

DCP UK Chair's update

Roman Raczka



WE ARE now more than a year into the pandemic, and the end is not yet in sight. The UK has vaccinated millions of people but Covid-19 cases are still circulating and new variants are causing concern. At this stage in the 'Roadmap out of Lockdown' we were all anticipating that we would be able to experience a wider range of family and community activities. However outbreaks connected to the variant B.1.617.2, the variant which originated in India, are showing signs of a rapid rise in cases and seem likely to overtake previous variants as the dominant and more transmissible form of coronavirus.

The DCP Executive have continued to respond to the pandemic and lockdown in a range of strategic ways. Our strategy outlines what we think the most important challenges are, and what our role as clinical psychologists might be, in addressing them.

Our overarching strategic aims are that:

We will provide guidance and support to psychologists, to all who use our services, and to the general public, responding to the emerging demands presented by the coronavirus pandemic. As the pandemic changes over time, we will aim to prioritise the focus of our support and work with Nation, Branch and Faculty leads, to prioritise implementation accordingly.

Across the range of services delivered, we would encourage clinical psychologists to continue to deliver psychological support to people who use our services, to psychologists and to the wider community in the following ways:

To support people who use our services

The DCP will encourage and support psychologists to:

- Ensure that children, families and adults continue to receive the psychological support that they need. Adapt methods of delivery to maintain service delivery.
- Acknowledge that inability to access digital support (due to financial or other reasons) means that creative alternatives must be identified.
- Share resources to improve the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.
- Develop a Living Well campaign – for example based on the Ways to Wellbeing model.
- Develop and share resources on specific psychological needs including bereavement, anxiety and depression, exacerbation of existing health problems, trauma.
- Engage with individuals with lived experience to listen and respond.
- Engage with communities who have been most significantly impacted by the coronavirus including Black Asian and Minority Ethnic and socially disadvantaged groups.

To support clinical psychologists

The DCP will:

- Provide clinical governance and professional leadership to aspiring and qualified clinical psychologists impacted by coronavirus.
- Provide support to prequalified and trainee psychologists who may be called on to take on new/challenging roles.
- Work with faculties and branches/nations to both listen and respond to the needs of different

communities.

Provide support to psychologists who are experiencing significant stress as a result of the coronavirus pandemic including our DCP Wellbeing Support Groups.

Provide support to Heads of Services.

Further develop new ways of working such as digital online support.

To support members of the wider community networks

The DCP will:

Encourage research into the psychological impact of coronavirus to be conducted and disseminated (including future special editions of *Clinical Psychology Forum*).

Make and strengthen alliances with other professional bodies including Royal College of Psychiatrists, Psychological Practitioner Networks, Royal College of Nursing, All Party Parliamentary Groups and Third Sector Organisations.

Engage with communities who have been most significantly impacted by the coronavirus including Black Asian and Minority Ethnic and socially disadvantaged groups.

Encourage a Community Psychology approach.

The DCP will also continue to work with other Divisions and Special Interest Groups across the BPS, both in the Presidential Taskforce as well as developing other working alliances.

The Presidential Taskforce have developed a wide range of publications for both professionals and member of the public and all will continue to be freely available to download.

Link to BPS Covid resources (available to all)

<https://www.bps.org.uk/coronavirus-resources>

Link to DCP Covid publications (members only)

<https://www.bps.org.uk/member-microsites/division-clinical-psychology/resources>

Digital healthcare

The coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on many people's mental health and well-being. It has also seen the NHS and other services dramatically change how they deliver services. For many, mental health services providing help and support by phone or online has always been a lifeline. The Covid-19 crisis and global pandemic has highlighted the role of telehealth care and digital tools such as apps to offer support in times of need. Many clinicians and patients alike are now experiencing the full potential of these digital tools, as we are all using these digital approaches to connect in a time when in-person and face-to-face visits are impossible. Examples of NHS reviewed apps and digital tools (that meet the Digital Technology Assessment Criteria) can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/>

The DCP Digital Healthcare sub-committee Chaired by Professor Helen Pote has been noteworthy in building on the work already carried out by the group and made tremendous progress in increasing the range of resources available to psychologists. Some of the key outputs of this sub-committee include:

- Developing the competence framework for digital competence of all psychological professions
- Securing funding and worked with London IAPT/HEE to adapt the framework for CBT practitioners
- Developing a range of digital resources for professionals and clients
 - Effective Therapy via Video – Top tips

- [Digital Adaptations to Supervision and Observations](#)
- [Top Tips for Psychological Sessions Delivered by Video Call for Adult Patients](#)
- Group work using Digital Methods (in press)
- Producing a [Webinar](#) – Top Tips on Effective Therapy via Video
- Securing a DCP grant for e-learning
- Developing four e-learning modules which will be produced next year
- Developing the website www.digitalhealthskills.com
- Producing written evidence on digital competences for the House of Lords
- Authoring a paper on the digital surveys conducted in 2018–2019 which has been accepted for publication in Digital Health.

Whilst the digital healthcare developments are both impressive and exciting, we must also ensure that we consider the needs of those in our society who are digitally excluded, to ensure that they experience the support that they need.

This may include clinical psychologists taking the following actions:

- asking people about their preferred choice as to how they wish to access the support they need;
- respecting people's choices, so that those who decide against a certain digital approach do not have restricted or limited access to services;
- giving clear guidance on the implications of each method of digital support to enable informed choice;
- including information on the benefits or drawbacks of different digital methods for people with particular mental health conditions or symptoms;
- providing clear practical advice to people using services remotely including on how to use the technology, privacy and confidentiality issues and what to do if there are problems at any stage of the process, see [Top Tips for Psychological Sessions Delivered by Video Call for Adult Patients](#)
- ensuring that services delivered remotely are culturally appropriate and that staff have the skills to deliver them in a culturally competent way;
- if people are digitally excluded or where privacy at home is a problem, improving access to digital and remote services by providing private spaces in services or other organisations' premises where people can access services remotely;
- seeking feedback from people using services about their experiences and integrating that feedback into the design of services.

The DCP Digital Healthcare subcommittee will continue to develop digital materials and guidance to support Clinical Psychologists both during the Covid pandemic and beyond.

Dr Roman Raczka

Division of Clinical Psychology, Chair