

MEET THE CHAIR



PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING PRACTITIONER TRAILBLAZER

This month we are introducing to you the chair of the level 6 Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner Trailblazer group, Ann Carter.

We asked her a few questions:

1. What is your day job?

Ann is the Head of Primary Care Psychological Therapy Services at Essex Partnership University NHS Trust. This mainly reflects working within the Trust's Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services. IAPT services provide evidence-based psychological therapies to people with anxiety disorders and depression.

2. Why did you step up to be the chair of the PWP trailblazer group?

Nationally it was recognised that there was difficulty in recruitment and retention of this role and this impacted on our ability to deliver services and therefore to meet nationally set access to therapy targets.

Widening the access to the PWP training was considered a necessary step to assist with this problem. Whilst many services were interested in the development of this apprenticeship, the time required was possibly a deterrent.

“Essex Partnership University NHS Trust is committed to delivering primary care therapy and so supported me to be able to progress the apprenticeship.”

3. Who was involved in the group?

There was wide interest from a range of stakeholders including service providers (large and small employers), HEIs, Health Education England, NHS England, professional bodies such as British Psychological Society, IAPT national team, with support from Skills for Health and the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

4. The standard is now approved for delivery so looking back, what were the challenges?

The Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner role is specific to Improving Access to Psychological Therapies services and so it was not always easy to fit the descriptions of the role and the details of the Standard into more usual healthcare based apprenticeship templates.

“It was important for all stakeholders to ensure that the role was correctly represented and that there would be no dilution of quality and standards in the development of the apprenticeship.”

5. And which achievements are you most proud of?

“Getting over the finishing line!”

It took much longer than we had anticipated and what was generally usual for apprenticeships. However, eventually all the major stakeholders were able to come together and develop an apprenticeship that we agreed would be appropriate for the role of Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner and would provide a sustainable workforce going forward.

6. Do you have any tips for other Trailblazer chairs?

Be prepared to listen to many differing viewpoints. Everyone involved will essentially be coming from the same place - to develop the best apprenticeship for the role.

Also access the support from Skills for Health and the Institute. Their guidance and input was invaluable throughout the process. Don't underestimate the time it may require whilst also undertaking the day job. Project Support is a must.

7. As organisations prepare to implement this standard, what challenges do you foresee?

“Initially I expect some resistance to an apprenticeship for a psychological role, it is ground breaking. However, I feel this will be overcome and the reputation for this training route will grow.”

8. Do you have any top tips for other employers considering implementing this apprenticeship?

Plan and promote recruitment to be sure of attracting apprentices. This role is not very well known outside of Improving Access to Psychological Therapies services and a psychological apprenticeship will not be on many radars at this early stage.

Work closely with your Workforce Development services, or senior management, to ensure the use of apprenticeships to grow the workforce.

Download the approved standard and EPA plan [here](#).