



CASE STUDY:  
**LIVING AND  
WORKING  
IN THE UK:  
AHP EDITION**

Developing a cultural, linguistic  
and practical pastoral course for  
internationally recruited AHPs in the NHS

## Overview

Specialist Language Courses (SLC) worked in partnership with the Herts and West Essex AHP Faculty to create the Living and Working in the UK: AHP edition digital course, designed to be used by internationally recruited (IR) AHPs to support their transition to the UK.

The course was then enhanced in partnership with University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust by adding a tutored element. Groups of AHPs taking the digital course met a teacher once a week over a period of five weeks to practise and extend the key learning points, develop greater cultural linguistic awareness, and build communicative confidence.

## Key benefits and outcomes

- A digital course was developed that supports IR AHPs as they transition successfully to living and working in the UK. The course has the inbuilt flexibility to be evolved over time to meet needs as they arise.
- A tutored complement was developed to support learning, develop confidence and address specific circumstances. Tutoring is delivered online, offering convenience and flexibility.
- There was consistently positive feedback from participants and their managers, demonstrating the value of the course and the achievement of its aim to support a smooth transition to life and work in the UK for IR AHPs.

## Background

SLC provides language and communication services to NHS employers across the UK. SLC had already developed a pastoral support course for nurses, Living and Working in the UK: Nurses Edition, which was being used by Herts and West Essex ICB (HWE).

The Herts and West Essex AHP Faculty at the ICB contacted SLC to discuss the development of a similar course for AHPs. There were several reasons for doing so.

As of July 2023, turnover rates among AHPs across HWE was high at 17.7%. Retention was therefore identified as an important challenge to overcome. At the same time, there was a requirement to increase the AHP workforce by 10%. International recruitment was seen as integral to this, as there were insufficient candidates coming from the UK education and training pipeline.

The course was seen as a tool to support both recruitment and retention.

- To enhance the current AHP international recruitment package.
- To support IR AHPs with cultural awareness, learning and development to successfully transition to living and working in the UK.
- To add to the wellbeing of IR AHPs transitioning to the UK
- To improve patient experience, as cultural awareness and communication skills are of key importance for AHPs.

The desire was for the course to be digital so it could be adapted over time to meet demand. This also aligned with the ICB's digital strategy to support efficient and effective delivery, so saving time for AHP Clinical and Operational Leads.

## Course development

Virginia Allum, SLC's Head of Medical English and lead writer, worked with the team at HWE AHP Faculty to adapt existing content from the nurses' course, such as the units on life, culture, idioms and dialects, and then to create new content, specifically addressing the needs of IR AHPs.

These included units on

the HCPC, the roles of AHPs within the NHS, and the core communication skills required when interacting with patients. The content was reviewed, not only by the HWE team, but also by NHS England AHP IR leads in the East of England and at Capital AHP.

Changes were made ongoingly, with the addition of content, including from the newly launched HCPC standards and frameworks and downloadable PDFs.

Details of the course can be found [here](#).

## Piloting the course

In October 2023, Living and Working in the UK: AHP edition was piloted by a small group of six IR AHPs at HWE with overwhelmingly positive feedback.

## Learner feedback

*"The Living and Working in the UK AHP edition training was very good and helpful, and it will be nice if it can be added as a pre induction course."*

*"The course gives one a clearer picture of the UK and its constituents countries and as well as the various roles of different AHP professions in NHS."*

*"It also gives one a broad understanding of the various slangs, everyday words/phrases used in different regions, which is good for ease of communication."*

## Manager feedback

*"This course is most useful for our IRs as it is an introduction to what to expect life to be*

*like for them in the UK, helping them to settle in sooner to working in their first job in this country. With this and the support they receive when working here we hope they will feel part of the team sooner and happy working with their patients and colleagues at The Princess Alexandra Trust."* Radiology Quality Manager, Princess Alexandra Hospital Harlow

*"To better understand any concerns that AHPs encounter through their own experiences when first coming to live in the UK. To create a feeling of belonging in their new teams and roles and by offering them the pastoral support they need. I think this course is a wonderful addition to an IR toolkit."* Senior Dietitian, Princess Alexandra Hospital Harlow

Since then, more IR AHPs have taken the course, not only in HWE but across the UK. Feedback taken remains at a 100% recommendation rate.

## Developing the course by adding group tutoring

SLC was approached by Sam Elliott-Olechnowicz, Senior Practice Educator, Multi-Professional International Recruitment, at University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust, who asked if some tutored sessions could be delivered as part of the course. This would give learners the opportunity to practise and extend what they learn, while also addressing the specifics of their working interactions.

We worked with a cohort of fifteen, primarily physiotherapists, divided into two groups who had five one-hour lessons per group. Needs analysis was done at both Trust and participant level, and a schedule agreed. The lessons took place over a five-week

period, during which they also worked on the digital course.

In practice, the lessons focused on developing participants' ability to recognise and understand accents, intonation and idiomatic language (*Why stand nice and tall, why not just stand tall?*) on the one hand, and their ability to communicate



*"The AHP Faculty is delighted to have collaborated with Specialist Language Courses and all Providers across Herts and West Essex Integrated Care System to coproduce a specialist language course for AHPs to support their transition to them Living well in the UK. Based on feedback from our international AHPs we know this is a gap, and needed to support them in clinical practice."*

**Louise Connolly** MSc, MRCOT,  
AHP Strategic Faculty Lead,  
Herts and West Essex AHP Faculty



*"We wanted to have a course that was bespoke for our needs. We know our international AHP's have competence in the English language, but it was their confidence in expressing themselves not only to patients, but colleagues too. Working closely with SLC we came up with the idea of tutored sessions to support the already great e-learning package to aid with the confidence in our staff. This was especially helpful and insightful when talking about idioms and accents. The feedback from our staff as well as their Teams has shown just how important access to this course is and what it can do to enable our staff to stay and thrive."*

**Sam Elliott-Olechnowicz**, Senior Practice Educator, Multi-Professional International Recruitment, at University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust



sensitively and appropriately with patients on the other. This include adopting more 'softening language' such as might, perhaps, a little (*This might hurt a little*), and the language needed to demonstrate listening and empathy.

Attendance was excellent throughout for both groups. At the end, the Trust took feedback not only from Sam at the Trust, but also from both participants and managers. Again, it was overwhelmingly positive.

### Learner feedback

*"The course drew my attention to some deficit I may not have noticed while communicating"*

*"This course provided me with a background of UK culture and NHS in a very concise and organised manner and allowed us as learners to integrate into our workplaces much quicker and easier."*

*"I really enjoyed learning about different accents and understanding the unique nuances of the people; how they speak, what sounds polite and what doesn't"*

### Manager feedback

*"You can see how much they have grown in terms of confidence, especially when speaking with patients and their families"*

*"It's great to hear what they have learnt from the sessions. I have noticed they are less shy about asking questions than before"*

*"It's been great to see how engaged they have all been whilst progressing through the course. They are speaking with more confidence than previously"*

University Hospitals Sussex is now in the process of gathering the next cohort of learners.

### About Living and Working in the UK: AHP Edition

The online course consists of 15 hours of study, divided into three sections:

- Life in the UK: life and culture; accents, dialects and idioms; education, housing, banking, driving
- Working in the UK: About the NHS; AHP roles; the HCPC; Trade Unions and the Equality Act 2010
- Communication Skills: gathering information, explaining, suggesting, advising

Tutoring is developed from pre-course needs analysis, with sessions combining linguistic cultural awareness with input and feedback on language and communication skills.

### Course fees

Digital course only: **£15 per person per month**

Digital course plus tutoring: **£695 for a group of up to 12 participants**

### About SLC

Based at the University of Sussex, SLC is the UK's leading provider of English language training to the global healthcare sector. SLC works closely with NHS Trusts across the UK supporting international recruitment by providing targeted and effective clinical communication, OET, IELTS and OSCE preparation materials and training.

### For more details

To obtain free access to the course and to discuss the learning needs of international recruited AHPs and other healthcare professionals, please contact Peter Rodway on [peter@specialistlanguagecourses.com](mailto:peter@specialistlanguagecourses.com), or contact us using the details below.



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