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Information paper

History of the support worker within the CSP

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History of the support worker within the CSP

Introduction

The CSP is the specialist professional, educational and trade union body for the UK's 52,000 qualified physiotherapist, physiotherapy students and support workers. Founded in 1894, the Society is member-led, governed by an elected Council and has three main functions:

- Professional Body
- Trade Union and
- Membership Services

This paper is a short summary of the history of the Support Worker within the CSP from their being able to join 'a list' in 1994 to present day.

History

Today's support worker is a very different one to the 'helper', who in September 1994, was encouraged to join a 'list' within the CSP. The admission of helpers or assistants to the organisation, changed the CSP fundamentally and irrevocably. Until that point, the organisation consisted of people who when qualified as a physiotherapist, became a members of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (MCSP).

The admission of Physiotherapy 'assistants' did not deflect the organisation from its mission and purpose, but did change the nature of its composition. Although it had always been the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, not Physiotherapists, by allowing assistants to join, the composition comprised of those who joined because of the qualification of physiotherapist and those who wanted to join because of their role.

After the Second World War 'Aides' were employed to support the therapeutic professions of physiotherapy and occupational therapy. Initially they offered 'housekeeping' type duties and did limited patient care. In the 60's, a shortage of therapists led to the widespread recruitment of therapy aides, many from a nursing auxiliary background, to support qualified therapists. In 1971 the DHSS as it was known before the start of the Department of Health, recognised therapy aides as an established grade called 'remedial helpers' and in 1974, the grade was established within the Whitley System.

In 1973, in recognition of the need to establish clear professional boundaries and to ensure adequate training for aides, the organisation issued two leaflets: 'Duties in a Physiotherapy Department that may be delegated to personnel other than physiotherapists'¹ and 'in-service training of helpers in physiotherapy departments'².

In 1985, the organisation produced a booklet 'The physiotherapy helper – a guide to training and duties'³ and two years later, in 1987, the society asked the Association of District and Superintendent Physiotherapists to establish two working parties to look at the role and practice of helpers and to identify training needs. In 1989, following on from the reports of the working parties the Society produced a definition of a physiotherapy helper as

'A health care support worker who assists the physiotherapist in the provision of physiotherapy'.

The same statement included a declaration on clinical governance that said,

'physiotherapists are ultimately responsible for the physiotherapy management of their patients and must ensure that their helpers are trained to undertake the delegated task'.

Whilst it is the duty of employers to ensure that employees are capable and competent to undertake their role, no professional can escape their individual responsibility to supervise and approve work undertaken by another through delegation: one can delegate the task but not the responsibility, which remains with the person delegating.

By the early Nineties, there was a growing recognition from physiotherapists and helpers alike that some form of recognition of the nature, status, role and function of helpers was needed. In 1994, a vote was taken of Society members to create a Helpers (later Assistants) List.

¹ Duties in a physiotherapy department that may be delegated to personnel other than physiotherapists' - The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, 1973

² In-service training of helpers in physiotherapy departments - The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, 1973

³ The physiotherapy helper – a guide to training and duties - The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, August 1985

The Physiotherapy Assistants Board (PAB) first met in January 1995. It was set up to investigate, debate and recommend action, where appropriate, on all matters relating to assistants.

In October 1996 delegates from all over the UK attended CSP headquarters to witness history in the making at the Society's first annual conference for Assistants.

In 1997 the requirement that a qualified physiotherapist must nominate an Assistant for the List was dropped and a year later the number of Assistant delegates voting at ARC was increased from three to fifteen. Following an ARC motion, Council recognised the need for CPD for assistants and allocated funds for courses and training. In 1998, Assistants were allowed equal voting rights at Board and Branch meetings.

In September 2000 a paper was presented to Council that recommended the deletion of the word 'substantial' (relating to physio work) from the definition of a uni-professional Assistant eligible to join the List and invited Council to work towards an overall expansion of the List to include multi-professional Rehabilitation Assistants. The word substantial was deleted from Regulation 1 (b) and six months later a further paper was submitted to Council that advocated more work to consider opening the List to multi-professional Assistants, as a proper response to changing workforce patterns in the health service and in view of the Community Rehab Team's (CRT) request for a 'home' for Rehabilitation Assistants⁴.

2005 saw the Assistants 'List' change to Associate (assistant) members and the new bye law change was agreed by Council and went to Privy Council in 2006. Since 2009 Associate (assistant) members have been known purely as Associate members.

In order to become an associate member of the CSP, the Statutes set down the following regulations:

'The term 'physiotherapy assistant', 'support worker' or any other title, indicates a person who is not a registered physiotherapist but is delivering physiotherapy or supporting the delivery of physiotherapy working under a registered physiotherapist or registered Allied Health Professional'.

⁴ The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy scoping exercise re rehabilitation assistants – systems 4, August 2001

Supervision, accountability and delegation

In 2006, the CSP worked with the Royal College of Nursing, the Royal College of Speech & Language Therapy, The British Dietetic Associate and Dr Susan Nancarrow, Senior Research Fellow from the University of Trent to consider the complexities of supervision, accountability and delegation. An inter-collegiate paper was produced for their members called 'Supervision, Accountability and Delegation of activities to Support Workers – A guide for Registered Practitioners and Support Workers'⁵. The purpose of this paper was to encourage both groups of staff engaged in the delivery of healthcare to reflect collaboratively on tasks proposed for delegation, in order to ensure that clients receive safe and effective care from the most appropriate person.

Regulation

Currently a person can be employed as a support worker without meeting any particular requirements other than those stipulated by the employer.

Associate members of the CSP on joining are sent the CSP's Code of Professional Values and Behaviour which sets out relevant ethical, moral and legal issues arising from the Rules of Professional Conduct. However regulation of some sort for support workers has always been a priority to ensure patient protection and in December 2010 Scotland introduced a set of mandatory induction standards for all new healthcare support workers and in February 2011, Wales produced a code of conduct to provide an Assurance Framework for public protection. Following Francis, regulation for support workers in England was ruled out but a Certificate of Fundamental Care is being considered, hopefully for ALL support workers.

Associate membership is regulated through to the CSP Regulatory Committee.

CPD

In 2010, the CSP undertook a major new project, with support from Union-Learn, focusing on its membership in the NHS to see how to help its members improve their access to non-mandatory Continuing Professional Development in the workplace. 371 Associate members responded out of a possible 2,100. 320 respondents were female with 40% being between 46 – 55 years old.

⁵ Supervision, accountability and delegation of activities to support workers – a guide for registered practitioners and support workers – The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy et al, 2006

Findings from the ULF project show that Associates overwhelmingly value CPD. 91% feel that CPD improves practice and 84% that it improves patient care. When asked how CPD affected them, 67% of Associates said it improved their motivation. Critically CPD is valued for minimising mistakes with hardly anyone disagreeing with this statement.

59% of Associates strongly agree or agree that they do enough non-mandatory CPD to fulfil their current role. However, 58% say they have encountered barriers when trying to access non-mandatory CPD. 70% of Associates felt that this was due to employer's lack of funds followed by 64% believing it was also down to staffing problems and 48% that it was lack of time off. 47% believe that support workers do not get the same access to non-mandatory CPD as qualified staff.

Associate members are not confident with their IT skills with only 55% rating their IT skills as good or very good. Consequently they do not tend to respond well to web communication. Over one third of our associate members have not recorded or updated their e-mail address on our membership system.

Membership package

Associate members can pay monthly or yearly and can apply for tax relief for their subscription

For accountability

- CSP Code of Professional Values and Behaviours which defines the professional values and behaviour that the CSP expects of all of its members. It promotes professionalism while reflecting members diverse roles.
- CSP Quality Standards developed to promote and assure quality in clinical practice and service delivery
- Professional Liability Insurance regardless of job-title but there must be some element of physiotherapy tasks in the overall work, even if other non-physiotherapy related tasks are also undertaken. The insurance is however predicated upon the fact that the associate will only be undertaking delegated tasks that have been delegated to them by a registered health professional.
- Information to support and guide members through professionalism and regulation on our website, and information papers.

For education and career development

- E-portfolio a personal, interactive online space that offers an exciting blend of information, learning activities, and resources to support continuing professional development (CPD).
- CSP Framework which helps you to identify your current skills, knowledge and competence through professional frameworks.
- CPD Syd, a weekly CPD activity with suggestions on how to record your learning and evidence the behaviours, knowledge and skills in the physiotherapy framework.
- Funding for accredited courses relevant to your work, with the exception of training to become a physiotherapist.
- An opportunity to attend the **first** day of the CSP CPD flagship event – Physiotherapy UK, free including travel to the event (with the exception of the first £35 of any travelling expenses) with a small charge for anyone wishing to attend a second day. Accommodation would have to be paid for by delegate.
- Library and Information Services - the UK's largest resource of physiotherapy related published information
- Union Learning Fund and Learning Champions. Learning Champions support and promote excellence in CPD for all CSP members, whatever their role, whatever their setting.
- The chance to represent Associate members at the Annual Representatives Council (ARC) where they have 15 seats.

For support in the workplace

- Professional Advice Service (PAS) where you can seek advice and information regarding matters connected with the professional practice aspect of physiotherapy.
- Stewards and Senior Negotiating officers in our employment relations and union services function for which associate members get the same training and opportunities to train to become stewards and safety reps.
- General Information papers covering a wide variety of subjects including further information about NHS changes in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- Enquiry Handling Service providing a comprehensive information service.
- CSP website
- Frontline the CSP magazine every two weeks and the e-bulletin which comes out weekly.
- InteractiveCSP (iCSP) to learn, communicate and share knowledge with peers and with CSP.
- Strong voice for Physiotherapy and Support Workers who represent members by lobbying ministers, policy and through consultation.

- A new information paper providing guidance on appraisals
- Your own newsletter published three times and year keeping you up to date with key messages.
- Associate Committee and representation on committees and Council ensuring that the needs and voice of support workers is always high on the agenda at the CSP.
- A welcome pack on joining with membership services outlined including a personalised welcome letter and badge.
- Access to the Members Benevolent Fund in times of hardship.
- Own dedicated officer.

If they are working part time as a support worker whilst training to be a physiotherapist, the CSP recommend that they hold dual membership as student membership does not cover them for the support worker role in the workplace eg no ERUS representation. If paying for support worker membership, they would receive student membership free of charge.

To conclude

Support workers are a necessary and valued workforce that needs to be trained appropriately and given the opportunities to develop their skills and prospects for career development and the CSP are constantly working to help guide and support them in every way through our functions. Further information for support workers can be obtained through information papers and the CSP website.

Useful Links

- [Scope of Practice for Support Workers](#)
- [Code of Professional Values and Behaviour](#)
- [The Physiotherapy Framework](#)
- [An update on education available for support workers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland \(PD076\)](#)
- [Supervision, Accountability and Delegation of Activities to support workers – a guide for registered practitioners and support workers](#)
- [Insurance and Physiotherapy Practice \(PD027\)](#)
- CSP website – www.csp.org.uk, where the link to iCSP and your e-portfolio can also be found.