Framework of core mental health competencies for all pharmacy professionals

Version 1
(Review date December 2020)

Contents

1. Introduction

One in four adults and one in ten children experience mental health problems and many more of us know and care for people who do[1]. Awareness of and attitudes to mental health are slowly changing. There is now more awareness generally about the importance of everyone maintaining good mental health and providing person-centred support that allows people with mental health problems to live well in the community.

However, there is some way to go. Good physical health and good mental health are linked. There remains an urgent need to improve the physical health and healthcare of people with mental health problems. People with severe and prolonged mental health problems are at risk of dying on average 15 to 20 years earlier than the general population[2]. Conversely, changes to physical health can lead to poor mental health [3].

All members of the healthcare team have a part to play. Pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and their teams work across all sectors of healthcare and have a key role in providing accessible services that allow an open dialogue around mental health. We need pharmacy professionals[4] who are confident and competent in communicating with people about their mental health and supporting them to improve it. They will help people to get the most from their mental health medicines so that when they choose to use a medicine, they use it safely and get the outcomes that they want. We need pharmacy professionals who can recognise signs of mental distress and support children, young people, parents and adults appropriately. We need pharmacy professionals who can help to improve the physical health and wellbeing of people with mental health problems. Finally, we need pharmacy professionals who can support their colleagues in the multidisciplinary team with medicines expertise and see this as a rewarding and fulfilling role.

If pharmacy professionals are to support people and their colleagues in this way, they need to be trained and competent, and this training needs to begin early and be maintained throughout their careers. Health Education England (HEE) therefore commissioned this mental health competency framework to raise awareness of the role that all pharmacy professionals can play.
The framework has wide applicability and so will remain consistent over time and can be used at an early career stage, and as careers develop, to enable pharmacists

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[1] NHS England (2018). About mental health: www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/about/
[2] NHS England (2016). The Five Year Forward View for Mental Health: A report from the independent Mental Health Taskforce to the NHS in England.
[3] The King's Fund. Bringing together physical and mental health: A new frontier for integrated care. March 2016.
[4] Pharmacy professionals in the context of this document means pharmacists and pharmacy technicians.

and pharmacy technicians to maintain their core competencies in mental health regardless of the stage, sector or speciality in which they are working.

The development of the framework was started before the COVID-19 pandemic. The decision to complete it was taken because of the importance of supporting people and colleagues with their mental health in a period that is challenging for everyone.

In completing the framework, the project team were mindful of not placing any additional burden on front line workers. This means the development process was modified and the framework has not been circulated for open comment as would normally be the case. In order to ensure that the framework has as much scrutiny as possible a version of this framework is available on the HEE website now for comment (https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/pharmacy). We would welcome any feedback. If required, the framework will be updated later in 2020.

2.   Scope of the framework

When using this competency framework please keep in mind these key points about its scope:

- The competency framework contains core competencies for all pharmacists and pharmacy technicians rather than specialist competencies in mental health pharmacy[5].

- The competencies should be acquired, maintained and further developed throughout a pharmacy professional's career, regardless of the sector in which the individual works. They should therefore be used to guide the development of mental health competencies during pre-registration and foundation training and beyond.

- This framework is relevant to professionals working in all sectors of practice; community pharmacy, general practice, primary care networks, care homes, acute hospital, health and justice environments, community services and other patient or public facing environments.

- This means that it is relevant to all groups of people, including children and young adults, mothers and older people. However, for some groups, more specific competency frameworks exist, and links are given to these in the framework where appropriate.

- Because it is a core framework for all pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in any sector of practice it must be contextualised to reflect the roles and

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[5] The College of Mental Health Pharmacy has developed competencies for mental health specialist pharmacists to support their credentialing programme https://www.cmhp.org.uk/

responsibilities of the individual which may change over time or with different jobs. Some of the competency statements may be less relevant (or more relevant) in some roles or career stages than in others.

- Some of the competencies in the framework are applicable to wider pharmacy team members and can be used as a starting point for discussion with those colleagues.

- Where competencies relate to the practice of pharmacy generally these are not in the framework. If, however, the application of some of these competencies is particularly relevant in mental health care and/or were considered to need emphasis they have been included.

3. Benefits of using the framework

A single competency framework for all pharmacy professionals will raise awareness of the need to develop and maintain competencies in mental health. As the framework remains consistent over time, organisations, teams and individuals will be able to use it to support a wide range of activities including to:

1. Inform the development of education curricula for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians (whether undergraduate, pre-registration or post- registration).
2. Inform the design, delivery and, if relevant, accreditation of mental health components of education programmes and provide a structured framework for learning and assessment.
3. Provide pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and the wider pharmacy team (e.g. pharmacy assistants, medicines counter assistants, health champions, delivery drivers) with an overview of the competencies needed by pharmacy teams in order to support people with mental health problems.
4. Help pharmacy team members to identify strengths and areas for development through self-assessment, appraisal and as a way of structuring feedback from colleagues.
5. Provide a basis for continuing education and development and revalidation processes. For example, for use as a framework for a portfolio to demonstrate competency in mental health.

4. The mental health competency framework for pharmacy teams

The competency framework has **six competencies**. Within each of the six competencies there are statements which describe the activity or outcomes pharmacy professionals should be able to demonstrate.

COMPETENCY 1. ATTITUDES, VALUES AND BELIEFS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH
1.1 Recognises the fundamental importance of good mental health to everyone.
1.2 Is aware of conscious and unconscious bias, how this may impact on own practice and takes steps to minimise this.
1.3 Recognises different forms of stigma and discrimination across all cultural group and acts to address and reduce these.
1.4 Considers mental health and physical health equally in a holistic approach to each person's individual needs.
1.5 Treats people with mental health problems, including the public, patients, carers and colleagues with empathy, dignity and respect.
1.6 Puts people at the centre of their care using the principles of shared decision making and acknowledges an individual's autonomy to make their own decisions.

COMPETENCY 2. MENTAL HEALTH CONTEXT
2.1 Familiar with the signs and symptoms of common mental health problems (including relapse) in people from all patient groups and across all ages and knows the steps necessary to support someone[6,7, 8].
2.2 Understands the disproportionate impact of mental health problems on marginalised groups.
2.3 Understands the fundamental tenets of consent, capacity and autonomy and how this applies to the safe and appropriate use of medicines.
2.4 Understands safeguarding and is able to act to safeguard vulnerable people in conjunction with other agencies.
2.5 Understands the importance of helping people with mental health problems to look after their physical health and make healthy lifestyle choices.
2.6 Knows how to monitor, manage, seek advice and /or refer to appropriate services to improve physical health and wellbeing, and maximise opportunities for health promotion.

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[6] See for example, NHS Education for Scotland. Competence framework for child and adolescent mental health services. http://www.knowledge.scot.nhs.uk/home/learning-and-cpd/competence-framework-for-child-and-adolescent-mental-health-services.aspx
[7] See for example, Health Education England. Competency framework for perinatal mental health. https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/mental-health/perinatal-mental-health/competency-framework-perinatal-mental-health
[8] New South Wales Ministry of Health. Intellectual disability mental health core competency framework: a manual for mental health professionals. 2016. https://3dn.unsw.edu.au/idmh-core-competency-framework

2.7 Recognises when someone has suicidal thoughts and can take steps immediately to help them stay safe[9].

2.8 Aware of the socioeconomic drivers of mental health problems and can signpost to wider services for support.

COMPETENCY 3. COMMIT TO DEVELOP SELF AND SERVICE

3.1 Engages in continuing professional development in order to develop, maintain and increase skills and knowledge in mental health.

3.2 Aware of the limits of own scope of practice in mental health and understands when and how to refer to other team members or services.

3.3 Shares knowledge with others and supports team members to provide quality services for people with mental health problems.

3.4 Knows the importance of looking after own mental health and wellbeing, and that of colleagues, and takes action to support self and colleagues.

3.5 Shows clinical leadership in the provision and development of services and an environment that promotes good mental health and supports people with mental health problems[10].

COMPETENCY 4. RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM AND OTHER SERVICES

4.1 Understands the role of other health, social care and voluntary sector services in providing holistic care for people with mental health problems and how own service fits into local referral pathways.

4.2 Works collaboratively with all clinical partners in the multidisciplinary team, within and across secondary and primary care settings to deliver tailored and holistic care.

4.3 Recognises when there are concerns about a person's mental health and communicates with the multidisciplinary team and other agencies in line with professional guidance on confidentiality and duty of care[11, 12].

4.4 Mitigates risks to people of having problems with their medicines when they transfer between care settings or are cared for across care settings.

4.5 Signposts people with mental health problems to other services for support, such as, psychological support[13], social prescribers, recovery colleges, support groups and other third sector organisations.

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[9] See also the self-harm and suicide prevention competency frameworks developed by Health Education England and the National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health. https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/mental-health/self-harm-suicide-prevention-frameworks

[10] See also Public Health England. Public mental health leadership and workforce development framework. Executive Summary. Confidence, competence, commitment. 2015. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/736587/Public_mental_health_leadership_and_workforce_development_framework_executive_summary.pdf

[11] General Pharmaceutical Council. Standards for Pharmacy Professionals. 2017. https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/sites/default/files/standards_for_pharmacy_professionals_may_2017_0.pdf

[12] General Pharmaceutical Council. In Practice. Guidance on Confidentiality. 2018. https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/sites/default/files/document/in_practice_guidance_on_confidentiality_june_2018.pdf

[13] Improving Access to Psychological Therapies is the largest programme for talking therapies for anxiety and depression available on the NHS. Patients can both self-refer and/or receive a referral from their GP.

COMPETENCY 5. COMMUNICATION WITH PATIENTS AND CARERS
5.1 Has an open, approachable attitude towards communication with people with mental health problems.
5.2 Recognises the importance of privacy and disclosure, and that people may be unwilling or worried about talking openly about issues related to their mental health.
5.3 Understands the impact that stigma may have on people with mental health problems and their carers, and approaches conversations in a non-judgemental way.
5.4 Listens and consults empathetically and shows compassion to people sharing their experiences.
5.5 Communicates with patients and carers flexibly using appropriate resources and different approaches as necessary.
5.6 Gives information in alternative formats where a mental health problem or a medicine could affect ability to understand.
5.7 Supports shared decision making, working with people to identify their priorities, concerns and what they would like to achieve from their medicines use.
5.8 Explains in a way that is understandable to the patient or carer how medicines are thought to work and any potential benefits and risks.

COMPETENCY 6. PHARMACEUTICAL KNOWLEDGE
6.1 Maintains an up to date clinical knowledge of the management of mental health conditions.
6.2 Has awareness of appropriate pharmacological and non-pharmacological strategies for managing mental health problems.
6.3 Advises patients and carers about reliable sources of information and decision aids around mental health medicines.
6.4 Aware of medicines (whether for mental health or physical health) that interact with mental health medicines and/or exacerbate mental health problems.
6.5 Knows about the unwanted effects of medicines for mental health problems and how to avoid, monitor and manage them (including in pregnancy and breastfeeding).
6.6 Aware of the impact of withdrawal or changes to medicines and/or doses of mental health medicines.
6.7 Recognises high risk medicines used in mental health and manages the risks associated with their prescribing, supply and use.
6.8 Knows where to find evidence-based information about mental health pharmaceutical care.
6.9 Recognises signs of poor adherence and works with patients taking mental health medicines to understand and support them to overcome barriers to medicines taking.
6.10 Takes opportunities to support the de-prescribing of inappropriate medicines.

5. Useful resources

- Association of Pharmacy Technicians UK educational frameworks: www.aptuk.org/foundation-pharmacy-framework
- College of Mental Health Pharmacy resources: www.cmhp.org.uk
- Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education Mental Health resources: https://www.cppe.ac.uk/gateway/mentheal
- Health Education England: Prescribing Competency Implementation Guidance for Mental Health https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Prescribing-Competency-Implementation-Guidance-for-MentalHealthV1.0.pdf
- Mind: www.mind.org.uk
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. NICE impact mental health. March 2019 https://www.nice.org.uk/Media/Default/About/what-we-do/Into-practice/measuring-uptake/NICEimpact-mental-health.pdf
- Rethink: https://www.rethink.org/
- Royal Pharmaceutical Society educational frameworks: https://www.rpharms.com/recognition/all-our-campaigns/shaping-the-future-of-pharmacy-education
- The Samaritans: www.samaritans.org
- Young Minds: www.youngminds.org.uk

Appendix A: Acknowledgements

Project team

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