

Assistant Practitioners for Mental Health

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A Workforce Development Project for the North of England
led by Health Education England North West
in collaboration with Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust

Developing people

for health and

healthcare

Agenda

Background
The Role of an Assistant Practitioner
The Transformational Contribution of the Assistant Practitioner
What the Project has achieved so far
What we have learnt

APs in Mental Health Services

GEOGRAPHY	No of APs *AfC Band 4 Only	Physical Health	Mental Health	% of People Working in Mental Health Services
NORTH WEST	1709	1547	162	9.5%
NORTH	3484	3053	431	12%
NATIONAL	7900	6871	1029	13%

Comments:

- Discrepancy in the development of the AP role between physical health and mental health settings
- Why? Awareness? Relevance? Need? Engagement?

The Role of Assistant Practitioner

- A trained senior clinical care support worker who competently delivers health and social care to and for people. They have a required level of knowledge and skill beyond that of the traditional healthcare assistant or support worker ([Skills for Health, 2015](#)).
- Band 4 NHS Careers Framework
- Designed to work across patient pathways and can offer additional flexibility in the delivery of new care models.
- Able to work across professional boundaries e.g. nursing, AHP, social work
- [The Assistant Practitioners in England Report \(SfH, 2015\)](#) identifies that stakeholders can clearly articulate the benefits of introducing the AP role, which include :
 - Contribution improvements in quality, productivity and efficiency
 - Able to work in a range of clinical, community and laboratory situations
 - Increasingly seen in roles that cross health and social care and professional boundaries.

Assistant Practitioner v's Nurse Associate - What's the Difference?

Nursing Associate: Bridges the gap between health & care assistants and **registered nurses**. A stand-alone role that provides a career pathway into graduate level nursing.

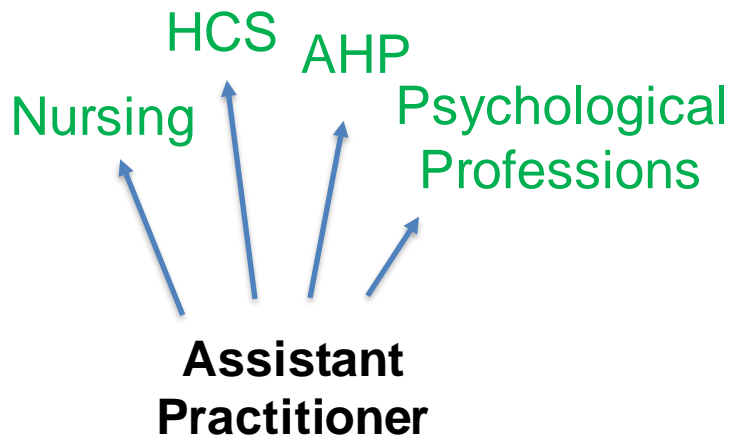
A role designed to develop the nursing workforce that can work across all nurse led settings.

Assistant Practitioners: Bridges the gap between healthcare assistant/ support worker and **registered professions**. A non-occupational specific role deployed across multi-professional settings. Provides a career pathway into a range of registered graduate professional roles such as a nurse, dietitian, physiotherapist, healthcare science practitioner, occupational therapist, psychological wellbeing practitioner.

A role with a flexible mix of skills that can work with a range of registered practitioners across health & care in multi-professional settings

Widening Career Pathways Across Health & Care Professions

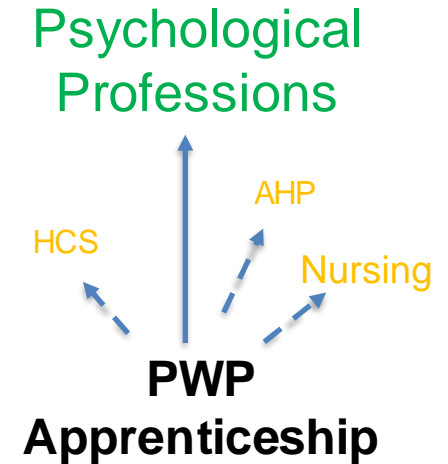
Wide Application
Provider Focus
Multi-professional Care Pathway



Broad Application
Profession Specific Focus
Nursing Care Pathway



Narrow Application
Profession Specific Focus
IAPT Care Pathway

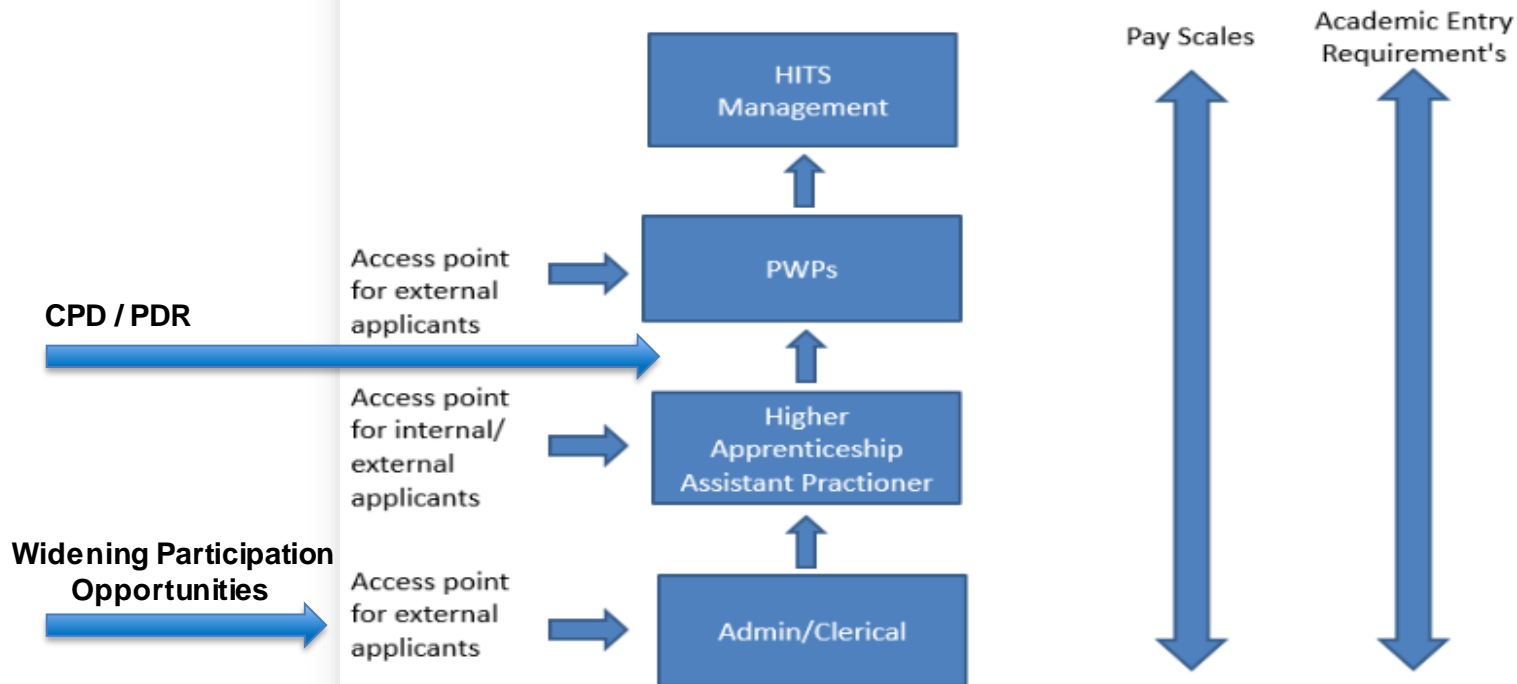


Role Comparison

- [Healthcare Assistant Practitioner](#)
Apprenticeship Standard Level 5
- [Nursing Associate](#)
Apprenticeship Standard Level 5
- [PWP Apprenticeship](#)
Apprenticeship Standard Level 6

Lengthening the Career Ladder & Widening Participation IAPT Case Example

Proposed IAPT Career Structure



Development of role and responsibilities

Four key responsibilities for APs in Mental Health services:

1. Supporting the multidisciplinary team with the organisation, implementation and coordination of clinical tasks - including Social Prescribing & Care Navigation

2. Patient Involvement and Engagement. Including collating patient feedback, following up patient experience questionnaires for inputting into service quality assurance processes.

3. Community Engagement. Building connections with community groups and resources; maintaining links with partner organisations; engaging with marginalised / hard to reach sections of the community

4. Support and coordination of Psychoeducational Groups. Supporting organisation and running of groups, follow-up of DNAs and gathering of service user feedback.

The Transformational Contribution of the Assistant Practitioner

- **Patient Care:** supporting transformation of the mental health care pathway by increasing the skill mix of the workforce
- **Widening Participation:** enabling careers of individuals employed on Agenda for Change bands 2-4.
- **Diversification of the workforce:** enabling recruitment of individuals with non-standard qualifications, including lived experience.
- **Workforce Growth & Retention:** expanding recruitment points and extending career pathways in to mental health and registered professions
- **Sustainable Work Based 'Earning & Learning':** the AP role is approved as a higher apprenticeship training route and funded through the Apprenticeship Levy

Assistant Practitioner Training

- Band 4 NHS Careers Framework
- Higher Apprentice model with trainees spending their time on day release to undertake 2 year foundation degree training programme
- Core and specialist modules tailored to intended area of practice.
- Care Certificate built into the degree
- Supervised practice throughout training to completion of the Programme - assessed by a trained mentor,
- Standard entry route for an AP is employment at Band 2/3 in their first year of training, progressing to Band 3 in year two and, on successful completion at the end of year 2, progressing to Band 4 responsibilities.

What has the Project Achieved so far?

- Workforce development offer from HEE
- HEI / FE provision across the patch
- Engaged providers / scoped demand
- Ran stakeholder events
- 2 cohorts currently being delivered with a 3rd cohort starting Spring 2021
- Developed a steering group
- Development of a Peer Support Network
- Website and Mentor toolkit in development

North Region Assistant Practitioner for Mental Health Workforce Development Offer

Stepping forward to 2020/21 states the importance of adopting support roles as part of the large scale expansion the mental health workforce in order to meet the ambition of treating one million more patients by 2021.

All of the North STPs have identified the development of support roles as part of their workforce expansion strategy.

Coordinated expansion of the AP role across mental health and improving access to psychological therapy teams (IAPT). Builds sustainability by building commitment and capability of service providers at scale and pace to access apprentice levy funding to develop AP career pathways.

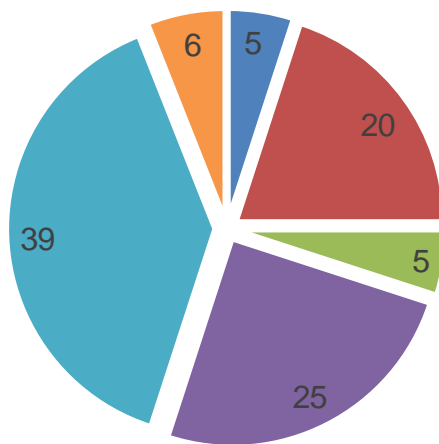
Assistant Practitioner Offer:

- Training support package for NHS & NHS commissioned providers of Mental Health and IAPT services to take up the Assistant Practitioner role to enhance their care pathways.
- Integrated practical support to develop the capability of NHS & PIVO mental health service providers to access apprentice levy funding for sustainability of new Assistant Practitioner apprenticeships in mental health.
- Monitoring and quality assurance of the uptake and application of the role across mental health settings to guide implementation and disseminate new ways of working and good practice at scale and pace.

Outcomes – In Training – Planned Training

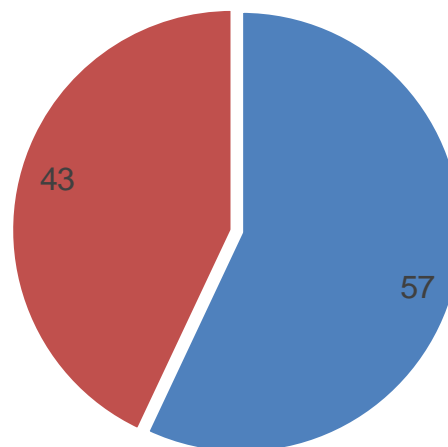
- 6 Started in September 2019 in NW & NE&Y
- Further 20 Started in February/March 2020 in NW
- Further 53 places to start in Spring 2021 in NW & NE&Y

Service Area (%)



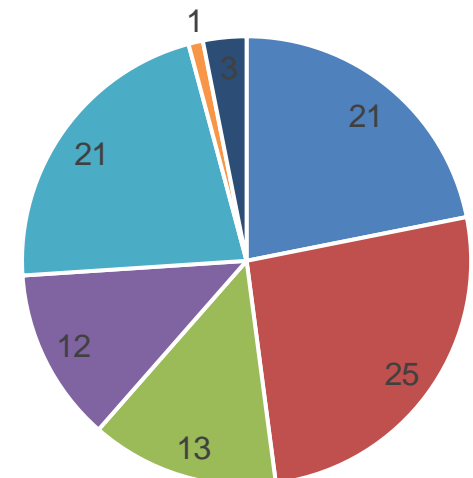
- End of Life
- Primary Care
- GP
- CYP
- IAPT
- Community Wellbeing

NHS/3rd Sector (%)



- NHS
- 3rd Sector

STP Area (%)



- Cheshire & Merseyside
- Greater Manchester
- Lancashire & S. Cumbria
- Cumbria & North East
- Humber, Coast & Vale
- South Yorkshire & Bassetlaw
- West Yorkshire & Harrogate

What we have learnt?

- **Research** - understand the role and the wider support workforce landscape it sits within
- **Formulate the rationale with examples** - linking to key workforce and delivery issues
 - e.g.: widening the supply pipeline; widening participation; developing talent – grow your own; new ways of working; innovation in care pathways;
- **Engagement & Persistence** - Get the right people in the room and explore any resistance.
- **Relevance** – Review the existing education programme – it may need to be tailored
- **Sustainability** - must be at the center from the beginning
- **Persistence** - System change doesn't come easily !
- **Math's and English Entry criteria**
- **End Point Assessments**

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