



The British  
Psychological Society

Division of Counselling Psychology

## **DIVISION OF COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY (DCoP)**

### ***Dispelling the myths about Counselling Psychologists whilst challenging discrimination***

Dear DCoP members,

Counselling Psychologists are now well established in clinical roles across the NHS and in the private and third sectors across different services, in positions of seniority and in leadership roles. The research that is being done in counselling psychology is considerably advanced in recent years. The discipline is growing and we have over 900 trainee members who will in due course become registered psychologists and chartered members of the society. As a Division we are working hard in a variety of ways to help our members with employment and employability. More than half of counselling psychologists now have NHS posts, and many have their training placements in the NHS. Counselling psychologists are therefore now well embedded in the provision of NHS services. They are also well represented in third sector services that are providing services commissioned by the NHS.

Despite this, we know there are still some areas of concern among the membership over employment opportunities. The purpose of this article is to inform members of what the Division is doing to address this.

The DCoP are involved in several initiatives, for example, working for competencies rather than title based recruitment; addressing how the discipline is presented, ensuring the training competences match the requirements of current employment, to name a few. Indeed, promoting the profession of counselling psychology and the Division of Counselling Psychology; the variety of competencies that Counselling Psychologists bring to the profession, in addition to holding onto our identity is of great importance to the DCoP. Within our organisation a lot of work continues to take place and the DCoP would like to inform members of what we know about the issue, the progress we have made so far and will continue to build on. This work is a fluid and ongoing process and we hope to continue to keep you updated with our progress in future.

#### **Key current projects:**

- We are currently involved in the project under the auspices of the BPS Membership Standards Board which is mapping the competences of all applied psychologists. This will hopefully go a long way to evidence that Counselling Psychologists have parallel competence with other applied psychologists in areas such as neuropsychology, cognitive testing, leadership and supervision, for example.

- The Professional Practice Board of the BPS agreed to support our position in relation to the NHS coding so that all psychologists in the NHS are coded under the 'applied psychologist' superordinate category in order for all psychologists to be positioned with equal standing at this level.
- Our Executive committee has prepared an employment leaflet which we urge members to read, which together with the joint statement signed by the Divisional Chairs a few years ago:  
<http://www.bps.org.uk/networks-and-communities/member-microsite/division-counselling-psychology/employment>
- May offer additional support to members who may experience discrimination. The leaflet highlights UNITE the Union who are better placed to take up individual cases. Copies can be found [www.unitetheunion.org/growing-our-union/joinunite](http://www.unitetheunion.org/growing-our-union/joinunite). Unite has done much to support colleagues where there has been employment related discrimination and pursuing actual individual concrete instances is one route members can take.
- The BPS Professional Practice Board has formed a sub-group to look at recruitment by competence which is engaged in developing further guidance on recruiting across the applied psychologies.
- Recent changes to the BPS training standards for counselling psychology have done much to ensure all clinical competences and broader competences e.g. in leadership and supervision, psychological testing, and neuropsychology are now demonstrably well developed on registration across all and not just some training programmes.
- We should recognise that many counselling psychologists report positive experiences where they are perceived with equal status and bring different perspectives on their work (clinical, departmental work, service development and leading services).
- These colleagues have good assertiveness and communication skills and can express what counselling psychology can offer and are less concerned with comparative difference/similarities. Many NHS managers understand and value the different applied psychologies. Once people are working in services and often as a result of having ensured during training they have developed the relevant breadth and depth of clinical experience in the setting in which they subsequently want to work, it is that experience and skill that makes them marketable for future opportunities. So some of this is a question of how employment is approached by the individual. Where there are concerns, it is usually most effective for an individual to seek advice where discrimination is seen to actually occur [eg: before the job interview etc].
- On a broader note with the 2nd phase of the member network review underway, this may change the structure of member networks and this will have implications for our members. We expect that this will be positive in terms of the greater emphasis on joint working across the applied psychologies.
- The DCoP Executive Committee will continue to raise our profile as one of the major applied psychologists. We have been pleased to see the emphasis that Prof Jamie Hacker-Hughes during his time as BPS President and there is significant support from Chairs of the other Divisions for initiatives to embed this as the norm across the Society.

The work of DCoP executive committee members often happens behind the scenes so we are pleased to bring you this summary of some of the key projects. We are also involved in BPS consultations, cross-divisional working teams and on BPS boards. For more information about our 2015 – 2016 strategic plans please visit our website. There you will find information about future projects, decisions made at our strategy meeting and our plans for the future of the division.

On behalf of DCoP Executive

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. McIntosh". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'M'.

Dr Maureen McIntosh PsychD, AFBPsS  
Chair Elect of the Division of Counselling Psychology  
CPsychol, Counselling Psychologist

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Nicholas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'H'.

Dr Helen Nicholas, PsychD, CPsychol, AFBPsS  
Chair – Division of Counselling Psychology