

Medical support worker experience at Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust (KMPT) from October 2022 to March 2023.

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MSW A Concise Overview

- The MSW (Medical Support Worker) post was established in 2020 as a response to the Covid National Emergency. Due to its initial success, the program was extended to run throughout 2022 and 2023, with a scheduled end date in March 2023. Although the program has not been renewed after its completion in 2023, some individual Trusts have chosen to extend it due to its effectiveness.
- The MSW post offers doctors the opportunity to apply their skills and training in a supervised and supportive environment, contributing to patient care and gaining valuable experience within the NHS. It is particularly beneficial for doctors who have not been actively practicing or for foreign medical graduates in the process of obtaining full GMC registration with a license to practice.
- In addition to the MSW program, there are other schemes available to support and supervise foreign-trained doctors, such as the Clinical Apprenticeship Placement Scheme (CAPS) for refugee doctors, which has been operating since 2011.

Embarking on the Journey: Unveiling the Path to Acquiring a GMC License for Foreign Trained Doctors in the UK

- Conquer the Language Barrier: Pass the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or equivalent language proficiency examination.
- Master the PLAB Tests: Successfully tackle the Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board (PLAB) tests, comprising two crucial parts:
 - PLAB 1: The written examination, assessing medical knowledge.
 - PLAB 2: Thrive in practical scenarios, demonstrating competence in clinical and communication skills, such as simulated consultations or acute ward scenarios.
- Embrace the Clinical Attachment: Dive into a transformative unpaid work experience, known as a clinical attachment, where doctors immerse themselves in the NHS environment for approximately four to eight weeks. This attachment provides an opportunity to observe and familiarize themselves with UK medical practices.
- The MSW role offers a significant advantage in obtaining a GMC license by providing practical preparation for the PLAB 2 exam. This exam evaluates doctors' proficiency in clinical and communication skills, ensuring their competence in real-life medical scenarios.
- Moreover, medical support workers awaiting PLAB 2 test dates, who often face limited availability, are granted priority in securing a test date. This preferential treatment in addition to the exposure to the workings of the NHS gained while working as an MSW facilitates a seamless transition into the NHS, ensuring a smooth pathway towards practicing medicine in the UK.

Navigating the Recruitment Process

- The recruitment process for the medical support worker role was streamlined and straightforward.
- Applicants submitted their applications to the MSW subject area senior manager, based on their location.
- Following the application review, candidates were scheduled for interviews with the respective trust within their area of application.

Shedding Light on the KMPT Interview Experience for the MSW Role

- The interview experience can be described as positive and well-organized, as the interviewers were friendly and demonstrated a genuine interest in my career aspirations within the medical field.
- In October 2022, the Trust employed two candidates for the MSW role, recognizing their potential and suitability for the position.
- Both successful candidates which included myself were provided with a comprehensive 2-week induction program. This program included relevant trainings, a guided tour of the allocated site, and introductions to other team members, ensuring a smooth integration into the role.

Supervision and Support

- After starting the role, I was assigned a line manager and a covering consultant in the ward. Throughout my rotations in different departments; I received regular supervision from the respective covering consultants.
- The team's support extended beyond the consultants, as nurses and junior doctors played a pivotal role in providing immense support during my tenure in this position.

The MSW Role within an Acute Mental Health Ward

- Provide support in general patient care and assist during clinical emergencies.
- Obtain patient histories to identify presenting problems.
- Conduct appropriate clinical examinations under supervision.
- Accompany lead clinicians/consultants on ward rounds, present clinical cases, and contribute to the collection and interpretation of investigation results.
- Prepare and maintain accurate medical records.
- Foster effective communication with other healthcare professionals.

Relevant Trainings:

- Basic Life support (BLS)
- Safeguarding adult and Children.
- Allergy and Drug reaction
- Autism awareness
- Care programme approach
- Conflict Management
- Clinical records keeping
- Dementia training for all staff
- Drug prescription and administration for all staff
- Dual diagnosis – drug and alcohol awareness
- Electronic discharge Notification
- Positive communication
- Rapid tranquilization
- Personal safety Breakaway
- Hybrid working for all staff.

Achieving Success: Highlights of a Productive Role

- It presented an ideal opportunity to learn about the systemic processes of the NHS and the patient pathway in psychiatry. The environment provided adequate support and supervision, creating a less pressured setting for learning.
- Rotating through various program components proved highly beneficial. Spending time in Liaison Psychiatry and different wards at Little Brook Hospital allowed for learning from diverse consultants and experienced professionals.
- Access to comprehensive training materials, both within and outside the trust, provided valuable learning resources. Junior doctors' teachings and other learning opportunities were readily available.
- Engaging in team discussions, such as CPA meetings and bed flow meetings, facilitated a thorough understanding of the processes and challenges within the NHS.
- Fostering a holistic, patient-centered approach to care by actively participating as a key member of a multidisciplinary team.
- Developing an understanding of the biological, psychological, and social factors contributing to the causes and treatment of psychiatric conditions during acute ward assignments.
- Collaborating with the team to deliver high-standard patient care and support smooth transitions for discharge into the community.
- Gaining foundational skills in basic audit and research, including involvement in a pharmacogenetics trial during ward duties.
- Acquiring a fundamental understanding of the workings of the Mental Health Act 1983.
- Experiencing a seamless transition into the NHS system upon completion of the role.

Seizing the Next Chapter: Embracing an NHS Role after MSW Experience

- After completing my GMC registration, I applied for job roles both within and outside the trust. During the interview process, it became apparent that my prior experience working within the NHS system distinguished me from other candidates.
- As a result, I secured a position within the trust, marking the beginning of my career pathway in psychiatry.

Recommendations:

While I had the opportunity to rotate within several departments during the role, additional rotation options would have been advantageous, particularly outside KMPT, such as A&E. This would have expanded my exposure within the NHS and provided a broader range of experiences. There is a need for increased staff awareness regarding the job description of this role. This could be accomplished through the placement of posters in relevant areas or by incorporating it into handovers and multidisciplinary team meetings.