

# Preceptorship – a personal journey

<sup>1</sup>Chiagoziem Charles-Ukeagu  
<sup>1</sup>The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust



## Introduction

Preceptorship is often misunderstood—frequently mistaken for mentorship or competency training. It is often viewed as an added burden on clinical services. In reality, it is a structured, supportive process that extends beyond induction or mentorship, aimed at helping clinicians to transition confidently into new roles or systems. Newly qualified, returning-to-practice, and internationally trained clinicians can all benefit from a well-structured Preceptorship.

Evidence and experience show that preceptorship enhances professional growth, improves service delivery, reduces attrition, and strengthens our workforce.

## My Journey

Before entering clinical orthotic practice in the UK, I had several years of orthotic experience abroad and postgraduate education and training in the UK. Yet, I approached my first clinical role with caution. The clinical, cultural, and regulatory contexts of the NHS differed significantly from my prior experiences.

Transitioning into clinical care within the NHS - balancing HCPC requirements, Trust protocols, supplier networks, and patient expectations - was challenging. These early hurdles were eased by a structured preceptorship that built confidence and inspired innovation.

As a Junior Orthotist at the Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, I was supported by a structured preceptorship that helped me transition confidently into UK clinical practice. Each element of the programme contributed meaningfully to my growth:

- Weekly 1:1 Support and regular clinical supervision with my preceptor and senior clinicians offering guidance, feedback, and safe clinical development.
- Extended appointment times, with a minimum of one hour per patient.
- Reduced patient caseload and safe triaging to ensure I am seeing patients within my scope of practice.
- Regular shadowing opportunities, MDT Exposure, as well as participating in team discussions, broadened my clinical insight and encouraged collaborative care.
- Induction, Training, and Protected weekly CPD Time offered structured learning opportunities, kept me aligned with NHS protocols, and supported ongoing professional development.
- Reflective practice and wellbeing resources reinforced resilience and encouraged a deeper understanding of my role.

This layered support didn't just ease my transition—it fostered innovation, adaptability, and a deeper engagement with the values of patient-centred care. It helped me feel valued, build my confidence, and gave me space to build competence without time pressure, improving patient care and learning outcomes.



## Discussion

From my own experience, I've come to see preceptorship not as an extra burden, but as an essential bridge between training and confident, independent practice. It allowed me to bring my existing skills into a new system safely and purposefully. Rather than slowing me down, it gave me the structure to adapt faster, think more critically, and contribute meaningfully to my team.

Relocating and integrating into a new healthcare system can be overwhelming—especially when navigating clinical expectations, cultural nuances, and unfamiliar protocols. Preceptorship gave me the space and support to grow, not just as a clinician, but as a contributor to service development and quality improvement.

I also saw how my questions and reflections challenged assumptions within the team. Far from being passive, preceptees can spark fresh thinking and help drive service innovation. When preceptorship is valued, it creates a culture where learning is ongoing, and ideas are welcomed.

This experience has shaped my belief that preceptorship should be embedded as a standard part of workforce development. It's not just a tool for transition—it's a platform for excellence, collaboration, and long-term sustainability in our profession.

## Conclusion

Preceptorship isn't a delay—it's a launchpad. It empowers clinicians to grow with purpose, adapt safely, and contribute boldly. To every preceptee: approach it with curiosity, humility, and intent. Ask questions, reflect often, and stay open. In doing so, you won't just integrate—you'll inspire.

## References

1. Early career guidance framework for prosthetics and orthotics. The British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists. 2024
2. Department of Health and Social Care. \*Preceptorship for Healthcare Professionals: Policy and Principles\*. GOV.UK, 2022.
3. Health Education England. \*Preceptorship: National Framework for Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions\*. HEE, 2022

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