

Research brief – understanding the barriers and motivators to applying for smaller and specialist allied health professions (AHPs)

1. Background

From 1 August 2017, new students will no longer have their course fees paid by Health Education England (nor a bursary provided by the NHS Business Services Authority) but will have access to the standard student support system provided by the Student Loans Company to cover the cost of their tuition fees and means tested support for living costs.

The impact of these changes is yet to be fully established but it's anticipated that the impact will be most felt on those courses who already struggle to fill their current university places. Primarily, the smaller allied health professions:

- podiatry
- therapeutic radiography
- orthotists and prosthetists
- orthoptics

The risks of universities not being able to recruit could mean courses becoming unsustainable and closing. This could lead to a vacuum of qualified professionals from 2020 onwards causing risks to the delivery of care.

In its response to the consultation on these changes to student financial support, the Department of Health recognises the risk to these small and specialist subjects and plans to monitor participation rates and make targeted interventions where necessary.

Further background on the changes to NHS bursaries, the government's consultation and its response can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changing-how-healthcare-education-is-funded>.

This project is being jointly funded by Health Education England, Higher Education Funding Council and the Society of Radiographers.

The College of Podiatry, British and Irish Orthoptics Society and the British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists are also key stakeholders in this research. All of these organisations form the steering group for this project.

2. Objectives

The overall aim of the research is to provide qualitative insights that support the development of future marketing and engagement activity to encourage applications to these courses.

Primary objectives:

To explore:

- the motivations and barriers for applying to these courses
- influences on these motivations and barriers
- messaging and activity that would strengthen or enhance the motivators and help to remove or diminish the barriers
- any myths about these professions
- what would make these careers/courses a more attractive option

Secondary objectives (related to secondary audiences – see section 3)

- explore current awareness of these professions among potential students
- identify what makes other AHP courses attractive eg physiotherapy, diagnostic radiography
- establish the most appropriate marketing channels for potential students

3. Target audience

To meet the objectives of this research, we are looking for the successful agency to undertake research with a range of audiences who are divided in to primary and secondary:

Primary

- newly qualified professionals in the identified professions (a mix of those who trained after completing a relevant degree and qualified via a postgraduate pre-registration qualification and those who started courses directly after completing further education)
- current students in the identified professions (a mix of those who started training after completing a relevant degree and those who started courses directly after completing further education)
- individuals who considered applying for these courses
- individuals who accepted offers/places but didn't take up places
- admission tutors/lecturers for the relevant AHP courses

Secondary

- current professionals and students in other AHPs where recruitment is strong eg diagnostic radiographers and physiotherapists (a mix of those who trained/in training after completing a relevant degree and qualified via a postgraduate pre-registration qualification and those who started courses directly after completing further education)
- potential students with an interest in health careers

Agencies will be asked which methodology they feel will best meet objectives and why. The initial feeling is that a mixed qualitative methodology should be considered at this stage, although agencies are asked to explore the benefits and drawbacks of this.

Recruitment of individuals to participate in the research will be supported by those on the project steering group but successful supplier might be expected to help with some of the recruitment for those harder to reach audiences eg individuals who considered applying for these courses.

4. Timings

- responses to tender received – 30 September
- agency commissioned – 14 October
- kick-off meeting – w/c 17 October
- field work – w/c 17 October to w/e 20 January
- report with recommendations - w/c 6 February

5. Deliverables

Please provide costs to conduct the research as outlined in this brief, along with the following deliverables:

- all field work including facilitation of proposed methodology
- active member of the project steering group
- at least one verbal presentation to steering group of results with Powerpoint and supporting notes
- a full written report of the research findings a management summary and recommendations for future action.

Health Education England will require draft copies of all key documents, such as any draft recruitment profiles, questionnaire, full presentation charts and management summary. These are to be submitted in sufficient time for comments to be incorporated into the final version and for our approval to be given for production of the final version to take place.

6. Criteria for selection

The proposals submitted should include:

- understanding of the brief
- sample and fieldwork details (as detailed above)
- personnel, including background and experience
- whether any part of the project will be subcontracted, and if so to whom
- project management approach including a plan for delivery and how the client and stakeholders will be kept informed of progress
- explanation of methodology and why they are appropriate
- the proposal should specify who will be responsible for the different stages of this project and should provide detail of the input into the project that will be provided by each named person.
- on receipt of a satisfactory proposal, the successful agency will be awarded a fixed price contract for the project. Health Education England observes the general practice of paying only for work satisfactorily completed. All work should comply with the Code of Conduct of the Market Research Society.

7. Budget

A total of £30,000 has been set for this piece of research. There could be additional budget available should the successful agency propose solutions that could bring real benefit to the project. Costs should be inclusive of VAT and include the presentation of findings.

8. Contacts

Please send your research proposal and costs by e-mail to Darren Aldrich and Gabi Ogada by 30th September 2016.

Costs should include all fees and expenses but exclude VAT.

E-mail: Darren.aldrich@nhs.net

Tel: 020 8433 6750

Email: Gabi.Ogada@nhs.net

Tel: 0207 125 0955