

17 March 2021

Information Rights & Compliance Team
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Our Ref: FOI/03870

Thank you for your request concerning Staff Accredited By Councelling Body.

Your request has been considered and processed in accordance with the requirements of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000.

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 (eg. BACP, UKCP, etc.).

- 1. 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.”

For the Hertfordshire IAPT Teams:

This is not applicable: HPFT currently employ one Counsellor in our Hertfordshire Teams. They commenced their role in July 2020 and we can confirm that they were already accredited with the BACP at that point.

Additional IAPT counselling provision for the Hertfordshire area is delivered under a separate contract, commissioned by ENCCG and HVCCG through AQP providers. HPFT are unable to comment on the accreditation status of the counsellors employed through that contract, including whether a deadline was set for them to attain accreditation as we do not hold this information¹.

For the Essex IAPT Teams:

IAPT services in North Essex operate on a partnership model, where counselling is provided by partner organisations. It is an expectation that counsellors within these organisations are accredited. We cannot comment on any specific arrangements and agreements put in place by our partners, including whether deadlines have been set at any stage because we do not hold this information¹.

2. Which organisation, body or panel was responsible for putting in place this deadline for the Trust?

Not applicable.

3. Was the need for existing NHS employee counsellors to be accredited officially communicated throughout the Trust? If so, by what means was this communicated (eg. 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?

Please see the answer to question 1.

4. 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?

Not applicable.

5. 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?

Please see the answer to question 1.

Should you require further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Please find enclosed an information sheet regarding copyright protection and the Trust's complaints procedure in the event that you are not satisfied with the response.

Yours sincerely

Sue Smith

**Sue Smith
Information Rights Officer**

Enc: Copyright Protection and Complaints Procedure Information Leaflet.

If you would like to complete a short survey in relation to your Freedom of Information request please scan the QR code below or click [here](#).



¹ Section 1(1) Any person making a request for information to a public authority is entitled (a) to be informed in writing by the public authority whether it holds information of the description specified in the request, and (b) if that is the case, to have that information communicated to him.