

AHP PrBL Recovery



Occupational Therapy 2023

AHP Practice-based Learning (PrBL) Recovery: Occupational Therapy 2023

Situation / Background

The Scottish Government commissioned NHS Education for Scotland (NES) to identify the number of placement hours shortfall for nursing, midwifery and AHP pre-registration students for the 2020-21 academic sessions. Concerns were growing that without the required number of placement hours pre-registration occupational therapy (OT) students would not be able to graduate and join the workforce. Previously, Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) identified that the required 1000 pre-registration clinical hours would be spent in more “traditional” environments, such as hospitals. There is now a strong desire for OTs to work across other sectors and environments including third sector, private practice and within community populations to enable the profession to demonstrate the full extent of its value and reach.

Task

The objective of the NES OT project, in collaboration with the Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), was to recover, and increase, OT pre-registration practice-based learning placement (PrBL) opportunities in Scotland that are high quality, modern, diverse, and sustainable. Quality PrBL experiences are vital to all OT students; allowing them to complete their programme of study and join the Scottish health and social care workforce.

The OT Practice Education Leads (PELs) led scoping activities that took place face to face, via Microsoft Teams, with individuals and with groups of OTs. A stakeholder group was created with involvement from NES, HEIs and practice educators across Scotland.

The following themes were identified within the scoping activities:

- Practice Educators (PEs) may frequently offer PrBL but are now increasingly overwhelmed

- PEs have ideas for offering placements but may not have the confidence to introduce something new, ultimately defaulting to one to one and face to face placement delivery
- Some clinical practitioners consider their practice area as being too “specialised” for most students

Actions

Pilot studies were identified, in collaboration with stakeholders and professional networks, to test different models and methods of PrBL delivery including long-arm supervision, peer-assisted learning (PAL) and project placements within NHS and cross / third-sector placement settings. Timescales were agreed, and desired outcomes created to trial and evaluate the models of PrBL delivery. An emerging framework developed by Janet Thompson, OT, NHS Grampian was adapted by the OT PELs for use with selected organisations.

Each pilot study was evaluated using a qualitative approach and the findings used to inform the aims of subsequent cross / third-sector pilot studies. The findings were discussed at stakeholder group meetings and further disseminated via stakeholder networks and the HEIs. Learning was also shared with new placement providers taking part in the project.

In addition, the following actions were undertaken as a direct result of findings from the scoping activities:

- Creation of drop-in clinics and the Scottish OT Practice Education Network to offer uni-professional support to new and existing PEs. Active promotion of the AHP PrBL Virtual Community, and buddying opportunities to encourage further networking and sharing of good practice.
- A range of resources including placement frameworks, Canva presentations, models and modes explanations, essential links, timetable examples, and blogs have been created to assist students, PEs, and placement organisations/providers in pre-planning activities available at <https://api.ltb.io/show/ABSPD>. Further

support was given in the form of face to face and virtual meetings, placement venue visits and ongoing daily/weekly contact via a dedicated Teams page during the pilot studies with learning shared thereafter.

- Introduction, development, and delivery of myth busting face to face and virtual roadshows to discuss models and methods of PrBL delivery. Resource pack developed so further areas can deliver their own roadshows.
- All stages and experiences of this process, for both PEs and students were actively shared via vlogs, blogs, roadshows, and national publications.

Impact

Engagement was evident with pilot projects, HEIs, PEs, cross / third sector organisations, and students. This was clear by the active collaboration with HEIs, the total number of new student PrBL opportunities created, and the number of cross / third sector organisations who approached the OT PELs requesting that occupational therapy students be placed with them.

A range of cross / third sector organisations volunteered to host pilot projects, each with varying degrees of support from the OT PELs. As a result of this project, additional placement capacity was created. Opportunities were identified and support given to deliver:

- Role emerging project based PrBL opportunities within NHS 24 which utilised long arm supervision, and PAL
- A project-based leadership placement within NHS Borders
- A project-based, hybrid, PAL placement within NHS Highland where the education authority hosted the student placements
- Split NHS Lanarkshire, cross / third sector PrBL opportunities utilising new placement settings

Twenty-eight students have undertaken 208 weeks, approx. 6000 hours of placement hours, through the opportunities identified and developed in this project. This comprised of 26 students undertaking 192 weeks of PrBL during the period June to December 2022, and a further two students each attending 8 weeks full time placement during the period

January to March 2023. Plans have been agreed for ongoing placements, building on two of the pilot projects that were created in collaboration with NHS, NES and an HEI colleague. These new PrBL opportunities have also been offered and accepted by a second HEI, providing additional PrBL for the future. All pilot projects have shared their learning through networks, social media, publication, and conferences.

Feedback indicated that despite these not being what would typically be called a 'traditional' placement, students could nevertheless gain experience and opportunity in acquiring skills identified by the HEI assessments and learning outcomes for PrBL. Therefore, by considering all sectors HEIs have an increased choice of quality PrBL options for students.

Students reported that decisions to accept employment offers were influenced by the opportunity to participate in modern and diverse placements. For example, one student commented that their decision to go for a mental health Band 5 post was a direct result of their placement with NHS 24 in the mental health hub. This was not an area of practice they had previously considered.

Crucially, links between NHS and cross / third sector organisations have been created and strengthened resulting in new modern and diverse PrBL opportunities. The sustainability of this is clear in the way that HEIs and cross / third sector organisations have continued to deliver and plan future PrBL opportunities for students despite the NES pilot projects having been completed.

To assist PEs to consider new modes and models, myth busting roadshows were delivered throughout Scotland both virtually and face to face. Questions for the OT PELs were around specific ways of delivering placements using the highlighted methods of delivery. The OT PELs were therefore able to share their own experiences from the NES pilot projects, for example of being a long arm supervisor, of managing peer assisted learning and of collaborating and setting up split placements across health and cross / third sector organisations. The roadshows focused on sharing the pilot outcomes and offering examples of good practice. Feedback from the sessions indicated a better understanding of PrBL and how it could be approached by PEs to enhance service delivery, capacity, sustainability, and future workforce.

One health board has created and secured funding for an Advanced Practice OT Post in Practice Education as a result of this work.

Learning / Recommendations

Recommendations moving forward:

1. Continued collaboration between PrBL providers, the HEIs and NES is essential to ensure sustainability. Identified capacity and mechanisms to continue this work is vital.
2. Utilisation of the Scottish OT Practice Education Network and drop-in clinics to support PEs and enable ongoing communication, sharing of good practice and networking throughout Scotland.
3. OT PrBL should endeavour to make use of full breadth of placement models available to ensure delivery in line with HCPC and RCOT professional standards. Examples of good practice and further information is available at <https://api.ltb.io/show/ABSPD>
4. Adequate time should be made available to ensure that all involved are fully prepared for PrBL and have access to the necessary resources.
5. PrBL should be part of all personal development plan (PDP) discussions for all members of placement provider team, and this should be supported by higher management.

The NES OT project has achieved the aim of increasing OT PrBL capacity and opportunities in Scotland. Modern and diverse opportunities have been developed through the utilisation of new settings, and different models and methods of delivery; and their value demonstrated. The project produced a surplus of pre-registration OT PrBL opportunities, and HEIs are continuing to offer these newly created opportunities beyond the NES project. Learning and good practice has been shared, and the development of resources and the Scottish OT Practice Education Network offer ongoing support for PEs.

This resource may be made available, in full or summary form, in alternative formats and community languages. Please contact us on **0131 656 3200** or email **altformats@nes.scot.nhs.uk** to discuss how we can best meet your requirements.



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