

## FOI264 Response

### Request

My name is XXXX and I am raising a freedom of information request to better understand how IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) services in UK have been improving the quality of care provided to those suffering from mental illness. I understand that over the last couple of years there have been changes to the requirements for NHS employees working within IAPT Trusts to improve the standards of care. One element of this is to ensure that existing employees providing counselling services are accredited by a relevant counselling body (e.g. BACP, UKCP, etc.).

I would like to have the following related questions answered:

- o **Q: Please can you confirm whether an official deadline was set within the Trust for existing employees to attain accreditation and what the date of this deadline was.**

In an effort to provide some context. I believe transitional arrangements for existing staff was touched upon within the *"The Improving Access to Psychological Therapies Manual"* under the *"Annex: Position Statement on Staffing Standards in - IAPT Services"* section.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/iapt-manual-v4.pdf>

The relevant clause states:

*"3.3 Transitional Arrangements for staff without the required qualifications and accreditations.*

*Where staff do not have the required qualifications and accreditations the clinical lead for the service will need to put in place transitional arrangements to ensure that the service is safe for patients and that the qualifications and accreditations of practitioners are transparent for the public using the service. A robust and urgent plan should be made to register staff onto the required training or for them to seek the required accreditations without delay. For patient safety it may be necessary to stop practitioners from practicing alone until they are registered as trainees or have their accreditation in place."*

- o **Q: Which organisation, body or panel was responsible for putting in place this deadline for the Trust?**
- o **Q: Was the need for existing NHS employee counsellors to be accredited officially communicated throughout the Trust? If so, by what means was this communicated (e.g. email, bulletin boards, meetings, etc.)? Was this also typically communicated by the affected employee's line manager and a plan put in place as an official objective?**
- o **Q: Typically, how long were affected employee counsellors given in which to achieve accreditation, was this a 12-month period or another period of time? Have there been instances where longer periods have been given for existing employees to work toward accreditation, specifically to those employees that may fall within the disability act or have been on extended periods of sick leave?**
- o **Q: Are there cases where existing employee counsellors have been allowed to work toward their accreditation within the Trust after April 2020? If so, were they allowed to continue working within their clinical role while working toward accreditation?**

I believe that these questions are also related to the wider *"NHS Mental Health Implementation Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24"* ([link](#)). It would be helpful to understand how this plan has been interpreted in the context of existing employee counsellors in the Trust in order to transition across to full accreditation.

## **Response**

Birmingham Healthy Minds (BHM) is an Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) service which provides therapies in line with recommendations from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE).

BHM offers advice, information and brief psychological therapies for people aged 16 years old and over, who are often feeling anxious, low in mood or depressed.

Please note that all Trust staff members within the Birmingham Healthy Mind Service are fully IAPT trained and have previously obtained the appropriate qualifications at appointment of employment.

In regard to counsellors, the Trust currently has one (1) counsellor within the Birmingham Healthy Minds Service who has the appropriate accreditation for the role as this was a requirement for the employment post.