

Non-Professionally Affiliated Roles in Mental Health

Deborah Harrison

PhD student ▪ School of Medical Sciences Education Development ▪ Newcastle University
deborah.harrison@ncl.ac.uk ▪ 0191 246 4527



Introduction

Changes to government policy in recent years have led to a huge increase in the non-professionally affiliated (NPA) workforce, as a way to ensure the best use of the skills of professionally qualified staff, address staff shortages and aid the 'drive for better value' (DoH, 2007).

Research Gaps

- Despite the growing presence and importance of NPA roles they remain a vastly under-researched group.
- What research does exist tends to be confined to clinical settings and to the viewpoint of others, such as the professionals they work alongside.
- Studies usually focus on one specific role in one specific context. This prevents any consideration of organisational and workplace factors (Bach et al., 2008).
- The lack of research is particularly evident in the context of the mental health workforce.

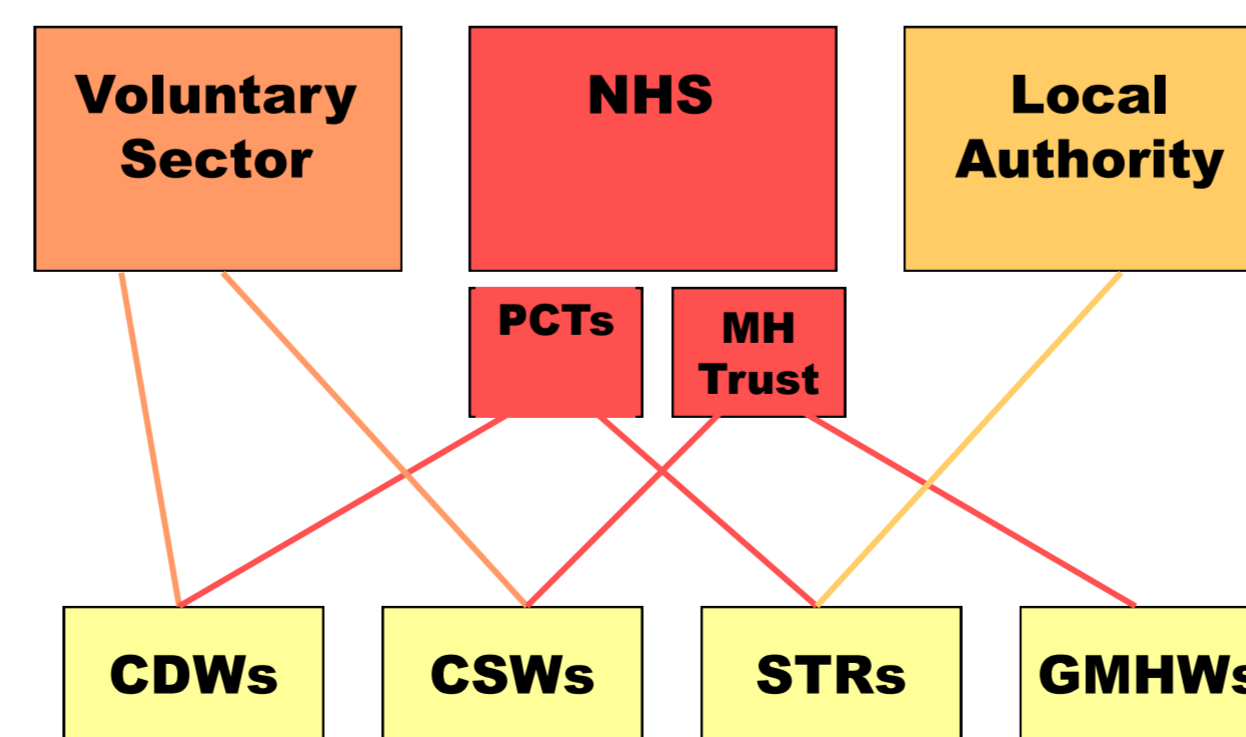
Aims

- To explore the role, identity and working relations of NPA workers in the mental health workforce, from the NPA worker's own perspective.
- To explore workplace and organisational factors by drawing comparisons across different roles, organisations and sectors.

Method

- Semi-structured interviews with workers in four mental health NPA roles:
 - Support, Time and Recovery (STR) Workers
 - Community Development Workers for BME Communities (CDWs)
 - Graduate Mental Health Workers (GMHWs)
 - Carer Support Workers (CSWs)
- Interview topics include role, background and aspirations, working relations and team-working, perceived impact and how the role is viewed by others.
- Semi-structured interviews with a small number of managers of the roles to gain an additional perspective.
- Analysis of documentary evidence relating to the different organisations and roles.
- Sample drawn across health services, local authority and voluntary sector organisations.

Employment situation of the roles under study



The Story so Far...

- Data collection is at a very early stage. A small number of interviews have been conducted, all with workers employed in the National Health Service (NHS).
- It is expected that 30-40 interviews will take place from May to October 2009.
- Emerging issues include:
 - Past experience as preparation for the role – important for workers' ability to cope and to perform the role effectively.
 - Support from the immediate team – reported to impact on most aspects of the worker experience, including retention and job satisfaction.
 - Physical aspects of a worker's location – important for effective team functioning and accessing informal support structures.
- The study is not yet at a stage to make any comparisons across sector, although there have been some early suggestions that it may have a large impact on the role a worker performs.

Funding

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References

- Bach, S., Kessler, I. and Heron, P. (2008). Role redesign in a modernised NHS: the case of health care assistants. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 18(2), 171-187.
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