

# DCP UK Chair's update

## Esther Cohen-Tovée

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**A**S I OBSERVED in our recent Covid Bulletin, I think that we are in a strange place of contrasting experiences and transition. We have lived through a unique period in our lives, but are mourning those who have lost their lives during this time. The initial Covid-19 peak is at last subsiding, but we are living with the awful knowledge that it has been more devastating in the UK than almost anywhere else. We are aware of the risks of a further peak, but also of the growing mental health, physical health and rehabilitation needs to which we need to respond. We are trying to imagine the future, but realising that this is not going to be a post-Covid future, but that we will be 'living with' Covid for some considerable time to come. We also recognise that the pandemic has been a catalyst for change, some of which has been unwelcome, but some of which has been positive and which we want to build on.

We are continuing to develop our DCP Covid next phase strategy and have had helpful feedback from a range of stakeholders. We have further clarified our strategic objectives, and we will be reviewing our existing workstreams and setting up some new ones, in order to take forward action plans.

### **Our latest COVID strategic objectives are:**

#### **1. Tackling the next phases.**

Recognising the multiplicity of impacts of the pandemic and the lockdown on different groups, we will develop pro-active and reactive responses to support the psychological wellbeing of the whole population across the lifespan.

This will include a focus on:

- The most vulnerable groups and groups most affected by recession including people from BAME backgrounds, those already living in poverty, experiencing domestic violence/abuse, and other psycho-social determinants.
- Coproducing psychological support for people recovering from Covid-19; suffering from bereavement; impacted by shielding and isolation; with pre-existing mental health problems which have been exacerbated.
- Find ways to support the wider population with the psychological challenges of both sustaining and of gradually exiting from the lockdown and social distancing.

We will take a trauma-informed approach including community-based interventions and drawing on the recently published Community MH framework (2019), emerging work with the Voluntary & Community Sector and learning from disasters/mass trauma events.

We will endeavor to share our psychological knowledge with the public, with services and with those who are planning and making the decisions.

#### **2. Partnership working.**

Underpinning all our work we will build on & increase coproduction and partnership working with Experts by Experience, fellow professional bodies, the England ALBs (Arm's Length Bodies) and home nation equivalents, Unions, and other key groups within the BPS.

### 3. Support to members.

We will continue to support and engage with our members at every career stage as the challenges for them develop and change, with particular focus on member wellbeing and wellbeing at work. There is an opportunity to collaborate across the sector with other professional bodies and the ALBs re staff wellbeing.

### 4. Finding and developing the positives.

We will share key messages re normalising responses and recognition of growth through trauma, while recognising and acknowledging the specific challenges brought by the pandemic. We will identify and share positive changes for services, organisations and communities, gathering learning & sharing, promoting innovation & wider implementation.

We hope that our members will engage widely with this work, as it is a crucial opportunity to build on the excellent work already done, in order to continue to make a significant difference going forwards for members, for people who use services and for the wider population. To be successful, co-production and partnership working must underpin this work.

The **Centre for Mental Health** has published this [helpful paper](#) on forecasting mental health needs, drawing on the most relevant literature.

### Black Lives Matter

The DCP Executive Committee, Minorities subcommittee and DCP Representative Assembly have worked together to produce an [initial response](#) to the dreadful news about the killing of George Floyd on 23 May while in police custody in Minneapolis, and to the wider issues highlighted by the Black Lives Matter movement and by our members. This response also appears on pp.53–54 of this issue of CPF.

We continue to listen, learn and work together to develop our Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-racism approach and action plans, building on the work already in progress. We hope that more DCP members from BAME backgrounds will consider coming forwards for elected roles and/or to join our committees as co-opted members. Mentors from BAME backgrounds would also be extremely welcome to join our Leadership & Management Faculty mentorship scheme, to provide the opportunity for BAME members at different career stages to choose a mentor from a similar background if they wish.

The Group of Trainers in Clinical Psychology have also provided an update on their action plan re increasing diversity in access to Clinical Psychology training, particularly for people from BAME backgrounds. We hope that the very welcome announcement of an increase in training places for September 2020 in England, with increases also agreed for Scotland and hoped for in Wales and Northern Ireland, will help increase diversity in trainees and that this can be sustained going forwards.

### DCP Minorities Subcommittee

We are very pleased to be working in partnership with the DCP Minorities Subcommittee, who bring very important knowledge, experience and perspectives from a wide range of groups with protected characteristics and those who experience marginalisation. We are working together, and with other groups, on our Equality, Diversity, Inclusivity and Anti-Racism work and action planning. The subcommittee members are also contributing to the DCP Covid-19 Strategy and are engaged in a number of DCP workstreams, including those related to changes to work for psychology professionals, clinical psychology trainees, the general public who use psychological services, and a workstream focusing on the impact on racial inequality in light of Covid-19. A sub-group of the committee have been working on a resource paper focusing on special considerations for psychological staff with various protected characteristics. Part of this involved conducting a large-scale

survey to ask various individuals who identify as minority group members about specific challenges that they have encountered in the current situation. This should soon be available on the DCP Covid-19 Resources webpage.

The Minorities subcommittee has also contributed to a number of DCP documents including guidelines for staff, training courses, aspiring psychologists and their employers, and the Group of Trainers in Clinical Psychology risk assessment for trainees. The subcommittee organises a number of events each year with a particular focus on preparation for Clinical Psychology applications & interviews. They recently adapted their planned Clinical Psychology Interview Practice event for online delivery, which was very well received.

### **Experts by Experience**

I am delighted to report that we are now making very good progress towards the development of a BPS-wide framework for working in partnership with Experts by Experience (EbEs), which will enable us to implement fully the DCP EbE strategy. I am chairing a working group which includes our DCP England, Wales and Northern Ireland EbE leads who have shared their experiences of working with us over a number of years, and have very ably illustrated the breadth and depth of the benefits and impacts of working in partnership. Our working group members include two of the BPS Directors (Karen Beamish and Debra Malpas) as well as Hannah Farndon and Helen Barnett, and DCP MSU Director Sheelagh Rodgers. We are planning to engage with a wider group of Experts by Experience through our EbE network and forthcoming EbE online event to help us further develop our ideas for the framework.

As well as being a key enabler for how we want to work in DCP, I am excited about the opportunity to engage with the wider BPS re. embedding the principles and practice of coproduction with EbEs. We discussed this at the June meeting of the BPS Practice Board, and it was great to hear the enthusiasm from colleagues across the domains of Applied Psychology.

Our forthcoming EbE network event '**What matters most to us: Conversations about building compassionate communities together**' replaces our planned two-day event in Newcastle. Taking place on **Friday 10 July 2020, 2–3.30pm** this is a free virtual event, which is open to all. [Registration](#) is required to access the joining details.

### **Prequalification Group**

The DCP Prequalification group has been working closely with the DCP Executive Committee on a number of projects to support members and the broader workforce and public during the Covid-19 pandemic. They have developed resources for trainees and aspiring psychologists related to how roles have been adapted during the pandemic, and what the BPS advises during these changes. They continue to collaborate with stakeholders including the Minorities Subcommittee about supporting the DCLinPsy trainee community during the adaptations to both academic and placement expectations of training.

The prequalification group are also working with members of the DCP Executive committee in relation to the racial disparities and health inequalities that are being exacerbated by Covid-19. They are working with the BPS to develop a webinar series over the coming months on themes including adapting in our roles during the Covid-19 pandemic, a joint event with the Leadership and Management Faculty. They are also focusing on supporting members aspiring to become clinical psychologists, with online resources including their 'Let's get to Clinical' podcasts.

### **DCP Representative Assembly and co-creation workshops**

Our planned two-day annual Representative Assembly in June has been replaced by a series of online workshops. Our Representative Assembly is made up of the Chairs (or a nominated committee member attending in their place) from all our DCP member networks (listed in the back of CPF).

Experts by Experience representatives and our Minorities subcommittee co-chairs are also invited to participate. This year we are starting a process of co-creation together, facilitated by The Social Kinetic as part of the second stage of the BPS Member Journey development work. We have some important challenges we need to address, but also opportunities to improve how we work together and as part of the wider organisation. We welcome the contribution of members to this process.

### **National Assessors Review**

A review of the National Assessor (used in the appointment of Consultant Psychologists Band 8c and above) guidelines and processes has been undertaken by the DCP/BPS in collaboration with ACP-UK. The review, chaired by Tony Lavender has sought to make the Guidelines more practical, supporting the use of online platforms, developing clearer appointment processes and online Chief, Lead and general application forms. The BPS Practice Board has requested minor changes to the revised guidance; when these amendments are completed, we will be able to progress the recruitment of a new Chief National Assessor, Lead Assessors (where there is a vacancy) and National Assessors. This should relaunch and reinvigorate the National Assessor system. We need more people to come forward to become National Assessors and to take up these lead roles, which provide excellent opportunities to make a positive contribution to the profession and to influence and learn from services across the UK. DCP members in leadership and management roles can also support the system by advising re. the importance of the use of National Assessors in consultant recruitment. Virtual attendance on interview panels will also make the system more accessible for Trusts and for Assessors themselves.

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