



Consultation of RCPsychiS Members – Views on Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Action Plan

Submission date: Thursday 30 March

Psychiatry Working Group

The Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland supports the Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Action Plan's proposed formation of a Psychiatry Working Group.

Our members would welcome more detail on how they can contribute to the work of this group. It is critical that the expertise of the psychiatry workforce is involved in shaping its design and delivery.

In order to facilitate our members' involvement, however, acknowledgement of the strain psychiatrists and educators are under is required.

The workforce action plan states that this group will 'initially look at the recruitment and retention of trainee doctors at Core and Higher Specialty training level, followed by a second phase which will consider the wider workforce including consultant and specialty grade doctors.'

Recruitment is undeniably important. However, neglect of retention will mean that mental health services continue to lose experienced staff members. We have a crisis in Scotland now, and so whilst a concerted effort to improve recruitment is necessary, it alone will not help in the short to medium term, due to the amount of time it takes to train a psychiatrist.

Furthermore, whilst it is important that we retain trainee doctors at Core and Higher Specialty training level, we need to get retention right at all stages of a psychiatric career.

In terms of good practice that we can learn from, the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) offer early career support and resources to GPs during their first five years through their [First5 programme](#).

Different approaches are needed at different career stages. The workforce action plan focuses on retention for those in training and at the end of their career. However, it neglects to address how it intends to support those in the middle of their careers. The Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland is increasingly hearing reports from our members that their colleagues are leaving the profession or giving up substantive positions in favour of locum roles, often as a result of stress. This then adds further pressure on the remaining workforce.

Five Pillars

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Action Plan is structured around five pillars: Plan, Attract, Train, Employ and Nurture.

As an organisation, we agree with these areas of focus. However, we would encourage prioritisation of the Nurture pillar to address the challenges relating to retention within the psychiatric workforce.

Careful Use of Language

The Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland would recommend more careful use of language within the workforce action plan.

For example, in Section A, the workforce action plan rightly calls for 'the stigma around mental health' to be challenged. However, it goes on to say that 'specialist help and support' will be provided 'for mental illness.' It should be made clear that the role of the mental health and wellbeing workforce is to treat people with mental illness, not the illness itself.

Lack of Time to Engage

Finally, the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland would like to draw attention to the very tight deadline that has been given to those who wish to comment on the first draft of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Action Plan. This has meant that we have not been able to fully consult our membership.

As a College, we represent 1400 psychiatrists in Scotland with a vast range of expertise and experience. In the future, we would like to be given the

time to properly engage with our full membership to feed their views into consultation exercises such as this one.

The workforce action plan will have a significant impact upon the way our members work. Therefore, they have a right to shape its contents.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland would recommend that more time is given to stakeholders to properly scrutinise future drafts of the workforce action plan. More meaningful engagement is required if the plan is to meet its aims.