

Framework for the Practitioner Health Provider Network – Europe (PHPN)

1 Practitioner Health Provider Network (PHPN)

1.1 Introduction

Within Europe there are only a small number of services which offer special services to sick doctors, Physician Health Programmes (PHPs). This is in contrast to the North America and Australia where PHPs have been in place for many years. Following a meeting in Dublin in December 2017, a number of European leaders in the field of Physician Health felt it was timely to establish a European network of provider services to help disseminate best practice and spread across Europe the need for such services.

European PHP which do exist have grown organically, often developed following a local high-profile issue (usually the death through suicide of a doctor). Whilst initially providing services to defined group (for example, junior doctors, addicted doctors) or area, over time and largely dependent on available resources, PHPs have expanded to deal with a much wider range of mental health issues, including stress, burnout and addiction. Some services have also expanded to include preventative actions to help physicians better manage their work, conflict in the workplace and difficult inter-professional relationships, all of which may be affecting their ability to practice safely.

A common theme across the providers within the network is to encourage health professionals to come forward and seek help at the earliest stage and to assist the individual, where appropriate, with a return to safe practice.

The development of a European Practitioner Health Provider Network (PHPN) provides the opportunity to share practice, understand variance between different services and help to begin to define a common European wide service specification for physician health services. The network will also help to define a common data set (patient, quality, service specifications) and outcome measures such that we can build the evidence on what works in this area of care.

A common theme across the providers within the network is to encourage health professionals to come forward and seek help at the earliest stage and to assist the individual, where appropriate with a return to safe practice.

The network will also help support others, across Europe build on best practice when setting up their own PHP. The network can also lend its support to help other countries develop these important services.

Finally, a strong network, acting as an advocate for the improvement in physician health might help create a cultural shift in how doctors are treated (well or unwell).

1.2 Purpose, aims and objectives of the network

The Practitioner Health Provider Network (PHPN) is a forum in which provider services can meet (virtually or face to face) to discuss, reflect and advise on mental health and addiction treatment, the impact of physical health and/or personal circumstances on mental health, psycho-educational support and preventative services for doctors and other health professionals.

The World Medical Association Geneva Convention (2017) states as its first line:

“I solemnly pledge to dedicate my life to the service of humanity”

The PHPN believes that doctors have the right to put themselves and their own health first in order to be a good doctor. This is true for all health professionals who cannot serve their patients without ensuring they are fit and able to perform their role.

Therefore we believe that the statement below, also included in the Geneva Convention should be the primary statement.

“I will attend to my own health, wellbeing, and abilities in order to provide care of the highest standard.”

The overarching aim of the network is to ensure that health professionals in Europe have access to help and support appropriate to their needs, are not disadvantaged by seeking treatment and that it is provided in a confidential, supportive manner in line with the rights of all other patients seeking care.

The secondary aims are

- to bring together those with experience of providing services and delivering care to health professionals
- to provide guidance in the development of new and existing services
- to enable services to work together across organisational and national boundaries
- to build a cohesive network to support established service provision and develop new routes of further support
- to build an evidence base of the issues and impact of sick health professionals in the workforce
- to identify good practice, research and initiatives internationally that are delivering positive outcomes for sick health professionals.

The objectives of the network are: (To be discussed)

- To identify and develop best practice guidelines, competencies and evidence for services.
- To describe the current working practices of existing PHPs and best practice in aspects of establishing and running practitioner health services.
- To provide a network of support for individual and teams delivering services and provide an opportunity to discuss in a confidential space issues and individual cases in the area of physician health
- To identify common themes, trends and service developments needed in this area
- To develop consistent outcome measurements which allow for meaningful comparisons between PHPs and provide a platform for research opportunities
- To identify the common causes affecting health professionals in the work environment and lobby for change

- To develop a strong advocacy for a culture shift identifying the importance of looking after practitioner health and play a role in preventative and educational aspects that equip health professionals with the tools to manage their own wellbeing
- To lobby for European funds to support the development of PHPs across Europe

1.3 Membership

Organisation	Country
Practitioner Health Matters Programme	Ireland
NHS Practitioner Health Programme	England
Arts in Nood	Belgium
Doctors4doctors	Belgium
Médecins en difficulté	Belgium
PAIMM	Barcelona
PHP	Netherlands
Association MOTS: Organisation du Travail et Santé du Médecin	France
Barbara Broers	Switzerland
Service in development	Malta
Service in development	Scotland
BMA Wellbeing	UK
Doctors Support Network	UK

1.4 Network inclusion criteria

The PHPN aims to work with all individuals, organisations and networks with an interest in physician health but is aimed solely at provider services.

The membership of the PHPN should:

- Be involved in an active PHP service in Europe
- Be a visible, engaged and active member of the group.
- Have sufficient time, experience and the right skills to carry the full responsibilities of the group.
- Use their expertise and experience to advise the PHPN.
- Propose recommendations for the development of the PHPN and where appropriate to provide analysis to support service development.

1.5 Accountabilities

The PHPN is established to enable members to engage in meaningful discussion and debate about the practitioner health service providers and on service development, including what its own role in supporting practitioner patients can be.

However the PHPN does not hold any formal authority to direct practitioner health service providers, rather it seeks to work in a collaborative way to advise and support, as well as potentially deliver its own voluntary support.

Each member of the PHPN is accountable to their own organisations where they are representing these or to their own registering body standards where they are presenting as informed individuals.

1.6 Frequency and location of meetings

The PHPN will meet every 6 months. Locations will vary across Europe. PHPN members will host meetings in their own countries on a voluntary and rotational basis.

1.7 Standing agenda

The secretariat will work with the Chair and PHPN members to agree agenda items and papers appropriate for the individual meeting.

1.8 Chair & Secretariat

The Chair of each meeting will be selected from the PHP hosting the individual meeting in that location. The host PHP will also provide secretariat functions to support the meeting, ensuring venue arrangements are in place and any relevant papers are sent out in advance and after the meeting.

2 Projects and Papers

The PHPN will agree if it believes that any projects or papers should be developed in-between meetings on specific areas of work as identified.

Each agreed project or paper will be developed within the parameters of the PHPN as set out above and to be led by named individuals from with the PHPN to agreed timescales.

Papers will be held on a shared-on drop box or equivalent and all PHPN members will have access to these.

Individual members can also add relevant papers to the shared dropbox that they believe are relevant to the PHPN.

Each individual or organisation involved in a project or paper will be accountable to their own organisations where they are representing these or to their own registering body standards where they are presenting as informed individuals.