Who’s Who in Health and Social Care
...a guide to who works in health/social services...
Introduction

If you have been in hospital, attending your GP regularly for illness, or been in contact with social services then you are likely to come into contact with a range of different staff from local health or social services. It can be confusing if you are told that you will be referred to a ‘Physiotherapist’, a ‘Social Worker’ or maybe a ‘Community Mental Health Nurse’. This booklet aims to explain briefly the role of many people who work within health or social services, and how they may be able to help you. Roles are listed in alphabetical order.
Clinical Psychologist

The role of the Clinical Psychologist includes supporting people who suffer from a mental illness. This could be an issue brought on after an accident (such as a brain injury), or a disorder phobia, obsessive compulsive disorders, post traumatic stress disorder, health anxiety, depression etc. A Clinical Psychologist can also offer support to people who have had a diagnoses of cancer and their family. Support offered by a Clinical Psychologist can include ‘talking therapy’, medication, group work or computer assisted treatment.

Community Care Support Worker

Community Care Support workers will visit people in their own home and can offer information, support and advice. The support they give can cover a range of situations such as giving information on local health and social services, advising on use of equipment or giving information about local community or voluntary organisations.

Consultant

A consultant has in-depth knowledge and experience of various conditions (eg. Dementia, Parkinson’s Disease, mental health etc). A consultant can order certain investigations such as a scan and be able to prescribe drugs to help your condition. You can be referred to a consultant through your GP. Examples of consultants are:
- Neurologist
  A neurologist is a doctor who specialises in brain and the nervous system. A referral to see a neurologist can be made by your GP.
- Psycho geriatrician
  A geriatrician looks after older people and specialises in physical and disabilities of old age.
**Counsellor**

Counsellors provide a ‘talking therapy’ where you will be invited to talk about your thoughts and feelings; the counsellor will then discuss ways of coping with you. Counselling can also be provided by community mental health nurses, psychologists, social workers etc. There is generally a waiting list for counselling services within the Health Service, but there are voluntary organisations that also offer talking treatments - ask your doctor (GP) or community mental health team for details. There are also private treatments available.

**Dietitian**

Dietitians make sure that people with certain conditions are getting the right nutrition from the food that they eat. Diet is very important in the treatment of many conditions such as diabetes, coeliac disease, malnutrition, renal disease and some children’s conditions.

**District Nurse**

District Nurses provide care to patients within their own home and provide support for carers. They work as part of an Integrated Primary Care Team which consists of nurses, social workers and occupational therapists. District Nurses also work closely with General Practitioners (GPs) and other health care professionals to provide a service tailored to meet individual needs.

District Nurses help patients to cope with ill health and disability thus allowing them to reach the best possible quality of life, whilst maintaining dignity and respect.
General Practitioner (GP/doctor)

You can see a GP in their surgery and they will advise you about any health worries you may have. Your GP can talk to you about your symptoms and problems, carry out a physical examination, refer you to another specialist or to hospital and prescribe any drugs/medication that could help your condition.

Health Visitor

Health visitors can advise people on how to stay well. They can give information on local health and social services and can run clinics such as breast feeding. They also work with young children and their parents, providing support regarding children’s growth and development, parenting support and support for maternal mental health. They can be contacted through the local GP surgery.

Healthcare Facilitator

Healthcare facilitators work with GPs within the area of Learning Disability. Following an annual health check for someone who has a learning disability, the Healthcare Facilitator will support the person to understand their health and the management of health conditions, and to access services.

Key Worker

If you have different elements to your care, for example you see a psychiatrist, counsellor, doctor and social worker, you may have access to a key worker. This person will talk to all the different professionals and be a single person for you to talk to and support you.
Nurses

Specialist Nurses

Specialist nurses are registered nurses with a high degree of knowledge, skill and competence in a specialized area, for example diabetes, asthma, M.S. Specialist nurses can include the following:

- **Specialist Palliative Care Nurse (Macmillan Nurse):** Macmillan nurses specialize in cancer and palliative care, and other life-limiting conditions. They are specially trained to help patients, their carers and families throughout their experience of cancer by providing pain and symptom relief and information about cancer treatments and side effects. They provide an opportunity to discuss problems, feelings and future plans. They can also advise on access to other forms of support, including financial help.

- **Diabetes specialist Nurse:** Diabetes Specialist Nursing Services provide expert advice on condition and self management of diabetes. The service is available across the Trust both in hospital and community settings from 9 am - 5 pm, Monday to Friday. Referral can be made to this service through a GP or by hospital services.

- **Rapid Response Nurse:** These are nurses who visit people at home to do specific procedures as requested by the GP e.g. giving IV fluids, antibiotics, blood transfusions etc.

- **Cardiac Rehab Nurse:** Cardiac rehab nurses visit patients after their surgery on the ward before discharge from hospital to explain what has happened to their heart and about the recovery process when they get home. They also visit people at home to go over lifestyle changes regarding healthy eating, exercise, smoking cessation, stress management and check their medication.
• **Practice Nurse:** Practice nurses are based in GP surgeries. They can carry out treatments including injections, taking blood, applying dressings, removing stitches etc. They can also run clinics and look after patients who have illnesses such as diabetes.

• **Treatment Room Nurses:** Treatment Room nurses are based in GP surgeries. They provide nursing interventions and treatments for patients who are well enough to attend surgeries.

• **Children’s Nurse:** Children’s nurses include a range of specialist nurses such as Community Childrens Nurse, Pediatric Palliative Care Nurse, Pediatric Diabetes Nurse, Pediatric Epilepsy Nurse Specialist. Each of these nurses specialise in their own area but in general can offer support to children who are acutely or chronically ill or who have complex health needs. These nurses give advice in relation to symptoms and the management of pain and the condition, and they also work closely with other health care staff who may be involved with the child/adolescent.

• **Community mental health nurses/Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN):** Community mental health nurses/CPNs are registered nurses who are trained in mental health and can talk to you about ways to cope with a mental illness (for example stress related problems, anxiety and depression, as well as more longstanding mental health concerns), and help with medication. Community mental health nurses/CPNs can specialize in working with older people, children or people with drug or alcohol problems.

• **Continence Advisor:** Continence Advisors are specialist nurses who carry out clinics for adults. Treatment of bladder and bowel problems is provided, with onward referral to other specialities following if necessary. Referrals can be made to the Continence Service by GPs, any other professional and self-referrals are also accepted.
Occupational Therapist

Occupational Therapists treat and rehabilitate people with physical and mental health conditions. They use specially selected activities to help people who are temporarily or permanently disabled to be as independent as possible.

Podiatrist

Podiatrists are health professionals who have been trained to prevent, diagnose, treat and rehabilitate abnormal conditions of the feet and lower limb. They can help prevent deformity, keep people mobile and active, relieve pain and treat infections.

Psychiatrist

A Psychiatrist mainly deals with the physical aspect of mental health, for example drug therapy. Psychiatrists often work closely with psychologists and counsellors who could discuss your thoughts and feelings and work out coping strategies with you.

Physiotherapist

Physiotherapists can show you exercises to help movement. You can see a physiotherapist at your local hospital or sometimes in a GP surgery or in your own home. You can also pay for a private physiotherapist, your GP should be able to recommend a suitable one for you.
Social Worker

Social Workers can work in the hospital or in the community. They interview patients and their carers to assess and review their situation. On the basis of this assessment they can organise a package of care to enable patients to live the fullest life possible. Social Workers can also offer advice on practical matters such as day care, accommodation and welfare benefits, or can link you with other appropriate organisations. They will also support the main carer, and let them know about other services to help family carers.

• Approved Social Worker

Approved social workers have undergone special training and can carry out some tasks under the Mental Health (NI) Order 1986, such as recommending a compulsory hospital stay. Approved Social Workers also have a particular duty to look at alternatives to hospitalization, for example by looking at the range of community care available that may allow the person with a mental illness to stay in their community.

Speech and Language Therapist

Speech and language therapists provide services to help children and adults who have difficulty communicating. This includes making speech sounds, understanding spoken language and the appropriate use of language and sounds. They also work with people who have a specific difficulty, such as a stammer. Therapists also treat people who have difficulties feeding, chewing and swallowing.
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