

# **AHP PrBL Recovery**



**Podiatry 2023**

## **AHP Practice-based Learning (PrBL) Recovery: Podiatry 2023**

### **Situation / Background**

The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the sustainability of podiatry student placement provision in Scotland. Prior to the pandemic, 96% of podiatry practice-based learning (PrBL) took place within clinic sites in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and NHS Lothian. Physical distancing measures led to a 50% reduction in capacity at these clinic sites and loss of some placement sites.

Over the past 10 years, there has been a 10 percent decrease in the number of podiatrists working in NHS Scotland. Workforce data also tells us that the average age of a podiatrist is 55 and over. We hear from services that there are ongoing recruitment difficulties across many health board areas of Scotland. This highlights the urgency of ensuring we have confident newly qualified practitioners entering the workforce who are ready to practice and ensure the sustainability of podiatry services.

This project identified a need to increase the number of trained and experienced practice educators and quality placement opportunities across all health boards in Scotland. Within scope included quality of PrBL, placement models, and practice educator learning and development. Routes into Podiatry careers including an apprenticeship model, newly qualified practitioner preceptorship and funding issues for students were also out of scope of this project.

The stakeholders identified to support this project included podiatry services, clinicians, HEIs, students and the professional body Royal College of Podiatry.

### **Task**

The project aimed to develop a more collaborative and consistent approach to PrBL across Scotland that combines the skills, perspectives, and ideas of those involved in podiatry PrBL towards a shared goal. This required the development of clearer channels of

communication, defining roles and responsibilities and creating a culture for shared learning and improvement.

### **Scoping**

Scoping of the current situation within Podiatry PrBL was conducted and involved initial 1:1 meetings with a range of health board areas (Urban, Rural and Remote), and the Royal College of Podiatry (RCOP), a stakeholder workshop and an Allied Health Professions (AHP) survey of student practice education.

Scoping identified that in board areas that had not supported many students there were a low number of trained or inexperienced practice educators. There was an assumption in some health boards that only more senior staff (Band 7+) were able to be practice educators.

### **Podiatry student practice education workshop**

A Podiatry student practice education virtual workshop was held via Microsoft Teams on the 3rd of May 2022 and attended by 65 podiatry students, clinicians, managers and lecturers. The aims of the workshop were to create a shared vision for Podiatry PrBL, identify barriers and opportunities and identify the role of a stakeholder group. The agreed vision statements are in Figure 1 below.




-  Podiatry students receiving a variety of placement opportunities and clinical exposure to develop the clinical skills and reasoning required to prepare them for meeting the needs of the population, including high risk and complex cases.
-  Quality learner-centred practice based learning experiences across Scotland supported by trained and experienced practice educators.
-  Positive learning environment for all

Figure 1: A vision for podiatry PrBL agreed by stakeholders May 2022

### **AHP Survey on practice education**

The AHP survey on student practice education was completed by 54 podiatrists (See full results in main report). The survey identified barriers and facilitators to becoming a

practice educator, and to facilitating student PrBL (See Figure 2 for barriers and facilitators identified by podiatrists and how this informed project actions).



Figure 2: Barriers and facilitators to podiatry PrBL identified in the AHP survey on student practice education 2022

## Action

**Development of a Stakeholder group:** A stakeholder group was identified from those who volunteered after attending the stakeholder workshop event and met every two months during the project via MS Teams.

**Peer assisted learning placements in remote and rural areas:** A concern highlighted during scoping was that it was difficult to support students in remote and rural areas. A test of change was carried out using the Peer-assisted Learning (PAL) model in NHS Western Isles in May 2022 with 2x level 3 students from Glasgow Caledonian University. This model was subsequently tested by Podiatrists in NHS Borders. Evaluation highlighted the key benefits that were identified by student and practice educators (See Figure 3 for details).

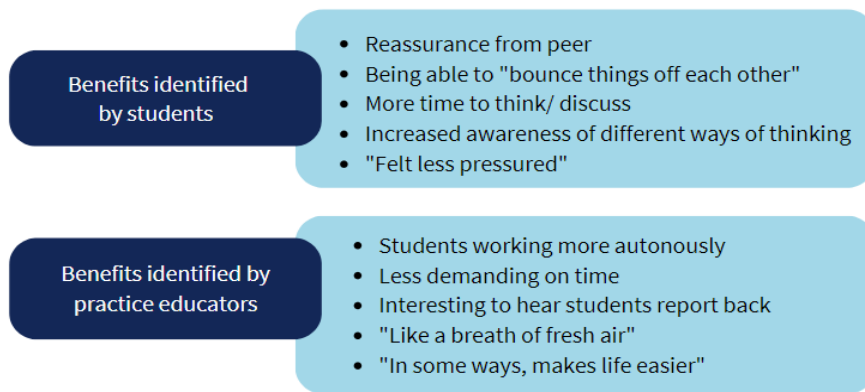


Figure 3: Benefits of the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) identified by podiatry students and practice educators

**Collaborative practice educator training:** Profession specific practice educator training was highlighted in the survey as a key facilitator to becoming a practice educator. This training provides information on course modules, assessment and documentation. This was previously provided separately by each HEI and at times, individually to health boards. A collaborative approach to practice education was taken in 2022/23 to improve consistency and ease of access to training. Sessions were facilitated by Glasgow Caledonian University, Queen Margaret University and NHS Education for Scotland.

**Drop-in sessions for Podiatry Practice educators:** Drop-in sessions were piloted and developed based on feedback to provide opportunity for peer support, problem solving and shared learning. Three sessions took place during October-December 2022. 37 podiatrists from 7 health board areas attended. Topics discussed included: learning outcomes, feedback methods, student development, supporting struggling students and practice considerations.

**Resources to promote placement locations:** Podiatry services have been encouraged to create promotional material to help to inform student choices around placement areas. This has been collated by Glasgow Caledonian University. Student representatives were invited to attend a stakeholder meeting to provide information about placement information but due to timings of meetings and the academic calendar, this did not occur.

## Impact

This project has seen a change in the culture around Podiatry PrBL across Scotland's health boards; increased commitment to PrBL, increased number of practice educators of all levels, increase in placement offers across health boards and the development of a supportive Podiatry PrBL stakeholder group.

**Podiatry PrBL Stakeholder Group:** Members of the stakeholder group rated the group 9/10 stars and highlighted benefits of improved communication between health boards and HEIs, and shared learning across health board areas. 100% of members would like the group to continue.

**Practice educator learning and development:** 12 % of the podiatric workforce (n=84) registered for practice educator training in 2022/23. The majority of podiatrists (54%) that attended training in 2022/23 reported to being new to the role of practice educator. The most significant increase was seen in NHS Grampian where a third of the workforce registered for training and two thirds of this were new to the role of practice educator. Attendees reported increased confidence to facilitate student learning and 66% of attendees were planning on supporting a student in the next 3 months.

Practice educator training was enhanced with the introduction of drop-in sessions for practice educators. The majority would recommend the session to a colleague and would like to see these sessions continue.

**Service impact of increasing the number of practice educators:** Stakeholders reported that there are now more students on placement within boards and that students are going to new placement sites with increased diversity of clinical exposure. This has led to increased flexibility around placement planning and reduced risk of cancellations.

HEIs have reported an increase in placement offers. For example, Glasgow Caledonian University reported 54 placements offers being made across 8 health boards in 2021/22 to 181 offers across 10 health boards in 2022/23. There are now more placement opportunities for students across health board areas.

Although there has been an increase in placement offers across health board areas, the rising costs of living and cost implications of external placements have limited the spread

of student placements and students continue to opt for placements close to university sites.

### **Learning/ Recommendations**

This project has seen a cultural shift in Podiatry PrBL with increased engagement and commitment across Scotland. A collaborative approach to PrBL learning and development has allowed for shared practice and experience across geographical areas. A network of all those involved in PrBL has formed and this has supported the increase in number of practice educators and placement opportunities. To ensure sustainability of these developments, it is vital that podiatrists of all levels and clinical expertise are encouraged to be involved in PrBL.

Ongoing innovation is required to develop, modernise and diversify the PrBL experiences of students so that they can gain the knowledge, skills and clinical exposure required to practice, enter the NHS workforce and meet the needs of the population.

Further information can be found in the Podiatry PrBL Recovery Project Learning Toolbox Stack: <https://api.ltb.io/show/ABSOV>

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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