



the british  
psychological society  
promoting excellence in psychology



Division of  
Clinical Psychology

## GUIDANCE

# Guidance for aspiring psychologists and their supervisors during Covid-19

Katie Knott – PQG Co-Chair: Pre-Training  
Leanna Ong – PQG Co-Chair: In-Training  
DCP Covid-19 Adaptations Workstream  
DCP Minorities Sub-Group  
Pre-Qualification Group (PQG) Committee.

This document provides guidance to those who employ and/or supervise individuals in assistant psychologist and other associated posts, both within the NHS and privately, during the Covid-19 pandemic. Please utilise this document alongside Trust policies and other guidance referenced throughout, particularly the [BPS Guidance for psychological professionals during the Covid-19 pandemic \(2020\)](#).

This guidance has been written to offer a structure of support for those aspiring psychologists who are working during this difficult period.

## DEPLOYMENT AND REDEPLOYMENT

Aspiring psychologists working in both NHS and private organisations may have been considered for, or asked to, adapt their current role.

Through discussions we have identified two types of adaptations:

Deployment – Staff are asked to support their service or organisation by changing the focus of their work to Covid-19, whilst continuing to use their psychological skills.

ReDeployment – Staff are asked to move to a different role to support their organisation's service provision (to keep the service running), where utilising psychological skills is not the key focus and task.

We acknowledge it is inevitable that individuals will be re/deployed to work in settings and roles that go beyond the scope of their current job specification, due to organisational changes. We invite a position of compassion towards the services and organisations you work in, given the complicated and ever changing nature of Covid-19.

GUIDANCE

It is important to acknowledge how power operates within the relationship between aspiring psychologists, their supervisors and their organisation, considering how this can impact on the duties that are agreed upon.

## WORKING WITHIN COMPETENCE

---

Aspiring psychologists are often more willing to undertake additional responsibilities as part of their professional development. However, particularly during this period, it is important to consider both level of competence and overall wellbeing.

Competencies of Band 4/5 psychological staff, under supervision, can include:

- Completing psychological assessments
- Delivering prescribed short-term interventions
- Facilitating groups
- Facilitating reflective spaces
- Research/audit/service evaluation
- Training resources.

It is important to acknowledge that many of these duties will need to be adapted to follow the government's social distancing policy.

The BPS is producing guidance and collating other resources to support professionals responding to coronavirus. It has created a [webpage](#) collating these documents.

## ADAPTING THE ROLE

---

The Pre-Qualification Group has gathered feedback from aspiring psychologists about how their roles are being adapted.

Aspiring psychologists could be utilised for the following duties during the Covid-19 pandemic:

- Continuation of individual and group sessions through adapted, organisation approved, communication methods (PPE/telephone/video)
- Regular 'check-in' contact with individuals who have chosen to delay their face-to-face sessions until after the social distancing policies are removed
- Creating, gathering and sharing resources (physical and mental health) with service users and healthcare staff
- Identifying the Covid-19 related needs individuals and groups are experiencing, exploring and implementing psychological support
- Running Covid-19 wellbeing groups for service users and/or healthcare staff
- Creating and facilitating reflective spaces for healthcare staff – within teams or across teams (see overleaf)
- Completing literature reviews and research related to Covid-19
- Working a split role across two services to maximise provision (possibly split between psychological and non-psychological roles).

As 'pre-qualified' members of staff, working in adapted and innovative ways, it is important that duties and responsibilities are undertaken at the appropriate level.

Individuals may feel uncertain about the scope and adaptability of their duties during the Covid-19 pandemic. Aspiring psychologists should seek and be provided with appropriate supervision prior to the adaptation of their role.

Whilst it is helpful to utilise staff numbers, please ensure local and national guidance are followed regarding staff safety around infection control. NHSE and Public Health England have provided a number of [helpful resources](#), particularly in relation to [appropriate use of PPE](#). For guidance on minimising the risk of carrying Covid-19 between your home and work settings, please see this [visual guidance](#).

We advise that discussions with supervisors around managing risk of infection, of both staff and service users, is prioritised prior to aspiring psychologists working within a clinical environment, or at the earliest convenience.

## REFLECTIVE SPACES

---

As mentioned above, facilitating and participating in reflective spaces could be a key role of aspiring psychologists during this period and beyond.

*Reflective practice is an active process of constructing solutions, rather than a passive process of following procedures and guidelines* (Thompson & Pascal, 2012).

This is not only applicable to aspiring psychologists, but vital to practice more broadly, and is particularly pertinent to those in services working directly with people taken ill or otherwise affected by Covid-19. The Pre-Qualification Group has received recent feedback from aspiring psychologists who shared that front-line staff have appreciated their services offering reflective spaces.

Benefits of reflective practice/groups (Bassott, 2016):

- Combat isolation during this period
- A space to feel heard and appreciated by the team
- A space to process difficult emotions without judgement
- An opportunity to develop conversations about hope
- Time and space for staff to generate innovative ideas for practice.

## CONTINUATION OF SUPERVISION

---

It is appreciated that supervisors may also be re/deployed into a different role, or may be off work due to sickness, health concerns or caring responsibilities. It is important to ensure that there is planning in place for the supervision of an aspiring psychologist to be taken on by another appropriate member of staff.

With supervision please consider the following recommendations:

- Regular review date for changes in role due to re/deployment
- If possible, supervision occurring at the same frequency/duration as previously
- Flexibility around communication to offer more remote support in line with guidance around information governance

- Utilising supervision for a reflective space related to the impact of re/deployment and the current pandemic e.g. the change to working from home or change to clinical and non-clinical duties.

The BABCP have produced [guidance for the delivery of remote supervision](#).

## INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

---

We encourage you to consider how there will be many individuals who are more significantly impacted by the current pandemic due to their own needs. Special considerations will need to be made for those who are at high-risk of developing complications due to Covid-19. Such individuals may not be known to occupational health as having a health condition and may not meet the Equality Act 2010 criteria for having a disability; but should be considered on an individual basis.

Providing accessible and inclusive working conditions will be of importance. Attention to confidentiality issues should also be paid and information should be shared according to the employee's needs and Trust policies. Special consideration will need to be taken when considering supporting the safety of staff whilst also being sensitive to confidential health disclosures, and the right of employees to not disclose health information (see Equality Act 2010). For further information regarding health and disability regulations please see your organisation's and the NHS's, policies on disability and health and also policies for diversity and inclusivity.

Other groups of individuals that will likely incur indirect risks associated with Covid-19 are carers, those with mental health difficulties, those with other physical health disabilities, parents, and those experiencing economic disadvantage.

The BPS DCP Minorities subgroup will be releasing a statement to outline the specific considerations that may be needed.

It is important to recognise that individual's needs may change throughout the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic.

## ASPIRING PSYCHOLOGIST GROUPS

---

Many aspiring psychologist groups are continuing to run their groups and support their members through adapted methods, such as using virtual meetings. We encourage this practice to continue during the Covid-19 pandemic. We are willing to support groups further by facilitating networking with other groups and sharing of best practice.

## RECRUITMENT AND DCLINPSY INTERVIEWS

---

NHS Rec (Recruitment) have continued to recruit for positions within the NHS, and this should remain the same for all pre-training roles. Interviews are occurring online to ensure that recruitment can still occur during this period of lockdown and beyond. Teams should consider the skills of this professional group, to ensure that new posts are being made available and start dates are not being delayed.

DClinPsy courses have moved to virtual interviews and are intending to run these as close to the original selection as possible. There is an anticipation that changes may occur for courses who

interview later in the year, if there are staff/interviewee sicknesses. Courses are sharing learning from interview feedback (from interviewees and selection staff) to ensure that those yet to interview can benefit from lessons learned. The Pre-Qualification Group are liaising with the Group of Trainers in Clinical Psychology to support aspiring psychologists during the DClinPsy recruitment.

Key messages to aspiring psychologists:

Ensure that you are working as you feel comfortable.

Maintaining your own wellbeing is as important as supporting others during this time. Ensure you are creating space for your own self-care needs.

Seek supervision wherever appropriate.

It can be natural to want to maintain psychological duties, however these will need to be adapted for safety or they may not be possible in some services.

If you are concerned about your employment – please see the government website for advice.

## REFERENCES

- Bassot, B. (2017). *The Reflective Journal*. Palgrave
- British Psychological Society (2020). Guidance for psychological professionals during the Covid-19 pandemic. Access online: [www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/News/News%20-%20Files/Guidance%20for%20Psychological%20Professionals%20during%20Covid-19.pdf](http://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/News/News%20-%20Files/Guidance%20for%20Psychological%20Professionals%20during%20Covid-19.pdf)
- Equality Act (2010). Access online: [www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance)
- Law, H. (2020). *Don't Take Covid Home*. Access online: [www.researchgate.net/publication/340416611\\_Don't\\_Take\\_Covid\\_Home](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/340416611_Don't_Take_Covid_Home)
- NHS England (2020). Coronavirus guidance for clinicians and NHS managers. Access online: [www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus](http://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus)
- NHSx (2020). Covid-19 Information Governance advice for health and care professionals. Access online: [www.nhsx.nhs.uk/key-information-and-tools/information-governance-guidance/health-care-professionals](http://www.nhsx.nhs.uk/key-information-and-tools/information-governance-guidance/health-care-professionals)
- Thompson, N. & Pascal, J. (2012). Developing critically reflective practice. *Reflective practice*, 13(2), 311–325.



the british  
psychological society  
promoting excellence in psychology

St Andrews House,  
48 Princess Road East,  
Leicester LE1 7DR, UK

☎ 0116 254 9568 🌐 [www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk) ✉ [info@bps.org.uk](mailto:info@bps.org.uk)