
General (Adult) Psychiatry

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

Version 1.0

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Purpose Statement

Adult 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

The NHS Long term plan⁹ is focused on population health systems and Adult 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 Adult Psychiatry training curriculum affords trainee doctors opportunities to achieve these capabilities.

Training in Adult Psychiatry begins with recruitment to the training programme, after successful completion of Core Psychiatry Training and the RCPsych examinations. It is recommended that Adult 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 Adult Psychiatrist to specialise in the assessment, diagnosis, treatment, management and prevention of mental disorders in adults. This includes evidence-based psychological, biomedical 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 Adult Psychiatry posts to gain experience and capabilities in a variety of clinical settings. A Consultant Adult 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.

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

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

Adult Psychiatry has limited interdependencies with other specialties. During training in Adult 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 Adult 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 Adult 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 Adult 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.

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 Adult 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-centred holistic 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 Adult 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.

References

- 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
- 9 [The NHS Long Term Plan](#), NHS, 2019
- 10 [Specialised settings: Eating disorders, Early intervention teams, Assertive outreach teams, Perinatal, Neuro, Access team](#)
- 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

General (Adult) Psychiatry Curriculum

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

By the end of ST6 you will:

GPC	High Level Outcomes (HLOs)	Themes	Key Capabilities (KCs)
1	<p>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.</p>	<p>1a) Professional Relationships</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>Work collaboratively with patients, families, carers of all ages and colleagues respecting their autonomy, diversity and valuing their contribution.</p> <p>Consistently demonstrate a holistic and person-centred clinical approach (which includes psychological, biological and social) to adult patients that is honest, empathic, compassionate, and respects their dignity while maintaining therapeutic optimism, while remaining realistically optimistic, honest and maintaining boundaries.</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to be flexible, lead, use initiative, be able to prioritise, and be adaptable, effectively managing your time and resources including the use of new technologies.</p>
		<p>1b) Professional Standards</p>	<p>Understand the impact of workload, patient and organisational dynamics on your own well-being.</p> <p>Develop strategies to take care of your wellbeing, seeking timely support and guidance.</p> <p>Effectively use available technologies where appropriate and necessary, taking into account knowledge of the complexities, limitations and demands of remote working on adult psychiatric practice.</p>

			<p>Demonstrate proficiency in the use of technologies where appropriate in psychiatric practice.</p> <p>Consistently demonstrate a positive and conscientious approach to the completion of your work.</p> <p>Recognise the importance of reflective practice towards understanding the emotional impact of the work on the individual and team, including the impact of suicide, trauma, and homicide.</p> <p>Use supervision and reflection effectively recognising your skills, limitations and your duty of candour.</p> <p>Make clear, accurate and contemporaneous records.</p> <p>Adapt your practice and the work of your team to the evolution of evidence and services for adults, co-producing changes with patients and carers.</p> <p>Promote the specialism of adult mental health including acting as an advocate for your patients and their carers.</p> <p>Maintain the appropriate professional standards while working clinically, as a leader within healthcare organisations.</p> <p>Work with increasing autonomy within a framework of supervision.</p>
2	<p>Demonstrate advanced communication and interpersonal skills when engaging with patients, their families, carers of all ages, their wider community, colleagues and other professionals.</p>	<p>2a) Communication</p>	<p>Demonstrate advanced interpersonal communication skills in order to appropriately diagnose, formulate a treatment plan and deliver it.</p> <p>Communicate effectively in person, using technology or via third parties.</p> <p>Appropriately and concisely summarise your key findings and communicate these to others.</p> <p>Demonstrate skills in supporting those in whom English is not their first language, including the use of interpreters, and providing information in other languages.</p>

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.

Synthesise complex information and communicate this succinctly and coherently in your written and verbal communications.

Adapt communication formats to the needs of patients, families, carers of all ages and others.

Recognise the limitations of assessment where language or cultural influences impact on communication.

Produce reports that are comprehensive, timely, accurate, appropriate and within limits of expertise.

Demonstrate effective communication and shared decision making with patients, taking into consideration their ideas, values, concerns and expectations.

Explain the outcome of assessment, treatment and management to patients, families, and carers of all ages as well as relevant others.

Adept in communicating potentially distressing diagnostic and prognostic information associated with severe and debilitating mental illnesses with patients, carers and clinicians; develop therapeutic optimism and hope.

Demonstrate proficiency in working with unconscious dynamics between yourself, your patients and other professionals, and be able to manage these within a team.

Demonstrate an understanding of individual variation and the impact of social and cultural, factors, including effects of deprivation, discrimination and racism.

			<p>Demonstrate proficiency in recognising and managing clinical uncertainty, ambiguity and divergent views, complex co-morbidities in those with mental disorders and associated risks.</p> <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>Consciously vary from established care pathways where clinically indicated and justify these decisions as needed.</p> <p>Work within the limits of your own clinical capabilities and seek timely support where necessary.</p>
	<p>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 Adult Psychiatry.</p>	<p>2b) Clinical Skills</p>	<p>Demonstrate an advanced level of person-centred holistic (which includes biological psychological and social) understanding and approach to mental disorders, including taking into consideration gene-environmental interaction, developmental, trauma and biological influences on adult mental disorders.</p> <p>Demonstrate detailed knowledge of person-centred holistic (which includes biological, psychological, social) and cultural factors which influence the presentation, course and treatment of a wide range of adult psychiatric conditions.</p> <p>Apply an advanced level of knowledge of human psychology, including the importance of early relationships, attachment styles, parenting, the impact of adverse childhood experiences, traumatic events, and protective factors and their impact on mental disorders in adulthood.</p> <p>Demonstrate an advanced knowledge of the effect becoming a parent may have on mental disorders and the effect mental disorders may have on parenting.</p>

Demonstrate an appropriate understanding of neurodevelopmental conditions during the life span, and their contribution to mental disorders in adulthood.

Demonstrate that you have 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.

Demonstrate advanced knowledge of the pharmacodynamics, pharmacokinetics, efficacy, tolerability, interactions, and short and long-term side effects, of all relevant psychotropic medications.

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).

Demonstrate skills in managing patients with dual diagnoses.

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 initiating, reviewing changing or discontinuing psychotropic medication regimes where appropriate.

Demonstrate proficiency in devising safe, effective, collaborative systemic treatment and management plans; depending upon the differential

diagnoses, comorbidities, clinical situation and risks in an emergency, as well as in the short, medium and long term.

Demonstrate proficiency in recommending psychotherapeutic/psychological treatment.

Demonstrate proficiency in the prescribing and administering of ECT and other physical treatments in Psychiatry, utilising relevant guidelines.

Apply contemporary knowledge and principles of psychological therapies where appropriate.

Demonstrate proficiency in managing Transference/Countertransference and know how to manage these effectively and safely to help with ongoing management.

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.

Seek appropriate guidance and refer to the appropriate specialist teams if relevant.

Assess the general health of your patients, taking into account the impact of their physical health on their mental health needs and vice versa. This assessment should include consideration of nutritional, metabolic, and endocrine factors and disorders, and the physical and mental impact of substance use and addiction on clinical presentation.

Assess those from a range of different cultural, spiritual, and religious backgrounds and demonstrate an understanding of how [protected characteristics](#) may impact on clinical presentation.

			<p>Diagnose physical health issues, considering their impact on mental health, taking into account nutritional, metabolic, reproductive, endocrine factors and substance use and addiction.</p> <p>Conduct relevant physical examinations, investigations and follow them up appropriately including further referrals where necessary.</p> <p>Safely prescribe evidence-based treatment considering recognised guidelines and standards for adult psychiatric illnesses and involving the patient in the decision making.</p>
	<p>Apply advanced management skills within General Adult Psychiatry in situations of uncertainty, conflict and complexity across a wide range of clinical and non-clinical contexts.</p>	<p>2c) Complexity & Uncertainty</p>	<p>Demonstrate proficiency in working with unconscious dynamics between yourself, your patients and other professionals, and be able to manage these within a team.</p> <p>Demonstrate an understanding of individual variation and the impact of social and cultural, factors, including effects of deprivation, discrimination and racism.</p> <p>Demonstrate proficiency in recognising and managing clinical uncertainty, ambiguity and divergent views, complex co-morbidities in those with mental disorders and associated risks.</p> <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>Consciously vary from established care pathways where clinically indicated and justify these decisions as needed.</p> <p>Work within the limits of your own clinical capabilities and seek timely support where necessary.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Apply advanced knowledge of relevant legislative frameworks across the UK to safeguard</p>	<p>3a) Knowledge of legal and organisational</p>	<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>

	patients and safely manage risk within General Adult Psychiatry.	<i>frameworks in your UK jurisdiction</i>	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 powers.
	Work effectively within the structure and organisation of the NHS, and the wider health and social care landscape.	<i>3b) Working within NHS and organisational structures</i>	Contribute to the development of National Health and Care Services.
4	Demonstrate leadership and advocacy in mental and physical health promotion and illness prevention for patients within General Adult Psychiatry and the wider community.	<i>4a) Health promotion and illness prevention in community settings</i>	<p>Demonstrate and apply an understanding of the factors contributing to health inequalities, and the social and cultural determinants of adult mental health.</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>Identify and challenge stigma and discrimination against people with mental disorders.</p> <p>Continue to promote mental well-being and prevention of mental illness within the context of societal change and social technology.</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>
5	Demonstrate effective team working and leadership skills to work constructively and	<i>5a) Teamworking</i>	Use your understanding of how individual personal qualities, emotions and behaviours of both yourself and your team, impact on teamworking and the quality of patient care.

<p>collaboratively within the complex health and social care systems that support people with mental disorder.</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, including conflict resolution within and between teams, co-producing improvements with patients and carers.</p> <p>Actively participate and contribute to the work and success of a team, including managing change.</p> <p>Work collaboratively with colleagues from diverse backgrounds and experiences and promote inclusivity.</p>
	<p>5b) Leadership</p>	<p>Recognise and appraise the leadership skills of others in various contexts.</p> <p>Understand how your own leadership style and approach impact on others and demonstrate an ability to adapt your approach to meet the needs of the team.</p> <p>Demonstrate the development and application of your own leadership skills in a variety of clinical and non-clinical settings.</p> <p>Demonstrate willingness to lead, take charge, and offer opinions and direction</p> <p>Support colleagues to enhance their performance and support their development.</p> <p>Display willingness and availability to give clinical supervision to colleagues at all times.</p> <p>Demonstrate inclusive leadership style and awareness of the impact of hierarchy and power within relationships with patients and colleagues.</p>

			Demonstrate ability to competently manage and lead a team/service; provide consultation and specialist advice to team members and other agencies.
6	Identify, promote and lead activity to improve the safety and quality of patient care and clinical outcomes of a person with mental disorder.	6a) Patient safety	Understand and use the principles and engage with the 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.
		6b) Quality improvement	Understand how Quality Improvement can lead to better patient outcomes and system performance. Undertake/lead quality improvement activities/initiatives relevant to your clinical practice, including supervising others. Disseminate findings/implement relevant changes.
7	Lead on the provision of psychiatric assessment and treatment of those who are identified as being vulnerable within General Adult Psychiatry. Demonstrate advocacy, leadership and collaborative working around vulnerability and safeguarding in patients, their families and their wider community.	7a) Safeguarding	Demonstrate knowledge of the individual and systemic factors contributing to and recognising vulnerabilities and safeguarding concerns in people of all ages. Understand the impact of victimisation/exploitation and trauma in vulnerable groups. Work within legislative frameworks and local processes to raise and report safeguarding concerns in a timely manner and contribute to safeguarding processes.

8	<p>Promote and lead on the provision of effective education and training in clinical, academic and relevant multi-disciplinary settings.</p>	<p>8a) Education & Training</p>	<p>Demonstrate knowledge of principles and methods of learning, education, teaching and training, and apply these principles in a variety of clinical and non-clinical settings.</p> <p>Understand your own training needs and pursue your own continuing professional development.</p> <p>Demonstrate an awareness of the principles of feedback and be able to implement this knowledge in the giving and receiving of feedback related to your teaching and learning activities.</p> <p>Demonstrate the professional qualities of an effective trainer; be able to teach and guide individuals and groups; Provide safe and effective clinical supervision in emergency and non-emergency situations or settings.</p> <p>Actively take part in clinical, psychiatric and educational supervision; demonstrate effective supervision and mentoring skills and promote safe and effective learning environment.</p>
	<p>Demonstrate effective supervision and mentoring skills as essential aspects of education to promote safe and effective learning environments.</p>	<p>8b) Supervision</p>	<p>Actively take part in clinical, psychiatric and educational supervision; demonstrate effective supervision and mentoring skills and promote safe and effective learning environment.</p>
9	<p>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.</p>	<p>9a) Undertaking research and critical appraisal</p>	<p>Critically evaluate data, papers, reviews, and meta-analyses; and implement findings in daily clinical practice.</p> <p>Translate research into local clinical practice, and disseminate critical appraisal findings to wider communities.</p> <p>Apply knowledge of up to date appropriate statistical methods.</p>

Demonstrate proficiency in the use of objective evidenced 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.

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