

MENTAL HEALTH OFFICER SERVICE

A Mental Health Officer (MHO) is a registered social worker who has undergone specialist training and education to work with people with a mental disorder. MHOs are accountable to the local authority that employs them, but their assessments are independent. MHOs must comply with the National Standards for Mental Health Officer Services.

WHAT DO MENTAL HEALTH OFFICERS DO?

MHOs have assessment, supervision, review and report writing duties under three main pieces of legislation:

1. The Mental Health (Care and Treatment) Scotland Act 2003

For people requiring hospital admission who are mentally unwell and cannot consent to the necessary treatment, the MHO may consider consenting to their admission to hospital for assessment or treatment under an Emergency or Short Term Detention Certificate (EDC or STDC).

For those persons requiring care and treatment in hospital for an extended period, the MHO can apply to the Mental Health Tribunal Service for a Compulsory Treatment Order (CTO), authorising detention in hospital for up to a period of six months. These orders can later be varied to community-based and extended if necessary.

2. The Criminal Procedures (Scotland) Act 1995

MHOs also perform duties under the Criminal Procedures (Scotland) Act 1995, including compiling Court reports on mentally disordered offenders who are subject to criminal justice processes.

3. The Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000

MHOs also perform duties under the Adults with Incapacity Act providing assessments and reports for the Sheriff Courts to support Guardianship and Intervention Order applications.

WHAT IS A DESIGNATED MHO?

When an individual is required to receive care and/or treatment under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) Act the local authority must appoint a designated MHO for the period that the individual is subject to compulsory measures under the Mental Health Act. This provides consistent contact for people to discuss their situation and any concerns they may have.

The designated MHO will consult and liaise with the doctor in charge of the person's care and treatment, known as the Responsible Medical Officer (RMO) and prepare any reports necessary for the Mental Health Tribunal Service or the Sherriff Court.

WHO CAN MAKE A REFERRAL FOR AN MHO?

A GP or psychiatrist will refer to an MHO when they are considering use of legislation to help a patient receive the right care and treatment for mental disorder.

A lawyer can request the help of an MHO to provide a report when an application is being made for Guardianship Order or Intervention Order.

TRAINING TO BE A MENTAL HEALTH OFFICER

Anyone in the West of Scotland wanting to practice as a Mental Health Officer (MHO) must be a registered social worker, with at least two years practice experience. They should also have completed the Postgraduate Certificate in Mental Health Social Work qualification offered by Strathclyde University or equivalent qualification.

THE POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN MENTAL HEALTH SOCIAL WORK

- Enables social workers to gain a qualification to contribute positively to the care and treatment of those experiencing mental disorder;
- Involves undertaking practice experience with your employing local authority;
- Benefits from the specialist input from guest lecturers;
- Prepares experienced and qualified social workers, registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) to undertake the statutory role of Mental Health Officer (MHO);
- Only available to qualified social workers currently employed by local authorities.

WHY THIS COURSE?

The course trains social workers for the role of Mental Health Officer (MHO) in which they will be able to contribute positively to the care and treatment of those experiencing mental disorder by ensuring an approach that recognises the impact of social as well as medical circumstances on their lives.

The role of MHO is as defined in Section 32 of the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003, and as qualified by the direction of the Scottish Ministers (Requirements for appointment as Mental Health Officers) Direction (January 2009).

In 2007 the Scottish Social Services Council published standards and practice competencies for MHO training. This stated that the certificate must be:

- provided by a university, within a programme provider partnership
- delivered at SCQF Level 11, which equates with Masters level
- be approved by the SSSC as a specialist course

The course has been externally evaluated and assessed as producing MHOs who are competent to practice from the perspective of the local authorities who employ the

candidates on completion of the award. Between 85 and 90% of all candidates complete the course within a 12-month period. On completion of the programme, 100% of candidates are appointed as MHO by their local authority.