The Experiences Aspiring Clinical Psychologists with Lived Experience of Mental Health Problems Face On The Journey To Clinical Psychology Training

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Aims

• To normalise the experience of being an applicant with lived experience of mental health problems.

• To portray the reality of the journey to getting on to the clinical doctorate with lived experience of mental health difficulties.

• To think about what courses can do to help with these challenges and barriers.
Disclaimer - Real life not research

• Confidentiality

• Sensitive content

• Our stance is that these are things that will impact possible applicants whether their mental health problems are current or in the past or both

• The spectrum of lived experience is vast and so is the resultant impact – we are just four individuals!

• We are aware that some tutors will have lived experience and will have been through these challenges themselves.
Background

• This follows on from discussions held at the Inclusivity Strategy that was held in Birmingham in 2016.

• Increasing amounts of research focusing on trainees and qualified psychologists who have lived experience of mental health problems has been conducted.

• But there is seemingly a silence around aspiring psychologists.
The numbers!

- **Numbers of those disclosing when applying:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISABILITY</th>
<th>All Applicants</th>
<th></th>
<th>All Acceptances</th>
<th></th>
<th>% success applicants to accepted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>89.8%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No disability</td>
<td>3365</td>
<td>89.0%</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>89.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total with a disability</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blind/partially sighted, Deaf/hearing impairment</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheelchair user/mobility difficulties</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health difficulties</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Clearing House Equal Opportunities Data for 2017 applicants)

- Yet research suggests that up to 67% of trainees and 62.7% of qualified clinical psychologists have experienced mental health problems (Grice, Alcock & Scior, 2018; Tay, Alcock & Scior, 2018).

- So why the disparity?
CHALLENGES AHEAD
Challenges - Undergraduate Degree

• Cost of getting good grades
• What support is available
• Feeling isolated
• Types of dissertations topics chosen due to MH
Challenges - Work Experience

- Clinical psychology with lived experiences
- Stigma and fear of disclosure
- Part time vs full time
- Availability of help whilst working
Challenges - Application form

Can't tell if too stupid to comprehend

Or application form is wrong
Challenges - Application form

• Revictimizing – trigger
• Requirement to explain myself?
• Exposing yourself
• Disclosing of details
• Doesn’t take into account real life – gaps in work
• Do I need to falsely proclaim I’m recovered??
Challenges - Choosing A Course...
What I had to give up and considerations I needed to make.
If there are any other factors relevant in assessing your application please give brief details here. (700 character limit for this question)

My academic performance was significantly impacted by mental health issues, including several hospital admissions. As a result, I do not believe that my results are indicative of my ability and I am extremely proud of the results I achieved. Following intensive treatment including therapy I now work full time and feel I have made more than sufficient strides within my recovery to manage the Doctorate.
When I was in my first year of university, I was raped. Unsurprisingly, this had an impact on my mental health, although not right away. I found myself physically unable to leave my (or my flatmate / best friend’s) bed, eating barely anything, dragging myself to lectures and struggling to focus. I stopped socialising (which, if you know me, is shocking and a very bad sign), I stopped cooking, I stopped reading and sank into a deep black hole of numbness, guilt and shame.

The reality is that my grades during that dark time at university are holding me back. They affect my chances of getting through to interview. They affect my chances of getting onto training. They might well affect the rest of my life. I don’t know about you, but that seems unfair. It seems unfair that our community should exclude those who have lived through tough times, those who have experienced that which we seek to treat and make better. I tell my patients all the time that they are not their mental illness, and that it will not define them for the rest of their lives. Surely, this should be true for me too?

Sheeva Weil
Help us to overcome the barriers to applying for the Doctorate

• Stigma

• Tokenistic statements on the Clearing House

• Disability Confident (was two ticks)

• References
The strengths that we feel we bring to our work!
Thank You For Listening!!