



Building Allied Health Professions Capacity for Social Justice: A Trust wide Project

Rhian Saville, Allied Health Professions Leadership Fellow, Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Email Rhian.saville1@nhs.net

Description

A project was established to build Allied Health Professions (AHPs) capacity for social justice in Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, following the launch of the new [AHP Strategy: We Deliver](#) (2022-2027).

The primary aims of the project were to deliver the domain of social justice within the Trust AHP Implementation Plan, and to support the AHP workforce to embed this within their clinical teams.

The intended benefits would be that AHPs would have increased knowledge of social justice, so equality, diversity and inclusion are considered for all aspects of patient care. Clinical teams would have a shared understanding of issues to enable pathways to be designed, delivered, and improved for their populations. Leaders would have a framework to support their workforce, and AHPs would have increased confidence to speak up, advocate for their service users and reach those who were not currently accessing or engaging with services.

The project ran for 4 months from 1 December 2022 to 31 March 2023 and was undertaken by Rhian Saville, AHP Leadership Fellow, along with an Occupational Therapy Apprentice who was undertaking a final year leadership placement.

Context

The project was informed by two key documents relating to health inequalities and AHPs and underpinned by [Core20PLUS5 \(adults\)](#) and [Core20PLUS5 CYP](#).

Firstly, the [AHP Strategy: We Deliver](#) (2022-2027) states that the “AHP community must focus on the needs of their local communities, represent their local populations, and be vested in reducing health inequalities and improving outcomes for all. Everyone has a part to play in this – as individuals and as a collective”. It outlines five ambitions for addressing health and care inequalities which are as follows:

- Supporting more equitable access to AHP services for lower socioeconomic groups, ethnic minority groups, people living in rural areas and other specific disadvantaged groups, and people with mental health problems
- Providing high-quality care and patient experience in terms of avoiding bias in decision-making, having culturally appropriate services, and meeting clinical standards
- Addressing the social determinants of health through supporting employment and housing
- Supporting mental wellbeing with specific AHP services as well as incorporating mental wellbeing considerations in routine AHP services
- Engaging and empowering communities to support the co-design and delivery of culturally relevant services

Secondly, [The King's Fund: My role in tackling health inequalities: A framework for allied health professionals](#) (2021), supports AHPs to develop their knowledge of health inequalities and how to apply this to their clinical practice.

These informed a Trust wide approach to ensure social justice would be embedded across all AHP services. This would develop a shared understanding and value base, resulting in more equitable access to care, a diverse workforce, and improved outcomes for patients. A framework to support social justice for AHPs would also provide a broader health inequality lens to support safety and quality initiatives. The risk of a Trust not implementing this approach would be services not demonstrating cultural sensitivity. This would result in a workforce that may be lacking in diversity, staff not having the knowledge, skills, and resources to engage their populations effectively, and therefore poorer patient outcomes.

Method

A focused plan was set with clear aims, outcomes, and timescales. The author began by accessing relevant contemporary literature to build on her own understanding of social justice. Key stakeholders were then identified to represent a wide range of professionals who would either influence or benefit from the project. Due to time constraints, most of the meetings were held online although some local face to face team or professional meetings were attended in person.

Examples included:

- 1:1 discussions with local, regional and national AHP Leads/AHP Fellows/ Programme Directors to widen understanding of social justice for AHPs
- 1:1 meetings with AHP Heads of Service/AHP Team Leads/AHP Consultants across the Trust to increase knowledge of local drivers and issues
- Attendance at Trust-wide AHP Professional Advisory Groups and Team Meetings to raise awareness of social justice and health inequalities, and to discuss issues and examples of good practice relating to their areas of work
- Insight visits by the OT Apprentice to see clinicians working in a range of settings to increase understanding of how AHPs address health inequalities across the Trust

When meeting with AHPs in their professional groups or service team meetings, a similar format was followed. Firstly, a brief presentation was given to introduce the concept of social justice and health inequalities. This involved defining the domain of social justice within the context of the [AHP Strategy: We Deliver](#) and [Core20PLUS5 \(adults\)/Core20PLUS5 CYP](#), along with the dimensions of health inequalities such as socioeconomic groups, protected characteristics, geography and inclusion

health groups. The group members were then asked to think about issues of health inequalities through the 6 aspects of the Kings Fund framework (self, patients, teams, networks, systems, future workforce) and examples were collected verbally.

A framework analysis model was then used to understand the themes and issues, collate examples of good practice and generate recommendations for service design.

Aims

- Bring together different models and frameworks to use across the Trust
- Raise awareness of concept of Social Justice for AHPs and AHP Support Workers
- Understand activities by AHPs and AHP Support workers across the Trust that are under the umbrella of Social Justice
- Raise awareness of potential roles for AHPs and AHP Support workers within Social Justice across services
- Enable AHPs to confidently re-register with HCPC with clear understanding of their contributions to Social Justice within their roles
- Support the Senior AHP Leadership Team to deliver Social Justice projects as appropriate, as part of the AHPs Deliver Strategy

Outcomes

The outcomes of the project were as follows:

- Increased awareness of social justice and health inequalities across all AHP groups in the Trust
- A social justice implementation plan was developed for the Trust AHPs Strategy from 2023 - 2027 (Appendix 1). This was mapped against the 4 enhanced foundations of the [AHP Strategy: We Deliver](#) to identify key activities for AHPs to be used in team objectives, personal appraisals and job planning.
- A Social Justice: Addressing health and care inequalities Resource Grid was created to support future learning and development for AHPs (Appendix 2)
- Examples of good practice from all AHP groups across the Trust were shared (Appendix 3)
- A social justice page was created on the Trust intranet to enable access to relevant resources.
- A video on social justice was created and uploaded to the intranet page to ensure information was accessible to all: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rMG2Asnpi9k>
- A social justice 'Skills to build' online training session was held at the end of the project to share the outcomes and further promote health inequalities.
- A successful AHP Apprentice Leadership Placement in Social Justice was achieved, and further student leadership placements were taken up to continue some of the project work.
- Social justice was embedded as a standing agenda item for some AHP professional groups and team meetings.
- A social justice – reducing health inequalities award was given to an AHP as part of the 2023 AHPs day celebrations for the Trust.

Feedback from staff following the awareness raising sessions included:

“We all found this a very useful session; definitely gave us some ideas on what we can do to support our inpatients”.

Feedback from staff attending the online training – Responses to the question ‘What did you like about the session?’:

“Seeing how the social injustices apply within this trust and what real issues people are having”.

“Ways AHPs can be more inclusive of equality and diversity in our work with patients and in our teams”.

Key learning points

1. Issues and risks

A wide range of issues and risks were highlighted by the AHPs that were interviewed for the project. These were grouped into the four dimensions of population health inequalities (socioeconomic groups, geography, protected characteristics, and inclusion health groups).

Examples included:

- Access to services: attending appointments are difficult for those in remote areas where they cannot afford the transport costs or time off work. They may then be discharged, resulting in further health complications in the future.
- A lack of interpreters was a common theme, resulting in important information being missed, patients not being involved in their care planning or delays in recovery.
- Severe and multiple deprivation impacted on forensic patients, and there were many cases where health literacy impacted on individuals being able to access health or social care.

2. Examples of good practice

Many examples of good practice were shared by AHPs from all professions and from a diverse range of services across the Trust (Appendix 3). These include the use of accessible information, digital solutions, cultural considerations, and place-based models of care.

3. Project learning points

The main project learning point was that the apprentice joined part way through due to the schedule of her placement. Whilst her involvement was invaluable, she was disadvantaged due to missing the initial planning phase and some engagement conversations. A recommendation would therefore be to involve all project team members from the outset.

4. Recommendations

The overall recommendations were as follows:

Knowledge, Skills and Training

- Social Justice section to be accessible on intranet for information and links to training resources
- Social Justice and health inequalities to be incorporated into Trust AHP inductions and training courses

Leadership

- AHPs Deliver Implementation Plan Social Justice: Addressing health and care inequalities to be disseminated to all AHP team leaders and AHPs across the Trust
- Ensure AHPs consider health inequalities in their roles by using a Social Justice checklist in appraisals, job plans, team objectives and AHP Professional Group plans.

AHPs in the right place, at the right time, with the right skills

- Ensure health inequalities are addressed by having more culturally appropriate services (for example, considering cultural and religious needs, and ensuring language and technology are not a barrier).
- Consider the best ways to support individuals in a wider sense by signposting/introducing them to other services/networks/community groups etc.
- Ensure AHPs are compliant with the HCPC requirements for re-registration
- Ensure inclusive recruitment practice and workforce support/retention to nurture a diverse workforce within the organisation

Research and Innovation

- Use appropriate tools to monitor and evaluate the effects of work through outcome measures or qualitative/quantitative methods and consider publication.

Digital technology and innovation

- Team leads/managers to review data about workforce planning to identify opportunities to ensure an inclusive, representative, and supported workforce capable of tackling health inequalities
- Team leads/managers to review data to increase understanding of protected characteristics and different dimensions of health inequalities within teams and services.

References

AHPs Deliver Strategy 2022: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/allied-health-professions-strategy-for-england-ahps-deliver.pdf>

UK Allied Health Professions Public Health Strategic Framework 2019-2024: <http://www.ahpf.org.uk/files/UK%20AHP%20Public%20Health%20Strategic%20Framework%202019-2024.pdf>

Core20PLUS5 (adults) – an approach to reducing health inequalities: [NHS England » Core20PLUS5 \(adults\) – an approach to reducing healthcare inequalities](#)

Core20PLUS5 – An approach to reducing health inequalities for children and young people: [NHS England » Core20PLUS5 – An approach to reducing health inequalities for children and young people](#)

Marmot Review – Health Equity in England 2020: https://www.health.org.uk/sites/default/files/upload/publications/2020/Health%20Equity%20in%20England_The%20Marmot%20Review%2010%20Years%20On_full%20report.pdf

NHS Oversight Framework 2022: https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/B1378_NHS-System-Oversight-Framework-22-23_260722.pdf

Public Health England Guidance: Place-based approaches for reducing health inequalities: main report 2021: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-inequalities-place-based-approaches-to-reduce-inequalities/place-based-approaches-for-reducing-health-inequalities-main-report>

Social Justice Film: Addressing health and care inequalities 2023:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rMG2Asnpi9k>

The Kings Fund: My role in tackling health inequalities: A framework for allied health professionals 2021: <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/tackling-health-inequalities-framework-allied-health-professionals>

Appendix 1:

AHPs Deliver Implementation Plan – Social Justice: Addressing health and care inequalities



Appendix 1 AHPs
Deliver Implementation

Appendix 2:

Social Justice: Addressing health and care inequalities - Resource Grid



Appendix 2 Social
Justice Resource Grid.

Appendix 3:

Social Justice: Examples of good practice



Appendix 3 Case
studies.docx