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Advanced and Consultant Level Practice

Radiographic workforce scoping and readiness evaluation

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Foreword

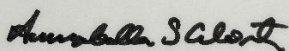
Building a recognised and visible advanced practitioner workforce is a priority for the NHS; there is a clear identified need for highly experienced clinicians who are trained to an advanced level of practice.

The multi-professional framework for advanced clinical practice in England (Health Education England, 2017) set out a vision in developing the workforce in a consistent way to ensure safety, quality and effectiveness by identifying the capabilities expected of practitioners working at advanced practice level across four pillars: clinical practice, leadership and management, education and research.

Regional Faculties for Advancing Practice have been established to drive pioneering workforce transformation for advanced practice across England. The North West faculty are in a unique position to understand and address their region's workforce needs, working with local systems to support transformation in practice. The Faculty has been providing regional leadership and promoting advancing practice as part of regional workforce solutions since 2021.

In 2022 the North West Regional Faculty for Advancing Practice commissioned a Consultant Radiographer (Joleen Kirsty Eden) at East Lancashire Hospital NHS Trust to undertake a radiography workforce scoping & readiness evaluation of advanced and consultant level practice across the region to understand how practitioners are working and supporting service need. The aim is to work with key stakeholders to address the recommendations identified in this report.

I would personally like to thank the author Joleen Kirsty Eden who has demonstrated a clear commitment to advance this agenda and support the expansion of advanced clinical practice for radiographers.



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Executive Summary

The Workforce Training & Education Directorate of NHSE (formerly Health Education England (HEE)) has established the Centre for Advancing Practice to oversee the workforce transformation of advanced level practice, by establishing and monitoring standards to embed the advanced and consultant practice workforce. In December 2022, HEE North West commissioned a twelve-week scoping and evaluation project of the radiographic workforce in the region.

Key drivers for the development of advanced practice roles in radiography include: The Richards Report, The Long Term Plan, The Cancer Workforce Plan and The People Plan. The North West Imaging Workforce Strategy recognises the need for upskilling of staff and new roles / new ways of working. A key objective of the project was to explore how the profession currently aligns to the HEE Multi-Professional Framework (2017) and the College of Radiographers Education and Career Framework (2022).

Increasing service demands are placing pressure on the current workforce with image acquisition taking priority over training and education within diagnostic radiography. To support advanced and consultant practice development across the radiography workforce; Advanced and Consultant level Practice roles were explored.

The evaluation consisted of an exploration of perceptions and understanding of the current workforce and skill mix in advanced and consultant radiography. This included both registered diagnostic and therapeutic Radiographers and non-registered sonographers.

Validation of the numbers within the NW workforce was not achievable, but a summary of the findings from the qualitative survey is included with recommendations. The recommendations should be used in conjunction with other published radiographic workforce reviews, both regionally and nationally.

These recommendations are based on the perceptions of the current NW radiographic workforce.

The information provided in this report is a summary of the experience and perceptions of the radiographic workforce in the North West. The findings aim to directly inform education and training priorities in 2023/24.

The Radiographer Workforce

An objective of the project was to validate the numbers of Radiographers working at advanced and consultant level in the North West.

Data was collected from the Advanced Practice leads in Trusts and radiology service managers.

National Imaging Data Collection (NIDC) was obtained through the HEE workforce dashboard for the region, however, this proved to be inaccurate with some significant underestimation of numbers in each modality.

The Society and College of Radiographers were unable to validate numbers as not all registered Radiographers are members of the union. Therefore, the following information is based on the most recent national workforce census reports (2021/2022) for diagnostic and therapeutic Radiographers, and sonographers.

Diagnostic Radiographers

By headcount in the UK, 10.2% of respondents in the diagnostic radiography workforce are in advanced practice and 0.5% are in consultant level practice. 85% of respondents were employing some diagnostic radiography and/or sonography agency staff

Therapeutic Radiographers

Due to the multiple job titles being used for advanced and consultant therapeutic radiographers it is unclear as to the headcount of those working in advanced practice roles.

Sonographers

Currently non-registered sonographers are unable to undertake the advanced clinical practice apprenticeship as this requires registration with the statutory regulator for the Health and Care Professionals Council

Project

A qualitative design was developed with two surveys; one aimed at the radiology service managers and the other directed to advanced and consultant practitioners at each Trust. Follow up discussion allowed for exploration and consolidation of the emergent themes.

Aims and objectives

The project aimed to evaluate the position of Consultant level and Advanced Practitioners in Radiography across the North West. It sought to quantify the current number and spread of existing staff, as well as to understand how staff are working and supporting the delivery of services.

- To collect and validate current numbers of existing Consultant and Advanced Practitioners.
- To understand and articulate where Advanced and Consultant Practitioners are working, including organisational, directorate and service level information.
- To understand and evaluate the existing skills and function of Consultant and Advanced Practitioners
- To understand the barriers, challenges and opportunities for career progression.
- To gather and quantify the current understanding within employing organisations of Consultant and Advanced Practitioner roles.
- To understand and evaluate the employer expectations of Consultant and Advanced Practitioners across the short, medium and longer term.

Stakeholder engagement overview and process

Stakeholders included Advanced Practice leads within all secondary care Trusts across the North West region, Radiology Service Managers, Therapeutic Service Managers, Regional Imaging Networks, Society and College of Radiographers, Cancer Alliances for the NW and North West Radiotherapy Operational Delivery Network.

Summary of Findings

Education and Training

- Significant variability in role definition, job titles, understanding of frameworks and expectations of working at an advanced level of practice involving all four pillars (a total of 16 different job titles found in the survey).
- Variation in plans to establish who is working at what level and alignment to the frameworks for advanced and consultant level practice.
- More than half were not aware of the NHSE ePortfolio (supported) route for recognition of education and training equivalence for Advanced Practice.
- 75% did not know the definitions of enhanced, advanced and consultant level practice as defined by the ScoR and / or NHSE frameworks.
- Shortages in supervisors and therefore capacity for imaging and development for training.
- Service demands prioritised over long term training and development for workforce.
- Access to funding for CPD to increase scope but does not reach the breadth of the Advanced Practice Programme.

Workforce challenges

- Confusion with Advanced Practice level and the traditional historic 'advanced practitioner' radiography role.
- Recruitment and retention of Band 5 and 6 radiographers.
- Short term/ one off funding for training hindering long term succession planning.
- Variation of banding for Advanced Practice level roles across the multi-professional workforce.
- Independent sector competition for reporting radiographers and sonographers.
- Advanced and consultant level variable job plans to align capacity for the Leadership, Research and Education pillars.

Facilitators

- There is potential for Advanced Practice level roles to be developed in many areas of radiography, with some already established.
- The radiography service need is a driver for the development of advanced practice.
- Raising awareness of NHSE funding offers to support training for Advanced Practice roles.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings from this report and should be used in conjunction with other published radiographic workforce reviews, both regionally and nationally.

Short Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage with College of Radiographers (CoR) to increase awareness and understanding of roles for radiography, to support consistency and dissemination of levels of practice• Engagement with Trust AHP leads / AP leads to ensure training opportunities/ funding for Advanced Practice shared with Radiology Service Managers (RSMs)• Develop case studies of roles demonstrating diversity of roles in radiography workforce
Medium Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with RSMs to explore service design, career development and succession planning• Explore education and training needs for AP trainees within radiography with HEIs in region• Work with North West Imaging Academy to support development of CPD for Advanced Practitioners specifically related to leadership and research pillar• Implementing the College of Radiographers Education and Career Framework for the Radiography Workforce
Long Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with CoR to provide a positive culture with shared ideas on how radiographic roles can be developed in both a uni- and cross- professional capacity.• Provide long term investment into the workforce through funding routes for training and beyond.

Conclusion

The findings and recommendations from this report provide the opportunity for the Faculty for Advancing Practice to work with key stakeholders to ensure the opportunity for education and training of radiographers to develop in advanced and consultant level roles is supported following identified service need. We will work with our regional partners in addressing the recommendations identified.

Acknowledgements

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