

# Evidence Brief: Operating Department Practitioners (ODP)

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

**Date of publication:** January 2025

Please acknowledge this work in any resulting paper or presentation as:  
Evidence Brief: Operating Department Practitioners. Hannah Wood and Katy Greenfield.  
(2025). UK: Workforce, Training and Education Knowledge Management Team

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## Key publications – the big picture

### [NHS Long Term Workforce Plan](#)

NHS England, 2023 (updated 2024)

Education and training places for the AHP workforce are estimated to need to grow by 19–25% by 2030/31. This Plan sets out an ambition to increase AHP training places by 25% to over 18,800 by 2031/32. To support this level of ambition and work towards this level of expansion, AHP training places will increase by 13% to 17,000 by 2028/29, with an increase of 8% by 2024/25 [...] This expansion would need to focus on both apprenticeship routes and traditional undergraduate courses. More than a third of AHPs could train through apprenticeships, compared to 6% now, but this would vary by professional group. The Plan sets out the following assessment for proportion of entrants joining the AHP workforce via an apprenticeship route by 2031/32: • at least 80% for operating department practitioners, therapeutic radiographers and podiatrists. (Page 45) Expanding apprenticeship routes can help address key workforce shortages and particularly benefit those professions that historically lack a consistent route for training and career development, such as non-clinical professionals in corporate services, estates and facilities and general management. Equally, they are beneficial for clinical professions such as learning disability nursing, therapeutic radiography and operating department practitioners, which may not be as visible to school leavers, and may be of more interest to people with greater life experience. (Page 50) In 2023/24 we will work with students, HEIs, royal colleges and clinical placement providers to understand and address the reasons students leave training and the variation in their experiences. Training attrition varies across the country, particularly for nursing. This Plan supports the existing commitment to reduce the proportion of students who leave nursing training from 16% in 2019/20 to 14% by 2024. We will also aim to bring the attrition rate down to 14% for

paramedics and operating department practitioners (ODPs). (Page 80)

### [Revised standards of conduct, performance and ethics](#)

Health & Care Professions Council, 2024

The revised standards of conduct, performance and ethics came into effect on 1 September 2024. Our [guidance on social media](#), which sits alongside the standards, has also been revised.

### [Approved programmes](#)

Health & Care Professions Council, 2024

A database of approved education programmes for Allied Health Professionals.

### [Recruitment of overseas allied health professionals](#)

NHS Employers, 2024

How overseas allied health professionals (AHPs) can enter the UK for work.

### [Innovation and collaboration: supporting Allied Health Professions Return to Practice](#)

NHS England, 2023

It is well recognised that there are significant challenges in AHP workforce supply, retention, and growth across all sectors of health and care. Returning Allied Health Professions are a vital element of the Health Education England (HEE) workforce plan and are essential in re-directing knowledge, skills and experience back into health and care sectors.

### [AHP Educator Career Framework](#)

Council of Deans of Health, 2023

The AHP Educator Career Framework is an outcome-based career framework that describes the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to be an effective teacher, learning facilitator, supervisor and role model in AHP education in

practice and formal education settings. First and foremost, it promotes the education pillar of AHP professional practice, recognising that education is everyone's responsibility.

### [Genomics for allied health professionals: Survey results](#)

NHS England WT&E, Genomics Education Programme, 2023  
Overall, your responses showed that a good majority of you feel you don't have a good understanding of genomics.

### [Your future allied health professionals](#)

NHS Employers, 2023  
This infographic sets out the different routes available for organisations to train allied health professionals.

### [Identifying the extent to which theatre support workers seek opportunities to become Operating Department Practitioners](#)

NHS England WT&E, 2022  
This report presents the findings of a small-scale one year study to identify the extent to which theatre support workers (TSWs) seek opportunities to become Operating Department Practitioners (ODPs), and to be part of the pipeline to increase the ODP workforce.

### [A guide to ESR coding for Advanced Practitioner roles](#)

NHS England WT&E, 2022  
To ensure that advanced practitioners' skills are consistently recognised, and better enable those skills to be deployed across healthcare settings we must now ensure that the NHS workforce accurately reflects the breadth of the modern clinical workforce.

### [The Allied Health Professions \(AHP\) for England: 2022 to 2027](#)

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.

### [Allied Health Professions' Research and Innovation Strategy for England](#)

NHS England WT&E, 2022  
This Strategy comprises a definitive collective national reference statement that encompasses and supports the existing research and innovation strategies of all the Allied Health professional associations.

### [National Operating Department Practitioner \(ODP\) Workforce Programme 2021-22](#)

NHS England WT&E, 2022

#### Key Messages

- The ODP workforce is uniquely skilled, valued, and vital to the delivery of care in England in the 21st century and elective care recovery
- The ODP workforce needs specific attention to thrive as a lack of profession specific attention has held back development of the profession in delivering its full value to population health
- The ODP profession needs to be better understood by the public, other health workers and workforce leads to enable employers to adequately recruit into the profession and optimally exploit the value and expertise of the profession
- ODP is uniquely connected across Allied Health Professions (AHPs), Nursing and other professions and these links must be respected and utilised to maximise support to the profession.

### [What can AHPs offer in mental health settings?](#)

Health Education England, 2021  
AHPs are the key to transforming health, care, and wellbeing. Working at the top of their competencies and skills, AHPs lead

mental health teams to new ways of working. Their expertise in rehabilitation and enablement is vital to move away from over-reliance on hospitals and towards professional interventions across health and social care settings.

### [My role in tackling health inequalities: a framework for allied health professionals](#)

The King's Fund, 2021

This framework builds on our commitments in the UK allied health professions public health strategic framework 2019–2024 (Allied Health Professions Federation 2019) and we hope AHPs across the UK will find it useful. It aims to help you to consider your own unique contribution to tackling health inequalities and to help maximise this through a series of lenses and questions.

### [What is advanced clinical practice?](#)

NHS England WT&E, no date (estimated post-2020)

Advanced clinical practitioners come from a range of professional backgrounds such as nursing, pharmacy, paramedics and occupational therapy. They are healthcare professionals educated to Master's level and have developed the skills and knowledge to allow them to take on expanded roles and scope of practice caring for patients.

### [Standards of education and training](#)

Health & Care Professions Council, 2017

In line with the way our education quality assurance model functions, we have split our standards of education and training along institution and programme levels.

See also: [Review of the standards of education and training](#) (2024)

## College of Operating Department Practitioners

### [Standards for Supporting Pre-Registration Operating Department Practitioner Education in Practice Placements](#)

College of Operating Department Practitioners, 2021

The purpose of this document is to define the College of Operating Department Practitioners (CODP) standards for supporting those learners in practice placements, who are undertaking a pre-registration programme that permits eligibility to apply for statutory registration with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) as an Operating Department Practitioner (ODP).

### [History of the College of Operating Department Practitioners and the ODP Profession](#)

College of Operating Department Practitioners, 2021

No history of the College would be complete without a brief look at the history of Operating Department Practitioners ourselves. The fact that ODPs as a group were not a creation of the Lewin report 1 of 1970, where the title Operating Department Assistant (ODA) was first coined. Indeed, ODPs can claim a lineage that pre-dates not only anaesthesia but also organised operating theatres.

### [A Vision: The College of Operating Department Practitioners and CPOC](#)

Centre for Perioperative Care, 2021

The ODP role has evolved significantly and includes increased practice outside the operating theatre environment and as such the scope of ODP practice encompasses the totality of the patient pathway and ODPs routinely practice within pre-

assessment, admissions units and post-operative care, including critical care units.

## Case Studies

### [Why I decided to become an ODP](#)

NHS England WT&E, no date

When I discovered Operating Department Practice, it was at a time when I was looking for a career change after losing my job. A career change was something that I had been thinking about, although I'd never done any more than think about it. Losing my job was the kickstart I needed to make the change. I was looking for something which offered a sense of fulfilment, something that offered career progression and personal development opportunities. I was now looking for job security, too.

## The Star for workforce redesign

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

## Statistics

You can find relevant statistics on the [Health and Care Statistics Landscape](#).

### [Registrant data and statistics](#)

Health & Care Professions Council, 2024

These factsheets provide a breakdown for each of the professions we regulate.

### [Key statistics on education and training for HCPC professions](#)

Health & Care Professions Council, 2024

We have provided key statistics as a summary of the picture of education and training for the professions we regulate, and how that picture is changing.

### [Retention rates of first time HCPC registrants, 2013 to 2018](#)

Health & Care Professions Council, 2023

The HCPC embarked upon this analysis to inform our work on preceptorship. We consider that the findings are of wider value. They have particularly important implications for providers and funders of training, and for workforce planners. They are also likely to be of great interest to other stakeholders including professional bodies.

### [Diversity data: operating department practitioners - March 2023](#)

Health & Care Professions Council, 2023

This factsheet provides key EDI information for operating department practitioners and how the demographics of this group compare to the demographics of HCPC registrants overall.

### [HCPC Diversity Data Report 2021:occupational therapists](#)

Health & Care Professions Council, 2021

Key findings

- Highest percentage (43%) of registrants who reported having caring responsibilities.
- Highest percentage (13%) of registrants who reported working in Adult Social Care as their primary work setting.

## 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.

## National Data Programme

Workforce, Training and Education staff can look at the [WT&E Data and Analytics Service](#) resources including the National Data Warehouse SharePoint site to find out more about datasets and Tableau products.

## Published Peer Reviewed Research

### Advanced practice

[The Advanced Clinical Practitioner \(ACP\) in UK healthcare: Dichotomies in a new 'multi-professional' profession](#)

SSM - Qualitative Research in Health 3, 2023

Findings were analysed into three overarching themes: (i) professional identity, (ii) differing definitions of ACP and (iii) advanced practice, professional regulation and recognition. ACPs hold a unique and emerging professional identity based on their previous professional health background and are themselves clear that they are not doctors. The role is not yet formally regulated, though many ACPs aspire to this. This research is an early look at a new type of professional which challenges existing understandings of what a profession is.

[Assessment of advanced clinical practitioners](#)

Journal of Interprofessional Care 36(6), 2022

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](#)

BMJ Open 11(8), 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 faces within the perioperative workforce: New, advanced and extended roles](#) Abstract only\*

Journal of Perioperative Practice, 2020

The operating department like many other areas within healthcare is diversifying its workforce. Several new, advanced and extended roles have been integrated within the team. This article briefly outlines historical and current developments which have influenced the operating department workforce. It focuses on the following: Surgical Care Practitioner, Physician Associate, Anaesthesia Associates formerly known as Physician Assistant in Anaesthesia, Surgical First Assistant, Assistant Theatre Practitioner and Nursing Associates, highlighting the professional regulators, education and training, qualification and continuing professional development requirements.

### Digital

#### [Barriers to Video Call–Based Telehealth in Allied Health Professions and Nursing: Scoping Review and Mapping Process](#)

Journal of Medical Internet Research 25, 2023

The barriers were related to technology issues, practice issues, patient issues, environmental issues, attributions, interpersonal issues, policies and regulations, and administration issues. The most reported barriers included the lack of hands-on experience, unreliable network connection, the lack of technology access, diminished fidelity of observations and poor conditions for visual instructions, the lack of technology skills, and diminished client-practitioner interaction and communication.

### 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](#)

Human Resources for Health 20, 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.

### Education and curriculum

#### [Scoping the Development of Implementing an Undergraduate Operating Department Practitioners Buddy Scheme](#) Abstract only\*

The Journal of Practice Teaching and Learning 22(3), 2024

All students regarded the buddy scheme to be potentially advantageous. The reflexive thematic analysis identified three main themes: (1) the value of having a buddy in supporting

wellness; (2) the sharing of students’ experiences; and (3) the structure of the buddy scheme.

#### [Sources of influence for choosing an operating department practitioner career: Findings from a questionnaire among students in England](#)

Journal of Perioperative Practice, 2024

One hundred and fifty operating department practitioner students attending undergraduate courses completed the questionnaire. Personal influences, such as role models, were the key sources of influence for choosing an operating department practitioner career. Educational sources were the least influential. Gaining work experience or exposure to the theatre setting was perceived as key to address course attrition. Conducting one’s own research was vital in learning more about the operating department practitioner role and influencing the decision to choose the profession.

#### [Implementation of research, education and leadership placements into Operating Department Practitioner training: A 4-pillar practice-based learning approach](#)

Journal of Perioperative Practice, 2024

This article details the introduction of practice-based learning in research, education and leadership alongside clinical placements for BSc Operating Department Practice students at Sheffield Hallam University. It provides insights into the benefits of this approach, outlines the components of each placement with examples of completed projects, shares feedback from students and practice partners and addresses challenges. The authors advocate for adoption of this approach across all pre-registration Operating Department Practice courses, to ensure a workforce capable of meeting evolving health care needs and driving the Operating Department Practice profession forwards.

### [The changing role of pre-admission work experience \(clinical visits\) in Therapeutic Radiography, Diagnostic Radiography and Operating Department Practice: Student perspectives](#)

Radiography 28, 2022

Four focus groups included 25 first year students interviewed prior to their first clinical placement (14 therapeutic radiography, 5 diagnostic radiography and 6 ODP students). Three themes were constructed, namely: informing career choices, the clinical visit experience, and the value of clinical visits. Clinical visits affirmed rather than inspired career choices. The best timing for a visit was before admission interviews and optimal duration was a full day. Interacting with current students was the most valued aspect. Videos and simulations provided in-depth information about the professional role and allowed replay, but some participants found the videos uninspiring. OLP entries present a confusing picture for applicants who may be researching several Universities and professions.

### [The changing role of pre-admission work experience \(clinical visits\) in therapeutic radiography, diagnostic radiography and operating department practice: Academic perspectives \(part 2\)](#)

Radiography 28, 2022

The enforced withdrawal of clinical visits may impact upon subsequent attrition associated with 'misinformed career choice'. Alternatives to clinical visits, while less onerous for students, admissions staff and clinical colleagues alike, need to be carefully evaluated to ensure they offer prospective students a realistic understanding of the profession.

### [The Theatre Training Checklist: A Toolkit to Improve Operative Training](#)

British Journal of Surgery 109, 2022

The Theatre Training Checklist is a simple framework that aims to facilitate awareness, understanding, coordination and

cooperation of training for all team members. It is a practical strategy that can be adopted in any setting.

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

BMC Medical Education 21, 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.

## Leadership, coaching and supervision

### [Inequitable barriers and opportunities for leadership and professional development, identified by early-career to mid-career allied health professionals](#)

Full text available with NHS OpenAthens account\*

BMJ Leader 8(3), 2024

Thematic analysis (TA) generated four themes, including the barriers and opportunities for AHP leadership development and career progression. Further TA identified three overarching themes: equitable and interprofessional leadership development; an equitable and structured AHP career pathway; and having AHP leaders at a strategic and/or very senior level. These overarching themes were subsumed under the umbrella category: equity of opportunity and voice. The AHPs, who were interviewed, reported inequitable access to both career and leadership development, compared with other professions, such as nurses, doctors and pharmacists.

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

Innovative Higher Education 46, 2021



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

### Role progression and development

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

Journal of Clinical Nursing 31(3-4), 2022

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.

#### [Assessment of advanced clinical practitioners](#)

Journal of Interprofessional Care 36(6), 2022

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.

#### [Use of in situ simulation to evaluate the operational readiness of a high-consequence infectious disease intensive care unit](#)

Anaesthesia 75(6), 2021

We recommend that staff working in clinical areas expected to receive patients with COVID-19 conduct in-situ simulation in order to detect their own unique risks and aid in the creation of local guidelines of management of patients with COVID-19.

#### [Simulation-guided preparations for the management of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases in the obstetric emergency theater](#) Abstract only\*

The Journal of Maternal-Fetal & Neonatal Medicine 35(9), 2020

The key changes were: first, floor plan adjustment, increase of the clinical area by converting some offices to clinical spaces, and standard operating procedures for transporting patients; second, enhancement of the efficiency of the communication and coordination between the clinical teams; third, availability of extra support for the staff in the Central Delivery Suite (CDS); and fourth, introduction of a neonatal care pathway to manage neonatal resuscitation in such an emergency.

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

BMJ Open 11(8), 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.

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

BMC Medical Education 20, 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](#)

BMJ Open, 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](#)

BMC Health Services Research 10, 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.

### [The evolving roles of Operating Department Practitioners in contemporary healthcare: A service evaluation](#) Abstract only\*

Journal of Perioperative Practice 30(3), 2019

A mixed method study was undertaken to capture quantitative and qualitative data in relation to the contemporary roles and skills of Operating Department Practitioners. The data provide evidence that Operating Department Practitioners take opportunities to widen their knowledge skills and practice, with over 37% of the sample completing a mentorship qualification and 14% having completed or studying towards a postgraduate or Master's Degree. The study provides evidence of the development in the roles of the Operating Department Practitioner and suggests that Operating Department Practitioners offer an eclectic mix of skills which are delivered in a variety of clinical settings. It is recognised that Operating Department Practitioners have the potential to further improve patient safety and service delivery in roles other than those historically associated with the profession.

## Workforce perspectives and mental health

### [Exploration of attitudes towards research: Operating department practitioners and theatre nurses](#)

Journal of Perioperative Practice, 2024

These revealed that those with a positive attitude towards research were most likely to have obtained a Master's level qualification (i.e. MSc) and had gained experience in research post-registration. When explored further, the overall positive attitude to research was found to be possibly linked to a belief in the usefulness of research and to prior exposure. The findings of this study can be used to help support, inform and strengthen research in clinical practice and research career aspirations.

### [Perioperative practitioners' experiences of critical incident debriefing: A qualitative explorative study](#)

Journal of Perioperative Practice, 2024

Five themes emerged detailing the advantages of critical incident debriefing, including addressing staff's personal needs and learning lessons from incidents, and the disadvantages such as time constraints and unsupportive/uninformative debriefs leading to poor-quality debriefs.

### [Cost Awareness of Anaesthetic Consumable Items Among the National Health Service \(NHS\) Staff and the Financial Impact on the NHS](#)

Cureus 16(7), 2024

Cost awareness among anaesthetic staff for commonly used equipment is poor. More education and training are necessary in this area as limited knowledge of service costs restricts the ability to make cost-efficient choices which are needed in the current NHS.

### [Public mental health and wellbeing interventions delivered by allied health professionals \(AHPs\): mapping the evidence and identification of gaps. A systematic review](#)

Journal of Public Mental Health 22(4), 2023

Mental well-being is associated with positive outcomes throughout the life course. This study aims to examine

interventions delivered by allied health professionals (AHPs) to alleviate community stressors adversely impacting public mental health and well-being.

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

Journal of Interprofessional Care 36(5), 2022

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](#)

PLoS One 17(9), 2022

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

## Competency Frameworks

[Operating department practitioners](#)

Health & Care Professions Council, 2023

These standards set out safe and effective practice in the professions we regulate. They are the threshold standards we consider necessary to protect members of the public.

[AHP Critical Care Capability Framework](#)

Intensive Care Society, no date (estimated post 2022)

The Allied Health Professions Critical Care Capability framework has been developed to highlight the experience, expertise and contributions of dietitians, occupational therapists, operating department practitioners, physiotherapists and speech and language therapists in intensive care.

## \*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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