only\\*](#)

UK critical care physiotherapists are skilled, experienced and motivated to participate in research, including pursuing defined academic research pathways. Nonetheless wide-ranging training needs and notable barriers preclude further involvement.

[Individual student characteristics and attainment in pre registration physiotherapy: a retrospective multi site cohort study, 2018 Abstract only\\*](#)

These findings suggest significant attainment gaps in pre registration physiotherapy education in this specific geographical region, particularly for non-White ethnic and disability groups.

[Empowerment of physiotherapy students on placement: The interplay between autonomy, risk, and responsibility, 2017 Abstract only\\*](#)

A strategy is proposed to provide an empowering alternative to the tendency to increase surveillance and/or limit the responsibility for students who lack confidence or capability in taking responsibility on clinical placement.

[Professional roles in physiotherapy practice: Educating for self-management, relational matching, and coaching for everyday life, 2016 Abstract only\\*](#)

Analyses of the interview data identified three modes of physiotherapy practice. In one, physiotherapists educate their patients to be self-managing in conducting exercise programs based on sound evidence. Educational films available on the Internet are included in these efforts to teach patients.

### Community, primary, secondary and tertiary care

[School-based allied health interventions for children and young people affected by neurodisability: a systematic evidence map, 2022 Abstract only\\*](#)

Our interactive evidence map can be used to help stakeholders prioritise the interventions most in need of further evaluation and implementation research, including tiered models of universal, targeted, and intensive allied health support.

[Barriers and facilitators to implementation of non-medical independent prescribing in primary care in the UK: a qualitative systematic review, 2022](#)

A more coordinated and targeted approach is key to overcoming barriers identified in the four stages of implementation and would help ensure that IP is recognised as an effective approach to help alleviate workforce shortfalls in the UK, and around the world.

[A comparative case study of prescribing and non-prescribing physiotherapists and podiatrists, 2020](#)

This study provides new knowledge that PP-IPs provide high levels of care. PP-IP care delivery was found to be more resource intensive. Further research is required to explore cost effectiveness.

[Physiotherapy for primary frozen shoulder in secondary care: Developing and implementing stand-alone and post operative protocols for UK FROST and inferences for wider practice](#), 2020 *Abstract only*\*

We developed physiotherapy protocols despite incomplete empirical evidence. Their clear structure enabled implementation in data-sheets designed to facilitate recording, monitoring of fidelity and reporting of interventions.

[Regional variation in practitioner employment in general practices in England: a comparative analysis](#), 2020

This study provides analysis of a more detailed and complete primary care workforce dataset than has previously been available in England. In describing the workforce composition at this time, the study provides a foundation for future comparative analyses of changing practitioner deployment before the introduction of primary care networks, and for evaluating outcomes and costs that may be associated with these changes.

[What helps and hinders the provision of healthcare that minimises treatment burden and maximises patient capacity? A qualitative study of stroke health professional perspectives](#), 2019

Our findings have important implications for the design and implementation of stroke care pathways, emphasising the importance of removing barriers to health professional provision of person-centred care.

[An audit of the utilization of physiotherapy assistants in the musculoskeletal outpatients setting within a primary care physiotherapy service](#), 2018 *Abstract only*\*

Using defined pathways in the treatment of musculoskeletal conditions of the peripheral joints provides the framework to

standardize delegation of clinical tasks from qualified physiotherapists to physiotherapy assistants.

### Role progression and development

[A multi-site prospective, observational study of physiotherapist independent prescribing activity across musculoskeletal clinics in the United Kingdom](#), 2022 *Abstract only*\*

Physiotherapist independent prescribing was used within all health sectors in conjunction with advanced skills in musculoskeletal physiotherapy as part of a multimodal physiotherapeutic approach. Prescribing activity was dictated by the clinicians' clinical reasoning and use of joint decision-making.

[Investigating the use of digital health tools in physiotherapy: facilitators and barriers](#), 2022

We reveal how physiotherapists and patients use the app in physiotherapy and identify 16 interdependent factors, on the macro-, meso-, and micro-level, that either facilitate or hinder its use.

[Assessment of advanced clinical practitioners](#), 2022 *Abstract only*\*

The insights from this study enabled lessons to be drawn for those responsible for workforce development who are key to the future development of the ACP role and to ensure high standards of interprofessional care.

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

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.

[An adventurous learning journey. Physiotherapists' conceptions of learning and integrating cognitive functional therapy into clinical practice](#), 2020 *Abstract only*\*

Four themes emerged from the data: 1) membership of work community; 2) learning journey; 3) transition to new working methods; and 4) professional role as a physiotherapist.

[The transition from physiotherapy student to new graduate: are they prepared?](#), 2020 *Abstract only*\*

Four themes emerged surrounding the transition from physiotherapy student to new graduate: 1) preparedness for practice; 2) protected practice; 3) independent and affirmation of practice; and 4) performance expectations.

[Advanced musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice: Informing education curricula](#), 2020 *Abstract only*\*

Despite variances in profiles of APPs both between and within countries, common themes emerged regarding their expected competencies and skills.

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

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.

[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.

[Building clinical academic leadership capacity: sustainability through partnership](#), 2018 *Abstract only*\*

A national clinical academic training programme has been developed in England for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals but is insufficient to build a critical mass to have a significant impact on improved patient care.

### Workforce perspectives and mental health

[Risk factors associated with physical therapist burnout: a systematic review](#), 2022 *Abstract only*\*

Fifty-three risk factors were identified, with four being classified as unavoidable and forty-nine determined as avoidable. The avoidable risk factors were further categorized as either structural/organizational (32%), psychological/emotional (19%), environmental (19%), or sociodemographic (13%).

[The relationship between burnout and empathy in physiotherapists: a cross-sectional study](#), 2022

There was an association between burnout and empathy. Specifically, higher levels of burnout are associated with lower

levels of empathy, whilst years of work experience is associated with lower levels of burnout.

### [Future-proofing the Profession: Physiotherapists' perceptions of their current and emerging role, 2022 Abstract only\\*](#)

Physiotherapists need to re-evaluate their role so a clear vision for the future can be co-created to ensure they remain contemporary and continue to optimise their potential.

### [The first year of private practice - new graduate physiotherapists are highly engaged and satisfied but edging toward burnout, 2022 Abstract only\\*](#)

Resilience was positively associated with job satisfaction suggesting those with capacity to 'bounce back' were more satisfied and engaged with their job. Although moderate levels of burnout were reported at 12-months, those with higher job satisfaction and employee engagement had lower levels of burnout. Participants proposed practical strategies to help mitigate burnout.

### [The placement wellbeing project: A remote intervention to support student health and wellbeing whilst on practice placement, 2022](#)

*No Abstract available\**

### [What are the views of musculoskeletal physiotherapists and patients on person-centred practice? A systematic review of qualitative studies, 2022](#)

Empowerment of patients in musculoskeletal physiotherapy contexts might be improved through a more narrative approach to assessment, with clinical bravery recognised as a specific person-centred physiotherapy trait able to facilitate this.

### [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.

### [Exploring the workplace mentorship needs of new-graduate physiotherapists: a qualitative study, 2021 Abstract only\\*](#)

New-graduate physiotherapists perceive workplace mentorship as a critical factor during the transition from student to clinician, which extends to the broader workplace. New-graduates place a strong value on individualized mentorship to support their professional development, which can influence self-perceived stress and anxiety and their perception of the workplace.

### [Stress and burnout: exploring postgraduate physiotherapy students' experiences and coping strategies, 2020](#)

Student consistently identified periods of stress and burnout, with curriculum coursework in particular being a trigger. Findings acknowledge the need for further investigation on sources of perceived stress, burnout, and coping mechanisms to optimise student welfare and enhance Higher Education Institution outcomes.

### [Stress and burnout in physiotherapists. A literature review of causative factors, the impact on patient care and coping strategies, 2020 Abstract only\\*](#)

To analyse and add further understanding of the extent and nature of stress and burnout in the physiotherapy workforce, its impact on the workforce and patient care. To identify coping



strategies that can be used by clinicians and managers in the workplace to reduce stress and burnout.

### [Physiotherapy treatment experiences of persons with persistent musculoskeletal pain: A qualitative study](#), 2019

The participants were actively involved in the process as exercises, activities and other treatment modalities were individualized. This was rewarding but also challenging and required effort on their part. The physiotherapist's initiatives and actions were an important incentive and means of support.

## Diversity and inclusion

### [An Exploration of the Experiences of Physical Therapists Who Identify as LGBTQIA+: Navigating Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Clinical, Academic, and Professional Roles](#), 2022 *Abstract only\**

Findings suggest that cultural norms may need to be reconceptualized in physical therapy to promote inclusion and belonging of individuals who identify as LGBTQIA+. Approaches to upskill new and existing physical therapists may include elements such as individual and institutional reflexivity, learning and implementing appropriate terminology, displaying indicators of inclusivity, and cultural safety training.

### [“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.

### [Blind and partially sighted physiotherapy in the United Kingdom. A century of development, success and challenge. Will it still belong?](#), 2021 *Abstract only\**

Significant changes in physiotherapy educational and training arrangements for blind students and changes in physiotherapy practice generally over the last four decades engender serious questions about whether blind physiotherapy will still “belong”, despite the increasing aspiration within society toward acceptance of diversity and inclusion.

### [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.

## Competency Frameworks

### [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.

### [CSP: Physiotherapy Framework \(condensed version\)](#)

The Physiotherapy Framework defines and describes the behaviours and underpinning values, and knowledge and skills required for contemporary physiotherapy practice.

### [Allied Health Professionals’ competency framework for progressive neurological conditions](#), 2019

See page 69 for the physiotherapy framework.

### **\*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.

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