



Spotlight on...

North West Allied Health
Professions Workforce Lead
Sue Louth

How would you describe your role?

As Allied Health Professions (AHP) Workforce Lead for Health Education England (North West), I facilitate workforce development to ensure we have AHPs with the knowledge, skills and behaviours to deliver high quality care. This means leading and co-ordinating regional work programmes and engaging with the AHP network to ensure they meet the needs of services, clinicians and managers. I also co-chair the North West AHP Workforce Board, the functions of which include setting priorities for regional workforce development and providing AHP expertise and intelligence to Health Education England (North West) and other stakeholders.

What does your work with Salford Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) involve?

I am seconded to the CCG to lead on primary care workforce development which requires me to apply my workforce knowledge and expertise in a whole new context. It means supporting general practices to introduce new roles and ways of working to meet the increased demands on primary care and support more services to be delivered outside hospital.

What is the main function of the North West AHP Network?

It brings together a wide range of AHPs to promote clinical excellence and inform education, training and workforce planning across the region. It also enables AHPs to share good practice around service improvement and workforce development and offers a forum for peer support, learning and collaboration. The Network provides a vehicle for engaging with all levels of AHPs to influence strategic developments at a regional and national level.





The Network is now well established. How has this been achieved?

It is not something which has happened overnight. It has been developed over the last 12 years during which we have tried hard to reach out and engage with as many AHPs as possible in a wide range of organisations. We have proactively encouraged AHPs at every level to become involved in our events and work programmes and established links with a wide variety of stakeholders. This has helped to strengthen our Network and enabled it to become a credible professional entity.

Would you describe the Network as unique?

We believe it is unique partly because we work collaboratively with other professional workforce networks (Healthcare Science, Pharmacy, Psychological Professions and Public Health) through the North West Centre for Professional Workforce Development (CPWD). This gives AHPs a greater voice and means we can pool resources and offer more opportunities to AHPs such as the multi-professional 'Leadership for Transformational Culture Change' programme. We are also extremely proud of our Network website at www.ahpnw.nhs.uk/ which facilitates efficient two way communication for all members. It offers AHPs a mechanism to share new information, events and good practice and provides an interactive online forum.

What network project or work are you most looking forward to in 2016?

The North West AHP Workforce Board has identified four key priority areas for 2016. This means we will:

- focus on developing and evaluating advanced practice roles for AHPs
- support AHP services to implement the 'Talent for Care' strategy for their support workforce
- enable AHPs to consider parity of esteem for mental health
- commence a work programme on technology for transformation of AHP services.

I am particularly looking forward to the technology for transformation work. I believe there are huge opportunities for AHPs to deliver improvements in health and social care through the increased utilisation of technology.

What is your ambition for the Network over the coming year?

To see the Network go from strength to strength. We will be growing our membership and reaching out to new groups of people such as early career AHPs and AHP students. In addition, our experience of engaging with service users through our events has been very positive, so we will also be working more closely with patients, carers and the public as we develop our work programmes.

What are your top tips for building networks?

It is really important to demonstrate how your network adds value both to its individual members and to the wider health and social care system. This in turn will attract more members. You also need to engage with as many people as possible to promote and grow your network. In short - communicate, communicate, communicate! Finally, once people are engaged it is essential to keep your network 'live' with plenty of opportunities for members to participate in network activities.

