Approved mental health professionals

Mental Health Act 1983

The Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) Service in West Sussex responds to urgent requests for assessment under the Mental Health Act 1983 (revised 2007). AMHPs work closely with colleagues across the NHS in the county, as well as with police officers and the ambulance service.

There are AMHPs in a number of teams and services across the county.

We (West Sussex County Council) have a number of other legal responsibilities under the Mental Health Act.

AMHP responsibilities

The AMHP Service provides high-quality assessments and support for people who are having a mental health crisis. AMHPs are independent and look at Mental Health Act assessments from a non-medical perspective.

The AMHP will ask you about your care needs and strengths, and will try to help you prevent your current situation getting worse. As far as possible, AMHPs will want to involve you in the assessment and planning process. This is because you understand your own strengths as well as your needs and can suggest ways to meet them.

AMHPs have the legal authority to temporarily take away your freedom, which would mean you being detained in a hospital. They will only do this if they believe it is necessary to protect your health or safety, or to protect others. There would also have to be no other options available. Being detained in a hospital because of a mental health crisis is sometimes known as 'being sectioned'. You can only be sectioned if two doctors confirm to the AMHP, in writing, that this is necessary. One of the doctors must have specialist expertise in assessing mental health difficulties.

Our AMHPs will always consider other ways of helping you get the most appropriate care and treatment. But if you are not able to make your own decisions we may have to take action on your behalf. We will only do this if it is in your best interests.

Working in West Sussex

The AMHP Hub is a 24-hour service. AMHPs are approved and authorised to act on our behalf, although they may not be employed by us. We give AMHPs access to legal advice when they need this. We also provide insurance cover for all AMHP practice.

AMHP training

Only professionally qualified and registered staff, such as social workers, psychologists, occupational therapists or nurses, can become AMHPs. The University of Brighton runs the training course on behalf of the three local social services authorities in Sussex (us, East Sussex County Council, and Brighton and Hove City Council). The training involves 600 hours of study, a series of written assignments, a supervised period of assessed practice, and a law exam.

AMHP Panel

We operate an AMHP Panel for West Sussex. The panel approves AMHPs to act on our behalf once they have successfully completed the appropriate training. The panel also considers whether to approve qualified AMHPs who come to West Sussex from other places in England and Wales.

Approval as an AMHP lasts for no more than five years. The panel will confirm the approval in writing to the AMHP. To be considered for re-approval for a further period, an AMHP will need to provide the panel with evidence showing that they have been working to the national regulations as well as our high standards.

The AMHP Panel is chaired by a senior manager in our council.

Continuing development

AMHPs are expected to keep their knowledge of mental health law up to date. We have prepared local guidance documents to help AMHPs with their decisions. We also provide specialist supervision.

Our continuing professional development programme gives AMHPs opportunities to reflect on the way they work and look at how they could improve. Part of the continuing professional development programme is provided by the University of Brighton. The rest of the programme is designed by us and provided in-house using specialist trainers.

Contact us

For more information about our AMHP Service, please contact the AMHP Hub Team Manager or the AMHP Service Manager.

Phone: **0330 222 8866**.

To make a referral for an assessment under the Mental Health Act, please call the AMHP Hub.

Phone: **0330 222 8866** (24 hours a day).

The quickest and easiest way to send us a comment, compliment or complaint is through the West Sussex County Council website.

Phone: **01243 777100** (please help us to keep this phone line for people who cannot use the internet without help, or who want general advice about the complaints process.) If you need an interpreter to help you make a complaint, please call 01243 777100 and ask to use the telephone interpreting service.

Call using Relay UK: **18001 01243 777100** (from a textphone or the NGT Lite app, which you can download onto a computer, tablet or smartphone).

If you cannot contact us online or by phone, please write to: Customer Relations Team, West Sussex County Council, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1RQ.