

# Evaluating the Perceptions of Preceptorship for Healthcare Science

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## Introduction

Preceptorship can ensure staff both perform effectively and feel valued in their new role [1, 2]. Preceptorships are used in a number of health professions e.g., in Nursing and Midwifery. However, formal preceptorship within Healthcare Science is currently limited [3, 4]. With the success of The All Wales Preceptorship within Audiology, the Healthcare Science Programme wanted to understand how preceptorship could be utilised in other Healthcare Science professions.

## Aims of evaluation:

1. To understand the **current preceptorship** programmes for new registrants entering the Healthcare Science workforce in NHS Wales
2. To explore the **potential value of preceptorship** for Healthcare Science, and how this may look if delivered across Healthcare Science professions in Wales
3. To evaluate the **potential opportunities and barriers** of implementing an all Wales Preceptorship for Healthcare Science

## Methodology

Professional representatives (n=14) from the Healthcare Science Network were invited to take part in an interview (See Note) where they shared their perceptions on preceptorship.

Thematic analysis was used to draw out initial themes from transcripts. This evaluation forms part of the Healthcare Science Programme and utilises the partners through the Healthcare Science Network.

## Findings

### Theme 1: Current Preceptorship Schemes are Limited and Varied

- Audiology has a well-established all-Wales Audiology Preceptorship
- Cardiac has a strong localised preceptorship programme in South Wales
- Other professions are working to produce 'in house' localised programmes
- Those who deliver preceptorship do so in different ways (e.g., having different individuals act as the preceptor, having the preceptorship available to individuals at different bands/stages in their career)

### Theme 2: The Problems Experienced without Preceptorship

- Problems experienced at an individual level – new staff feeling unprepared, not clinically ready, lacking in theoretical knowledge, and finding their new role daunting
- Problems experienced at a service level - When experienced staff retire/leave, the new staff aren't able to fill the gap which strains the service.

### Theme 3: The Benefits of Preceptorship

- Benefits to the preceptee - Increased confidence, motivation, feeling valued and supported. Nurtures good habits for CPD and self-development.
- Wider benefits of preceptorship – Preceptor develops leadership skills, and consolidates their knowledge. The service may have better recruitment and retention as a result of the scheme.

### Theme 4: The Challenges to Implementing Preceptorship

- Challenges were focused in three main areas; time, finance, and staffing levels
  - i. Time – Concerns around allocating designated preceptorship time.
  - ii. Finance – Barriers to receiving additional funding, remuneration for the departments delivering preceptorship.
  - iii. Staff – Limited staff, especially in smaller specialisms. Difficulty finding a preceptor.

### Theme 5: Seeing the Bigger Picture

- Preceptorship was used interchangeably with other terms such as 'mentoring' and 'training' – There is a lack of universal definition and understanding.
- A few of the profession representatives expressed a desire to share knowledge and network the understanding of preceptorship.

'I think it would have a big impact on educational knowledge amongst the teams and bring that support to the next level'

'Training doesn't end with someone being qualified'

'As employers and people who are qualified, we all have confidence in the [preceptorship] programme'

'I need dedicated protected preceptorship time where I can say next 'Thursday at two o'clock in the afternoon, I'm going to sit down with Joe Bloggs, and between two and five' and know we are not going to be disturbed'

'I think there should be remuneration for the department to be able to add additional hours or things like that to allow the skilled staff to preceptor'

'We're getting people asking to be preceptors. It's really nice they want to be involved'

'Preceptors feel that they contribute to the development of the service, develop their own, feel that they're giving back to the service, and they're supporting the new people coming through'

'At the end they've got a body of work that can go in against their CPD'

'If you're showcasing that you're offering this kind of support, as an employer you look far better, people know that when they come to the workforce they will be looked after'

'We've got big plans and big ideas, but it all comes down to resources... person power and capacity.'

## Discussion

- Services appear to be developing their own approaches to preceptorship at different rates in different formats.
- Most services in Wales are offering component parts such as mentoring, even if only on a small scale.
- Many of the professional leads expressed interest for preceptorship but perceived barriers in rather significant areas (i.e., lack of staff, time, and finance).
- Those with preceptorship demonstrated that the perceived barriers may not be substantial enough to outweigh the benefits that preceptorship can bring [2, 3, 4, 5].
- Preceptorship may bring significant potential for cross-Wales networking at an early stage in individuals' careers, to further enhance the "one voice" strategic change across the profession.
- One potential limitation of this evaluation is that the representatives of the Healthcare Science Network often work together collaboratively, therefore there may be a need to further explore the willingness for a collaborative approach across all services in Wales.

## Next Steps

The Healthcare Science Clinical Lead for Workforce and Education is now working towards the development of an **all-Wales preceptorship guidance** for Healthcare Science in NHS Wales.

## Note:

Professionals interviewed represented the following Healthcare Science disciplines:

- Audiology
- Cardiac and Respiratory Physiology
- Clinical Bioinformatics
- Clinical Engineering
- Genomics
- Radiography
- Medical Illustration and Clinical Photography
- Medical Physics
- Neurophysiology
- Pathology

## References

1. Welsh Government (2023a). Written Statement: NHS Pay Award Enhancement for 2022/2023. Cabinet Statement written by Eluned Morgan, Minister for Health and Social Services.
2. Welsh Government (2023b). National Workforce Implementation Plan: Addressing NHS Wales Workforce Challenges.
3. British Academy of Audiology (2022) Professional Development Preceptorship Framework.
4. Society for Cardiological Science & Technology (2020). SCST Certificate of Proficiency in Healthcare Science (Cardiac Physiology): Preceptorship Programme Framework.



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