

Optimising the contribution of the Allied Health Professions support workforce

A statement from the following Professional Bodies and Trade Union Partners:



Purpose of this statement

As Professional Bodies and Trade Union partners for the Allied Health Professions (AHPs), we aim to ensure that the knowledge, skills, attributes and experience of the AHP non-registered (support) workforce are fully utilised.

We are calling for a UK wide commitment from employers, policy makers and workforce planners in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to take action to grow and develop the AHP support workforce.

In addition we are calling for greater numbers of regulated Allied Health Professionals so that there is capacity within the regulated workforce to provide supervision, oversight and support to those in the support workforce. This requires further work to enable and develop all of the regulated Allied Health Professions adequately, as well as the support workforce.

The AHP support workforce referenced in this statement is inclusive of all those in profession specific and generic roles and across all settings and sectors where AHPs are deployed.

How we intend to use this statement

To strengthen our voice and inform workforce policy discussions, including arguing for investment in the growth and development of the AHP support workforce.

To empower our respective members to advocate for the growth and development of AHP support workers in local workforce development plans.

1. The issues

The AHP support workforce make a significant contribution to AHP services. Supporting them to develop to the height of their capability is crucial in order to enable AHP services to meet rising population and person demand and in supporting wider workforce transformation.

AHP support workers possess skills and experience that are essential to delivering safe, effective and productive AHP services. However, this contribution frequently goes unrecognised. There is now a sense of urgency as the COVID-19 pandemic has created new direct and indirect levels of need. AHP support workers can help meet this need by fully using their knowledge, skills, attributes, and experience. This contribution needs to be planned for in a strategic and co-ordinated way to support greater responsiveness across systems.

AHP support workers tell us of their frustration and comment that their roles feel 'invisible'. They are often not involved in plans that affect them and their opportunities to develop and progress do not reflect their value as a workforce or within the teams in which they work. Many feel that they lack a clear pathway for career progression and report a lack of clarity and consistency in the requirements, responsibilities and boundaries between jobs at different grades.

We believe several factors contribute to this:

- inadequate data on how AHP support workers are deployed and their impact in the sectors, settings and services in which they work
- inaccuracies in job descriptions and inconsistencies in job titles and remuneration both within the same profession and across professions
- inadequate investment in AHP support workers' learning and development
- lack of clear progression routes within AHP support worker roles and into the registered professions

If these issues are addressed, opportunities to enable the AHP support workforce to work at the height of their capability and in order that they can fully contribute to new ways of working can be progressed.

2. Actions we commit to take

- 2.1** work with UK Governments and relevant arm's length bodies to bring about change in order to increase the number of AHP support workers and ensure they have consistent access to appropriate education, training and development that enables them to thrive
- 2.2** take action to increase equity, diversity and belonging within the AHP support workforce
- 2.3** lobby for consistent and equitable access to continued professional development for the AHP support workforce
- 2.4** support the development and implementation of career frameworks and supporting resources
- 2.5** highlight the role and contribution of the AHP support workforce nationally

3. Actions needed by others

The following are areas we have identified as requiring direction and support:

3.1 Recognition of the contribution of the AHP support worker workforce through:

- delivering consistent funding streams to support sustainable access to education training and development that meets the needs of the AHP support workforce
- including the AHP support workforce in national and local workforce development plans
- including the AHP support workforce in initiatives to promote AHP careers
- engaging in initiatives to promote the value of the AHP support workforce
- developing national programmes to ensure this group have a voice and are actively engaged and heard in developments and changes that affect them

3.2 AHP support worker career development and progression frameworks that cut across sectors and include:

- a career route map from post 16 education
- clarity of education, experience and entry requirements at different levels of practice
- mapping of levels of practice to scope of job roles at different levels
- synergies with professional bodies' frameworks
- routes to bridge into the regulated professions

3.3 Learning and development provision that meets the specific needs of the AHP workforce