

Ten Questions about being an advanced practice physiotherapist

Completed by: Nick Downing (Advanced Practice Physiotherapist, Vita Health Group)



1. Please describe briefly your job role and responsibilities

I work as Head of Service across a number of MSK Physiotherapy contracts for an Independent Physiotherapy and Mental Health provider; Vita Health Group. I am responsible for all aspects of these services supported by a number of other roles; clinical, managerial and administration. My responsibilities cover the 4 pillars of Advanced practice.

2. Please describe briefly your career pathway so far

- I started out studying Sport Science then worked for 5 years running corporate events (a great leadership foundation). I then studied for a Physio Pre-reg masters in Birmingham.
- I worked clinically in Birmingham for 2 years before moving to London. I then worked in Camden initially as a team leader and clinician then completed a PG Dip in advancing practice in 2013 and moved into an Advanced Practice role.
- I gradually reduced my clinical hours as I supported a number of other contracts in Hampshire, Waltham Forest, Nottingham and Chelsea and Westminster.
- In 2015 I moved to Crystal Palace Physio Group as a Business Manager then Head of Service. My role is now predominantly about developing and integrating services, leading the service and ensuring quality and governance standards.
- In 2015 I was co-opted to the APPN to support 'Digital' and subsequent was voted in as chair in 2018.

3. Have you completed any postgraduate education courses relevant to your role?

PG DIP in Advancing Practice

4. What have been the challenges in achieving advanced level practice?

For me, I knew I wanted to reach Advanced Practice as a clinical level and I was focused on achieving this. I thought about how I wanted to progress and made choices about the path I wanted to take. For me formal qualifications were better than weekend courses. I feel I have been fortunate with the opportunities that have presented themselves to me to allow my progression. I have also made a habit of saying yes when given the chance to progress!

5. What advice would you give to a new graduate keen to develop as an advanced practice and consultant level Physiotherapist?

- Consider what your strengths are as an individual. Speak to those whom you look up to and learn about their journey to help you understand what the options are and decide where you want to go.
- Reach out to others and ask them the direct question 'what helped you on your journey'.
- The national frameworks for advanced and consultant level practice will make development pathways clearer.
- I like to read but podcasts, online learning etc now offer an incredible breadth of opportunities to learn; not just clinical skills but also the other 3 pillars.
- Most physio's will focus on clinical skill acquisition to become the best clinician they can be. Reading around Communication, Leadership and different professional approaches to consultations/Healthcare will undoubtedly mean you pick our skills that will improve your patient interaction, ability influence and therefore your scope of practice and enjoyment of physiotherapy as a profession.
- Join the APPN and follow the iCSP links.
- Be prepared to take control of your own development as opportunities for this within many employers has reduced over the years.

6. What personal qualities/characteristics are important to have for your role as an advanced level Physiotherapist?

As a leader and manager, resilience, a desire to learn and develop, willingness to flex and adapt to changing healthcare environment. To have fun in your role and enjoy the patient and peer interactions.

7. How to do measure your effectiveness as a advanced level Physiotherapist?

- For me effectiveness in the role as advanced level Physiotherapist is based on service effectiveness not just a clinical level with patients. This includes patient outcomes and experiences, complaints and incidents, referrers and CCGs and partners across the healthcare pathway.
- Mapping to the pillars as an advanced level Physiotherapist you should be able to evidence Research, Education, Leadership with a local or national influence. I often reflect on my strengths and weaknesses and where I feel I am against these pillars, bouncing ideas/concerns off colleagues and friends. I am definitely always learning and know I can always improve.

8. Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

I would like to continue to champion Physiotherapy as a profession and have many interests in Healthcare so we will see! I see digital as a significant agent for change in the coming years as well as the need to do things differently to cope with a changing population, workforce challenges and more LTCs.

9. What type of CPD activities do you do at this level?

- I am fortunate to engage with an excellent business coach, I aim to learn from my peers by understanding their journeys and consider this mentorship
- I find mentoring others looking at studying Physio or early in their career really helps me to reflect on my own journey.
- I like to be involved in innovation so aim to keep abreast of research and innovation.
- I read the Kings Fund and subscribe to the Harvard Business Review to look outside the walls of physiotherapy and understand the healthcare economy more fully.

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10. What would be your 3 top tips to an experienced Physiotherapist keen to develop as an advanced level physio?

- Assess yourself against your peers and the frameworks that are available to get to know yourself and what you can do to move yourself and your development forward.
- Join the APPN to learn and engage with the AP community to learn from those that have trodden the path
- Make a plan based on where you are today and where you want to be tomorrow – get a trusted friend to be a supportive critic