

How NHSSA SFA accelerated programme is making a difference to individual practitioners' career progression

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Introduction: The NHS Scotland Academy's Surgical First Assistant (SFA) accelerated; educational skills-based programme is delivered over 34-weeks. This includes essential competencies and integration of extended skills required of an SFA; advantageous to reduce time away from service, while allowing full immersion in the role, differing from other programme provision nationally. This Once for Scotland approach provides individual career development to the senior perioperative workforce, enabling career progression while offering staff mobility cross-Scotland. Career opportunities for senior staff have remained stagnant, this advanced role now provides a clear career pathway. As the number of trained SFAs is currently unconfirmed in Scotland, our programme has already doubled the suggested numbers.

Methods, Results/Discussion

These components within our programme benefit not only the individual, but also service provision (evidenced by positive evaluations received).

- **Mandatory Tripartite Meetings:** Facilitated by the programme team involving clinical supervisor, clinical mentor, and learner. Online meetings offer support, development of role and highlight key professional opportunities.
- **ePortfolio:** Evidences the learner's development and provides a significant body of evidence supporting career progression and aiding revalidation.
- **Facilitates a Professional Community of Learning:** Allowing SFAs to develop a community of shared practice demonstrating career progression while developing as professional leaders with shared values and service goals.
- **Integration of Human Factors:** The importance of interdisciplinary team working and effective communication as an advanced practitioner.

This accelerated model of learning is credit rated by one of our partner HEI's, with accreditation from RCPSG. We collaborated extensively with stakeholders to shape and advance the direction of travel desired for this role. This aligns with NHSSA aims to deliver bespoke training opportunities to key areas in need.

Learner Testimony: "I set my sights on a career in the theatre department as a second-year nursing student.. I started working bank shifts as a Healthcare support worker in my free time and secured a job within the department whilst on my management placement. I first attended the NHS Scotland Academy's Foundation of Perioperative Practice course, which allowed me to build on my skill set and learn about a range of specialities. So, when I was encouraged to apply for the Surgical First Assistant role, I jumped at it This has allowed me a safe space to develop and practice surgical skills and learn about the legal and ethical aspects of the role. I firmly believe if it was not for the NHS Scotland Academy, I would not be in the position I am now. They have individually and collaboratively provided me not only with practical, surgical skills but also with the confidence to make and build on interprofessional relationships."



References

- AfPP competency toolkit (2023)
- ASPiH standards for simulation-based education (2023)
- National Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care in Scotland (2022)
- NHS Recovery Plan 2021-2026 (2021)
- NMAHP Professionals Development Framework (2021)
- PCC Position Statement (2018)

Conclusion

NHSSA accelerated programmes have positively impacted NHS Scotland workforce capacity and the SFA accelerated programme has been welcomed by perioperative practitioners seeking career development and progression. Our programme has supported the development of a robust, skilled and confident workforce, capable of meeting the demands of modern healthcare.

The integration of extended skills within the accelerated programme ensures that practitioners are well-prepared for advanced roles, reducing the need for additional future training. This approach not only benefits individual practitioners by enhancing their career prospects and job satisfaction but also strengthens the overall healthcare system by addressing critical workforce gaps.

The positive feedback from learners highlights the programme's success in fostering professional growth and improving clinical competencies. As we continue to expand and refine our training initiatives, we remain committed to supporting the ongoing development of the NHS Scotland perioperative workforce, ensuring that they are equipped to deliver high-quality patient care now, and in the future while promoting increased job satisfaction, providing access to cutting-edge training and education and fostering a culture of lifelong learning.

The SFA accelerated programme prioritises professional individual development and enables progression into advanced perioperative practitioner roles, offering additional career pathways leading to improved surgical outcomes and patient safety.