

Guidance on the support of Mental Health Social Workers and Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHPs) working in NHS, independent or integrated services



Resource Pack

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1. Introduction and overview

This guidance was developed in partnership with the Department of Health, Social Work England and in consultation with organisations, professionals and system leaders across health and social care services.

By encouraging NHS organisations to recruit and employ more MHSWs, we will support the wider NHS to ensure:

- the social determinants of mental health will be addressed
- there will be a holistic response to meeting needs.
- Social work values of self-determination and empowerment will be incorporated into the NHS culture and service provision.

Latest workforce data indicates that approximately xxx social workers (xxx in mental health and learning disability trusts) are employed by the NHS. A larger number of local authority-employed staff work in partnership and are based in the NHS.

In mental health, social workers often undertake intensive post-qualifying training to hold roles linked to the Mental Health Act 1983, such as Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP), Best Interest Assessor and Non-Medical Approved/Responsible Clinician (AC/RC).

Social workers comprise 95 per cent of the Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHPs) workforce, but fewer than five of the non-medical approved clinicians come from a social work background. The document outlines eight organisational requirements for effective support of the social work profession in mental health services wherever they may work.

The Guidance supports and enhances the role of social work in health and care organisations

- by advising on how to successfully employ and support social workers in a variety of partnerships.
- by helping the NHS to embed social workers as a key staff group and support registered social workers already employed in generic teams
- by identifying the actions on leadership, engagement and workforce that strengthen social work's role in mental health care.

It is particularly useful for system leaders, commissioners of services, the voluntary sector, Accountable Care Systems, not-for-profit organisations and independent sector employers, social work in other roles and settings.

The impact on patients

This guidance should encourage the NHS to directly employ more mental health social workers. Having mental health social workers as part of the multi-disciplinary team offers patients better, more holistic care and a rights-based perspective, which is truly person-centred. They emphasise preventive care and independence for people who need care and support. Their skills are essential to meet the requirements of the NHS Long Term Plan.

2. Key messages about the guidance

- this guidance helps to develop and transform the social work role across mental health services
- This guidance offers timely support for organisations to recruit, retain and support mental health social workers including AMHPs and ensure they can contribute their vital skills to holistic care for patients and service users
- It is for those who want to expand, develop and support the role of social work in the NHS
- Supporting and expanding the role of mental health social workers in the NHS forms a core part of HEE's mental health workforce plan
- This work is crucial to achieving NHS [Long Term Plan](#) ambitions and alleviating workforce pressure.
- The guidance is part of a suite of resources to support the NHS and other parts of the health and care system in recruiting, retaining and developing mental health social workers

3. Key messages in the guidance

- Social work is one of the key professions working in mental health
- Social workers increasingly work in a wide range of health and social care agencies including the NHS,
- Social work is all about working alongside people and communities – supporting independence and respecting human rights.
- good social work has the power to transform people's lives
- Social workers provide an 'alternative lens' in mental health focusing on the social determinants and social solutions to mental health problems and distress
- Social workers roles include strength-based community working, hospital discharge and expert understanding of the care act, mental capacity act, mental health act, human rights act and equality legislation
- The profession is recognised for its distinct values and the transformative, relational and rights-based principles and practice that it brings to work with communities, families and individuals.
- Social workers and Approved Mental Health Practitioners (AMHPs) employed in NHS services need effective support, supervision and progression as a regulated profession to achieve their full impact.

4. Concise summary of themes

5. Slide decks segmented by key audiences

6. Action list for groups

7. List of key audiences/stakeholders

- Mental Health Trusts in England – Boards and senior managers and HR directors, communications teams
- Independent employers
- Association of Mental Health Providers
- NHS Confederation: Mental Health Network and Mental Health Board
- Royal College of Occupational Therapists
- Royal College of Psychiatrists
- British Association of Social Workers
- Local government employers of social workers
- Association of Directors of Social Services

- All Party Parliamentary Group for Mental Health
- Centre for Mental Health
- Consultancy/Shaw Mind Foundation
- Mental Health Foundation
- Mind
- National Autistic Society
- National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health (NCCMH)
- NHS Careers
- NHS Improvement
- PAPHYRUS
- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
- British Psychological Society
- Association of Child Psychotherapists
- Institute of Health Visiting
- National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health
- Social Work England
- Mental Health and Well Being Partnerships Board
- Mental Health Social Work networks and forums
- The NHS Leadership Academy and Talent Management
- All Party Parliamentary Group on Mental Health
- Local ICS leaders

8. Short educational films

Full playlist of short films made with and about mental health social workers

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLrVQaAxyJE3fn52TDaw3hXueDiWWXSHdP>