

Ensuring sufficient practice placement capacity for physiotherapy students

Introduction

This briefing responds to indications that the provision of sufficient practice placements for pre-registration physiotherapy students is becoming an increasing challenge in some geographical areas. It seeks to promote a collaborative approach to addressing these challenges.

The briefing also highlights the broad imperative of seeking to influence workforce planning processes within a context of tight financial constraint and increasing pressures to demonstrate the clinical- and cost-effectiveness of services. As part of this, it is essential to make the case that physiotherapy staff resources must be at levels that afford the capacity and stability to sustain placement provision. This activity has broader benefits for service development and improvement, particularly within the context of the post-Francis agenda.

Key CSP messages

1. Educating future members of the physiotherapy workforce is a joint responsibility; this has to be shared across the profession and by higher education institutions and service providers.
2. A collaborative approach between higher education and service providers has to be taken to meeting practice education needs.
3. Physiotherapy service delivery models and staff resources must have the capacity, stability and certainty to sustain placement supply and to underpin the joint, forward-planning of provision by HEIs and services
4. Creative approaches to placement provision are needed: while clearly upholding safe and effective student supervision, these need to optimise opportunities for team-based and co-learning; seize opportunities for developing new approaches to placement design and delivery; and maximise the benefits of placement provision that offer mutual and reciprocal support to all parties (including across sectors and settings).
5. There needs to be a strong co-ordination of how placements are accessed at any one time to make the best use of available practice education capacity.
6. Physiotherapy students need exposure to a broad range of service delivery models to prepare them for future job roles and career development opportunities: placements need to reflect new and emerging practice settings; be available across employment sectors; and reflect the increasing emphasis on integrated, out-of-hospital services across health, social care and public health.
7. Providing student placements has real benefits for service providers: for service improvement initiatives, staff development, reciprocal links between HEIs and service providers (including CPD support), future workforce supply, and sustainable recruitment and staff engagement.

8. It is essential that the links are made between having sufficient staffing capacity and stability for sustainable placement provision and taking a strategic approach to workforce planning to meet changing population/patient, service and practice needs in clinically- and cost-effective ways.
9. Supplying practice education placements contributes to meeting the imperatives set by the post-Francis agenda: these include ensuring patient care is compassionate and of a consistently good quality; providing opportunities for staff development and engagement in service improvement initiatives; promoting an ethos of organisational learning and shared leadership; and supporting current and future members of the workforce to develop and exercise patient-centred professionalism.

The CSP's position

The provision of physiotherapy pre-registration education is a shared responsibility. A collaborative approach has rich benefits for service/placement providers, as well as for students and universities. These include recruiting physiotherapy graduates with the knowledge, skills and values required for newly-qualified practice and onward career development. Increasingly, these need to be gained through a broad range of placement experience, across a diversity of sectors and settings. Providing placements also offers valuable professional development opportunities for existing staff and ultimately can enhance patient care and safety.

Despite the efforts and loyalty of thousands of dedicated physiotherapy practice educators across the UK, the profession can periodically suffer from a shortage of placements. This can arise for complex reasons, including service pressures in times of financial constraint.

The CSP recognises that placement shortages, when they occur, put those who offer placements, students and HEIs under strain. It is keen to provide support to all members in addressing these.

New ways of supporting student practice education have to be found to ensure the provision of safe, up-to-date and good-quality learning and development opportunities for students, while avoiding pressures on practice educators, service managers and their colleagues. As part of this, the benefits of the new practice education tariff in England (which should mean that 'funding follows the student') need to be optimised.

The CSP is seeking to influence workforce planning processes through making the case for physiotherapy's distinctive and cost-effective contribution to meeting changing patient care needs. Activity includes progressing project work relating to workforce data modelling and safe and effective staffing levels, responding to policy initiatives (including those that progress the post-Francis agenda), and strengthening support to members at a local level in engaging in workforce planning processes.

CSP resources

The CSP provides a range of resources that support all members in developing, delivering and assuring the quality and sufficiency of practice education. Links to these resources are provided below.

CSP Practice Education Information, Support and Guidance e-resource (2014):

<http://www.csp.org.uk/publications/practice-education-%E2%80%93-information-support-guidance>

CSP Physiotherapy Framework (2011; updated 2013):

<https://v3.pebblepad.co.uk/v3portfolio/csp/Asset/View/6iqbh3GzhGWrrcGqpknwmZzh8Z>)

CSP Learning & Development Principles: [CSP's Learning and Development Principles](#)

Recent *Frontline* articles (19th Feb 2014 edition, 'Practice makes perfect: Learning from student practice education': <http://www.csp.org.uk/frontline/article/practice-makes-perfect> and 5th March 2014 edition, 'All for One - CPD and student practice education':

<http://www.csp.org.uk/frontline/article/all-one-cpd-student-practice-education>

CSP accredited clinical educator [ACE] scheme: <http://www.csp.org.uk/professional-union/careers-development/practice-educators/accreditation-clinical-educators-ace-scheme>)

Other links and resources

Department of Health (2013) *Introduction of Tariffs for Education and Training*.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/implementation-of-tariffs-for-education-and-training>

HEE Call for evidence (related to workforce planning): <http://hee.nhs.uk/work-programmes/workforce-planning/hee-workforce-planning-201415-call-for-evidence/>

NHS Education for Scotland – AHP Practice Education: Supporting education in the workplace: <http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/education-and-training/by-discipline/allied-health-professions/practice-education-supporting-learning-in-the-workplace.aspx>

For further advice/support related to physiotherapy student practice education, please contact the CSP at learninganddevelopment@csp.org.uk