

# Career Progression of the Assistant Practitioner Workforce across the North West



## Career progression of the Assistant Practitioner Workforce across the North West

<b>Report for</b>	Mike Farrell, Head of Education Transformation, HEE
<b>Paper Prepared By</b>	Cath Hudson, Work Based Education Facilitator Alison Doyle, Interim Deputy Head of WBEF Network
<b>Subject/Title</b>	Career progression of the Assistant Practitioner Workforce across the North West
<b>Date</b>	January 2018
<b>Purpose of Paper</b>	To provide an overview of the attrition rates of the commissioned Trainee Assistant Practitioners and career progression of the Assistant Practitioner
<b>Action/Decision Required</b>	For information and discussion
<b>You are reminded not to use acronyms or abbreviations wherever possible. However, if they appear in the attached paper, please list them in the adjacent box.</b>	AP – Assistant Practitioner APEL - Accreditation of Prior Learning HEE – Health Education England HEI – Higher Education Institution NHS – National Health Service NVQ – National Vocational Qualification TAP _ Trainee Assistant Practitioner WBEF – Work Based Education Facilitator

# Career progression of the Assistant Practitioner Workforce across the North West

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	4
Assistant Practitioner Career Progression .....	5
Response .....	5
Results .....	5
Limitations .....	6
Conclusion .....	6
Career Progression in an Acute Trust .....	6
Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust - Developing the workforce.....	6
Career Progression .....	6
Current Progression .....	7
Conclusion .....	7
Appendix 1 - Case Studies .....	9

# Career progression of the Assistant Practitioner Workforce across the North West

## Introduction

Health Education England (HEE) has steadily commissioned education and training to develop the Assistant Practitioner (AP) role in partnership with several Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) across a wide range of health and social care organisations across the North West.

The AP role has since become well established within the North West with anecdotal evidence that many APs have been able to progress their careers within the National Health Service (NHS), undertaking further qualifications thus enabling them to become registered professionals. With the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy and the Nursing Associate role it would appear an appropriate and relevant time to review the commissioned AP programme in order to establish:

1. Uptake and completion of the Foundation Degree - Foundation Degree Health and Social Care (Assistant Practitioner) Programme
2. Career progression
3. Number of APs progressing to professional registrant within a single organisation and impact on workforce development

Data was examined from across the North West region, ranging from Jan 2009 to September 2016. The data was extracted from: the Work Based Education Facilitator (WBEF) Network communications system 'Fulcrum', employee survey and from HEE. During this time frame:

- 1,429 learners commenced the Foundation Degree programme
- 1,252 learners successfully completed their studies and qualified as Assistant Practitioners
- 177 learners withdrew from the programme

Overall 88% of learners completed the programme with a mean attrition rate of 12%, with variances in attrition rates each year (table 1). Reasons for non-completion remains unclear from the data.

The high rate of successful completions may be due to the level of support available throughout the programme; tutor support, learning services, and WBEFs (facilitating learner support both in the university and the workplace).

Table 1

Financial year of cohort start	Number of starters	Number discontinued	Number completed	Percentage of attrition
2009-10	280	43	237	15%
2010-11	219	29	190	13%
2011-12	252	36	216	14%
2012-13	214	27	187	13%
2013-14	134	10	124	7%
2014-15	129	17	112	13%
2015-16	201	15	186	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,429</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>1,252</b>	<b>12% (mean av.)</b>

Data as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016 provided by HEE

### Note

1. 2014 to date are not fully completed cohorts as some students have suspended and resumed studies and remain on the programme
2. The number of Education providers changed after 2012-13 and overall capacity was capped

## Career progression of the Assistant Practitioner Workforce across the North West

### Assistant Practitioner Career Progression

Completion of the foundation degree is the first academic step in the learners' journey. The completion of the course equips the AP with the necessary qualification to access further training and development to enable career progression. Please see appendix 1 for case studies.

It is clear that several APs have gone on to further training, however the detail has never been closely examined. The WBEF Network gather data on AP development by means of a survey:

#### Aim of survey

- To identify the number of APs progression to professional registration
- To identify the amount of progression via Continuing Professional Development (CPD) modules

#### Method of survey

- A total of 8 questions were devised using Survey Monkey
- Survey was then distributed to 290 qualified APs via the WBEF Network's Fulcrum system

### Response

There were 125 responses received over a 4 week time scale; response rate 43%. Responses were received from all three regions within the North West: Cumbria and Lancashire 41%, Greater Manchester 14%, Cheshire and Merseyside 45%.

Respondents had primarily completed their Foundation Degree between 2013 and 2016 with only 2% having completed prior to this date. A total of 90% of respondents were currently employed as an AP.

### Results

Area of care employed in	Social Care	Allied Health	Mental health	Nursing	Other
	9%	10%	7%	58%	16%

Progression to professional registration	No	Occ. Therapy	ODP	Nursing	Other
	90%	1%	1%	6%	2%

Have you undertaken further study?	Yes	No			
	15%	85%			

Type of study accessed	Degree	Mentorship	CPD Module	Other	
	7%	1%	4%	88%	

Further study intended	Yes	No	Unsure		
	51%	10%	39%		

# Career progression of the Assistant Practitioner Workforce across the North West

## Limitations

The data stored within Fulcrm contains student information from 2013, therefore the wider AP population cannot be reached via this system. The 2% that had completed prior to 2013 were included as their details are recorded in Fulcrm as an AP in a mentoring role.

It is clear that, whilst the survey responses give some insight into the progression of APs, the response rate of 43% provides a partial illustration only.

## Conclusion

It is encouraging to see that there has been career progression for some of the APs and the uptake of CPD modules demonstrates that the APs are keen to progress and develop within their chosen areas of clinical practice; of the 110 that responded “other,” only 7 comments were made, 5 specified CPD modules including; diabetes diploma, retinal eye screening diploma and contraception modules. A further 2 specified training within their organisation such as manual handling keyworker workshops. A total of 51% respondents would consider further study in the future. Attrition rates appear relatively low in comparison to other programmes of study within health and social care. Reasons for attrition were not available.

## Career Progression in an Acute Trust

Due to the data limitations across the region, it was agreed that more focused exploration of career progression within one specific organisation may be of benefit.

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals first introduced the AP role in 2006. The organisation has retained data relating to career progression which provides further insight into the career paths chosen by qualified APs.

### Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust - Developing the workforce

The AP role has steadily expanded since Blackpool Teaching Hospital first introduced the role in 2006. To date they have developed 103 healthcare support workers into AP roles with steady cohorts of students recruited each year.

### Career Progression

Within this Trust, the most common career pathway onto the foundation degree is from the advanced level apprenticeship in health, delivered on site at the Trust’s education centre. Learners remain employed by the Trust as a band 2 or 3 Health Care Assistant.

The completion of the foundation degree also enables access to additional training to further support career progression within the NHS. Secondment opportunities, through Widening Access scheme, has supported many APs to progress onto pre-registration and operating department practitioner programmes of study.

Locally the foundation degree enables the AP to use accreditation of prior learning (APEL) to join the second year of the nursing degree, thus ensuring that staff who are supported in their development return to the organisation as registered nurses in two years’ time, rather than three.

This progression route links to the NHS Plan in ensuring that the NHS provides a model of career progression by offering a Skills Escalator. Investing in staff in this way with a “grow your own” workforce approach has greatly enhanced recruitment and retention over the last ten years within this Trust.

# Career progression of the Assistant Practitioner Workforce across the North West

## Current Progression

Between January 2006 and September 2016 Blackpool Teaching Hospitals supported 113 Trainee Assistant Practitioners on the foundation degree programme. This figure relates to completed cohorts. In addition to this there are 31 students currently studying towards the foundation degree.

The overall attrition rate is relatively low at 7% compared to the North West average of 12%, with 103 successfully completing the programme, giving an overall completion rate of 91%.

Of the 103 qualified APs within the organisation, 21 have progressed onto further qualifications, 18 to the nursing degree and 3 undertaking the operating department practice degree. The Trust has seconded all but one of the Trusts' APs through widening access, which has resulted in 20% progressing onto further training. See table.

### Assistant Practitioner Progression at Blackpool

Cohort Year	Commenced FD	Completed FD	Progressed	%Progressed	Notes
Commenced - completed					
Jan 2006 – Jan 2008	8	8	2	25%	
Jan 2007 – Jan 2009	2	2	1	50%	
Jan 2008 – Jan 2010	11	11	4	36%	
Jan 2009 – Jan 2011	12	12	0	-	
Jan 2010 – Jan 2012	21	18	4	22%	
Jan 2011 – Jan 2013	21	21	6	29%	
Jan 2012 – Jan 2014	15	13	3	23%	
Jan 2013 – Jan 2015	7	7	1	14%	
Sept 2013 – Sept 2015	6	3	0	-	One remains on FD
Sept 2014 – Sept 2016	10	8	0	-	One remains on FD

### Total Assistant Practitioner Progression at Blackpool

Jan 2006 – Sept 2016	Commenced	Completed	Completion %	Progressed	%	Remains on FD
	113	103	91%	21	20%	2

There has been a consistent number of APs progressing onto further qualifications each year. The largest cohort of ten were seconded to the nursing degree in September 2015 and one to the operating department practitioner degree.

Those that have completed their registered qualification so far have all returned to the Trust where they have remained, with the majority taking up posts within the original department that they were seconded from. This has helped with local recruitment problems, particularly in hard to recruit to areas.

## Conclusion

Focusing on an individual organisation has enabled more reliable data to emerge. It should be noted however, that this Trust employs a high number of APs which may explain the disparity between this data and that retrieved from the survey.

## **Career progression of the Assistant Practitioner Workforce across the North West**

Secondment opportunities via widening access have been the catalyst for the majority of workforce development within this organisation, since 20 of the 21 APs progressed via this route.

With the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, it remains to be seen whether this level of career progression is sustainable, however the launch of the nursing apprenticeship and nursing associate roles would indicate that there will still be an affordable and perhaps more flexible route into nursing careers in the future.



# **Career progression of the Assistant Practitioner Workforce across the North West**

## **Appendix 1**

### **AP Career Progression Case Study Karen Teale**

#### **Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust**

## **Overview**

Karen's learning journey started back in 2002 when she began soaking up practical experiences as a Health Care Assistant, which then provided the foundations for her academic study. She learnt early on the value of reflective practice and team work and has never looked back. These values helped to cement her pathway to success from an Assistant Practitioner (AP), to Staff Nurse and most recently to a Sister's post.

## **Background**

Karen began working in the Trust as a Health Care Assistant on the haematology/oncology ward in 2002. From 2007 – 2008 she completed her National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 2 and 3, subsequently applying for the Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care (Assistant Practitioner) for the January 2008 intake. Karen always went the extra mile with her foundation degree, producing work of a very high standard which clearly expressed her compassion and empathy for the patients in her care. She successfully qualified as an AP at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) February 2010.

## **Career Progression and Development**

Karen then secured a band four AP post on the haematology/oncology ward and during the next six months she completed her adult numeracy level two qualification which, together with the foundation degree, allowed her to apply for a nursing degree programme. Karen completed her Nursing (Adult) BSc (Hons) pre-registration, graduating in September 2012.

On qualifying as a registered nurse, Karen successfully applied for a staff nurse position on the haematology/oncology ward where her learning journey had begun five years earlier. Returning as a qualified nurse to the area where her journey began, ensured that the service retained an invaluable and experienced staff member, and one who had continually developed herself in order to enhance care provision.

In 2013 Karen was nominated for an award as part of Adult Learners Week and became the joint winner in the career progression in health and social care category.

After gaining twelve months experience as a staff nurse on the haematology/oncology ward, Karen applied for a position in the community nursing team and worked as a district nurse for one year. Whilst Karen enjoyed her experience in the community and gained many valuable skills, her passion remained within the speciality of haematology/oncology nursing and she returned here as a staff nurse in 2014.

Karen completed a Principles and Practice of Cytotoxic Chemotherapy module at UCLan in 2015 and attended the Haematology and Stem Cell Transplantation Educational Programme for Nurses. This enabled her to develop her knowledge base within this specialised field practice whilst continuously increasing her portfolio of clinical skills. She successfully secured a Sister's post in July 2017 and has since been encouraged to undertake both a peripherally inserted central catheter module, and an oncology module. Karen's long term goal is to work within the palliative care team at the Trust.

# Career progression of the Assistant Practitioner Workforce across the North West

## Benefits

The Trust is committed to supporting individual personal and professional development goals and Karen is a great example of 'growing your own' workforce. She has been well supported to achieve her NVQ Level 2 and 3 qualifications, enabling her to go on to study for the foundation degree and become an AP whilst still working at the Trust.

Having been seconded from the Trust through a Widening Access scheme, she was able to complete her nursing degree and subsequently returned as a registered nurse with a wealth of previous experience to draw upon. This ensured that the Trust retained invaluable skills and experiences of an employee by facilitating a clear career progression pathway.

Karen is a keen advocate for lifelong learning, regularly participating in prospective learner events in order to share the experiences of her own learning journey, offering encouragement and advice to those considering similar career progression pathways.

The Trust reports reaping many rewards from their investment in such a dedicated individual and Karen continues to inspire her colleagues with her commitment and dedication to learning, and to patient care.

## AP Career Progression Case Study Antony Preston East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust

## Overview

Antony has worked in various health care assistant posts prior to moving into community nursing where he commenced the Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care (Assistant Practitioner) in 2008. Following his successful completion of the programme, Antony has continued to progress academically completing the BSc Health & Social Care Degree in 2011 and has most recently achieved a mentorship qualification.

## Background

Antony commenced his career in health care in 1995 when he took up a position in a local nursing home, having been made redundant from his previous occupation at the local council. In 1997, Antony took up the position of Rehabilitation Assistant at Burnley General Hospital. During his time in this post he completed an Open University course in health and social care and studied for an NVQ level 3, completing this qualification in 2005.

Antony then applied for a Trainee Assistant Practitioner (TAP) post in community nursing, successfully achieving a Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care (Assistant Practitioner) in 2010.

## Career Progression and Development

Following completion of the foundation degree programme, Antony became a band four Assistant Practitioner (AP) within the community nursing team. Keen to continue his learning, he went on to complete a BSc Health & Social Care Degree in 2011 and returned to university once again in 2012 to complete a mentorship qualification. With his additional

## **Career progression of the Assistant Practitioner Workforce across the North West**

qualifications in place, he applied to work in a new service that had been set up within the Trust, the Intensive Home Support Service (IHSS) where he remains today.

Between 2012 and 2014 Antony has mentored 3 TAPs who all successfully completed the foundation degree and are now practising APs within the IHSS team. He is currently providing mentorship for one TAP who is progressing into her second year with 'good standing'.

Antony is a Safer Handling Facilitator and has just taken on a new role as 'Staff Experience Champion' He continues to work as a band four AP, complementing the role of the Advanced Nurse Practitioners by supporting their clinical investigations and undertaking the effective monitoring of patients while in an acute phase of illness.

### **Benefits**

The completion of the BSc Health and Social Care degree has provided Antony a high level of knowledge which he can apply to his AP role. This deeper understanding of care provision facilitates a competent and confident practitioner, and his AP qualification has enabled registered nurses to safely delegate aspects of care to Antony which fall within his scope of practice. Antony has developed effective leadership skills which positively contribute to cohesive team working within the service.

The completion of the mentorship qualification has provided many benefits to the team. For example, it has enabled an identified and experienced practitioner to guide and support other TAPs through their own work based learning. This in turn has led to the 'freeing-up' of registered practitioners to concentrate on the mentorship and assessment of pre-registration student nurses, consequently enhancing the learning environment.