



Policy and Education Committee

6 June 2024

Transition into Practice Report and Next Steps

Classification	Public
Purpose	For decision
Issue	Considering our approach in supporting new registrants to make an effective and supported transition into practice.
Recommendation	To consider and provide feedback on the updated findings of this qualitative research and agree next steps.
Financial and resourcing implications	All data sources are collected and analysed in house and so there is no budget cost internally beyond staff time.
Equality and diversity implications	Matters related to equality and diversity are being considered as part of this work and an Equality Impact Assessment has been commenced. Participants of the original focus groups completed a survey which included equality and diversity monitoring information, so as to monitor who engages with us and whether protected characteristics impacted on transition and choice of practice they went into after qualification. Issues raised from an EDI perspective have been integrated into our research and will inform the development of our policy options. While this research work has focussed mostly on the experience of new UK graduates, we also recognise that there will be others returning to practice who may also benefit from thinking, for example those on maternity or paternity leave or sick leave or those with international qualifications working for the first time in the UK for example. We will aim to include such stakeholders in the next stages of our thinking as we develop our policy options.
Communications implications	A review of the key touchpoints and engagement activities between GOsC and new graduates has been undertaken as part of this work and the research findings will inform a detailed communications and engagement plan in due course.
Annexes	Transition into practice research report by Dr Stacey Clift



General
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Key Messages

- Transition into practice is important for osteopaths and patients in terms of quality of care and also recruitment and retention. A successful transition into the workplace with good support networks and communities are more likely to be conducive to high quality osteopathic care, resilience and good health and wellbeing reducing professional isolation.
- Our research shows that there are enablers that are predictive of a positive transition into practice and barriers predictive of a less successful transition into practice and ongoing professional development.
- There are potential actions that GOsC might take to support enablers of a positive transition to practice outlined in the paper.
- The paper is coming to the Policy and Education Committee to enable members to reflect on the findings of the transition into practice research, to consider what current provision is, where there are gaps and to consider the implications for our proposed approach and next steps.

Background

1. The current business plan asks us to do the following:

'Support new graduates (UK and Internationally qualified) making the transition into practice through better understanding of the barriers and enablers to building communities, including the development of appropriate resources.'

2. During 2023 and 2024 we began undertaking research work to better inform how we can best support new graduates making the transition into practice. We wanted to support communities of practice for new graduates so that they are able to access the support they will need as an autonomous health professional.
3. This research enables us to reflect on enablers and barriers to a successful transition into practice and to increase knowledge about what is happening now and where are the gaps and to identify, for the first time, that there were common themes between different stakeholders providing clarity about the issues, as seen from different perspectives, so that we can work together with the sector to provide solutions and encourage positive change.
4. This involved three distinct phases of research to explore enablers and barriers:
 - Phase 1 was undertaken during 2023 and involved qualitative focus group work to ascertain newly qualified osteopaths' views on starting out in practice.
 - Phase 2 was undertaken during 2023 and involved qualitative interviewing owners of large osteopathic clinics to explore different models of practice that new graduates enter when first starting out in practice .
 - Phase 3 was undertaken in 2024 and involved qualitative interview work to explore education providers and special interest groups views on the provisions made for osteopaths starting out in practice.
5. The full Transition into Practice: Research Report can be found in the **Annex**.

Discussion

Phase 1: Newly qualified osteopaths' perspectives¹

6. The findings from the focus groups with newly qualified osteopaths identified:

- Three interrelated factors concerning expectations about practice. These were lack of patient awareness of osteopathy, underestimated soft skills that affect patient outcomes and struggling with pay/earnings.
- There were a series of enablers and barriers to preparedness to practice,
 - enablers related to the type of practice a newly qualified osteopath began working at (e.g., principal-associate, multidisciplinary practice, or NHS). Key support networks drawn upon by newly qualified osteopath, (if they had any), were fellow alumni or former clinic groups, mentorship opportunities and CPD or research groups.
 - barriers involved lack of career pathways, education specific elements (such as students suffering hands-on experience in clinic due to COVID pandemic, student clinic experiences both in terms of the same amount of time spent treating patients in student clinic was not possible once in actual practice and no placement opportunities and gaps in knowledge, the gaps included working in the NHS, how to set up a business, rehabilitation and chronic pain advice) and risks of burnout.
- Future support that newly qualified osteopaths wanted to see across the sector going forward consisted of
 - diverse clinical placements to support them to know more about the environment that they want to move into;
 - graduate pre-registration programmes, or mentorship opportunities (so as to experience more diverse treatment options with experienced practitioners/supervisors');
 - networking, and group opportunities, GOsC registration resources (e.g. linking them to their local/regional group) and CPD or more specific resources, around choosing the right clinic and what makes a successful associate-principal relationship.

Phase 2: Large osteopathic clinic owners' perspectives

7. The qualitative interviews conducted with owners of large osteopathic clinics identified:

¹ Phases 1 and 2 of this research were originally reported to the Policy and Education Committee in June 2023: <https://www.osteopathy.org.uk/news-and-resources/document-library/about-the-gosc/pec-june-2023-public-item-5-transition-into-practice-final/>

- Models of support were needed for the transition into practice for newly qualified osteopaths to be successful.
- The enablers to be prepared for practice included support, structure, and a key contact for the newly qualified osteopath to go to.
- Barriers included isolation, lack of confidence in patient interactions and communication and fear of treating or adverse event anxiety.
- Future support was needed in encouraging responsible practice owners, webinars for the whole profession on business areas, regulation on principal and associate relationship, introduction of a clinical year, better education about key areas of practice, good marketing of osteopathy, gaps in data about osteopathy as a profession and advertising job opportunities.

Phase 3: Education providers and special interest groups perspectives

8. The qualitative interviews conducted with education providers and special interest groups identified:
 - There is an array of provisions for students starting out in practice, both within the curriculum (professional practice modules and student clinic time is adapted to prepare students for private practice accordingly) and outside the curriculum through special interest group support and mentoring. Signposting graduates to further areas of support also takes place by both education providers and special interest groups.
 - Alumni provision tends to be underdeveloped and informal.
 - Typically, graduates are often not receptive to non-clinical areas of practice at the time they are introduced in the curriculum.
 - Education providers keep track of their graduates via Office for Student graduate surveys and their own check as to whether students go on to register with the GOsC.
 - It has identified the following areas where more support is needed for newly qualified osteopaths (after registration) included:
 - Time and confidence to deal with patients in shorter period of time and also greater diversity of patients.
 - Business skills and being self-employed.
 - Support and networks, including the confidence to seek these out.
 - Having a good practice with mentoring and support

Next steps

9. From the qualitative research conducted we can see that a great deal is already provided for osteopaths starting out in practice by both education providers and

a range of special interest groups. There is a common understanding of the predictors of success and barriers/challenges for those starting out in practice and many key sector organisations are doing something in this area to assist.

10. However, newly qualified osteopaths are either not accessing the provision, or not accessing it at the right time or are finding gaps in terms of the support that they need when they need it. Consequently, the key now is how best we respond to these challenges together.
11. We have been reflecting on how stakeholder organisations and osteopaths might better support the transition into practice for new graduates. For example:
 - What does 'good' look like for graduates in a new practice?
 - What support, guidance and opportunities could settings where new graduates work aim to offer their new graduates?
 - What skills could those working alongside new graduates (and existing colleagues) enhance to support mutual professional development? (For example, enhancing skills of educational development, giving and receiving constructive feedback and leadership. (The similar sorts of skills to be developed for the peer discussion review aspects of the CPD scheme).
 - How could we better signpost new graduates to understand enablers and barriers to a successful transition and to take actions to give them as individuals the best chance of success? For example, we might be able to suggest the kinds of CPD that might be helpful to focus on in the first CPD cycle based on our research.
12. How can we, as a regulator support the osteopathic sector including the CPD 'market' to support osteopaths as they transit into practice?
13. Our research has given us important insights which we could share with the profession to enhance the transition.
14. Potential options that GOsC could do collaboratively with stakeholders includes:
 - 1) *For graduates:* developing specific CPD guidance for the first three-year cycle to support them to include CPD which will support a successful transition into practice. This could include the following areas:
 - *Content:* CPD that might be helpful for osteopaths within their 1-2 years of practice. A strong example from our research was business planning (including marketing, accounting etc), given research shows that graduates feel underprepared for this and engage with this area of practice, once in practice (rather than before). Other areas included: exercise prescription or rehab advice, good communication in terms of communicating services offered and costs of treatment.
 - *Building relationships and networking:* the importance of building different types of networks of people around them as part of their professional development and obligation to keep up to date and to help them to consider the different types of support that they will need (e.g. who are they seeking peer support from to discuss difficult cases and to learn from these, where are they seeking support or

coaching to develop specific relational skills, where is their 'safe space' to discuss issues and concerns with people who are in a similar situation to them, who is mentoring them to consider their career or practice development?) The importance of having a key experienced practitioner to talk things through with (including both contact time and ongoing mentoring)

- *Guidance on 'features of a supportive practice environment':* which could include what good looks like to support learning and development in associate and principal roles. This could support students and new graduates to consider potential job opportunities with this guidance to assist them to explore expectations about how they will be supported, criteria to look for and what they might consider acceptable, good and bad examples and whether job adverts reflect the position.
- *GOsC Communications:* Further work on our communications to final year students and new graduates to ensure that they have the information that they need, at the points they need it to access relevant and necessary information.

2) *For osteopaths working alongside new registrants:*

- *Guidance:* Clarity about what good practice looks like for osteopaths in terms of their professional responsibilities to support colleagues. For example:
 - What is good practice in structured mentoring, supervision or support. This could provide hints, tips and signposting about how to: gain skills to support and develop others, foster a supportive environment; foster an environment including structured Continued Personal Development and training.
 - [CPD guidance \(specifically related to 'range of practice' \(see p7\)\)](#) could be updated to include examples of principals describing their practice as including a role to support the development of their colleagues and this could highlight the value of CPD in mentoring, supervision, or leadership to better support their associate of their role to support new registrant's development.

3) *For consideration by all stakeholders:* We plan to share research findings through collaborative workshopping with key stakeholders, to reflect together on how as individuals and organisations we can act to support osteopaths to start out and remain in practice. We will discuss what more we can do as a sector to promote change and provide support to osteopaths and new registrants.

This could help to explore how best to work as a sector to deliver some of the suggestions in the report which may not be a part of our role as a regulator, for example: marketing osteopathy as a brand, profession wide support webinars in the area of business.

Next steps

15. We now need to explore with the key stakeholders the appetite for these potential guidance enhancement activities and workshop activity highlighted in (1)- (3) and any others we can work collaboratively on together.
16. The Committee are asked to reflect on our response to the findings in the report and to consider if we are proposing the right actions informed by the evidence and what gaps there may be. How else might we promote more opportunities to support graduates to make successful transitions into practice?

Recommendation: To consider and provide feedback on the updated findings of this qualitative research and agree next steps.