

Therapy Network needs Volunteers

The Therapy Network **exists to support West Midlands' psychology services** in providing high quality, ethical, effective and safe services for NHS users and carers. The Therapy Network scheme, which has been operating in the West Midlands for almost 25 years, is a register of psychological therapists working within the West Midlands who volunteer to act as therapists for other psychology service staff.

Over the years hundreds of psychologists and trainees have been supported by this scheme. While it is in heavy demand from trainees, about one third of all the users are qualified psychologists. **At its peak there were over 40 volunteers but currently there are only 13 volunteers** on the Register. This is partly because changes in the organisation and management of psychological services have meant that many NHS practitioners have felt unable to offer their services as TN volunteers. Also several longstanding volunteers, who have given unstinting service to TN, have retired from the scheme. Nearly all of the current volunteers who, are retired from the NHS, are working privately or are university based, and donate their services free as a contribution to the profession. Currently only 1 volunteer works solely within the NHS.

But **this position is unsustainable unless we can recruit more volunteers** from psychologists working within the NHS. This is where you come in! I am asking you to **consider volunteering**, particularly if you have benefited from the scheme in the past or are fairly recently qualified. Managers are asked to facilitate those in their service who wish to volunteer.

There can be certain **advantages to being a volunteer**. Volunteers have reported that:

- The work is mostly rewarding and stimulating.
- The work can allow those in a limited clinical role to maintain skills.
- TN allows those working in different specialties to experience working in 'Adult mental health.
- TN can allow those who have trained in a particular orientation, for example CAT to practise these skills.
- Supervision can be arranged for this work from other experienced volunteers in the Network.

There are a number of documents which may give you more information about how the scheme operates. The Register itself and an application form if you feel able to volunteer are available from Catherine Ashton, email below.

If you have any questions or would like further information about the scheme, please contact the Chair, Delia Cushway d.cushway@gmail.com or the TN administrator Catherine Ashton c.ashton@coventry.ac.uk. Therapy Network has been providing a valuable service for over 25 years and remains an important support to the profession in these difficult times. Please help us to continue. Thank you.

Delia Cushway - Chair, Therapy Network Steering Group