North West Psychological Professions Network:

Workforce Issues in 2016

Being part of Health Education England, the North West Psychological Professions Network (PPN North West) was asked to identify workforce issues that are affecting their members working into NHS services, in the North West. The information collected is used to inform the planning of training provision in the North West, to ensure that the NHS has the right workforce, with the right skills, to provide clinical services now and in the future. Workforce planning and transformation initiatives focus on ensuring the adequate supply of clinicians, who receive ongoing training to develop new skills, roles and ways of working.

The themes that came out of the workforce intelligence gathered this year suggest that:

Within clinical services, the factors affecting the psychological professions are:

1. There are constant service transformations occurring at pace, to deliver new models of care across multiple providers.
2. With a growing population of people with co-existing long term health conditions, demand for health care increasingly outstrips supply and clients are presenting with more complex mental and physical health needs, requiring multi-professional input across services.
3. Outcome and performance-driven commissioning is coming into play for all mental health services.
4. Funding of non-NHS services, such as social care and public health is being increasingly eroded, reducing preventative care provision.

This stretched and complex health and social care system is affecting the psychological professions because:

1. Clinicians need to work systemically, with clients with complex mental and physical health needs, which is time-consuming and often beyond the scope of their existing skill set and service contracts.
2. Clinicians are increasingly reporting feeling stressed, depressed, a failure, undervalued and lacking a sense of control.
3. Increasing numbers of clinicians are choosing to work part-time and move into alternative non-NHS or non-clinical roles, affecting staff retention in clinical services.

4. Many senior clinicians are retiring early with mental health officer status or leaving posts. These vacancies are either not being replaced or are filled by more junior clinicians, leading to a loss of clinical expertise, supervision, support and leadership within services and wider systems.
5. There are fewer career development opportunities, further contributing to staff retention problems.
6. There are particular difficulties recruiting and retaining Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners, Counsellors with NHS experience who are "IAPT-compliant" and Clinical Psychologists with expertise in Learning Difficulties and Older People specialties.

Parts of the psychological professions workforce need:

1. To be upskilled to work with clinical complexity and across multiple service-providers, to deliver a range of psychological interventions, within integrated-care models.
2. To be able to apply psychological skills to clients with multiple, long term health conditions and support non-mental health staff to work with psychological presentations.
3. To have competencies in effective clinical data management and introducing new technologies into clinical practice.
4. To develop clinical leadership skills and have opportunities to promote transformational change in services.
5. To have manageable workloads and optimal working conditions, to ensure that they are well-supported to work within their clinical competence, develop their skills and career, support colleagues, feel valued and receive a sense of reward from their work.

We would like your views!

We will be publishing a survey via PPN North West to find out more about your views and ask for your ideas and potential solutions to these issues. Please look out for further news in the PPN North West postings and by email. If you would like further information in the meantime, please contact: **Dr Julia Boot, PPN North West Project Manager: Julia.Boot@srft.nhs.uk**.