
General Psychiatry

Royal College of Psychiatrists Higher Specialty
Curriculum (ST4 – ST6)

Version 1.0

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Purpose Statement

General psychiatry as referred to here, encompasses a range of specialties involved with the provision of psychiatric care to 'adults' and treatment of people who are of 'working age.'

General psychiatrists assess and treat adult patients presenting with a wide range of mental disorders, including psychotic, non-psychotic and organic brain illnesses. They work across age-related transitions or service transitions with other psychiatric specialties when appropriate.

It is clear that the need for psychiatrists across the specialties is growing throughout the UK.^{1 2 3}Public Health England states that, in any given year, one in six adults experience at least one diagnosable mental health condition, and that mental health conditions are the second leading cause of morbidity in England.⁴

The Welsh Government's ten-year strategy to improve mental health and well-being⁵ has identified a range of areas that require attention. This includes providing better perinatal mental health care; ensuring each health board has crisis services available seven days a week; the establishment of effective mental health psychiatric liaison capacity for district general hospitals; and addressing mental health/substance misuse needs of frequent attenders of emergency departments.

The Scottish Mental Health Strategy⁶ has identified the need to shift the balance of care towards mental health.

Northern Ireland has higher levels of mental ill health than any other region in the UK⁷ and it has been identified that building up the range of specialist mental health services is required to meet need.⁸

¹ "There are predicted to be two million more people with mental health conditions by 2030." [Facing the Facts, Shaping the Future – a draft healthy and care workforce strategy for England to 2027](#), Public Health England, 2017.

² [Old Problems, New Solutions: Improving acute psychiatric care for Adults in England](#), *The Commission to review the provision of acute inpatient psychiatric care for adults*, 2016.

³ [The State of Care in Mental Health Services 2014 to 2017](#), Care Quality Commission, 2017

⁴ [Community Mental Health Survey 2018](#) NHS Patient Survey Programme statistical release, Care Quality Commission, 2018. (P6)

⁵ [Together for Mental Health](#), Welsh Government, 2012

⁶ [Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027](#), Scottish Government, 2017

⁷ [Making Life Better](#), Northern Ireland Assembly, 2014

⁸ [Evaluation of the 2009-2011 Bamford Action Plan](#), Dept. of Health , Social Services and Public Safety, 2012

The NHS Long term plan⁹ is focused on population health systems and General psychiatrists will be expected to participate not just in patient assessment and management but also in improving clinical outcomes, health promotion, collaborative or integrated care and providing person-centered care.

The depth and mastery accessible within the General psychiatry training curriculum affords trainee doctors opportunities to achieve these capabilities.

Training in General psychiatry begins with recruitment to the training programme, after successful completion of Core psychiatry training and the RCPsych examinations. It is recommended that General psychiatry training is undertaken over 36 months (Whole Time Equivalent) in order to achieve the required capabilities and gain the necessary experience. Successful completion of the programme leads to entry on to the specialist register.

The purpose of this training curriculum is to enable the Consultant General Psychiatrist to specialise in the assessment, diagnosis, treatment, management and prevention of mental disorders in adults. This includes evidence-based psychological, biological and social interventions in a wide range of clinical settings in adult mental health services including inpatient, community, crisis and home treatment.

It builds on the clinical capabilities attained in Core Psychiatry training such as advanced communication and interpersonal skills, examination skills, diagnosis and treatment to a mastery level. It also involves the further development of capabilities such as leadership and management, teaching, teamwork, research and quality improvement.

This curriculum provides a framework for training. It enables the achievement of essential specialty-specific clinical and generic professional capabilities through development of the professional values, behaviours, knowledge and skills required in order to provide high-quality, evidence-based patient care for the adult population.

Trainees will be expected to rotate through a variety of approved General psychiatry posts to gain experience and capabilities in a variety of clinical settings. A Consultant General Psychiatrist will be able to work with and manage mental health conditions for the whole range of adult patients including acute and long-term illnesses, in settings such as inpatients or community mental health teams, and will be able to work in more specialised settings.¹⁰

They would also be able to support the physical health of adults with mental health issues, through health promotion and management of physical health co-morbidities.

⁹ [The NHS Long Term Plan](#), NHS, 2019

¹⁰ Specialised settings: Eating disorders, Early intervention teams, Assertive outreach teams, Perinatal, Neuro, Access team

Further curricula are available for the following other established psychiatry specialties:

- Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
- Forensic Psychiatry
- Learning Disability Psychiatry
- Medical Psychotherapy
- Old Age Psychiatry

General psychiatry has limited interdependencies with other specialties. During training in General psychiatry, a trainee develops the knowledge and skills required to have primary clinical responsibility, lead a team, understand governance and supporting structures.

The recommended three years spent in training will provide appropriate development of transferable skills and experience (e.g., advanced communication, leadership, emergency psychiatry and complex decision making) as well as specialised skills and experience in General psychiatry.

The skills and knowledge trainees develop and demonstrate in their training have not changed in this new curriculum. Trainees will therefore continue to have the opportunity to undertake sub-specialty training in Rehabilitation, Addiction or Liaison Psychiatry, where patient demand and service need is high,^{11 12 13} as part of their General psychiatry training programme.

RCPsych is committed to working with the four countries to strengthen the systems in place to ensure local workforce needs can influence the allocations of areas of special interest.

Trainees may also undertake dual training with another psychiatric specialty building upon skills from training in General Psychiatry.¹⁴

The GMC-approved dual training programmes include shared capabilities and combinations of skills and experience for diverse service and population needs. Due to these shared capabilities, dual programmes can be undertaken in less than six years, the standard recommended training time for training in two psychiatric specialties.

¹¹ “Comprehensive liaison mental health services are currently available in only one in six (16 per cent) of England’s 179 acute hospitals.” [The Five Year Forward View for Mental Health, NHS England, 2016](#) (p30)

¹² “Around 20% of people receiving care from early intervention services have longer term and complex needs that will require input from rehabilitation services.” [Guidance for Commissioners of rehabilitation services for people with complex mental health needs Joint Commissioning Panel for Mental Health, 2016](#) (p6)

¹³ [Alcohol and Drugs Prevention, Treatment and Recovery: Why Invest](#). Public Health England, 2018

¹⁴ [Training for Two CCTs in Psychiatry](#), Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2018

There are numerous shared competencies that a trainee can continue to achieve whilst transferring from other higher speciality training programmes within psychiatry and these have been mapped.

They include most of the high level outcomes inclusive of professional values and behaviours; professional skills including clinical and communication skills and professional knowledge such as legislative powers and safeguarding. Leadership and team working are transferrable, so also education and training capabilities.

All trainees will use similar safeguarding knowledge and skills, work on quality improvement and patient safety as priority. Research skills are also readily shared between higher specialties.

The General Psychiatry learning outcomes are mapped to the Generic Professional Capabilities Framework (GPCs) ensuring ease of transfer between medical specialties. Through attainment of the High-level Learning Outcomes (HLOs), this curriculum will enable trainees to lead and work in multidisciplinary and multi-professional teams; provide leadership and participate in research, teaching and training in a variety of clinical settings. It will also enable trainees to gain experience in formulating person-centred¹⁵ holistic¹⁶ systemic management plans.

It provides opportunities to develop expertise to work with adult patients and understand the need to signpost to other relevant specialties where appropriate.

Sub-specialty training covers aspects of the General psychiatry curriculum (e.g. leadership, multidisciplinary working, developing expertise in holistic patient care using psycho-bio-social care and working with wider communities and carers) within a subspecialty context.

This purpose statement has been endorsed by the GMC's Curriculum Oversight Group and confirmed as meeting the needs of the health services of the countries of the UK

¹⁵ **Person-centred** – focuses on the patient as a person, with 'personhood' being its superordinate principle. Takes into account all protected characteristics in doing this.

¹⁶ **Holistic model / approach** – understanding and applying the psychological, biological, social, cultural and spiritual context in the delivery of person-centred mental healthcare.

The below tables outline the High Level Outcomes (HLOs) and Key Capabilities (KCs) to be achieved under 16 key themes.

The reference in brackets below each HLO is to the GMC Generic Professional Capabilities. HLOs are mapped to the nine GPCs.

High Level Outcome 1 (GPC 1)	Demonstrate the professional values and behaviours required of a Consultant Psychiatrist with reference to Good Medical Practice, Core Values for Psychiatrists (CR204) and other relevant faculty guidance.
Themes	Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:
1.1 Professional Relationships	Work collaboratively with patients, families, carers of all ages and colleagues respecting their autonomy, diversity and valuing their contribution.
	Recognise, validate and actively address systemic and structural inequalities, intersectionality, and their impact on clinical outcomes for patients and their carers of all ages and on working relationships with colleagues.
	Consistently demonstrate a holistic and person-centred clinical approach to adult patients that is honest, empathic, compassionate, and respects their dignity while maintaining therapeutic optimism and boundaries.
	Demonstrate flexibility, leadership, use of initiative, prioritisation, and adaptability, effectively managing your time and resources and using new technologies as appropriate.
1.2 Professional Standards	Understand the impact of workload, patient and organisational dynamics on your own well-being.
	Use supervision and reflection effectively recognising your skills, limitations and your duty of candour.
	Apply strategies to take care of your wellbeing, seeking timely support and guidance, including acknowledging if you have a protected characteristic which might impact on your training or if you are having difficulties adapting to working in the UK.
	Use the method of receiving, reflecting and responding to understand and manage the emotional impact of work on yourself, the individual and the team, including the impact of suicide and homicide.
	Consistently demonstrate a positive and conscientious approach to the completion of your work.
	Make clear, accurate and contemporaneous records.
	Promote the specialism of adult mental health including acting as an advocate for your patients and their carers.

	Maintain the appropriate professional standards while working clinically, as a leader within healthcare organisations.
	Demonstrate an understanding of the principles of sustainability and how they underpin sustainable psychiatric practice.
High Level Outcome 2.1 (GPC 2)	Demonstrate advanced communication and interpersonal skills when engaging with patients, their families, carers of all ages, their wider community, colleagues and other professionals.
Theme	Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:
2.1 Communication	Demonstrate advanced interpersonal communication skills in order to appropriately diagnose, formulate and deliver a treatment plan.
	Consistently demonstrate effective communication approaches with patients and relevant others, including those with neurodevelopmental disorders making reasonable adjustments and adaptations where appropriate, including the use of new technologies.
	Use active listening skills and empathic and respectful language in the context of your own self-awareness to manage conflict, expectations and emotions, while maintaining boundaries and consistency of care and ensuring partnership and shared decision making.
	Appropriately and concisely summarise your key findings and communicate these to others.
	Recognise the limitations of assessment where language or cultural influences impact on communication and demonstrate skills in supporting those in whom English is not their first language, including the use of interpreters, providing information in other languages.
	Synthesise complex information and communicate this succinctly and coherently in your written and verbal communications.
	Produce reports that are comprehensive, timely, accurate, appropriate and within limits of expertise.
	Demonstrate proficiency in communicating potentially distressing diagnostic and prognostic information associated with severe and debilitating Mental Disorders with patients, carers and clinicians; develop therapeutic optimism and hope.

High Level Outcome 2.2 (GPC 2)	Demonstrate advanced skills in the psychiatric assessment, formulation, diagnosis and person-centred holistic* management of an appropriate range of presentations in a variety of clinical and non-clinical settings within General Psychiatry.
Theme	Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:
2.2 Clinical Skills	<p>Demonstrate an advanced level of person-centred holistic understanding and approach to mental disorders their presentation and treatment, including taking into consideration gene-environmental interaction, developmental, neuro-developmental, trauma and biological influences.</p> <p>Apply an advanced level of knowledge of human psychology, including the importance of early relationships, attachment styles, parenting and becoming a parent, the impact of adverse childhood experiences, traumatic events, and protective factors and their impact on mental disorders in adulthood.</p> <p>Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of social determinants of health including the lived environment, deprivation and disadvantage and the impact these have on the aetiology and presentation of mental disorder in adults.</p> <p>Apply advanced knowledge of the pharmacodynamics, pharmacokinetics, efficacy, tolerability, interactions, and short and long-term side effects, of all relevant psychotropic medications as appropriate when initiating, reviewing changing or discontinuing regimes.</p> <p>Demonstrate proficiency in receiving a full psychiatric history and performing a Mental State Examination (MSE) for patients presenting from the whole spectrum of mental and neurodevelopmental disorders in adults; in routine, urgent and emergency situations and in various different settings (community, inpatient and acute hospitals).</p> <p>Assess patients from a range of different cultural, spiritual, and religious backgrounds, including asylum seekers and refugees, and demonstrate an understanding of how protected characteristics may impact on clinical presentation.</p> <p>Demonstrate an appropriate understanding of learning and behavioural stages of human development through the lifespan including awareness of normative as well as variations in presentations, for example with neurodevelopmental conditions and across cultures.</p> <p>Conduct relevant physical examinations, investigations and follow them up appropriately including further referrals e.g., to specialist teams where necessary.</p> <p>Diagnose physical health issues, taking into account nutritional, metabolic, endocrine and reproductive factors and substance use and addiction, considering their impact on mental health.</p>

	Demonstrate proficiency in assessing, formulating, and managing the risk to a patient's health, safety and the safety of others in a wide range of psychiatric disorders and in various settings.
	Use a detailed knowledge of psychopathology and recognised, relevant classification systems to make a differential diagnosis.
	Demonstrate proficiency in formulating the information that underpins the presentation of the patient using a systemic approach.
	Demonstrate proficiency in devising safe, effective, collaborative systemic treatment and management plans, depending upon the differential diagnoses, comorbidities, reproductive status, clinical situation and risks in an emergency, as well as in the short, medium and long term.
	Apply contemporary knowledge and principles of psychological therapies where appropriate and recommend psychotherapeutic/psychological treatment.
	Demonstrate proficiency in the prescribing and administering physical treatments in Psychiatry, utilising relevant guidelines.
	Demonstrate proficiency in working across interfaces, between psychiatric specialties, other medical and non-medical specialties and services, demonstrating appropriate liaison and collaboration to manage risks.
	Demonstrate proficiency in developing professional therapeutic alliances with patients to enhance treatment compliance and engagement.
	Safely prescribe evidence-based treatment considering recognised guidelines and standards for adult psychiatric illnesses and involving the patient in the decision making.
High Level Outcome 2.3 (GPC 2)	Apply advanced management skills within General Psychiatry in situations of uncertainty, conflict and complexity across a wide range of clinical and non-clinical contexts.
Theme	Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:
2.3 Complexity & Uncertainty	Demonstrate proficiency in recognising and managing clinical uncertainty, ambiguity and divergent views, complex co-morbidities in those with mental disorders.
	Demonstrate proficiency in managing unconscious dynamics including Transference/Countertransference effectively.

	<p>Move beyond single condition guidelines and protocols, where clinically appropriate, in complex situations, for example those of multimorbidity and polypharmacy, while maintaining the patient's trust.</p> <p>Work within the limits of your own clinical capabilities and seek timely support where necessary.</p> <p>Demonstrate an understanding of individual variation and the impact of social, cultural, religious and spiritual factors, including effects of deprivation, discrimination and racism.</p> <p>Consciously vary from established care pathways where clinically indicated and justify these decisions as needed.</p>
High Level Outcome 3.1 (GPC 3)	Apply advanced knowledge of relevant legislative frameworks across the UK to safeguard patients and safely manage risk within General Psychiatry.
Theme	Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:
3.1 Knowledge of legal and organisational frameworks in your UK jurisdiction	<p>Demonstrate proficiency in the application of current legislation in your UK jurisdiction governing the care and treatment of people with mental disorder, including the use of emergency powers and compulsory treatment aspects.</p> <p>Balance the duty of care to the patient and the protection of others with the restriction of human rights when considering the use of legal power.</p> <p>Meet the requirements to apply for relevant statutory approval where appropriate.</p>
High Level Outcome 3.2 (GPC 3)	Work effectively within the structure and organisation of the NHS, and the wider health and social care landscape.
Theme	Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:
3.2 Working within NHS and organisational structures	Contribute to the development of National Health and Care Services.

High Level Outcome 4 (GPC 4)	Demonstrate leadership and advocacy in mental and physical health promotion and illness prevention for patients within General Psychiatry and the wider community.
Theme	Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:
4.1 Health promotion and illness prevention in community settings	<p>Apply an understanding of the factors contributing to health inequalities, and the social, cultural, spiritual and religious determinants of adult mental health.</p> <p>Promote mental well-being and prevention of Mental Disorders within the context of societal change and social technology, identifying and challenging stigma and discrimination against people with mental disorders.</p> <p>Demonstrate an understanding of the effect of public health measures relating to mental and physical health.</p> <p>Demonstrate proficiency in working collaboratively across agencies to promote mental well-being and quality of life, including in unforeseen circumstances.</p> <p>Ensure that appropriate physical health treatments, including optimal nutrition, lifestyle interventions and social prescribing are appropriately used for improving the outcome of treatment of mental disorders.</p> <p>Participate in the design and delivery of services, taking into account local and national health promotion and illness prevention strategies.</p>
High Level Outcome 5 (GPC 5)	Demonstrate effective team working and leadership skills to work constructively and collaboratively within the complex health and social care systems that support people with mental disorder.
Themes	Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:
5.1 Teamworking	<p>Use your understanding of how individual personal qualities, emotions and behaviours impact on teamworking and the quality of patient care.</p> <p>Demonstrate a working knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of, and the interface between multidisciplinary team members, including peer support and peer working.</p> <p>Understand team dynamics and use effective negotiation skills to resolve conflict and dysfunction.</p> <p>Model, educate and adapt the service, using conflict resolution skills within and between teams, co-producing improvements with patients and carers.</p>

	Actively participate and contribute to the success of a team by working collaboratively with colleagues from diverse backgrounds and experiences and promoting inclusivity.
	Demonstrate proficiency in working with unconscious dynamics between yourself, your patients and other professionals, and be able to manage these within a team.
5.2 Leadership	Recognise and appraise the leadership skills of others in various contexts.
	Demonstrate the development and application of your own leadership skills in a variety of clinical and non-clinical settings.
	Demonstrate inclusive leadership style and awareness of the impact of hierarchy and power within relationships with patients and colleagues.
	Demonstrate an understanding of how your own leadership style and approach impact on others, adapting your approach to meet the needs of the team.
	Lead, take charge, and offer opinions and direction.
	Support colleagues to enhance their performance and facilitate their development.
	Competently manage and lead a team/service, providing consultation and specialist advice to team members and other agencies.
High Level Outcome 6 (GPC 6)	Identify, promote and lead activity to improve the safety and quality of patient care and clinical outcomes of a person with mental disorder.
Themes	Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:
6.1 Patient safety	Understand and apply the principles and systems of clinical governance that assure, promote, and improve safety and quality of patient care.
	Participate in activities that promote reflection and learning from critical incidents.
6.2 Quality improvement	Apply an understanding of the impact of quality improvement activities in improving patient outcomes and system performance.
	Lead on quality improvement activities relevant to your clinical practice, including supervising others.
	Disseminate findings from quality improvement activities, implement and manage relevant change.

High Level Outcome 7 (GPC 7)	<p>Lead on the provision of psychiatric assessment and treatment of those who are identified as being vulnerable within General Psychiatry.</p> <p>Demonstrate advocacy, leadership and collaborative working around vulnerability and safeguarding in patients, their families and their wider community.</p>
Themes	Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:
7.1 Safeguarding	Apply knowledge of individual and systemic factors contributing to vulnerabilities and safeguarding concerns in people of all ages.
	Work within legislative frameworks and local processes to raise and report safeguarding concerns in a timely manner and contribute to safeguarding processes.
	Demonstrate understanding of the impact of victimisation/exploitation and trauma in vulnerable groups.
High Level Outcome 8.1 (GPC 8)	Promote and lead on the provision of effective education and training in clinical, academic and relevant multi-disciplinary settings.
Theme	Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:
8.1 Education & Training	Apply understanding of the principles and methods of learning, education, teaching, training and feedback in a variety of clinical and non-clinical settings.
	Identify your own training needs and pursue your own continuing professional development.
High Level Outcome 8.2 (GPC 8)	Demonstrate effective supervision and mentoring skills as essential aspects of education to promote safe and effective learning environments.
Theme	Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:
8.2 Supervision	Demonstrate the professional qualities of an effective trainer, teaching and guiding individuals and groups, providing safe and effective clinical supervision in emergency and non-emergency situations or settings.
	Actively participate in clinical, psychiatric and educational supervision, demonstrating as appropriate effective skills, creating safe and effective learning environments.
	Use supervision and reflection effectively recognising your skills, limitations and your duty of candour.

	Work with increasing autonomy within a framework of supervision.
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High Level Outcome 9 (GPC 9)	Apply an up-to-date advanced knowledge of research methodology, critical appraisal and best practice guidance to clinical practice, following ethical and good governance principles.
Theme	Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:
9.1 Undertaking research and critical appraisal	Critically evaluate data, papers, reviews, and meta-analyses and implement findings in daily clinical practice.
	Translate research into local clinical practice and disseminate critical appraisal findings to wider communities.
	Apply knowledge of up to date appropriate statistical methods.
	Demonstrate proficiency in the use of objective evidence-based clinical assessment instruments.
	Work within ethical frameworks when carrying out or appraising research.
	Apply the principles of Research Study Protocols where available.
	Demonstrate practical contribution to an ethically approved research study.