

MEET CAROLINE PREECE



“ It is both an opportunity and a privilege to be a practicing AMHP. ”

Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) Adult Social Care, Herefordshire Council

What is an AMHP?

The AMHP role is complex and unique among the tasks of social workers and other mental health professionals. The AMHP acts as an autonomous professional rather than an agent of their employees, whether this be a local authority or an NHS Trust. An AMHP makes independent decisions based on the evidence they have gathered and observations they have made during a Mental Health Act assessment.

AMHP's have had to undergo extensive specialist training. They have in-depth knowledge of the law and have the responsibility for upholding the law when conducting assessments under the MHA.

AMHP's use their knowledge to ensure that the rights of those being assessed are protected and alternatives to hospital admission are explored. They provide a counter to the medical model of mental health, introducing a social perspective to the process. They need to use their knowledge not just of mental health legislation but also the Human Rights Act, Mental Capacity Act and Care Act.

The AMHP will draw on all the information available on the individual being assessed, not just the medical and clinical factors. This includes their individual social and cultural circumstances, the possible risks and protective factors, as well as their knowledge of mental illness and the legal process, in order to try and reach a just and equitable conclusion which will balance the rights of the patient with their possible need for protection and treatment.

How did you get into this role?

My interest in social work started when I was completing my degree in sociology and social policy and also volunteering at a shelter for the homeless. I went on to complete a Masters in social work and whilst on this course I became particularly interested in mental health.

Whilst on this course I had a placement at Llanarth Court, a specialist medium secure hospital for adults with mental illness. It was during this placement that I learnt about the role of the Approved Social Worker, which was abolished and replaced by that of the Approved Mental Health Professional in 2007, and had aspirations to one day train for this role.

When I qualified as a social worker I gained employment in an Older Adult Community Mental Health Team and worked alongside AMHP's. I had the opportunity to shadow colleagues and eventually applied to undertake the AMHP training in 2015.

What advice would you give to others?

The AMHP role is challenging and requires resilience, but don't let this put you off. The skills you already have as a qualified social worker, in addition to the AMHP training will provide you with the skills required to undertake this role effectively.