

HOT TOPIC: AN INTRODUCTION TO MODERNISING SCIENTIFIC CAREERS - WORKFORCE EVOLUTION IN PROGRESS

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change." - Charles Darwin

Modernising Scientific Careers (MSC) is a UK-wide education and training strategy for the whole healthcare science workforce in the NHS and associated bodies. MSC introduces, for the first time, a clear and coherent career pathway and structure for the healthcare science workforce. Aspects of the programme cover every step of the career pathway (from Assistant to Consultant), and include education, training and workforce planning ensuring that the healthcare science workforce meets future service delivery needs.

This article forms the first in a series of articles that will seek to inform you of the progress that has been made within the North West and provide details of how MSC has been implemented across the healthcare science workforce. Future articles will focus on specific elements of MSC mentioned in this introduction to ensure that you are fully aware of the opportunities and benefits and potential impact on both service delivery and workforce development.

The significant progress made with MSC implementation within the North West has only been possible through the:

- strong leadership of the North West Healthcare Science Network
- positive, supportive and forward thinking attitude of the healthcare science workforce and employers
- innovative, collaborative and 'can do' approach of North West academic programme providers

Background

The healthcare science workforce within the NHS accounts for approximately 5% of the total workforce. More importantly perhaps is that the healthcare science workforce influences approximately 80% of all diagnostic decisions made.

An extensive consultation took place in 2009 following which the changes to be made were published in 'Modernising Scientific Careers: The UK Way Forward' in February 2010. This policy document informed key stakeholders of the strategy for the development of the healthcare science workforce and their education and training as initially outlined in 'A High Quality Workforce'. This was followed by the



publication of 'MSC: The England Action Plan' in March 2010, which set out how implementation would be achieved by working with key stakeholders to ensure a phased approach.

Modernising Scientific Careers has been designed to ensure delivery of a sustainable, fit-for-purpose, scientific workforce for the future, that is affordable, builds upon the best of the past and ensures that patients and the public receive the greatest benefit from its skills and talents. It will enable employers to profile the workforce more effectively and ensure that it is appropriately trained and developed, where appropriate, to take on more advanced clinically-facing roles. It will also enable the education sector to better understand the needs of the NHS and support the education and training of the scientific workforce.

The way services are delivered is changing as a result of new technology, the drive to relocate service into primary care and the community, and a broader range of providers. These will all have major implications for how the healthcare science workforce evolves over the next twenty years and how it will look by 2030.

Context

Modernising Scientific Careers implementation commenced in the North West in 2010 and since then it has gone from strength to strength in terms of:

- the number of North West higher education institutes (HEIs) delivering academic programmes under MSC
- collaboration between the region's HEIs to provide delivery of the academic programmes
- the number of learners recruited to MSC Scientist and Practitioner training programmes
- adoption of MSC programmes by mainstream healthcare education support structures (e.g. practice education facilitators)
- senior healthcare scientists contributing to the development of curricula by leading on the delivery of clinical education, contributing to the delivery of academic education, and providing expertise by fulfilling key roles in academic institutes
- integration of learners following MSC programmes into the wider leadership development agenda
- encouraging input from all learners within healthcare science for their own development through the establishment of the North West Trainee Network Board

Healthcare provider organisations in the North West are currently providing work-based learning for around 300 healthcare science learners and this figure is set to rise over the coming years as the size of cohorts grow and programmes are fully embedded.

The region's practice education facilitators (PEFs) have provided a vital communication and support role to enable the successful implementation of MSC within organisations. Though the PEF role covers learners from all professions, getting to grips with the new programmes delivered under



MSC has been a steep learning curve. In many cases individual PEFs within organisations have stepped up to the mark and taken the responsibility to lead on healthcare science learners. A PEF's Healthcare Science Forum has recently been established to ensure they can work collectively to continue to build their knowledge around MSC and address challenges in a collective and collaborative way.

Benefits

Benefits to Patients

The healthcare science workforce is an integral part of diagnosis and treatment, playing an important role in adding value to patient care and quality outcomes. The main benefits for patient care are:

- faster and improved access for patients to healthcare, particularly for diagnostic services
- patients are benefiting from the latest advances in technology and research as leading edge training is provided to the healthcare science workforce through MSC
- faster more efficient services for patients as the healthcare science workforce are fully engaged as part of a clinical team
- fewer separate appointments as healthcare scientists can look at 'the whole patient'
- more informed patient choice with care delivered closer to home and a more informed healthcare science workforce who understand the needs of patients

Benefits to the NHS

MSC integrates with the direction of travel outlined in the white paper Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS. It:

- enables NHS Trusts to better align the healthcare science workforce to deliver services that are outcomes-based and more responsive to patients
- is designed in partnership to support decision-making and initiatives such as Choice of Diagnostics
- ensures future roles will make services and care less fragmented, enables delivery closer to home and improves working across professional boundaries

- encompasses the scientific workforce requirements of the Public Health Service and the Information Revolution
- supports increased productivity. Cost savings are modelled and will produce up to £250 million savings per year, by enabling more accurate workforce alignment to local service needs, ensuring work is undertaken at the right level, by the right people
- MSC is also a major enabler of the QIPP pathology workstream to reduce costs in the service by £0.5 billion per year
- the MSC programmes provide education and training to support flexible working and new roles, particularly at higher levels at the medical/scientific interface, where there are opportunities to affect even greater savings.
- by having more structured and co-ordinated education & training programmes, MSC should reduce MPET costs by more than £5 million a year

Benefits for the Healthcare Science Workforce

- a clear, coherent and common approach to career development for all of the healthcare science workforce
- a flexible and modular career path, with a variety of entry points, to attract and retain people. This will include greater flexibility in skills and knowledge development
- a fair and respectful approach which recognises existing skills, training and experience, allowing the healthcare science workforce to develop their careers without having to spend years retraining. It also respects the professionalism of each and every specialism
- alignment of career pathways with other healthcare professionals
- transparency for those already in the workforce or thinking of entering it
- a combination of specialism-specific training with generic elements, such as leadership, professional practice and research methods
- the ability to make a greater contribution to new clinical pathways, models of integrated care and innovation in healthcare

Useful Tools and Activities

Engagement and support of employers to help them to understand their healthcare science workforce has been a key factor in the successful implementation of MSC in the North West. The North West Healthcare Science Network has tried with some success to ensure structures are established within organisations to facilitate communication between the healthcare science workforce and those responsible for workforce development/management of human resources.

However, should you wish to hold any engagement events within your organisation to, for example, assist with the communication required for the re-coding of the healthcare science workforce within the Electronic Staff Record we would be keen to hear from you.

www.ewin.nhs.uk
@eWIN_Portal

Special Note

The Health and Social Care Information Centre have issued guidance for changes to be made to the classifications used in ESR for the healthcare science workforce during the period December 2013 to May 2014. The North West Healthcare Science Network is keen to support HR departments and ESR coders with the implementation of the new classification by providing key contacts and links within healthcare science services. Please contact Helen Liggett or Nick Fowler-Johnson to find out how we can assist your organisation.

The [North West Healthcare Science website](#) contains a wealth of resources and information relating to MSC including details of the training programmes, workforce re-profiling tools, and ESR re-code for healthcare scientists. In the event that you are unable to find the information you require please contact Nick Fowler-Johnson directly, whose contact details at the end of this document.

This article forms the introduction to MSC implementation and further articles providing details of specific aspects of MSC programmes and implementation will be published on a monthly basis. Please keep an eye out for the February article which will focus on the work of the North West Healthcare Science Network in the context of North West MSC implementation.

Key Dates

The North West Healthcare Science Network is in the process of engaging with individual organisations to create robust local healthcare science networks to support MSC implementation. Please contact Nick or Helen if you would like to host a 'Healthcare Science Roadshow' in your organisation

Useful Resources

- North West Healthcare Science Network website www.nwhcs.nhs.uk
- NHS Employers – Planning Your Workforce: MSC www.nhsemployers.org/PlanningYourWorkforce/Modernising-Scientific-Careers/Pages/MSC-background-info.aspx
- National School of Healthcare Science www.nshcs.org.uk
- The Academy for Healthcare Science www.ahcs.ac.uk

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