

Community of Practice Information Pack



Version 1.0

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Psychological Professions Network (PPN) aims to extend and embed psychological knowledge and practice across the whole of health and care; informing, enabling and influencing NHS commissioned healthcare to maximise the benefits of the psychological professions.

The purpose of this pack is to support PPN Midlands members in getting the most out of Community of Practice (CoP) involvement, outlining the resources and support available to PPN Midlands Communities of Practice and providing a range of information to support the management and functioning of our communities. Whilst some sections will be relevant to all CoP members, there are also some specific sections relevant to CoP chairs/co-chairs and secretaries, who along with PPN Midlands team members are the CoP leadership (core) team. Community of Practice members may be inspired to become more involved in their community, perhaps even putting themselves forward to support with helping their community to thrive through undertaking a leadership or facilitation role where these are available.

This pack will be updated regularly to reflect any significant changes, so please go to the 'resources' page on the [PPN Midlands website](#) to **ensure that you have the most up-to-date version**. Whilst we will endeavour to keep this pack up to date, please also defer to the range of stakeholder websites we have included, which are can be found by clicking on the **underlined hyperlinked text**. References have also been included as footnotes where relevant, to support further reading.



[Click on these links](#)

2. PPN MIDLANDS COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

A Community of Practice (CoP) is a group of people who share goals, a common interest, or professional field, and who come together to share ideas, develop expertise, solve problems, compare notes, and learn collaboratively¹. [A toolkit](#) created by members of 'Communities of Practice in Higher Education' at the University of Glasgow offers valuable guidance for developing and sustaining a Community of Practice. It also provides numerous links to additional resources.

PPN Midlands have established several Communities of Practice, based on member requests. Our communities are typically based on role similarity or a particular area of

¹<https://www.england.nhs.uk/improvement-hub/wp-content/uploads/sites/44/2015/08/learning-handbook-communities-of-practice.pdf>

practice relevant to psychological professionals. The current PPN Midlands Communities of Practice are as follows:

Community of Practice name	Who is it for and what is its focus?	Frequency and duration
Chief Psychological Professions Officers (CPPO)	Open to Chief Psychological Professions Officers or most Senior Psychological Professional in their organisation. Purpose is to engage with and support CPPO's/Senior Trust Psychology leads from across the Midlands region, facilitating a space for leaders to share information, system intelligence and best practices.	Every 3 months for 2hrs
Psychological Practitioners	Open to all Psychological Practitioner roles facilitating professional growth through sharing and enhancing skills, knowledge and practice. Attendance is open to all trainee, qualified, senior, lead and education providers who recognise themselves as part of the PWP, CYWP, EMHP and MHWP professions across the Midlands.	Every 3 months for 2hrs
Psychological Professionals in Physical Healthcare	Open to Psychological Professions Leads and/or Service Leads working in physical healthcare across the Midlands. There is a focus on implementing psychological professional roles within physical healthcare settings. This CoP will be a forum for discussing topics such as building successful business cases, benchmarking services across specialties and localities, and linking in with NHS Talking Therapies (NHS TT) Long Term Condition (LTC) leads	Every 3 months for 1.5hrs
Clinical Associate in Psychology	Open to qualified or trainee CAP, or stakeholder representatives, including representatives from regional training providers and employers across the Midlands. The group will meet to share good practice, successes and challenges, share ways of working and case examples, generally providing a reflective space for qualified and trainee CAP.	Every 2 months for 1hr, or up to 2hrs if a presentation is being delivered
Assistant Psychologists and Psychology Students	Open to Undergraduate Psychology Students on BPS-accredited courses and post-graduate Assistant Psychologists employed in health and social care across the Midlands. This aim is to foster collaboration, and empower individuals through the exchange of skills, knowledge, and best practices.	Every 3 months for 1hr

The PPN Midlands team are interested in hearing about any requests from members to establish a community of practice that doesn't currently exist. To submit a request for a new Community of Practice to be established, contact the PPN Midlands team at bsmhft.ppnmidlands@nhs.net

To join an existing Community of Practice (CoP), complete the online form [here](#)

Communities of Practice need to have a core team, who provide leadership, direction, planning and organisation of the community of practice. These core team roles are excellent for career development and are specifically a chair/co-chair and secretary. PPN Midlands have example role profiles for these roles, but in many cases, they are undertaken more informally; not all Communities of Practice have specific role profiles. In simple terms:



- A chair/co-chair leads the meeting, facilitating discussions, and ensuring objectives are met and that the meeting runs to time. The chair will also ensure routine reporting to PPN Midlands Workforce Council.
- A secretary manages meeting administration tasks such as taking meeting minutes/notes, supporting the chair with setting agendas.

Further information for chairs/co-chairs and secretaries is given later on in this resource pack.

3. COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE: GENERAL INFORMATION

PPN Midlands Community of Practice (CoP) information for members, chairs/co-chairs and secretaries is all maintained on the [Future NHS](#) platform (see **section 4 for help in accessing Future NHS**)

Information available to members includes:

- CoP Terms of Reference
- Minutes or notes and agendas from previous meetings (if these were taken)
- Slides of previous presentations given at CoP meetings
- Other useful information shared by and between members.



All PPN Midlands Communities of Practice have **Terms of Reference** (ToR). This is simply a brief document that sets out key information such as who the CoP is for, what its purpose and aims are, what eligibility criteria there is for members to join, how frequently and for how long the CoP will meet, arrangements for chairing and taking notes at meetings, and other information that might help members or prospective members better understand the CoP.

Whilst CoP members cannot upload documents directly themselves onto the Future NHS platform, they can send them to the CoP core team (co-chairs and secretaries) who have additional editing permissions on the platform.

In between CoP meetings, members are encouraged to participate in discussions with other members using the **Discussion Forum**. Relevant documents can also be uploaded and shared here.

It is for the community – its members and its core team – to further set parameters around how the Future NHS platform is used to support the group, although the general principles in this pack will apply.

4. ACCESSING FUTURE NHS

The Future NHS platform is a collaboration platform built to support those working within health and care. It provides secure collaboration across different organisations. To register for Future NHS, you will need to have an official public sector email address (NHS, Local Authority, Government department, Police, etc) because it is important that users of the platform cannot post in forums anonymously and all content added to workspace has an audit trail. **However**, members who do not have a public sector email address can be invited into the workspace by workspace managers (the PPN Midlands team). This means that people who may have an interest in the psychological professions who do not have a public sector email address, such as Experts by Experience (EbE's), can be invited to join communities where appropriate.

The PPN Midlands Communities of Practice workspace can only be accessed by invitation, which means that workspace managers (the PPN Midlands team) have oversight of who is being invited to join. The platform does have some general user expectations, and PPN Midlands have also produced some **ground rules** outlining expectations for members to ensure it remains a respectful and hospitable environment for all. The PPN Midlands team as well as CoP co-chairs and secretaries

will endeavour to monitor and moderate the platform and reserve the right to edit or remove content deemed inappropriate.

5. CHAIRING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

An effective chair ensures that meetings run smoothly and efficiently by:

- Covering all agenda items.
- Facilitating inclusive discussions, ensuring everyone has the opportunity to contribute.
- Guiding the group towards clear decisions.
- Keeping the meeting on schedule, starting and ending on time.



A good chair also:

- Maintains a focus on the overall progress of the meeting, not just the topic being discussed.
- Strikes a balance between allowing everyone to contribute and ensuring the agenda is completed.
- Avoids using their position to dominate the discussion or promote their own views at the expense of others.

A chair's effectiveness depends on the cooperation and participation of all attendees—they cannot manage a successful meeting alone. Chairing well is a skill anyone can develop with thought and practice. Confidence grows with experience, so individuals new to chairing roles are recommended to observe how others chair meetings, notice what works and what doesn't, and model behaviours of competent chairs.

We recommend that individuals who have not previously chaired a meeting engage in self-directed learning using the resources below, which are also available as PDFs in the CoP Chairs folder on Future NHS.

[The Chartered Governance Institute](#) provide a good overview of the skills needed to chair a meeting effectively. A similar guidance document has been produced by the British Medical Association (BMA) which can be accessed [here](#).

Some NHS Trusts that have subscribed to [NHS Elect](#) have access to a 2-hr online training module that covers chairing meetings effectively.

Whilst these may not relate specifically relate to chairing Communities of Practice, some good general tips about how to chair meetings effectively are available on YouTube, an example of which is [here](#).

Some Communities of Practice have opted to have co-chairs instead of one consistent person undertaking the role of chair. Having 2 or more co-chairs not only gives the community greater resilience, but it also gives the co-chairs and opportunity to develop their chairing skills together, learn from each other, and help each other reflect on developing as chair.

6. THE ROLE OF SECRETARY

Ideally, each CoP will have a secretary who can help with some of the practical tasks that accompany CoP meetings, although some administration processes will be supported by the PPN Midlands (see below).

The primary role of the secretary in a CoP is to support the chair with meeting planning, compiling agendas, and taking minutes during meetings. Minutes are concise notes that summarise discussions and agreements. Given the informal nature of many CoPs, these records may simply be referred to as "notes with actions." They don't need to be lengthy or complex but should clearly and simply record the decisions made and who is responsible for carrying them out. A minute taking [e-learning resource](#) is available on the NHS Learning Hub.

As a minimum, minutes/notes usually include the date and time of the meeting, how it was conducted (i.e., face to face or via MS Teams), who chaired it, and the agreed actions and assigned responsibilities. Please note that if minutes or notes are taken they may need to be made available to the PPN Midlands Workforce Council. For CoPs requiring a more formal record, the minutes can also include the list of attendees, apologies for absence, and key points or discussions from each agenda item. Minutes follow the structure of the agenda. An example agenda and set of minutes is available to view in the CoP chairs and secretaries' resources folder.

The secretary will have administrative access to their community on Future NHS, enabling them to upload minutes (notes and actions) after they have been reviewed and approved by the chair.

7. THE ROLE OF THE PPN WITH ADMINISTRATION PROCESSES

The PPN Midlands team will oversee and support the management and coordination of certain aspects of each Community of Practice, not least because CoP members are recruited from the growing pool of PPN Midlands members. Key processes managed by the PPN Midlands are outlined below:

- Review and process member sign-ups to each CoP weekly, by verifying eligibility against the CoP Terms of Reference, adding new members to the

membership list for each CoP, and sending confirmation or ineligibility emails as needed.

- Add new CoP members onto the Future NHS platform, where they can see contents of the folder relating to their community, along with all sub-folders and documents including the CoP discussion forum
- Scheduling meetings for each CoP. CoP chairs (or secretaries if the CoP has one) should liaise with the PPN using the mailbox address bsmhft.ppnmidlands@nhs.net
- Adding new members to calendar invitations for CoP meetings (scheduled using Microsoft Teams links). **Note:** The PPN does not have access to advanced functions such as creating breakout rooms. If CoP chairs wish to use alternative platforms, e.g., Zoom for this purpose, the PPN Team can include an alternative meeting link in the calendar invitations upon request.
- Supporting chairs with arranging CoP planning meetings.
- Promoting each CoP in fortnightly bulletins.
- Supporting with the recruitment of CoP chairs and secretaries.
- Capture information from CoP post-meeting feedback forms (completed by chair/co-chair or secretary) for discussion/appropriate escalation to PPN Midlands Workforce Council.
- Disseminate information to CoP chairs to support PPN and CoP objectives.

8. COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE GOVERNANCE

How each community of practice functions will be outlined in its Terms of Reference (ToR), mentioned previously. Essentially, everything that someone interested in joining the community might want to know about it, should be held within the Terms of Reference. This would include who it is for, what it is for, when and how does it meet, how long do meetings last, what are the objectives of the community, how it is chaired and administered, etc. Terms of Reference are usually reviewed annually to check that they are still up-to-date and relevant.

PPN Midlands have template that can be used to assist with establishing Terms of Reference. Templates are also available for agendas and meeting notes.

Points for escalation or commendation

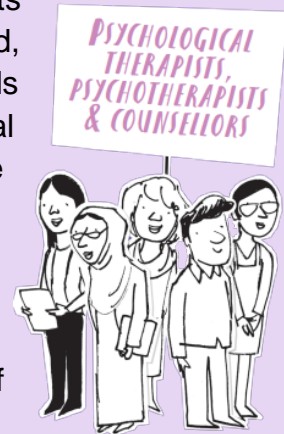
PPN Midlands Communities of Practice sit within the wider PPN Midlands structure. CoP chairs/co-chairs or secretaries are asked to provide feedback to the PPN Midlands Workforce Council. A [Microsoft forms link](#) is provided for this purpose, which is used to keep a record of CoP name, meeting date, particular meeting content or outputs, and points for escalation or commendation. These are structured in line

with the 'Tripple A' approach to good governance, where escalation is highlighted as items of advice, assure and alert.

Any escalation would aim to further the PPN Midlands' objectives—and those of the CoP—and would be provided in good faith. Escalation offers an opportunity for the PPN to maximise its capacity to inform, enable, and influence. Points for escalation would be discussed with the PPN Midlands Chair and, depending on their nature, could be directed to the PPN Midlands Workforce Council, the PPN Midlands Chief Psychological Professions Officers CoP, the PPN Regional Leads Group, or the NHS England Workforce, Training, and Education (WT&E) directorate.

Examples of escalation points could include:

- Concerns from a practitioner group that their roles are not being utilised in line with nationally agreed systems of practice, potentially impacting service delivery.
- Confusion or concern arising from a nationally published statement or policy initiative affecting psychological professionals.
- Emerging evidence of inequities in the allocation of psychological roles or resources across services, that may require regional or national attention.
- Identification of gaps in workforce planning or training pathways that could hinder the development of psychological professions.

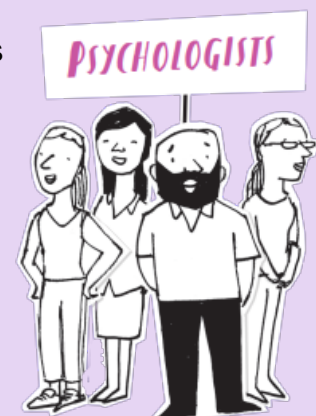


9. MEETING ADMINISTRATION

As described in previous sections, the role of secretary is important to support with meeting administration within meetings. Much of the administration tasks outside of actual meetings themselves are managed by the PPN Midlands team as noted above.

In the absence of a secretary, the group will need to consider other options for meeting administration, such as:

- The chair/co-chairs preparing agendas along with other CoP members
- Agreeing as a group the process for making a record of the meeting
- Asking a volunteer from another community via the PPN Midlands team – or a member of the wider PPN membership – to attend meetings to support with administration tasks.



10.FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Below are some common questions and answers regarding PPN Midlands Communities of Practice:

- *Can I join a PPN Midlands CoP, even though I do not live or work in the Midlands?*

This will depend on what the CoP has decided and what is written in their Terms of Reference. Members from other regions are sometimes permitted to attend if there is not a similar CoP available to them in their own region.

- *I am a Clinical Psychologist. There isn't a PPN Midlands Clinical Psychologist CoP, so can I attend the Practitioner CoP?*

No, the Practitioner CoP is specifically for those in one of the 5 'Practitioner' roles specified in the Psychological Practitioners Taxonomy (shown on the [PPN Careers Map](#)). PPN Midlands can support other groups to establish a CoP for their specific role and needs if there is sufficient interest from our membership, and volunteers who step forward to take a leadership role in establishing it.

11.ACRONYM BUSTER

Acronym	Long form
AP	Assistant Practitioner / Assistant Psychologist
APP	Aspiring Psychological Professional
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CAP	Clinical Associate in Psychology
CoP	Community of Practice
CPPO	Chief Psychological Professions Officer
CWP	Children's Wellbeing Practitioner
CYP	Children and Young People
DClin	Doctorate in Clinical Psychology
EBE	Expert by Experience
EMHP	Education Mental Health Practitioner
HEI	Higher Education Institution
MDT	Multi-disciplinary team
MHWP	Mental Health Wellbeing Practitioner
NHS TTad	NHS Talking Therapies for Anxiety and Depression
NHS TT LTC	NHS Talking Therapies for Long Term Conditions
PPN	Psychological Professions Network
PWP	Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner
ToR	Terms of Reference

12. APPENDIX 1: FUTURE NHS PLATFORM USER INFORMATION

FutureNHS is an online collaboration platform designed for NHS staff, public sector partners, and individuals working in health and social care. Typically, those eligible to register include:

- NHS employees
- Staff from local authorities, voluntary sector organisations, and academic institutions involved in healthcare
- Other public sector professionals with a relevant role
- **However**, people who do not work in the public sector and only have personal email addresses **can be invited** to workspaces by workspace managers.

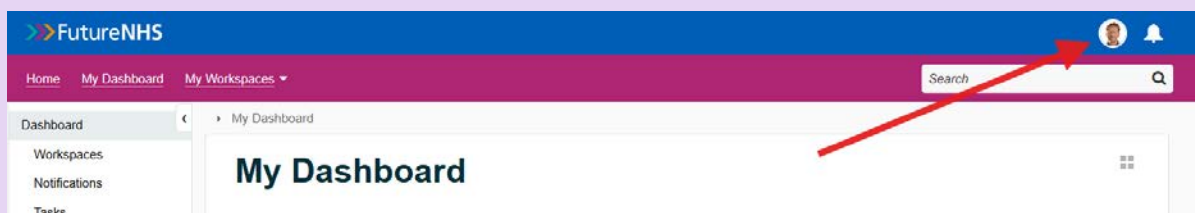
How to Register on the FutureNHS Platform:

1. Go to the FutureNHS website: <https://future.nhs.uk>
2. Click 'Register' (usually found on the login page).
3. Enter your details, including your name, email address, organisation, and role.
 - If you have an NHS email address, registration is usually straightforward.
 - If you are from a partner organisation, you may need additional verification.
4. Submit your registration request.
5. Wait for approval. FutureNHS may review your application, and approval typically takes a few days.

Once registered, you can join workspaces, collaborate with colleagues, and access a range of resources.

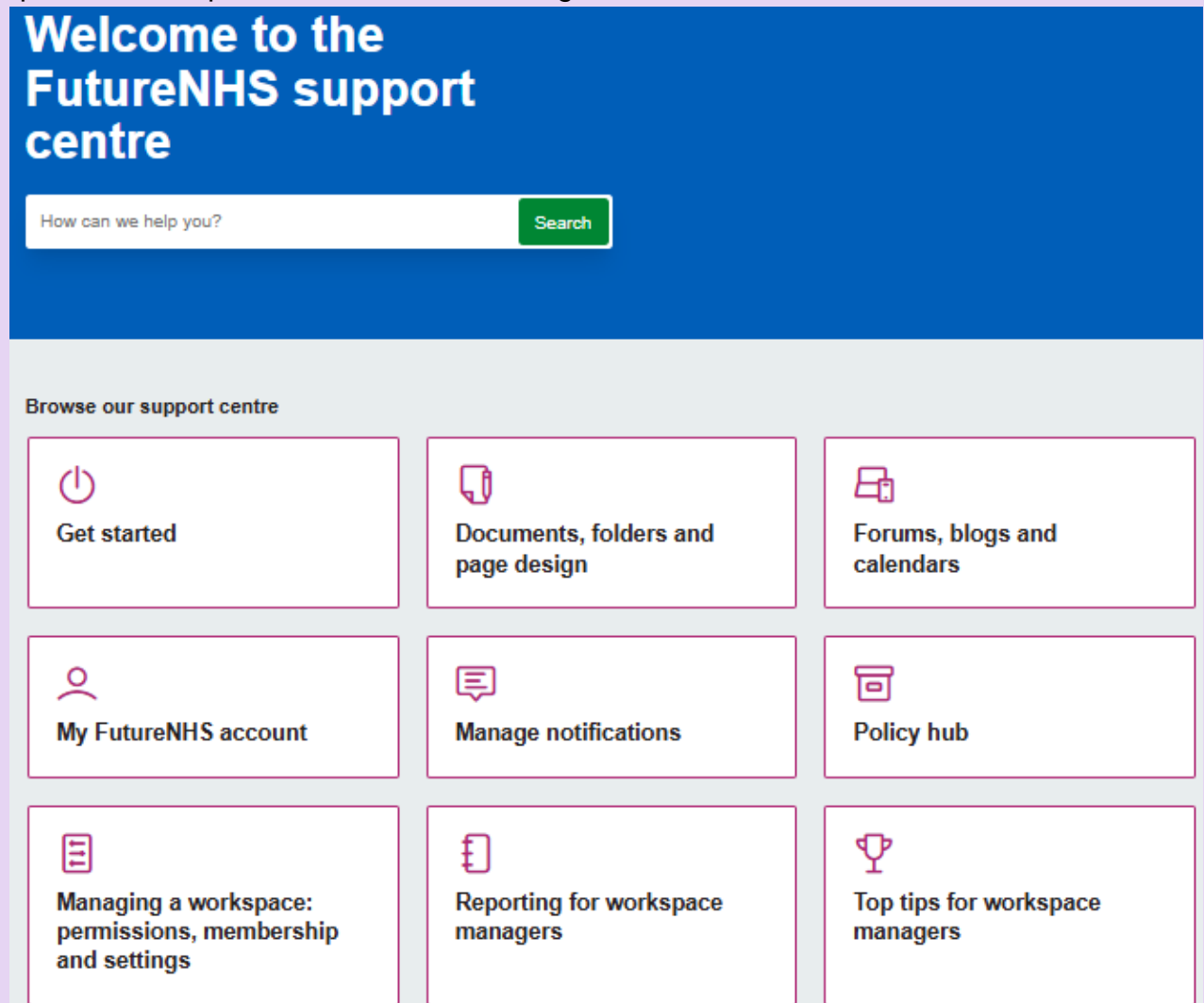
Updating your Profile Information

Please update your personal information with region, job title and any other details you wish to share. This will help us to identify you in the future if you need permissions changing or are having technical difficulties with the platform. You can change your profile settings by going to “**My Account**” (indicated by your initials or avatar) shown in the image below and clicking “**profile**” from the drop-down list

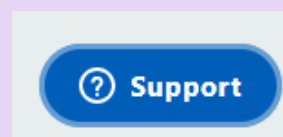


Using Future NHS

The Future NHS Platform has a range of user guides which are accessed from the [support centre website](#). The image below shows the topics covered. Any specific questions or topics can be searched using the search bar.



For complex queries or if the information you are looking for isn't available, clicking the 'support' button to the bottom right of the screen opens up a webform for direct support from the Future NHS team, who respond to enquiries quickly by email.

A contact form titled "Contact us" with a blue header. It contains the following fields: "Your name" (text input), "Email address" (text input), "How can we help you?" (text area), and "Attachments" (file upload area with a plus icon and the text "Add up to 5 files"). At the bottom right is a blue "Send" button. The Zendesk logo is visible in the bottom left corner.

Version control

Version	Details	Who By	Change made	Date
V1		James Varty		20/02/2025