

Expanding the Psychological Professions to deliver the NHS Long Term Plan

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We need a more psychological NHS. Why? Because this is what patients want – three times as many people with mental health problems would prefer a talking therapy to medication. And there is excellent evidence to show that talking therapies and other psychological interventions are effective.

Psychological approaches don't just help improve mental health and wellbeing: they can help people adjust to and manage major health conditions such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. They can also help shape a more truly biopsychosocial approach across the whole of healthcare. In the NHS Long Term Plan, we now have a policy framework with the ambition to expand psychological healthcare at a faster pace than ever before.

The Plan makes specific commitments to expand access to evidence-based psychological therapies and interventions in perinatal mental health, children and young people's mental health, for adults with common mental health problems and those with severe mental health problems.

We will need to expand the psychological professions to make timely autism assessments and improve the management of major health conditions, dementia and intellectual disability care. Psychological professionals will have much to offer in many other parts of the Plan, such as building technology-enhanced care, interventions for problem gambling and people who sleep rough, in supporting NHS staff wellbeing, and in preventing mental and physical ill health.

Many talented and enthusiastic individuals want to work in health and social care in one of the 12 psychological professions, but many can't find a way in. So how can we turn this talent and enthusiasm into a rapidly expanding workforce to deliver better access to evidence-based psychological interventions and a more psychological approach across the whole of healthcare? The Psychological Professions Workforce Group will help answer this question by tackling four strands of work:

- We will develop and publish a psychological professions strategy for England, describing our vision of how the 12 psychological professions together can create the biggest impact across healthcare to achieve the Long Term Plan.
- We will create an integrated workforce plan for all the psychological professions, covering both established and new roles, to safely and effectively expand psychological ways of working.
- We will plan the training and career paths of psychological professionals to enable easier entry and progression.
- Finally, we will review and make recommendations for the leadership of and by psychological professionals in local providers, integrated care systems, at regional and national level, with an appropriately influential voice in policy-making.

We will collaborate with stakeholders – including employers, universities, professional bodies and arm's length bodies – to develop this work and take forward its products into the NHS People Plan when it is published this autumn.