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Business Case for Improving Workforce Supply in Psychological Professions in The North West Region – Phase 4 Project - Trainee Associate Psychological Practitioners (TAPPs) Cohort 3 (March 2023- March 2024)

**1. Introduction/ Proposal**

The strategic intention behind this programme of work is to develop a new and sustainable, supply of practitioners into psychological roles in order to reduce the significant workforce gaps that exist in this area. For cohort 3, we propose to focus upon TAPPs working in primary care settings. In order to realise the aims of the NHS LTP, there has been significant investment into primary care, namely Primary Care Networks (PCNs) to expand the workforce and employ Mental Health Practitioners (MHPs). MHP is an umbrella term for a number of professionals who are able to provide mental health care. PCNs have numerous funding streams, with one being the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) payments for these roles. By 2023, if they wish to, PCNs are able to access funding to employ up to 3 MHPs per PCN. With approximately one in three GP appointments reportedly involving a mental health component, there is both a demand and need for MHPs in General Practice settings, yet there are workforce supply issues that can make recruiting and filling such roles challenging.

This proposal sets out a recommendation for the application of £1.6m of HEE funding between March 2023 and March 2024 to further develop the supply of TAPPs/APPs into the North West Region following successful implementation and evaluation of cohorts 1 and 2. This will be a third cohort, focusing on PCNs. It had been agreed by HEE that the programme will convert from a Post Graduate Diploma (PGDip) to a Post Graduate Certificate (PGCert) as this aligns better to the development of national roles. In addition UCLan has commenced the process of accreditation with the British Psychological Society (BPS) whom are keen to focus initially on one pathway. This mirrors the current demand in PCNs for ARRS. The third cohort will continue to inform the test of concept and the ongoing evaluation of the programme, including a health economic evaluation, in line with the recommendations from the Cohort 1 Report (attached at Appendix 1).

Each TAPP will be employed as a band 4 in the NHS and, on completion of a Post PG Cert APP at The University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), they will move into a substantive band 5 role as an APP. TAPPs will be allocated a training support package of £15k to cover the course fees, set up costs, clinical supervision and placement support and mentoring in PCNs. There is £1.5 million available to fund TAPPs so 100 are being funded across the NW. The remaining funding of £100k will be used to support recruitment and project administration and delivery. As this role development is still at the ‘test of concept’ phase, the academic programme will continue to be delivered by UCLan. On completion of cohort 3 in March 2024, the evaluation reports of all three cohorts will be shared regionally and nationally and will inform a future approach to role adoption and procurement.

The programme continues to address a wider set of recommendations and deliverables, including the development of a nationally recognised career framework, an undergraduate foundation pathway and a School of Psychological Professions. The key objectives and milestones are contained in the PID which is attached at Appendix 2. The programme is sponsored by HEE and delivered by The Academic Health Science Network (Innovation Agency North West Coast) in partnership with Lancashire Care Foundation Trust (LSCFT) The Strategic Clinical Network and the three People Boards across the North West Region. The programme directly reports to a programme board and provides regular updates to the North West Regional Workforce Supply Board for Mental Health and Learning Disabilities. The Programme is well established and stakeholders include The Psychological Professions Network, a bespoke stakeholder reference group, Primary Care Programme Boards and the Primary Care Training Hubs

in the three ICS footprints.

**2. Summary of TAPP Cohorts 1 and 2**

It has been a successful phase of the project with the first TAPP cohort graduating as Associate Psychological Practitioners (APPs) in January 2021 and the second cohort commencing in March 2022. An evaluation of cohort 1 has described positive outcomes for patients, staff and services. From a patient’s perspective, this included significant reductions on measures of anxiety and depression and significant improvements on measures of resiliency and wellbeing. The evaluation of cohort 2 is ongoing and it will include an economic evaluation.

The project has successfully scaled to a NW regional footprint and, due to changes in the funding model, there has been a significant increase in TAPP numbers in the second cohort (N=90). Demand for the role remains high, with significant interest from primary care and career progression has been identified through the Mental Health Practitioner (MHP) Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS).

The project has again demonstrated a high quality and readily available workforce supply, secured through a regionally coordinated recruitment process. For cohort 1 there were just over 500 applicants for the 50 roles and for cohort 2, there were 664 applications for the 90 roles.

**3. Course Summary for Cohort 3**

The course was structured around a mentored competence development ethos, with a core competency framework, based upon the demonstration of competency to meet APP job description requirements, with the competency journey supported by curriculum of themed workshops and regular clinical supervision and documented through a set of competency record sheets and a reflective journal explored with the supervisory team at interim and terminal reviews. A clinical supervision network has been established to quality assure the model of clinical supervision and address any operational concerns. This aspect of the course makes up the shared/universal component of what defines the TAPP training. Around this is the more bespoke and specialist aspect that defines the TAPP within their role and that come from the specialist competency aspects of their role.

It is proposed for cohort 3, that we move from a 120 credit PGDip framework to a 60 credit PGCert model. This has been at the request of HEE and reflects the importance put on alining all NHS band 4 training programmes at a comparable level thus bringing us in line with PWP training for instance. The second element of the revised programme will be the desire for us to align with a specific sector and population group and for cohort 3 we will be offering the programme to partners in the PCN sector only, previously having members of cohorts based in secondary care settings such as long-term conditions etc. This is very much in keeping with the needs for a focused course for the purposes of progressing to an accredited programme which will be essential for the programme to become adopted at a national level. The course will move from a single 120 credit module to a two module structure with 40 and 20 credit modules. The 40 credit module will be the repository of the broader clinical skills aspect that underpins the APP programme, whilst the 20 credit module will be the specific focus, in this case a PCN trainee module that addresses the specialist aspects of working in this sector. In time this will allow us to offer a range of service specific themes for trainees deployed in different sectors e.g. long term conditions, or narrower focusses within a sector such as CYP in PCN. These additional module variants would also be accessible for qualified APP practitioners seeking to transition from one specialist focus to another.

One of the most important questions to address in relation to APP roles is how they differ in relation to the wider psychological workforce. The most immediate distinction at band 4/5 level is that the TAPP training is a widely transferrable graduate entry point built around a flexible core curriculum that equips trainees for a range of roles, as opposed to other roles that are designed around a single focussed skill set and one therapeutic approach (e.g. IAPT practitioners, mental health practitioners and psychological and health coaches). Under the model for cohort 3 this will still be possible within the 40 credit core module but the range of services will be narrowed to the specific PCN services. A clinical and service evaluation will be undertaken, including a health economic component.

# Summary of the Proposal for TAPPs Cohort 3 (March 2023-March 2024)

This proposal requests funding of £1.6 m to establish a third cohort of TAPPs across the North West Region of which £1.5 m will be used to fund up to 100 TAPPs in PCN settings, £15K per TAPP placement. The remaining £100k will be used to support one off costs relating to recruitment and overall project administration, including the accreditation of the programme with the BPS. The academic programme will be converted by UCLAn from a PGDip APP to a PGCert APP, to ensure it aligns more closely to national role development and to support the process of accreditation with the BPS. This is the final year of the ‘test of concept’ for TAPPs (each cohort undergoing full clinical and service evaluation) and in March 2024, on completion of cohort 3, the findings will be collated to inform regional and/ or national adoption and procurement.

There is continued high expressed demand for the role by PCNs and places will be offered initially by way of Expressions of Interest. The project team will quality assure all EOIs, in line with the accreditation process, and agree a prioritisation framework with HEE and key stakeholders as required, including the Primary Care Training Hubs . It is proposed that the recruitment will be coordinated by the project team and LSCFT, with trusts/PCNs coordinating local interview panels and ensuring that robust local processes are in place, including HR and dedicated project management support. It is proposed that all TAPPs are in post by no later than February 2023 to allow for local induction, prior to course commencement in March 2023.

1. **Next Steps/Timeline**

* Expressions of Interest (Aug 2022-October 2022)
* Coordinated Recruitment (Nov-January 2023)
* TAPPs in post by February 2023
* Course Commences (March 2023)

1. **Appendices**

Appendix 1. TAPP HEE evaluation



Appendix 2. Copy of PID Psychological Professions



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