

Royal College of Psychiatrists
Sustainability Scholar Job description



Job title:	Sustainability Scholar
Term of office:	1 year: October 2026 - October 2027
Responsible to:	The Chair of the Planetary Health and Sustainability Committee
Working with:	
Governance	The Registrar
Management	The Chair of the Planetary Health and Sustainability Committee
Elected/appointed:	Appointed
Scope:	UK-wide
Time commitment:	Weekly special interest time and to include 3 committee meetings per year (one in person at Prescot Street)
Salary:	Voluntary, with a dedicated bursary of £800

Job purpose

Sustainability scholars are Higher Specialist Resident doctors or SAS doctors in psychiatry, who use their special interest day each week to work with the RCPsych Planetary Health and Sustainability Committee for a period of one year starting in October 2026.

This is a programme that supports resident and SAS doctors to develop their knowledge of the interface between planetary and mental health supporting development of skills in leadership, advocacy and delivering sustainable quality improvement. Scholars will be expected to develop and pilot a practical project on a sustainable clinical transformation in their local area or join one of the PHSC workgroups to complete a specific piece of work. Scholars get a dedicated study budget for the year.

Background

The RCPsych Sustainability Scholar Programme has been running for over 6 years and was previously known as the Green Scholarship Programme. Previous successful candidates have used their allocated “special interest” professional development time (1 day per week), to sit on the RCPsych Planetary Health and Sustainability Committee and lead on projects

for the College. The areas on which previous scholars have focused have been varied, and have included developing and piloting therapeutic nature-based and horticulture-based interventions, carrying out work on medicines optimisation, developing sustainability training, working on practical guidance of relevance to clinicians, and supporting the work of the CCQI accreditation service. The PHSC are particularly interested in candidates who want to carry out practical projects with clinicians and service users to support their local healthcare organisation to develop more sustainable clinical services.

Key responsibilities

- Contribute to the RCPsych Planetary Health and Sustainability Committee by participating in committee activities and supporting the College's sustainability agenda.
- Lead and deliver a sustainability-focused project within mental health services.
- Develop leadership skills in clinical sustainability through working with others on this project and being an advocate for the values of the PHSC.
- Collaborate with stakeholders within the College, healthcare organisations, and external networks to ensure dissemination of lessons learned from the project carried out and to spread good practice.
- Undertake professional development in planetary health through training, conferences, and project work, making effective use of the programme's study budget and dedicated development time.

Person specification

1. Current Higher Specialist Resident Doctor or SAS Doctor in Psychiatry with eligibility to undertake a dedicated special interest day (approximately one day per week) for the duration of the programme.
2. Demonstrated interest in sustainability, planetary health, environmental issues, or climate change and their interface with mental health and healthcare delivery.
3. Understanding of the relationship between planetary health, mental health, and social justice, and an interest in reducing health inequalities.
4. Strong leadership potential with the ability to initiate, manage, and deliver projects independently and collaboratively.
5. Experience or interest in quality improvement, service development, research, education, or sustainability initiatives within healthcare settings.

6. Effective communication and advocacy skills, including the ability to engage stakeholders, deliver presentations, and influence positive change.
7. Ability to work collaboratively with multidisciplinary teams, professional networks, and external organisations to support sustainability objectives.
8. Excellent organisational and time-management skills, with the ability to balance scholarship commitments alongside clinical responsibilities.
9. Commitment to personal and professional development and willingness to participate in relevant training, conferences, and committee activities.
10. Enthusiasm for developing practical, sustainable, prevention-focused solutions that improve mental health services and patient outcomes.

Scope

Some member roles have a global or UK-wide remit, whereas others are nation or region specific. If your role has a UK-wide remit, please be aware that health and social care, education and training, local government, some taxation, justice and policing are all devolved powers for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. To reflect this, the RCPsych has Devolved Councils and structures in each nation which lead the College's engagement on these matters, and devolved policy can often vary to meet national requirements.

If you have any questions or need any guidance about the situation in any of the four nations, please speak to your College staff contact.

Support and Supervision:

The successful scholars will be matched with one or more members of the RCPsych Planetary Health and Sustainability Committee who will mentor and supervise the resident or SAS doctor throughout the year. The committee has excellent links with organisations such as the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare¹, UK Health Alliance on Climate Change², Greener NHS³, and other organisations committed to sustainable practice in health services.

¹ <https://sustainablehealthcare.org.uk/>

² <http://www.ukhealthalliance.org/>

³ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/>

The College Values

Courage

- Champion the specialty of psychiatry and its benefits to patients
- Take every opportunity to promote and influence the mental health agenda
- Take pride in our organisation and demonstrate self-belief
- Promote parity of esteem
- Uphold the dignity of those affected by mental illness, intellectual disabilities and developmental disorders

Innovation

- Embrace innovation and improve ways to deliver services
- Challenge ourselves and be open to new ideas
- Seek out and lead on new, evidence-based, ways of working
- Have the confidence to take considered risks
- Embrace the methodology of Quality Improvement to improve mental health services and the work of the College.

Respect

- Promote diversity and challenge inequalities
- Behave respectfully – and with courtesy – towards everyone
- Challenge bullying and inappropriate behaviour
- Value everyone's input and ideas equally
- Consider how own behaviour might affect others
- Respect the environment and promote sustainability.

Collaboration

- Work together as One College – incorporating all members, employees, patients and carers
- Work professionally and constructively with partner organisations
- Consult all relevant audiences to achieve effective outcomes for the College
- Work together with patients and carers as equal partners
- Be transparent, wherever possible and appropriate.

Learning

- Learn from all experiences
- Share our learning and empower others to do the same
- Value and encourage personal feedback
- Use feedback to make continuous improvements
- Create an enabling environment where everyone is listened to, regardless of seniority
- Positively embrace new ways of working.

Excellence

- Deliver outstanding service to members, patients, carers and other stakeholders
- Promote excellent membership and employee experience
- Always seek to improve on own performance
- Promote professionalism by acting with integrity and behaving responsibly
- Demonstrate accountability in all that we do
- Uphold the College's 'Core Values for Psychiatrists'.

INTERNAL COLLEGE CONTACT:

- Department: Governance
- Name of Contact and Email: theo.roberts@rcpsych.ac.uk
- Job Title: Senior Governance Manager