

# Forensic Psychiatry

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

Version 1.0

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# Purpose Statement

The purpose of Forensic Psychiatry is the assessment, care and treatment of mentally disordered offenders and others requiring similar services. Risk assessment and management and the prevention of further victimisation are core elements of this.

Forensic psychiatrists assess and treat patients with mental disorders who have shown a capacity to cause serious harm to other people, which is usually related to their mental disorder. They have often caused harm to themselves and, commonly, others have harmed them. The patients tend to suffer from multiple mental disorders, particularly including severe and enduring mental disorders, and substance use disorders. Treatment is aimed at managing mental disorders but also reducing risk to others and reducing offending behaviour. Patients usually have criminal convictions and enter forensic mental health services from prison. Forensic psychiatrists work most often in secure healthcare settings, but also in the community and in custodial environments, treating patients directly and advising other agencies, particularly criminal justice agencies and criminal courts. Issues of risk occur in all psychiatric specialties, so forensic psychiatrists also provide consultation and advice to their non- forensic psychiatric colleagues.

The need for psychiatrists across the specialties is growing throughout the UK.<sup>1 2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> It is predicted that there will be 2 million more people with mental health conditions by 2030.

In 1998 the reported prevalence of mental disorder among male prisoners was twenty times that in the general population, and the rate among female prisoners is even higher.<sup>4</sup> The prison population has risen steadily since the middle of the last century and is forecast to continue to rise over the coming years.<sup>5</sup> The rates of psychiatric morbidity among offender populations in the community is also high<sup>6</sup>, which is reflected in the recent development of a range of clinical services aiming to meet the needs of community offender populations, including criminal justice liaison teams, services to support offenders with mental disorders in the community, and enhanced community forensic psychiatric services.

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<sup>1</sup> [Facing the Facts, Shaping the Future – a draft health and care workforce strategy for England to 2027](#). Public Health England, 2017

<sup>2</sup> [The State of Care in Mental Health Services 2014 to 2017](#). Care Quality Commission, 2017

<sup>3</sup> [Community Mental Health Survey 2018](#). NHS Patient Survey Programme statistical release, Care Quality Commission, 2018

<sup>4</sup> [Guidance for Commissioners of forensic mental health services. Joint Commissioning Panel for Mental Health, 2013](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Prison Population Projections 2019 to 2024, England and Wales. Ministry of Justice, 2018](#)

<sup>6</sup> [An Investigation into the Prevalence of Mental Health Disorder and Patterns of Health Service Access in a Probation Population. Criminal Justice and Health Research Group, University of Lincoln](#)

The NHS Long Term Plan<sup>7</sup> for England is focused on population health systems and forensic 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-centred care. The depth and mastery accessible within the forensic psychiatry training curriculum affords trainee doctors opportunities to achieve these capabilities.

The Welsh Government's ten-year strategy to improve mental health and well-being<sup>8</sup> has identified a range of measures that are required to ensure equality of care for people within the criminal justice system. These include timely transfer from prison to secure hospitals; development of criminal justice liaison services; timely advice to courts; and multidisciplinary risk assessment and case management. It also advocates the redeployment of resources to develop local secure mental health services in order to reduce out of area placements.

The Scottish Mental Health Strategy<sup>9</sup> identifies a need to increase mental health staffing in prisons in order to improve the mental health of prisoners, including young offenders. It recognises the importance of continuity of care for prisoners' mental health during the transition back to a community setting.

In Northern Ireland, where there are higher levels of mental ill-health than any other region in the UK<sup>10</sup>, the need to develop improved care pathways encompassing secure mental health care and forensic mental health care in the community has been recognised.<sup>11</sup>

These current developments in the delivery of mental health care are accompanied by a changing legislative environment: a new Mental Health Act in Northern Ireland is awaiting implementation; a major review of the Mental Health Act in England and Wales has recently been published<sup>12</sup> and a review of the Mental Health Act in Scotland is underway. The broad capabilities included within the forensic psychiatry curriculum will enable forensic psychiatrists to adapt to changing healthcare environments in the future.

Training in Forensic Psychiatry begins with recruitment to and completion of the Core Psychiatry training programme and achieving membership of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Selection into a Forensic Psychiatry training post is through competitive interview and is an indicative three-year programme (Whole Time Equivalent) in order to achieve the required

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<sup>7</sup> [NHS Long Term Plan. NHS, 2019](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Together for Mental Health – a strategy for mental health and well-being in Wales. Welsh Government, 2012](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027. Scottish Government, 2017](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Making Life Better. Northern Ireland Assembly, 2017](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Evaluation of the 2009-2011 Bamford Action Plan. Dept. of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 2012](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Modernising the Mental Health Act: increasing choice, reducing compulsion. Department of Health and Social Care, 2018](#)

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 Forensic Psychiatrist to specialise in the assessment, diagnosis, treatment and management of mental disorders in adults, specifically those posing risks of violence or involved with the Criminal Justice System. This includes the delivery of evidence-based biological, psychological and social interventions in a wide range of secure and non-secure settings within mental health services.

The programme builds on the clinical and professional capabilities attained in core psychiatry training, including assessment (including of risk), diagnosis and treatment as well as communication, leadership and management skills, teaching and research, service development and quality improvement. The forensic curriculum also includes capabilities relating to the use of security and relevant legislation to deliver safe and effective treatment, an understanding of the causes of offending behaviour, and the perspective of victims of crime.

The curriculum provides a framework for training, which enables trainees to attain these essential specialty-specific and generic professional capabilities, through development of the professional values, behaviours, knowledge, and skills required in order to provide high-quality, evidence-based forensic mental health care.

Trainees will be expected to rotate through a variety of approved training posts to gain experience and capabilities in a variety of clinical settings. Trainees will be expected to undertake acute, unscheduled work while working on-call. This on-call work will include providing psychiatric support to forensic or non-forensic inpatient or community services, while under supervision of an on-call consultant psychiatrist. A Consultant Forensic psychiatrist will be able to work with and manage mental health conditions for the whole range of forensic patients, including acute and long-term mental disorders, in health care or custodial settings of any security level or in the community.

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

- General psychiatry
- Child and Adolescent psychiatry
- Psychiatry of Learning Disability
- Medical Psychotherapy
- Old Age psychiatry

Forensic psychiatry has interdependencies with other specialties which are limited in number, but which are of significance. As a specialty within psychiatry, there are capabilities which are common to all psychiatric specialties. The recommended three years spent in specialty training will provide for the development of transferable skills and experience as well as specialised skills and experience in Forensic Psychiatry.

During training in Forensic Psychiatry, a trainee will develop the knowledge and skills needed to have overall responsibility for patient care, lead a team, manage complexity, respond to psychiatric emergencies and manage the physical health needs of their patients. They will also be able to understand governance and overall structures and know how to use relevant legislation. The skills and knowledge that trainees develop and demonstrate in their training have not changed in the new curriculum.

Trainees may undertake dual training with another psychiatric specialty, specifically general psychiatry, child and adolescent psychiatry or medical psychotherapy. These 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, which is the standard recommended training time for training in two psychiatric specialties.

The Forensic Psychiatry learning outcomes are mapped to the Generic Professional Capabilities Framework (GPCs) so the commonalities with other psychiatric specialty curricula and those capabilities relevant to other medical specialties are clear.

In particular, through attainment of the High Level 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 provides opportunities to develop the expertise to work with patients and understand the need to signpost to other relevant specialties where appropriate.

***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.***

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, <a href="#">Core Values for Psychiatrists (CR204)</a> and other relevant faculty guidance.
Themes	Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:
<b>1.1 Professional Relationships</b>	<p>Work collaboratively with patients, families and carers of all ages and colleagues while managing complex risk and victim dynamics.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Consistently demonstrate and promote in others a holistic approach to patient care that is empathic, compassionate and respectful, while remaining realistically optimistic, honest, mindful of human rights and maintaining boundaries.</p> <p>Demonstrate flexibility, leadership, use of initiative, prioritisation, and adaptability, effectively managing your time and resources and using new technologies as appropriate.</p> <p>Set and maintain proper professional boundaries with legal professionals, the justice system and other agencies.</p>
<b>1.2 Professional Standards</b>	<p>Understand the impact of workload, patient and organisational dynamics on your own and others' well-being.</p> <p>Use reflective practice in supervision effectively yourself, and while promoting and facilitating it for all clinical staff.</p> <p>Develop 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.</p> <p>Use the method of receiving, reflecting and responding to understand and manage the emotional impact and public perception of the work on the individual and the team, and the importance of reflective practice in managing this.</p> <p>Consistently demonstrate a positive and conscientious approach to the completion of your work.</p>

	Maintain the appropriate professional standards while working clinically, as a leader within healthcare organisations, with justice system partners, and in courts.
	Demonstrate an understanding of the principles of sustainability and how they underpin sustainable psychiatric practice.
<b>High Level Outcome 2.1 (GPC 2)</b>	<b>Demonstrate advanced communication and interpersonal skills when engaging with patients, their families, carers of all ages, their wider community, colleagues and other professionals.</b>
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:</b>
<b>2.1 Communication</b>	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.
	Adapt your style while remaining authentic, to take account of individual communication sensory and cognitive needs, as well as the ethnic, social cultural, spiritual and religious context, and ensure consistently that communication has been effective.
	Demonstrate skills in supporting those in whom English is not their first language, including the use of interpreters, and providing information in other languages.
	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.
	Demonstrate a high level of clear and salient written and oral communication in clinical and medico-legal settings.
	Consistently demonstrate unambiguous and courteous communication with patients, their families, carers of all ages, colleagues and others, including in the justice system, recognising problematic communication and being able to mediate.
	Understand the ways in which you, patients and others communicate verbally and non-verbally, including communication between organisations or between organisations and individuals.

<b>High Level Outcome 2.2 (GPC 2)</b>	<b>Demonstrate advanced skills in the psychiatric assessment, formulation, diagnosis and person-centred<sup>13</sup> holistic<sup>14</sup> management of an appropriate range of presentations in a variety of clinical and non-clinical settings within Forensic Psychiatry.</b>
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:</b>
<b>2.2 Clinical Skills</b>	<p>Consistently take a person-centred holistic approach to the clinical assessment and management of people with mental disorders who show risk of harm to self or others, whether in hospital, custodial or community settings.</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>Understand the ways in which mental disorders or symptoms of mental disorder may be associated with risk or problematic behaviours.</p> <p>Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of relational security in providing safe and effective treatment, and its relationship to physical and procedural security.</p> <p>Understand the relationships between addiction or problematic substance use, mental disorders, and offending.</p> <p>Demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the assessment of risk of harm to others in the context of mental disorder.</p> <p>Understand the role of different levels of physical and procedural security in providing safe and effective treatment for mental disorder and apply this knowledge to optimise the care of your patients.</p> <p>Understand developmental pathways to criminal behaviour and to mental disorders, including risk factors, protective factors and the importance of adverse childhood events.</p> <p>Apply criminological theories to your clinical practice.</p>

<sup>13</sup> **Person-centred** – focuses on the patient as a person, with ‘personhood’ being its superordinate principle. Takes into account all protected characteristics in doing this.

<sup>14</sup> **Holistic model / approach** – understanding and applying the psychological, biological, social, cultural and spiritual context in the delivery of person-centred mental healthcare.



	Undertake comprehensive assessments of adults who show risk of harm to self or others and may have a mental disorder, in a range of settings, including secure and non-secure inpatient services, custodial settings and in the community.
	Undertake comprehensive assessments of patients presenting with mental disorder or problematic trait.
	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.
	Assess and manage the general physical health of your patients, taking into consideration of nutritional, metabolic, endocrine and reproductive factors and disorders, and the physical and mental impact of substance use and addiction and restricted freedom on clinical presentation.
	Use a detailed knowledge of psychopathology and the classification of mental disorders to make a differential diagnosis of mental disorders.
	Assimilate and synthesise person-centred holistic information into a coherent and structured case formulation.
	Use formulation to devise a safe, effective, collaborative and co-productive management plan to ensure continuity of care in the immediate, short and longer term.
	Use restrictive practices appropriately when they are necessary to provide safe and effective treatment for your patients.
	Recognise and work with unconscious dynamics between yourself, your patients and other professionals.
	Develop, and lead the delivery of, a comprehensive treatment plan which includes person-centre holistic interventions delivered by a multidisciplinary team, through the acute, rehabilitation and maintenance phases of recovery from mental disorder.
	Develop, and lead the delivery of, a comprehensive risk management plan, which encompasses health professionals and non-health agencies appropriately.
	Safely prescribe medication and other physical treatments for mental disorder, reviewing and adjusting according to response, in line with the best applicable evidence base.

	Develop and lead the delivery of a comprehensive treatment plan which includes evidence-based psychological therapies for mental disorder and for problematic substance use.
	Lead a clinical multi-disciplinary team in assessing and managing patients who have been charged with serious violent offences from arrest by the police through to final disposal by the court.
	Lead a clinical multi-disciplinary team in managing restricted patients from final disposal by the court towards conditional discharge.
	Practice psychiatry in a prison, taking into account the nature of the prison environment, adapting skills accordingly, and recognising what can and can't be achieved.
<b>High Level Outcome 2.3 (GPC 2)</b>	<b>Apply advanced management skills within Forensic Psychiatry in situations of uncertainty, conflict and complexity across a wide range of clinical and non-clinical contexts.</b>
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:</b>
<b>2.3 Complexity &amp; Uncertainty</b>	Demonstrate an understanding of unconscious processes, including transference, countertransference, projection and splitting and the impact of these on yourself and others.
	Recognise and acknowledge uncertainty, conflicting information and complex co-morbidities and work with others to develop safe management plans to reduce the risk of harm.
	Demonstrate an understanding of individual variation and the impact of social, cultural spiritual and religious factors, including effects of deprivation, discrimination and racism.
	Apply knowledge of ethical theory consistently in clinical practice.
	Manage the complexities of diversity in restrictive settings and forensic psychiatric practice.
	Work effectively across custodial, inpatient and community settings and the justice system, understanding the impact of setting on the presentation and treatment of patients, and managing the interfaces.
	Address complex clinical or non-clinical situations so as to provide a balanced response and contain the anxieties of others.

<b>High Level Outcome 3.1 (GPC 3)</b>	<b>Apply advanced knowledge of relevant legislative frameworks across the UK to safeguard patients and safely manage risk within Forensic Psychiatry.</b>
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:</b>
<b>3.1 Knowledge of legal and organisational frameworks in your UK jurisdiction</b>	Demonstrate a general knowledge of relevant criminal law, and a comprehensive knowledge of those aspects relevant to mental disorder as applied in your UK jurisdiction.
	Demonstrate advanced knowledge of how clinical services and individual patient care pathways are organised and funded across the healthcare sector.
	Apply, current legislation, case law and procedural rules in your UK jurisdiction governing the care and treatment of people with mental disorders.
	Apply the standards and requirements governing the provision of evidence in medico-legal settings as applied in your UK jurisdiction.
	Apply clinical descriptions to specific legal definitions and tests.
	Recognise the potential for misuse of clinical concepts in a legal context, particularly including the use of classification systems of mental disorder and the communication of risk.
	Meet the requirements to apply for relevant statutory approval where appropriate.
<b>High Level Outcome 3.2 (GPC 3)</b>	<b>Work effectively within the structure and organisation of the NHS, and the wider health and social care landscape.</b>
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:</b>
<b>3.2 Working within NHS and organisational structures</b>	Demonstrate an advanced knowledge of the structure of the prison estate, other custodial environments, and the wider criminal justice system.
	Demonstrate an advanced awareness of the impact of political and social factors on patient care.

<b>High Level Outcome 4 (GPC 4)</b>	<b>Demonstrate leadership and advocacy in mental and physical health promotion and illness prevention for patients within Forensic Psychiatry and the wider community.</b>
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:</b>
<b>4.1 Health promotion and illness prevention in community settings</b>	Apply advanced understanding of the range of factors that contribute towards the development of, and protect against, offending behaviours and mental disorders, including understanding the role of trauma, in clinical practice.
	Identify and challenge stigma and discrimination against people with mental disorders and offending.
	Understand the impact of secure care and non-health custodial settings on health promotion and illness prevention.
	Act as a leader, advocate and educator for health and non-health professionals in promotion and illness prevention.

<b>High Level Outcome 5 (GPC 5)</b>	<b>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.</b>
<b>Themes</b>	<b>Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:</b>
<b>5.1 Teamworking</b>	Apply an advanced understanding of how teams develop and work effectively, including the role of the forensic psychiatrist in the team, while recognising divergent views and resolving conflict.
	Motivate patients and the team to follow treatment plans and maintain realistic therapeutic optimism.
	Work with team feedback to recognise excellence and promote improvement.
<b>5.2 Leadership</b>	Provide effective leadership when working with a multidisciplinary clinical team, valuing the leadership of others in the team according to the task in hand.
	Lead, support and supervise others in research and service development
	Demonstrate inclusive leadership style and awareness of the impact of hierarchy and power within relationships with patients and colleagues.
	Provide clinical supervision and mentor colleagues.

	Provide effective clinical leadership and represent a therapeutic perspective when working in prisons and with other non-healthcare agencies.
	Support colleagues, patients, and others following traumatic incidents.
<b>High Level Outcome 6 (GPC 6)</b>	<b>Identify, promote and lead activity to improve the safety and quality of patient care and clinical outcomes of a person with mental disorder.</b>
<b>Themes</b>	<b>Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:</b>
<b>6.1 Patient safety</b>	Lead effective clinical governance within a clinical team and within the wider service.
	Promote a therapeutic and open culture in secure environments for the benefit and safety of patients and staff.
	Apply the principles of investigating adverse clinical events.
<b>6.2 Quality improvement</b>	Use accepted quality improvement methodologies to identify and implement improvements within your service, including supervising others, and involving patients and other stakeholders.
<b>High Level Outcome 7 (GPC 7)</b>	<b>Lead on the provision of psychiatric assessment and treatment of those who are identified as being vulnerable within Forensic Psychiatry.</b> <b>Demonstrate advocacy, leadership and collaborative working around vulnerability and safeguarding in patients, their families and their wider community.</b>
<b>Themes</b>	<b>Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:</b>
<b>7.1 Safeguarding</b>	Demonstrate specialist knowledge and understanding of factors that may lead to increased vulnerability to harm from others in healthcare, custodial and community settings.
	Work within legislative frameworks and local processes to anticipate and report safeguarding concerns, providing leadership when necessary.
	Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the impact of victimisation and trauma in vulnerable groups.
	Work with others to proactively protect vulnerable people from harm.

<b>High Level Outcome 8.1 (GPC 8)</b>	<b>Promote and lead on the provision of effective education and training in clinical, academic and relevant multi-disciplinary settings.</b>
Theme	Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:
<b>8.1 Education &amp; Training</b>	Plan, organise and deliver educational and training activities using a range of learning methods for medical, other healthcare or justice system colleagues, or for patients and carers.
	Consistently and proactively work to maintain an effective learning environment in the workplace.
<b>High Level Outcome 8.2 (GPC 8)</b>	<b>Demonstrate effective supervision and mentoring skills as essential aspects of education to promote safe and effective learning environments.</b>
Theme	Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:
<b>8.2 Supervision</b>	Provide safe clinical supervision and developmental feedback to medical and non-medical colleagues.
<b>High Level Outcome 9 (GPC 9)</b>	<b>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.</b>
Theme	Key Capabilities (KCs). By the end of ST6, you will be able to:
<b>9.1 Undertaking research and critical appraisal</b>	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.