

New Roles in Mental Health Programme: Resources, Products and Tools



Developing people
for health and
healthcare

Vision of the National Programme for New Roles in Mental Health

Introducing new roles into mental health services, or expanding existing roles, form a key part of HEE's Mental Health Programme.

This national programme of work is included in the 2019/2020 HEE Mandate: 'supporting the delivery and expansion of innovative, recently created roles in mental health by implementation of agreed priority work streams which have been identified as having the greatest impact in mental health services in transforming the workforce.'

Initial planning was taken forward through Task and Finish Groups and then moved into implementation groups to oversee delivery. This structure enabled the groups to focus on the key priorities for their areas. In some cases, this was the development of guidelines and frameworks; in other cases, it involved testing out innovative workforce practice.

The Programme has focused on expanding and maximising the potential of the workforce in eight key roles across health and social care, key to achieving ambitions of the [Long Term Plan](#). The work focuses on upskilling, new ways of working, supply, new roles and leadership.

**Allied Health
Professionals in
Mental Health**

**Mental Health
Nursing and Nursing
Associates**

**Mental Health
Social Workers**

**Peer Support
Workers in
Mental Health**

**Pharmacy
and Pharmacy
Technicians in Mental
Health**

**Physician Associates
in Mental Health
Settings**

**Psychological
Professions**

**Meaningful
engagement with
partners, arms
length bodies
and key
stakeholders**

Allied Health Professionals in Mental Health

The AHP Group focused on innovative ways of working across three trailblazer sites in three different settings.

Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) are the third largest workforce in the NHS. In the main, these are degree-level professions and professionally autonomous practitioners. They provide system-wide care to assess, treat, diagnose and discharge patients across health, social care, housing, education, and independent and voluntary sectors. Their focus is on the prevention and improvement of health and wellbeing to maximise the potential for individuals to live full and active lives.



AHPs working in mental health services make a unique contribution to mental health services in the following ways:

- Specialist early intervention to users of services and their families and carers, makes sure patients get the right support and care at the right time.
- As champions of physical and mental health they link across care pathways and can therefore provide a strategic overview for commissioning activities.
- Mental health services provide AHPs with the settings and opportunity to maximise their skills and work at the top of their competencies and skills.

Three trailblazer projects aim to demonstrate how optimising the input of AHPs working to their upper capacity can improve outcomes for patients with mental health issues. The sites will investigate possible efficiencies to inform the development of future service models and skill sets for AHPs. The three sites are focusing on:

1. Investigating options to undertake the Approved/Responsible Clinician (A/R/C) and Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) roles in order to develop the upper career pathway for AHPs and facilitate an integrated approach to high quality patient care.
2. Exploration of the crossover in referrals between Older Adults Community Mental Health Teams (OACMHT) and Community Long-Term Care and the potential for new roles for AHPs that may be integrated to support the system working across physical and mental health services.
3. Establishing if there would be operational benefits to having joint mental health and acute skill sets within therapy at the front door teams.



Mental Health Nurses and Nursing Associates

The Mental Health Nursing Group identified the need to articulate the unique role of mental health nurses and the contribution which mental health nurses make to the wider health and care workforce.

Whilst developing the Mental Health Nursing Competence and Career Framework, views were sought from many mental health nurses across the different career levels on what had attracted them to enter, remain in and progress their career in the profession. The responses were varied, and the 'unique selling point' (USP) and uniqueness of mental health nursing may be an area for further investigation in the future. Some of the themes identified for the USP include: using a holistic approach to support and understand the whole person through a trusting relationship, and utilising one's own personal skills and uniqueness to help the individual to understand their world and seek their own solutions.

There's a clear case that more mental health nurses are required both in the NHS and in other private and voluntary organisations and agencies that serve it. Equally, there's a shared understanding that mental health nurses even from before they consider pre-registration training, right throughout their career to retirement, need at all stages to feel valued, supported, developed and safe in their practice.

Key products from this work are:

- A Mental Health Nursing Career and Competency Framework has been developed with Skills for Health.
- Three engagement workshops to help develop the framework were held December 2019 – March 2020. Stakeholders included NHS and non-NHS sectors and attendees ranged from national nursing leaders to frontline staff.
- A [blog promoting the role of trainee Nursing Associates in mental health](#) (by HEE's then Chief Nurse Lisa Bayliss-Pratt) and [a promotional video](#).



Mental Health Social Workers

Working across the NHS, local authorities, voluntary and independent sectors, mental health social workers ensure that the social model of mental health is at the core of integrated services. The focus of the group has been on expanding and enhancing the role of the mental health social worker, and providing support and guidance to NHS and other organisations on how best to recruit, retain and develop this key workforce.

The work programme included:

- Raising the profile of Social Work in Mental Health
[Film: The contribution of mental health social work to health and care services.](#)
- Developing and supporting the AMHP role: briefings, e- learning, videos
- Developing continuing professional development (CPD), career and post-qualifying support with Social Work England
- Commissioning NHS Benchmarking to undertake a comprehensive data survey of mental health social workers and Approved Mental Health Practitioners (AMHPs) across all agencies
- Developing models of partnership via Social Work for Better Mental Health project
- Developing [a specific web page for mental health social workers](#)
- Support for forensic social work on standards and social supervision
- Supporting the NHS England [Community Mental Health Framework](#) implementation



Peer Support Workers in mental health settings

The Group recommended three activities to support the expansion of peer support workers in mental health settings: The collection of robust workforce information on peer support workers; the development of a competency and training framework; and a collection of thought pieces on core topics.

Peer support workers are individuals with personal lived experience of mental health challenges, built on shared experiences and empathy, who support those receiving services, working towards the individual's wellbeing, giving hope of recovery.

A national competence framework has been developed and consulted on, and will be available later in 2020. The Framework will be part of the national commitment to develop and expand peer support worker roles to support the mental health workforce.

The Framework covers peer support worker roles in mental health settings, including voluntary sector and NHS organisations. It focuses on the ability of peer support workers to draw directly on their lived experience of mental health difficulties (including the experience of caring for someone with mental health difficulties) and offer emotional and practical support to others going through a similar experience, in a similar setting or context, helping them build personal, social and community connections.

Other projects include:

- A suite of thought pieces designed to support core requirements for the implementation of the role in a range of settings
- Commissioning NHS Benchmarking to undertake a comprehensive data survey of Peer Support Workers in mental health settings across all agencies
- Scaling up the Lived Experience Connectors© role (LECs) through two events on implementing the role; an animation on LEC principles, a promotional video on the role and its benefits; a blog by a trainee Nursing Associate on the benefits of a LEC connector they experienced on their development and training; an innovative role for people who have experience accessing or caring for people accessing mental health services.



LECs support people working in services with continuous support and feedback in their journey of person-centred practice.

Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians in Mental Health

The Group agreed to prioritise resources that enable all pharmacists to feel confident and equipped to have the right conversation with a patient, and also know where to signpost them to other services or support if needed. This is because we know that patients with mental health difficulties present in primary care and community pharmacies as well as hospitals.

The longer term ambition is to increase the exposure of pharmacists to mental health services, and build their experience in this vital part of our health and care system, so they can bring their unique insights and skills to support patient-centred care.

Products include:

- scoping the current provision of placement opportunities to enable exposure to mental health settings during early careers
- developing a single framework of core mental health competencies for pharmacy health professionals
- developing a suite of resources that can be used to spread best practice across the system.



Physician Associates in Mental Health Settings

The Group, led by the Royal College of Psychiatrists, focused on ways to deliver the expansion of the Physician Associate (PA) role, to raise awareness of its benefits and to share best practice for adoption more widely across mental health services.

PAs work alongside doctors, providing medical care as an integral part of the multidisciplinary team. At the moment, most PAs work in general practice, acute (internal) medicine and emergency medicine.

The PA role in mental health can be especially important in ensuring patients receive holistic, continuous care. For example, PAs can conduct mental state examinations and cognitive and initial psychiatric assessments, and perform general medicine, physical assessments and basic procedures (liaising with acute hospital services as needed). Although as yet only a small number work in mental health settings, the role has been very positively received by consultants supervising them.

HEE and the Royal College of Psychiatrists believe that PAs play a valuable role extending the capacity of psychiatrists and making a positive difference by enhancing access to patient care.

Projects delivered to date include:

- [Implementation toolkit](#) to encourage the employment of PAs in mental health services
- [FAQs for Physician Associates](#), published on the Royal College of Psychiatrists website
- A campaign to promote PAs in mental health services; working towards 10% of newly qualified PAs working in mental health as first post
- Understanding and supporting PAs: A survey of workforce numbers and training, gap analysis to inform training
- Royal College of Psychiatrists' knowledge resources made available to PAs in training
- [A filmed interview](#) with the outgoing President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, Professor Wendy Burn, in which she endorses the role.



Psychological Professions

The Group agreed to focus on developing a range of guidance and resources to support the planning, supply, training and implementation of the 12 psychological professions so that they have a clear career framework, can work at the top of their capability and have a leadership voice in all levels of health and social care system.

The psychological professions deploy a wide range of psychological competences in health and social care which make a difference to both individual patients and families and to the effective operation of the whole system of care and treatment. Many work in specialist mental health services but recent expansion has seen developments in wider contexts too, across primary and acute care and into educational and community services. There are over 20,000 psychological professionals working in NHS commissioned healthcare in England. These are drawn from 12 distinct professional groups.

Resources include:

- Integrated Workforce Plan
- Advanced Clinical Practice and Consultant Frameworks
- Review of service user and carer involvement across training
- Promoting psychological practice in physical healthcare
- Review of the right clinical and professional leadership at local, regional and national levels.



Meaningful engagement with partners, arms length bodies and key stakeholders

To raise the profile of these roles by communicating their impact and value across the health and care system, through communications, partnership working, showcasing and campaigns.



Good governance, oversight and delivery

Bi-monthly

- Mental Health Workforce Delivery Group
- HEE Assurance Committee.



March 2019

New Roles Task and Finish Group reports

2019-2020 and 2020-2021

Delivery period

RACI framework

(responsible, accountable, consulted, informed)
setting out deliverables outlining responsibilities for each of the ALBs to bring partners together and support with accountability

Implementation Groups

- New Roles SRO identified
- Quarterly New Roles Chair of Chairs Group directed by an independent Chair as ambassador and sponsor
- Monthly/bi-monthly meetings of the 8 New Roles Implementation Groups.

HEE National Mental Health Programme

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more information:**

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**[Health Education England New Roles in
Mental Health Resource Hub](#)**

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