

# HOT TOPIC: SKILL MIX TO SUPPORT PRODUCTIVITY

**There is increasing recognition at a national level that our health and social care workforces need to work differently – across traditional professional boundaries, in different settings, with greater communication and integration with other services, at all levels of the career framework, with different individual skills and team skill mixes.**

The predicted ageing of our population, with increasingly complicated health and care needs, led to the introduction of the national Quality, Innovation, Productivity and Prevention programme (QIPP) in 2008. This challenges health and social care organisations to increase productivity and cost-effectiveness of services, while improving quality of care. The HEE Business Plan 2014/15 expresses this in its foreword:

*“Following the Robert Francis report, the focus on quality in the NHS is greater than ever before, and there is now a welcome recognition of the key part that staff have to play in ensuring high quality care for patients. But this understanding comes at a time when public finances are tight, and the NHS, along with other public sector bodies, is required to deliver more with less growth.”*

The national drivers to increasingly provide healthcare services in a community and primary care setting, with a focus on keeping people well and out of hospital, will also require a workforce that is ‘fit for purpose’.

## Our Work in the North West

The North West has led the way nationally in developing new, multi-professional roles that support service improvements, developing around 100 advanced practitioners and more than 160 assistant practitioners each year since 2002. The resources produced have supported organisations in the North West and further afield to develop and use these roles.

The Workforce Transformation Team, based at Health Education North West (HENW), aims to continue to mobilise the workforce, not just through supporting the training of the above types of new roles, but by developing the skills used by the workforce that already exists, to promote new and different ways of providing services. It aims to see improvement the quality of patient care in a range of ways, as well as improvement in efficiency and productivity of service provision. The team assists providers of health and social care services to deliver high quality patient care, by supporting these services to adopt effective workforce solutions, including:

- up-skilling staff
- developing and promoting new ways of working
- ensuring sufficient supply of highly skilled staff



An important aspect of this is to provide evidence of the improvements that can be achieved, and information on how these solutions can be implemented. The team has recently developed a suite of posters that showcases a range of examples of workforce solutions, providing evidence of improvements made.

The team's resources look at services across the whole system of health and social care, from hospital to community-based care and primary care services; looking at services provided by trusts, GP practices, other public sector providers, and the third sector, in order to promote more integrated provision of care.

## Key Outcomes

The Workforce Transformation Team's resources provide evidence for the benefits of workforce transformation in a range of areas:

### Street Triage for Mental Health

- Mental health nurse practitioners who work with police have reduced the number of arrests under 'section 136' by 80% in Warrington and Halton
- Previously, 70% of people arrested were subsequently released, following a time-consuming and costly assessment process
- Reducing the number of arrests means more appropriate care can be given instead
- A small-scale pilot provided savings of £32,000 over six months

### Musculoskeletal Specialist Practitioner in A&E

- A specialist physiotherapist service in an A&E department manages the treatment of acute musculoskeletal minor injuries and wounds
- This service has reduced the rate of unplanned returns to the department from 4.7% to 2.3%
- The service has also reduced the average time these patients spend in A&E by 34 minutes

### Community In-reach for Mental Health in Care Homes

- An advanced practitioner-led service for people with dementia in care homes has reduced admissions from care homes by 30%
- The number of occupied bed days for such patients has been reduced by 35%

## Skill Mix Solutions in an Acute Hospital Pharmacy Service

- By developing a new staffing model and clearly defining roles, the pharmacy service improved its rate of checking in-patient prescriptions within 24 hours from 30% to 65%
- The service also improved its rate of supplying new medicines within 24 hours of prescription, from 43% to 83%

## Key Initiatives in the North West

Health Education England's national planning round is critical in supporting the Workforce Transformation Team's aim to support local planning and investment. The team has two key initiatives:

- **General Practice Workforce Data Collection** – designed to capture skills and capability of the General Practice workforce to support workforce development and service transformation
- **The Single Planning Tool** – a unique whole system workforce planning tool that collects data from health care, social care and third sector providers to model workforce requirements against new service models being piloted in Central Lancashire health economy

Click here for more information about the [GP Workforce Data Collection initiative](#).

## Useful Links and Resources

- [Workforce Transformation poster series](#)
- Further [case studies](#), particularly looking at assistant practitioner and advanced practitioner roles
- Coming soon – a resource pack on workforce transformation in GP services

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