**Briefing on the Health Education Improvement Wales and Social Care Wales Strategic Mental Health Workforce Plan**

**Background**

The 10-year Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care, published in 2020 and the Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan 2019 - 22 set out requirements for Welsh Government to work with Health Education Improvement Wales (HEIW), Social Care Wales (SCW) and partners to produce a multi professional strategic workforce plan for mental health.

We engaged proactively with the consultation for the strategy. We met individually with HEIW leads, an as an AHP policy officers group and also on a number of occasions as part of the Royal Colleges Mental Health Expert Advisory Group. We also produced two papers –

* Final report for HEIW on role of SLT within mental health and
* the RCSLT Wales response to the HEIW consultation on the draft strategic plan.

Both are available [here](https://www.rcslt.org/policy/wales/#section-2).

The Strategic Mental Health Workforce Planwas officially launched in November 2022.

**Key points about the plan for the profession**

The plan is set against the backdrop of an anticipated threefold increase in the demand for mental health services within 5 years. HEIW and SCW view the plan as the ‘vehicle for driving radical change and comprehensive improvements in how we develop, value and support our specialist mental health workforce’. There is a strong theme that mental health and wellbeing is everyone’s business . It is proposed that the plan is also an opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge of the generalist health and social care workforce to better equip them to deal holistically with the mental health needs of the people needing their care.

The plan sets out the 33 actions under the below seven themes and is underpinned by three fundamental principles – wellbeing, inclusion and the Welsh language.

*Key themes*

1. An engaged, motivated and healthy workforce
2. Attraction and recruitment
3. Seamless workforce models
4. Building a digitally ready workforce
5. Excellent education and learning
6. Leadership and succession
7. Workforce supply and shape

The key actions relating to AHPs predominantly fall under the workforce supply and shape theme and are listed in detail below. The plan also includes proposals to improve supervision and leadership opportunities, develop and roll out mental health literacy training for the health and care workforce and improve the capacity of primary and community care teams. The full plan may be found [here](https://heiw.nhs.wales/about-us/key-documents/strategic-mental-health-workforce-plan/).

*Key relevant actions*

**Action 2:** Undertake scenario planning to inform the shape of the specialist mental health workforce including nursing, pharmacy, psychiatry, social work, psychological therapies and AHPs for the next 10 years.

This will result in the development of a ‘Future Mental Health Workforce’ report, which will be jointly commissioned with partners during 2022/23 and will include services models and demand capacity modelling. It will take account of the new service vision, the impact of Covid-19, and broader factors that could impact on people’s mental wellbeing such as environmental concerns, as well as any potential changes in legislation and policy such as Liberty Protection Safeguards and the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act 2016. This work will also provide the  opportunity to consider the role of professions that have a key role to play in mental health services including AHPs and pharmacy

**Action 5:** Develop and implement plans to ensure that there is an appropriate supply of trained professionals to undertake new and existing legal roles. This action will focus on increasing the numbers of mental health professionals who are able to participate in work often in relation to serious mental illness requiring a specific skill set, including Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHP), Section 12 doctors, and other duties under the Mental Health Act (1983), and Liberty Protection Safeguards.

**Action 7:** Develop and implement a specialist mental health Allied Health Professional (AHP) model as a pathfinder for rollout across Wales. Access to specialist AHP support in mental health services is varied and inconsistent across Wales, despite evidence that this can make a positive contribution to quality and outcomes. This action will build on the good practice that has been developed in individual AHP professions and will be used to evaluate and shape a workforce model to support in primary, community and hospital settings.

**Next steps**

We are pushing for a meeting with the HEIW mental health strategy lead alongside our AHP policy colleagues to discuss further the pathfinder model and proposals for the future mental health workforce report. If you would like to learn more about our mental health influencing work or get involved, please contact caroline.walters@rcslt.org