

# Preceptorship Fact Sheet – March 2024

## Background

NHS employers across the UK are required to have Preceptorship programmes in place for people transitioning to new roles, including occupational therapists. The NHS Terms & Conditions of Service handbook confirms this: <https://www.nhsemployers.org/tchandbook>

In November 2023, the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) launched the Principles for Preceptorship and NHS England (NHSE) the Allied Health Professions (AHP) Preceptorship Standards and Framework. These initiatives are designed to support AHP's through career transitions e.g. starting work, moving to the UK, or returning to practice.

## Benefits of a Preceptorship programme

Preceptorship provides a structured process for the induction / development of staff who still require support and guidance from colleagues as they start in practice. Benefits include:

- Improving confidence and responsibility for maintaining knowledge in the profession.
- Improved patient care and service improvements
- Developing an understanding of the HCPC requirements.
- Improved recruitment / retention
- Reduced sickness absence and increased staff satisfaction and morale

## HCPC

The HCPC developed the Preceptorship Principles working with professional bodies, registrants and Higher Education and Training Institutes across the four UK nations, ensuring the principles fitted with existing / developing arrangements.

The Principles are designed to support all registrants to access Preceptorship during career change. It has a key role in supporting registrants to achieve their potential. Those running / establishing Preceptorship should use the Principles as a guide, to ensure it meets registrants' needs and supports service improvements.

The HCPC five Preceptorship Principles: [hcpc-principles-for-preceptorship.pdf \(hcpc-uk.org\)](https://www.hcpc-uk.org/hcpc-principles-for-preceptorship.pdf) are broad in structure, so that they can be used across all AHPs. They are there to serve as a guide, ensure programmes meet HCPC registrants' needs and to support improvements in the quality of the services AHP's provide.

### Principle 1 - Organisational culture & preceptorship

- Preceptorship is a structured programme of professional support and development designed to improve registrant confidence as they transition into any new role.
- Preceptorship contributes to an organisational culture in which registrants are supported to achieve their potential whilst delivering safe and effective care and treatment.

### Principle 2 - Quality & oversight of preceptorship

- Preceptorship is an important investment in a registrants' professional career.
- All registrants should have access to a quality preceptorship programme. It demonstrates the value of individual registrants' health, wellbeing and confidence during times of

transition.

### **Principle 3 - Preceptee empowerment**

- Preceptorship should be tailored to the individual preceptee, their role and their work environment.
- Preceptorship should not retest clinical competence but instead, empower the preceptee to reflect on what they bring to their role and identify support needed to develop their professional confidence.

### **Principle 4 - Preceptor role**

- The preceptor role is a fundamental part of effective preceptorship. Preceptors should have appropriate training, time and support to understand and perform their role.
- Preceptors do not need to be from the same profession as preceptees but should be the most appropriate individual to provide support.

### **Principle 5 - Delivering preceptorship programmes**

- Preceptorship programmes should reflect the differences in routes to registration, range / intensity of previous practice experiences, and the variety of services / work settings.
- These Principles apply to all registrants working in any health or social care setting across UK, including but not limited to, the NHS, the social care sector, and the independent and charitable sectors.

## **Differences between Preceptorship and other forms of support**

Preceptorship should not be confused with other training / learning or development activities. Coaching, induction, probation, mentoring and supervision are not Preceptorship.

## **Working outside of the NHS**

The HCPC recognises many registrants work outside of the NHS, so Preceptorship can be more difficult to access. It is not a requirement for HCPC registration, but evidence supports its benefit. Please refer to page 23: [hcpc-principles-for-preceptorship.pdf \(hcpc-uk.org\)](https://www.hcpc-uk.org/hcpc-principles-for-preceptorship.pdf)

## **Preceptorship for internationally recruited registrants**

For HCPC registrants who have come to work in the UK via the international route, Preceptorship programmes can assist in understanding differences, e.g. how the UK's health and care systems operate. The HCPC offers 'Joining the UK workforce' webinars and workshops for international registrants, designed to support their transition to practice. Please refer to the **HCPC Professional Liaison Service**, at: [professional.liaison@hcpc-uk.org](mailto:professional.liaison@hcpc-uk.org)

## **Preceptorship in England**

The NHSE sets out what AHP Preceptorship means, expanding on the HCPC five Principles to provide standards and a best practice implementation framework to support AHPs in England. Please refer to: [Allied Health Professional \(AHP\) Preceptorship Standards and Framework | Health Education England \(hee.nhs.uk\)](https://www.hee.nhs.uk/allied-health-professional-ahp-preceptorship-standards-and-framework)

The NHSE standards and framework are not intended to replace existing Preceptorship programmes but provide guidance / improvements to AHP Preceptorship. They also assist preceptees, preceptors, and organisations to consider how AHPs develop / maintain confidence as they transition into / across the workforce. Organisations can use the resource to develop an effective and flexible approach to preceptorship.

The NHSE expanded the five HCPC Principles to provide twenty standards of AHP Preceptorship. These can be used to evaluate the Preceptorship offering: [Part three: The AHP Preceptorship](#)

[Standards and Framework | Health Education England \(hee.nhs.uk\)](https://www.hee.nhs.uk/standards-and-framework)

## Preceptorship in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, there is an established preceptorship programme for registered nurses and midwives: <http://nipec.hscni.net/resource-section/preceptorship/>

## Preceptorship in Scotland

NHS Education for Scotland has the Flying Start NHS programme, which is available for newly qualified nurses, midwives or AHPs, and is designed to be completed in the first year of practice: [Flying Start NHS - Developing confident and capable health practitioners](#) NHS Education for Scotland has a framework for nursing and midwifery colleagues which is currently being reviewed and adapted for use by Allied Health Professions: [Preceptorship - A framework supporting nurses, midwives and SCPHN](#)

## Preceptorship in Wales

There are currently no multi-professional preceptorship programmes in place, but there are a number of local or profession-specific schemes. The AHP workforce (AHP Framework for Wales has: Looking Forward Together, 2019). These are supported via national programmes managed by 'Health Education and Improvement Wales' (AaGIC/HEIW): [AHP Webpages: Allied Health Professions \(AHPs\) - HEIW](#) and [AHP Framework for Wales](#)

## Summary of Preceptorship arrangements by UK nation

Refer to pages 25 and 26: [hcpc-principles-for-preceptorship.pdf \(hcpc-uk.org\)](https://www.hcpc-uk.org/publications/principles-for-preceptorship.pdf)

## Difficulties receiving Preceptorship

If you are not receiving Preceptorship and anticipate you should be, consider speaking with Unison. They are contactable via 0800 0857 857: <https://www.rcot.co.uk/practice-resources/unison-services-resources/steward-resources>

## RCOT

Please refer to: <https://www.rcot.co.uk/supporting-early-career-occupational-therapists>  
RCOT Career Development Framework: <https://www.rcot.co.uk/cpd-rcot>  
RCOT Professional Standards for occupational therapy practice, conduct and ethics: <https://www.rcot.co.uk/publications/professional-standards-occupational-therapy-practice-conduct-and-ethics>

## Preceptorship arrangements and occupational therapy

Refer to page 28: [hcpc-principles-for-preceptorship.pdf \(hcpc-uk.org\)](https://www.hcpc-uk.org/publications/principles-for-preceptorship.pdf)

## Resources

NHS Employers website: <https://www.nhsemployers.org/>  
The Elizabeth Casson Trust: <https://elizabethcasson.org.uk/support-development/newly-qualified-ot-resources/>

## Questions

If you have any questions about Preceptorship, contact the Professional Advisory Service at RCOT. The team can be contacted via: [professional.advisoryservice@rcot.co.uk](mailto:professional.advisoryservice@rcot.co.uk) or [020 3141 4630](tel:02031414630). The service is open Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm. If the phone lines are busy, your call may go to voicemail. Please leave a message, and your call will be returned as soon as possible. Please remember to quote your RCOT membership number in all communications.