

Coalition calls for new Chief Psychological Professions Officer role to deliver NHS Long Term Plan

As service users and representatives of the approximately 20,000 professionalsⁱ delivering psychological healthcare across NHS services, we are calling for the establishment of a Chief Psychological Professions Officer as a matter of priority.

Recent years have seen an alarming rise in mental distress among children, young people and adults. Psychological healthcare has a strong evidence base, is cost effective and popular with the public. We were therefore delighted to see the NHS Long Term Plan validating the importance of rapidly and significantly increasing access to psychological healthcare.

But a plan is only as good as its delivery. If people are to experience real improvements a rapid, coordinated and sustainable expansion of the psychological professions workforce – by around 50 per cent over the next decade – will be needed.

Achieving this unprecedented expansion will require everyone to work together – professions, service users and policy makers. It will also demand strong leadership, vision and coordination at a national level. That's why we're calling for the establishment of a Chief Psychological Professions Officer, putting the psychological professions on a par with medicine, nursing and the allied health professions.

The NHS Long Term Plan offers a much needed roadmap for improving access to quality psychological healthcare. Now we need a Chief Psychological Professions Officer to help make this plan a reality for patients.

Signed:

- Sarb Bajwa, Chief Executive, British Psychological Society (BPS)
- Gary Fereday, Chief Executive, British Psychoanalytic Council (BPC)
- Laura Lea, mental health service user
- Prof Sarah Niblock, Chief Executive, UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP)
- Dr Andrew Reeves, Chair, British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)
- Professor Paul Salkovskis, President, British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP)
- Dr Reenee Singh, Chief Executive, The Association for Family Therapy and Systemic Practice in the UK (AFT)
- Dr Nick Waggett, Chief Executive, Association of Child Psychotherapists (ACP)
- Prof Mike Wang, Chair, Association of Clinical Psychologists UK (ACP-UK)

ⁱ The workforce comprises 12 psychological professions: practitioner psychologists (clinical, counselling, forensic and health), cognitive behavioural therapists, counsellors, adult psychotherapists, child and adolescent psychotherapists, systemic family therapists, psychological wellbeing practitioners, children's wellbeing practitioners and education mental health practitioners.