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Profile Trainees Help

Context

Advanced Practitioners have been highlighted as an integral part of the 21st century NHS workforce. With a pivotal role outlined within the *NHS Five Year Forward View* (NHS, 2014), advanced practice is posited to be the answer to changing workforce demands in the context of a changing health and social care environment (Department of Health, 2010).

Attempts to standardise advanced practice across allied health and nursing professions has been a strategic arm of Health Education England for a number of years (HEE, 2017). Encompassing four pillars of Clinical Practice, Education, Research and Leadership, Advanced Practitioners are educated to Master's level and have developed the skills and knowledge to allow them to take on expanded roles and scope of practice caring for patients (HEE, 2017).

Advanced practice schemes are already well established within emergency medicine (RCEM, 2018), and advanced practitioner roles are becoming increasingly common in primary care. It is unsurprising that UK ambulance services have simultaneously developed Advanced Paramedic Practitioner (APP) programmes to offer career development for paramedics within the ambulance service setting. Within London Ambulance Service NHS Trust, the Advanced Paramedic Practitioner in Urgent Care programme was established in 2017 with a view to provide additional health assessment and care on scene and reduce unnecessary emergency department admissions within the nation's capital.

National examinations, such as the College of Paramedics Diploma in Primary and Urgent Care, require submission of a work- place based assessment portfolio, as will future entry onto the advanced practice directory held by *Centre for Advancing Practice* within England. To ensure advanced paramedics can evidence their development and attainment of this level of practice, good governance is required to demonstrate work at an advanced practice level as well as maintaining regulatory and employer requirements for continuing professional development.

Background

Education is a core component of advanced practice schemes within primary care encompassing initial the induction, employer education and training, postgraduate study and ongoing Continuing Professional Development (HEE, 2021). A paper work-placed based assessment document was created for Advanced Paramedic Practitioners in Urgent Care within the LAS to evidence their development as they transitioned from paramedic to advanced paramedic. This group of staff work on a rotational basis between the LAS in a solo response vehicle and within the emergency operations centre, and between primary and urgent care settings. Mapped against the core capabilities for paramedics working in primary and urgent care (Skills for Health, 2019), this document included standard education tools such as:

- Clinical supervision reports
- Consultation Observation Tools
- Clinical Skills Assessment
- Case based discussion
- Multi Source Feedback
- Patient Satisfaction
- Peer review
- Self-assessment

Benefits of ePortfolio

The implementation of an ePortfolio system for APP-UC in LAS has outlined many benefits to the individual clinicians and clinical managers within the programme, as well as the organisation as whole. This includes:

- Access to the portfolio on any internet connected device, regardless of the clinical setting
- Instant notification of completion for practice supervisors and managers
- Backup in case of loss or damage
- Linking records to credentialing criteria
- Generation of compliance reports
- Zero paper use.

Negatives of ePortfolio

- Internet connection required to sync forms (offline completion still possible)

Rationale for change

- Whilst such a portfolio was adequate when the programme employed a relatively small number of clinicians, a number of pitfalls developed as the scheme has continued to expand. These included the amount of paper required for advanced paramedics to complete their portfolio, against the requirement of the NHS to reduce paper use by 50% by 2022 (NHS Digital, 2017), and the logistical review of portfolios by clinical supervisors and practice development managers within the programme.
- Electronic Portfolios (ePortfolios) offer a potential solution. The aim of ePortfolios is to reproduce the paper-based portfolio to achieve an easy-to-use system, accessible from any location. As well as reducing the need for paper, evidence can be recorded, audited, shared and added to by both individuals and their supervisors –digitalising governance structures in line with the *NHS Long Term Plan* (NHS England, 2019).

Implications for paramedic practice supervision and education

Introducing ePortfolio for Advanced Paramedic Practitioners in Urgent Care has improved the efficiency of collection of WPBA documents that demonstrate the capabilities and competencies of individuals working at this level. In particular, live progress reports linked to clinical supervisors enable the opportunity to identify at an early stage if an action plan or additional support is required.

However, ePortfolios should be introduced within a sound, programme-specific, governance structure that works for both employing organisations whilst also giving flexibility of staff to work in other settings.

Introducing ePortfolios within the ambulance service that are linked to bodies such as the HCPC, CoP, HEE and RCEM would improve the process of fulfilling registration and credentialing requirements, as well as enable transferability of staff portfolio across different care settings.



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