



NHS Employers

May 2017

Dear Colleague

The future of the mental health workforce

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) is the professional body for pharmacists in Great Britain. We are the only body that represents all sectors of pharmacy in Great Britain. The RPS leads and supports the development of the pharmacy profession including the advancement of science, practice, education and knowledge in pharmacy. In addition, we promote the profession's policies and views to a range of external stakeholders in a number of different forums.

The RPS would like to take the opportunity to respond to the questions within your briefing.

1. What opportunities are mental health care providers taking to make use of new roles, including apprenticeships, nursing and physician associates, and peer supporters? What issues have arisen from experience so far?

There are opportunities for new roles for pharmacists at mental health providers and more widely within new models of care that integrate the way care is delivered across the health and social care system. Pharmacists and members of their team can address many of the issues raised by the Mental Health Task Workforce in existing and new roles by:

- *Supporting greater compliance with NICE guidelines on the use of medicines;*
- *Ensuring consistent adherence to standards in prescribing;*
- *Advising on care that has been reported as being too reliant on medicines and reduce cases of polypharmacy;*
- *Advising on reducing or stopping medicines;*
- *Providing timely and full information on side effects of medicines.*

2. What measures are being taken to create more flexible ways of working for staff members

wishing to pursue non-traditional career paths, and with what impact?

Flexible working can be supported by human resources policies that allow staff to work across sectors, remove barriers to collaboration and support multi-disciplinary working. Such policies should fit with work-life balance approached – the impact being the retention of staff within the mental health workforce. However, flexible working requires a greater head count this needs to be considered in workforce plans.

3. How are providers seeking to widen participation in the mental health workforce, particularly among the most excluded communities?

Recruitment should ensure local people are not excluded from the workforce and hard to reach groups can be targeted – apprenticeships provide an opportunity to achieve this.

4. What impact have STPs had so far on local mental health workforce planning and development? What further impacts are envisaged longer term?

The impact of STPs so far is difficult to assess. It is likely that there will be a further shift of care away from hospitals. For this reason it is important that training in mental health is

available to the wider workforce who can support patients closer to home. Thus the healthcare workforce, including pharmacists who are not employed by mental health providers need to be advanced generalists who can support patients with long term conditions that might include mental health as well as physical health problems.

5. How far can local commissioners, providers and STPs innovate and develop alternative ways of working without creating unacceptable levels of variation?

There needs to be oversight of developments and sharing of best practice.

6. How can we ensure that all of these developments reduce health inequalities and improve access, quality and outcomes for the most excluded and marginalised groups of people?

By taking a system-wide approach and clearly defining roles, responsibilities and outcomes across the patient care pathway.

Pharmacists and their teams are uniquely placed to deliver mental health services for patients thereby reducing demand on General Practice, mental health providers and care units. Access to independent prescribing courses and other postgraduate clinical training needs to be

secured so that the workforce is able to deliver these services. This will ease the burden of demand faced by other healthcare professions who currently face shortages and who have long training lead times.

Yours sincerely