

# Workforce Strategy

## 2020-2023



## Foreword

The College has always worked tirelessly to help resolve one of the greatest challenges faced by the NHS: ensuring the UK has a highly skilled mental health workforce. The COVID-19 pandemic makes this work more challenging, though even more important.

From educating to examining, from workforce planning to policy influencing, from campaigning to promoting research, the College plays a major role in ensuring people with mental illness can get the psychiatric support that they need. Yet we never took the opportunity to pull together all the work carried out by both College members and staff in one strategic plan.

The *Workforce Strategy 2020-2023* sets out the workstreams that will be prioritised over the next three years to ensure we have a workforce of well-supported psychiatrists delivering high-quality safe care and leading sustainable services for patients. It encapsulates our ambition to support all psychiatrists in their careers, regardless of their background, and to promote equal opportunities in the workplace.

Implementing this strategy will require bravery and innovation. The good news is that the College has a track record of achieving what others had believed impossible. Our *Choose Psychiatry* campaign demonstrates what we can aim for through ambitious and collaborative work: after three years of campaigning to encourage medical students and foundation doctors to specialise in psychiatry, we achieved a CT1 fill rate of 95% in England in 2019 compared to 67% in 2017 and we anticipate that 2020 will see unsurpassed levels of recruitment into the specialty.

Our projects help to rapidly establish and grow the workforce where it is most needed. At the forefront of innovation, we have been running successful projects such as the *CAMHS run-through* training programme - allowing trainees to complete all their training in a single region - and the *Building Capacity* project to train consultant psychiatrists to become perinatal specialists. More than ever, we need to think practically and creatively about how we can recruit and support the psychiatric workforce that will be needed once the pandemic has passed.

Taking action to retain a well-supported workforce is another key issue that requires a strategic and plural approach. After developing a list of practical and tangible measures that we recommended mental healthcare organisations put in place, we are working to ensure that all job descriptions have a specific wellbeing section. Our recently established Retention & Wellbeing Committee helps us to ensure that our work remains purposeful and relevant, and we hope that the changes made will bear fruit over the next three years and beyond.

It is becoming increasingly evident that new NHS roles can help alleviate some of the pressure on mental health staff, while providing the continuity of care that patients need. Taking a flexible and problem-solving approach, the College is leading on a campaign to encourage more Physician Associates to work in mental health settings.

Finally, influencing national and regional workforce policy decisions will continue to be a priority. The College has been bold in its campaigns and requests to governments - such as calling to double the number of medical school places - and it will continue to be so.

The *Workforce Strategy 2020-2023* embodies our values of courage, innovation, respect, learning and excellence, and will be particularly important in the context of the COVID19 pandemic and beyond. Most of all, it speaks to our value of collaboration: it is by working together that we will ultimately make a real difference to the workforce challenges we all face.

Dr Adrian James, President

Dr Kate Lovett, Dean

## About the RCPsych

We work to secure the best outcomes for people with mental illness, intellectual disabilities and developmental disorders by promoting excellent mental health services, supporting the prevention of mental illness, training outstanding psychiatrists, promoting quality and research, setting standards and being the voice of psychiatry.

## Our workforce vision for 2023

**To ensure the psychiatric workforce – and other mental health roles - are significantly expanded between now and 2023 to deliver the care that patients with mental illness need.**

## Our strategic workforce priorities for 2020-23

1. To increase recruitment into psychiatry
2. To improve retention and wellbeing in psychiatry
3. To promote psychiatric leadership
4. To recruit and retain Physician Associates and other roles in mental health
5. To influence mental health workforce policy agendas and hold stakeholders to account on delivery

Internally, the College's work on workforce falls within the remit of two departments:

- Professional Standards
- Strategic Communications

For generic workforce queries: [workforce@rcpsych.ac.uk](mailto:workforce@rcpsych.ac.uk)

For careers queries: [careers@rcpsych.ac.uk](mailto:careers@rcpsych.ac.uk)

For specialty training queries: [specialtytraining@rcpsych.ac.uk](mailto:specialtytraining@rcpsych.ac.uk)

For SAS doctors queries: [specialtydoctors@rcpsych.ac.uk](mailto:specialtydoctors@rcpsych.ac.uk)

For queries related to our work on Physician Associates:  
[physicianassociates@rcpsych.ac.uk](mailto:physicianassociates@rcpsych.ac.uk)

For press / media enquiries: [press@rcpsych.ac.uk](mailto:press@rcpsych.ac.uk)

## Increasing recruitment into psychiatry

By the end of 2023, we will have further helped increase recruitment into psychiatry. We will also have persuaded governments, arms-length bodies and employers to make significant progress towards achieving our ambition for the creation of thousands of new psychiatric posts.

### What the College will do:

- Continue to run the **Choose Psychiatry campaign**, reinforcing the campaign's brand, placing its funding on a longer-term sustainable footing, and broadening the aims of the Choose Psychiatry in Scotland campaign.
- Send consistent messages and design vibrant resources to **increase secondary school students' awareness of and interest in psychiatry and mental health**, through the College website and by encouraging them to sign up for information on psychiatry.
- Support the implementation of **Choose Psychiatry: Guidance for medical schools**; and encourage medical schools to set up **enrichment activities** to raise students' interest in psychiatry based on examples of good practice.
- Recruit an Associate Dean for **Academic Psychiatry** and an Associate Dean for **Undergraduate Education** to promote the key role of teaching and research in recruitment and retention.
- Appoint two Presidential Leads on **Race Equality** to support members from diverse backgrounds to have equal access to career opportunities and to get to any point of seniority within the College and their organisation.
- Increase engagement, training and support for **medical students and foundation doctors** interested in mental health and psychiatry, through winter, summer and autumn schools, careers fairs and events, and the National Psychiatry Conference for medical students.
- Promote the specialty of psychiatry to **foundation doctors** via the Foundation Fellowships, through which participants receive mentoring support, free attendance at the College's annual International Congress, and free access to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Online and Trainees Online (TrOn) modules.

- Support **overseas doctors** to access psychiatry training, by working with Health Education England to support training applications from overseas doctors and by promoting the Widening Access to Specialty Training scheme.
- Promote active research areas in psychiatry to foundation doctors and core trainees to increase their involvement in **academic activities** including research and teaching.
- Assess the College activities' **impact on attitudes** towards psychiatry and determine future steps.

## Improving retention and wellbeing in psychiatry

By the end of 2023, we will have further helped retain psychiatrists in the NHS and taken practical steps to improve the wellbeing of frontline psychiatrists.

### What the College will do:

- Increase engagement with and support for **trainees** by:
  - Recruiting an Associate Dean for Trainee Support.
  - Developing the trainees' conference and workstreams on valuing trainees.
  - Increasing opportunities for flexibility in training by developing credentials and run-through pilots, such as those in Liaison Psychiatry and Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and less than full time (LTFT) training.
  - Improving the capacity and quality of supervision of doctors in training across mental health service providers.
  
- Design an informed plan to increase **retention from Core to Higher Specialty Training** and tackle **attrition** in psychiatry training.
  
- Take a strategic and multi-layered approach to **support the mental health and wellbeing of psychiatrists**, by:
  - Including as a requirement in the **job descriptions** for all psychiatrist posts a description of local processes to support doctors' wellbeing.
  - Encouraging NHS organisations to embed the health and wellbeing recommendations included in our **"Going for Growth" plan** following the 2020 COVID19 outbreak.
  - Developing and training a network of **RCPsych Psychiatrists Wellbeing Representatives** to raise awareness and knowledge at a local level of the individual and system factors that support wellbeing, the risk factors that contribute to burnout, and the modalities of local and national support.
  - Expanding the **Psychiatric Support Service (PSS)** to manage expected increased demand from psychiatrists who may be experiencing personal or work-related difficulties during and following the COVID19 pandemic.
  - Developing **Joy in Work**, a national Quality Improvement (QI) initiative led by the College's Centre for Quality Improvement (CCQI).

- Supporting the development of **educational resources** aimed at increasing awareness about wellbeing.
- Persuading decision-makers and employers to take **practical measures** to improve the wellbeing of mental health staff, get the “basics” right, ensure both staff and patient safety, increase retention and encourage those who have left the workforce to return to work.
- Develop a work programme to ensure **psychiatrists from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds** receive fair treatment and appropriate support in the workplace.
- As the COVID19 pandemic takes its course, call on all mental health organisations to carry out **risk assessments for vulnerable staff, including BAME staff**, as a priority and make appropriate arrangements accordingly.
- Explore how we could best support **International Medical Graduates** who choose a career in psychiatry in the UK.
- Support **Specialty and Associate Specialist doctors (SAS)** doctors working in psychiatry who play a vital role in service delivery both within the NHS and private sector.
- Capture and share examples of **good practice** in NHS organisations to retain staff and improve wellbeing and morale.
- Incorporate a **wellbeing workstream** into the Choose Psychiatry in Scotland Committee for the first time, with a view to promoting the College's wellbeing agenda in Scotland.
- Establish the **Scottish Psychiatry Recruitment and Retention Steering Group**, bringing together strategic partners including the Scottish Government and NHS Education for Scotland to work collaboratively to foster opportunities to learn from each other and share resources.
- Promote and increase engagement, training and support for trainees to get involved in **academic activities**, including research and teaching.

## Promoting psychiatric leadership

By the end of 2023, we will have further embedded a culture of medical leadership in mental health services, which will ultimately mean better care for patients.

### What the College will do:

- Promote leadership through the **StartWell initiative**, supporting psychiatrists in their roles with the intention to establish good habits in their career.
- Empower and support members in NHS England/NHS Improvement regions and across the devolved nations to act as **advocates** in influencing the commissioning and provision of mental health services in their area.



## Recruit and retain Physician Associates and other roles in mental health

By the end of 2023, we will have helped increase the number of Physician Associates and other roles in mental health settings.

### What the College will do:

- Create a **UK network** of Physician Associates working in and interested in mental health and their supervisors and engage with Physician Associates on social media.
- Organise a **Training and Education Conference** for Physician Associates in employment and in training as well as **online events for Employers** related to employing Physician Associates.
- Design and deliver a **marketing recruitment campaign** to attract more Physician Associates in mental health.
- Call on the **Governments** to recruit more Physician Associates and other roles – such as Advanced Clinical Practitioners - in mental health and learning disability. Engage in national discussions on **introducing prescribing rights** for Physician Associates and on the **Mental Health Curriculum and Capabilities Framework** for Advanced Clinical Practitioners.
- **RCPsych in Wales** will be asking Health Education and Improvement Wales to develop an attractive **career pathway for Physician Associates** in Wales.

## Influencing mental health workforce policy agendas and holding stakeholders to account on delivery

By the end of 2023, we will have influenced and helped implement mental health workforce policies across the UK.

### What the College will do:

- Influence the **national agenda in England** on workforce, including the NHS People Plan, calling on the Government to:
  - Address issues related to the mental health and wellbeing of the NHS workforce, new ways of working, as well as issues with **capacity and demand** to meet existing mental health service commitments.
  - Increase **funding for workforce education and training** for mental health professionals.
  - Increase the number of **medical school places** and allocate those places to schools that have a clear plan to encourage more students to choose a shortage specialty, including psychiatry.
  - Invest in both **digital infrastructure and training** to raise the digital literacy of the NHS workforce and ensure innovative technology functions smoothly.
  - **Address geographical and specialty shortages** in doctors.
- Contribute to the **implementation** of the NHS People Plan in England, working collaboratively with stakeholders.
- Modernise our **UK census** to collect more consistent workforce and staffing data in order to inform policies and decision-making and improve delivery of services to our communities.
- Influence the **Integrated Care System (ICS)** agenda on workforce in England, by providing support to members to be involved in workforce-related discussions at ICS level.
- Re-profile the College's workforce planning asks to take account of COVID19-related factors and develop **innovative and solution-focused recommendations** to build, diversify and support the psychiatric workforce that will be needed once the COVID19 pandemic has passed, including retire and return offers for experienced staff.

- Influence the **national agenda in Scotland** and continue to monitor and work with strategic partners to ensure the Cabinet Secretary commitment to the expansion of **foundation posts** in general practice and psychiatry by 105 places by 2022 operates effectively.
- Influence the **national agenda in Northern Ireland**, including calling on the Government to:
  - Ensure that a **Mental Health Strategy** for is developed, addressing the need for a fit for purpose and extended mental health workforce.
  - Increase the number of **medical school places**, and work with medical schools to ensure that the psychiatry curriculum is adequate.
  - Increase the number of **psychiatry training places** to address the need for consultant expansion necessary to improve mental health services across the age range of the population.
- In advance of the 2021 Senedd Cymru Elections, influence the **national agenda in Wales**, including calling on the Welsh Government to:
  - Commit to **more psychiatrist posts** in the Welsh NHS, particularly in old age psychiatry, addiction and eating disorders.
  - Extend the existing **legislation** 'Nursing Staffing (Wales) Act 2016' to acute and inpatient mental health units.
  - Apply the principles of **prudent and value-based health care** to the work that psychiatrists do.
- Influence and work with **Health Education and Improvement Wales** to:
  - Establish a higher training programme for **medical psychotherapy** in Wales.
  - Expand the **cultural competencies** of the NHS workforce in Wales through support for the Diverse Cymru Cultural Competency Framework.
  - Re-establish **academic psychiatry training posts** in Wales.



London office: 21 Prescot Street London E1 8BB

020 7235 2351

[www.rcpsych.ac.uk](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk)

@rcpsych