Mental Health and Learning Disabilities Workforce in the NHS

Supplementary Experimental Report, England

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Key findings

There is no single way of counting the Mental Health and Learning Disability (MHLD) Workforce to answer all questions and judgement is needed on what groups to include for each purpose. This report focusses on three ways in which the workforce could be grouped: by organisation cluster; by specialty or care setting; or by primary area of work.

In September 2017 there were 174,695 full time equivalent (FTE) staff working in NHS organisations that specialise in MHLD care. The total staff in these organisations have increased by 1,927 FTE between September 2013 and September 2017.

In all types of NHS Trust, but narrowing the type of staff to only include those working in a Mental Health and Learning Disability specialty or care setting, there were 88,590 FTE staff in September 2017, a decrease of 2,210 since September 2013.

Finally, for all staff whose work is recorded as having a primary area of work relating to psychiatry, there were 66,573 FTE staff in September 2017, a decrease of 142 since September 2013.

The widest possible view of the MHLD workforce counts staff in any of the above three categories. In September 2017 there were 181,689 FTE staff working in this group, an increase of 2,446 FTE since September 2013.

These figures illustrate the large differences in the ways of counting the MHLD workforce. There is further variation when individual groups of staff are considered in the body of this report.

All of these counts exclude staff providing services in primary care, social care and other non-NHS settings.
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This report summarises what is known around the size and type of the Mental Health and Learning Disability NHS Workforce based in NHS Hospital and Community Health Services, NHS Trusts and Clinical Commissioning Groups.

Alongside this report and available from the publication landing page is:

- A master table providing a full set of data tables used to generate the findings.
- A flexible data tool that can be used to interrogate the data to view numbers for various ways of categorising the workforce for Mental Health and other areas.
- A general guide on how to use this data tool.
- A specific guide on identifying staff groups.

The data in this report come from the NHS’s Human Resources and Payroll system: the Electronic Staff Record (ESR)\(^1\).

The report does not cover workforce in the following organisation types:

- Independent Sector Healthcare Providers (including Social Enterprises, Community Interest Companies and those providing Improving Access to Psychological Therapies)
- Primary Care
- Social Care providers
- Staff in NHS Central and Support Organisations

Any changes in the proportion of services undertaken in these settings may affect interpretation of time series. Plans are underway to develop other datasets to gain a fuller picture of Mental Health staff in other settings.

\(^1\)These statistics include data from two NHS trusts that do not use ESR.
Total Mental Health and Learning Disabilities staff and ways of counting them

There are three main ways\(^1\) that Mental Health and Learning Disability (MHLD) staff can be counted:

1. **Organisation Cluster**: The type of organisation they work for. This is the widest possible look at organisations specialising in MHLD and includes Care Trusts.\(^2\)

2. **Specialty or care setting**: The specialty or care setting for which they work.

3. **Primary area of work**: The primary area of work to which they are assigned.

There is overlap across these groups as some staff work in more than one.

None of these groups on their own can give a full view of staff supporting MHLD.

For example looking at:

- organisation cluster would miss staff working on MHLD in acute settings. Where a Trust specialises in MHLD, but also provides non-MHLD services, staff working on these services would also be included. Major organisational restructures restrict historic analysis.

- specialty or care setting would miss staff performing important support functions to enable MHLD care to take place.

- primary area of work would miss staff providing a Mental Health service in a different area such as A&E.

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1) See Definitions  
2) Care Trusts, as identified by their organisation code starting with a “TA”, were included as a detailed analysis of their staff composition showed a very similar profile to that of other Mental Health and Learning Disability Trusts.
Total MHLD staff by group at September 2017

- **174,695** FTE\(^1\) staff that work in organisations in the Mental Health cluster\(^2\). This includes 8,106 FTE staff in Care Trusts.\(^3\)
- **88,590** FTE staff that work for specialties or care settings relating to MHLD.
- **66,573** FTE staff whose work is recorded as having a primary area of work relating to psychiatry.

The organisational cluster is the group that includes the most staff. This is due to:
- large numbers of support staff for MHLD activity who are only picked up in this grouping
- some staff working in non-MHLD areas where a Trust specialises in MHLD but also provides other services

These figures cannot be summed as some staff are present in more than one group.

The chart on the next page shows how the numbers overlap between groups.

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\(^1\) Full Time Equivalent  \(^2\) Whilst this is technically known as the “Mental Health Cluster”, it includes Learning Disabilities within it.

\(^3\) As identified by organisation code beginning “TA”.
This diagram shows the overlap of staff in the different groups.

52,730 staff who work in the Mental Health cluster are from specialties or care settings relating to MHLD and have a primary area of work relating to psychiatry. 81,662 staff who work in the Mental Health cluster are not from either of these other two groups.

Adding all of the groups together gives a total of 181,689 FTE staff who contribute to delivering MHLD services or work in a MHLD environment in NHS hospitals and the community in September 2017. This count of MHLD staff using these three groups will be used further in this publication.
Changes in staff numbers by cluster group over time

This slide includes staff in all cluster groups and not just Mental Health in order to show the impact of organisational restructures over time.

All staff by cluster group¹ (Sep 2009 to Sep 2017)

Data from the Electronic Staff Record is available from 2009, but not all comparisons can go back that far.

Staff assigned to Primary Care Trusts show a sharp drop between 2011 and 2013 as they were disbanded.

Between these years there is an increase in numbers of staff in the Mental Health Cluster, some transferring from PCTs.

Therefore in this publication:
• analysis dependent on organisation type starts from September 2013².
• analysis not dependent on organisation type starts from September 2009³.

¹Includes staff in NHS Hospital and Community Health Services, NHS Trusts and CCGs ² Even beyond June 2013, some restructuring may have a limited impact on precise comparability. ³ There may be some small impact from staff moving from PCTs to central organisations and no longer being counted as a Trust or CCG.
Changes over time for MHLD staff

Mental Health and Learning Disabilities staff\(^1\) (Sep 2009 to Sep 2017)

- The total number of staff working in MHLD according to any of the three groups can be tracked through time.
- Between September 2013 and September 2017 (in FTE):
  - Combined MHLD workforce changed from 179,242 to 181,689.
  - The Mental Health cluster group changed from 172,767 to 174,695.
- For the groups less affected by organisational change, the totals for September 2009, September 2013 and September 2017 were:
  - Mental Health and Learning Disabilities specialty or care setting changed from 98,989 to 90,801 to 88,590
  - Primary area of work relating to psychiatry changed from 68,220 to 66,715 to 66,573

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\(^1\) Includes mental health staff in NHS Hospital and Community Health Services, NHS Trusts and CCGs

\(^2\) Clearly counting all staff who work in any MHLD gives a smaller figure than the sum of the three individual groups as some staff will be counted in multiple groups.
Staff groups for a combined set of MHLD Staff

Restricting the comparison to the period following most of the organisation change the chart shows different positions amongst staff groups within the combined set.

Of the biggest groups between September 2013 and September 2017 (in FTE):

- Nurses and health visitors changed from 57,969 to 56,276.
- Support to clinical staff changed from 59,287 to 60,273.
- Scientific, Therapeutic and Technical staff changed from 24,971 to 28,534.
- Central Functions changed from 14,008 to 13,411.
- Medical and Dental staff changed from 9,634 to 9,705.

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1 Includes mental health and learning disability staff in NHS Hospital and Community Health Services, NHS Trusts and CCGs.
Staff Groups within the Mental Health cluster

This chart shows different positions amongst different staff groups within the Mental Health cluster.

Of the biggest groups between September 2013 and September 2017 (in FTE):

- Nurses and health visitors changed from 55,983 to 54,465
- Support to clinical staff changed from 57,558 to 58,519
- Scientific, Therapeutic and Technical Staff changed from 23,004 to 26,271
- Central Functions changed from 13,978 to 13,365
- Medical and Dental Staff changed from 8,903 to 8,609

1 Whilst this is technically known only as the “Mental Health Cluster”, it includes Learning Disabilities within it
Staff groups for staff within a MHLD specialty or care setting

This comparison is less affected by organisation change so can go back further to 2009 when ESR started.

Of the biggest staff groups between September 2009 and September 2017 (in FTE):

- Nurses and health visitors changed from 46,155 to 38,695
- Support to clinical staff changed from 36,078 to 29,387
- Scientific, Therapeutic and Technical Staff changed from 7,646 to 11,608
- Medical and Dental Staff changed from 9,110 to 8,900

1 Includes MHLD specialty or care setting staff in NHS Hospital and Community Health Services, NHS Trusts and CCGs
This comparison is less affected by organisation change so can go back further to 2009 when ESR started.

Of the biggest categories between September 2009 and September 2017 (in FTE):

- Nurses and health visitors changed from 29,161 to 25,317
- Support to clinical staff changed from 24,570 to 25,579
- Scientific, Therapeutic and Technical Staff changed from 4,801 to 6,529
- Medical and Dental Staff changed from 7,381 to 7,688

1 Includes staff with a psychiatry primary area of work in NHS Hospital and Community Health Services, NHS Trusts and CCGs
Methodological Decisions

There is no perfect definition of Mental Health and Learning Disability Staff and there are a number of cases where a decision has been needed on what to include or exclude. For example:

- Care Trusts have been included in Mental Health and Learning Disability organisations as per the cluster group as:
  - Analysis showed the profile of staff working in these Care Trusts is similar to that in other Mental Health and Learning Disability Trusts
  - They offer MHLD services and provide data to the Mental Health Services Dataset
  - Although some of them do not provide exclusively MHLD services, this is also the case with other organisations in the Benchmark Group

- Certain types of therapists, for example occupational therapists, are not counted as someone working in a Mental Health and Learning Disability specialty or care setting. Some of them do work in Mental Health and Learning Disabilities and these would often be picked up by looking at the provider group or the area of work group (see accompanying tables).

A comprehensive definition of what each category comprises is included in the accompanying tables.

By having three different views of the workforce and combining them gives several opportunities to identify someone as working in Mental Health, reducing the likelihood of MHLD staff being excluded.

September 2017 is the endpoint of the analysis as it is the most recent month for which data were available for production.

September 2013 is the start point for reported trends depending on organisation type as the major NHS restructuring was largely concluded at this point and starting at September removes seasonal impact.

September 2009 is the start point for reported trends not depending on organisation type as ESR starts then.

The figures are drawn from Payroll and Human Resource Systems so the underlying data are considered to be of good quality. They can vary on a monthly basis due to ebbs and flows in staff joining or leaving the workforce as well as long term trends, so while the commentary highlights point to point changes, this could change depending on precise selection of months so users should view the charts and underlying data to understand the patterns.

Precise figures have been given to 1 FTE to make it easier for users to identify the figures in the reference tables and then do any further analyses they may be interested in.

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Alongside this report, we have released a comprehensive set of underlying data and metadata. We would welcome your feedback, in particular on:

- Any feedback or enquiries on alternative ways of categorising aspects of the workforce.
- Developing new areas of the dataset.

For feedback or enquiries please email enquiries@nhsdigital.nhs.uk and quote “Mental Health and Learning Disabilities Workforce in the NHS, Supplementary Report, England” in the title.