

Future Clinical Workforce – Psychological Professions focus

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Patients consistently ask for better access to psychological interventions such as talking therapies, and there is excellent evidence that psychological treatments work for individuals and families. However, we need to be able to offer this form of help to far more people if we are to achieve true parity of esteem for mental and physical healthcare. This can be achieved in two ways: by expanding access to specific evidence based therapies and interventions, and by supporting the whole system of health and social care to become more psychological in outlook, to achieve a truly biopsychosocial approach. More psychological professionals are needed to support both endeavours.

There are 12 distinct psychological occupations, comprising a workforce of 20,000 staff in NHS commissioned healthcare, with about 14,000 directly NHS employed. These occupations include practitioner psychologists, psychological therapists, counsellors and wellbeing practitioners, among others. The Long Term Plan requires expansion of the current psychological professions workforce by 6,450 additional posts in addition to the expansion by 6,425 already underway to deliver the *Stepping Forward to 2020/21* mental health workforce plan. These additional staff will deliver expanded Improving Access to Psychological Therapy (IAPT) services for an additional 380,000 adults with anxiety and depression each year, including a growing number with long term physical health conditions. They will also staff the new Mental Health Support Teams working with schools and colleges to make mental health support available to a population of 470,000 children and young people. There will be a need for more psychological professionals to deliver psychological assessment, care and intervention to people with severe mental health conditions, to new parents, people with major health conditions, learning disabilities or autism, and to play a vital part in supporting the NHS workforce.

To deliver this ambitious expansion we will produce an integrated LTP workforce plan for the psychological professions, focusing on both established and newer roles, and how they fit together in a coherent career and training path. Whilst we know that supply to these professions is currently very good, we need to safeguard this by delivering a sustainable solution to salaries for postgraduate trainees. At the same time we will develop and publish a proposal for leadership of this group of disciplines at local, regional and national level to ensure the required expansion is delivered safely and effectively.

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