

DCP UK Chair's update

Roman Raczka

ECP2023 Symposium on Psychological Responses to the Covid pandemic

AT THE recent European Congress in Psychology (ECP2023), I chaired the symposium on Psychological Responses to the Covid Pandemic. The aims were to take a wider look at the Pandemic exploring how psychologists across Europe responded to the pandemic, the lessons that we have learned, the immediate and continuing impact across the world.

All Party Parliamentary Group on Psychology

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Psychology is a cross-party group of members of parliament from both the Houses of Commons and Lords. The purpose of the APPG on Psychology is to increase the awareness of psychology amongst parliamentarians and public policy makers.

APPG on Psychology meeting on Mental Health Support for NHS and Social Care Staff 18/07/23

The APPG for Psychology meeting in July was an opportunity to meet with members of the Houses of Commons and Lords as well organisational leaders to provide an overview of the vital support NHS Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs have been delivering, an opportunity to discuss more widely what mental health and wellbeing support is available to NHS and social care staff, and what more can be done to improve support.

Interviews with Psychologists in Parliament

Dr Lisa Cameron MP

Lisa has served as a Member of Parliament representing East Kilbride, Strathaven and

Lesmahagow since 2015, and is Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Psychology and Health. Prior to her election, Lisa worked as a Consultant Clinical Psychologist in Scotland.

Lea Beretti is a Trainee Clinical Psychologist at Royal Holloway University of London on a final year training placement in the office of Dr Lisa Cameron.

Nominate for one of the DCP awards

Our 2023 awards are open for nominations until 1 October. Awards offered include The M.B. Shapiro Award, The May Davidson Award our Pre-Qualification Award and two Trainee Clinical Psychologist awards.

1. ECP2023 Symposium on Psychological Responses to the Covid pandemic

At the recent European Congress in Psychology (ECP2023), I chaired the symposium on Psychological Responses to the Covid Pandemic – considering both UK and European perspectives.

In the panel discussion, I was joined by Carmen Bryce (Mental Health Ireland), Peter Keri (President of GAMIAN-Europe), Professor John Drury (Professor of Social Psychology at the University of Sussex) and Dr Lisa Cameron MP.

The aims of the symposium were to take a wider look at the Pandemic exploring how psychologists across Europe responded to the pandemic, the lessons that we have learned, the immediate and continuing impact across the world and reflections on policy responses.

There were a number of themes that emerged from presentations and discussions including:

- The significance of psychosocial approaches and self-help activities

- The need to support the continuance of mutual aid groups to sustain local communities
- The need to adopt a co-production approach when designing, implementing and evaluating activities.
- The importance of research innovation as a necessity
- The need to facilitate collaboration, sharing expertise and joined up working
- The ongoing challenges of the disproportionate impact of the virus and pandemic on particular groups across societies including minoritised groups, children and young people, individuals with disabilities, people experiencing financial hardships
- The ongoing impact of long covid.

2. All Party Parliamentary Group on Psychology

Founded in 2017, the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Psychology is a cross-party group of members of parliament from both the Houses of Commons and Lords. The purpose of the APPG on Psychology is to increase the awareness of psychology amongst parliamentarians and public policy makers. The APPG provides the opportunity to demonstrate how a psychological evidence base is fundamental to good public policy and political decision making. The APPG provides a formal space for psychologists to showcase best practice and evidence the impact of psychology on resolving some of society's biggest problems.

3. APPG on Psychology meeting on Mental Health Support for NHS and Social Care Staff 18/07/23

The BPS, with support from ACP-UK and a wide range of other stakeholders, has been running a campaign to protect NHS Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs. Launched by NHS England in February 2021, the 40 hubs have been providing NHS staff with fast access to free and confidential local mental health services. At the dedicated hubs, staff are helped by practitioners who have a unique understanding of the pressures they are facing in work and beyond.

The hubs were launched in 2021 in response to the trauma NHS staff experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic. But, as the pressures on the NHS have continued to widen beyond the immediate problems created by Covid-19, so too has the role of the hubs. Their purpose has evolved to address issues including staff retention and turnover, sickness levels, work-force wellbeing, suicide risk and staff burnout.

Whilst there are welcome acknowledgements in the recently published Workforce Plan about the pressures staff face and the need to support wellbeing, the funding that has been administered through NHS England for staff mental health support is greatly inadequate to maintain the level of provision that the hubs have been offering.

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has been urged to **#FundNHS Hubs** and:

- Commit to a minimum of one year's transitional ring-fenced funding to safeguard the vital support provided by the hubs for NHS and social care staff, and give hubs time to identify alternative funding options or wind up operations in a safe and ethical way.
- Prioritise NHS staff wellbeing with clear measures and funding to address this – a BPS analysis of NHS Digital sickness absence data over 12 months (November 2021 to October 2022) has revealed nearly a quarter of absences due to sickness (an average of 23 per cent) were due to anxiety, stress, depression and other psychiatric illness.

The APPG for Psychology meeting in July was an opportunity to meet with members of the Houses of Commons and Lords as well organisational leaders to provide:

- an overview of the vital support NHS Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs have been delivering
- an opportunity to discuss more widely what mental health and wellbeing support is available to NHS and social care staff, and
- what more can be done to improve support.

Speakers included, Dr Lisa Cameron, Saffron Cordery (Deputy Chief Executive of NHS Providers), Dr Richard Duggins (Consultant Psychiatrist and Clinical Lead for the North East and Cumbria Staff Wellbeing Hub) and Dr Roman Raczka.

I then chaired a wider audience discussion. There was a focus on how better mental health support for staff could have a wider impact on the operation of the NHS, including on rates of sickness absence and staff retention, as well as ensuring staff can provide the highest-quality care possible. All agreed on the importance of making the need for hubs and their benefits known, using a clear evidence base.

Future Actions included:

- Developing a strong evidence base demonstrating the impact of the hubs, impacts of their closures and financial sustainability
- Shared Learning from the hubs that can be used as best practice

Finally Lisa has tabled a request for a House of Commons short debate on the wellbeing hubs when parliament resumes after the summer recess.

4. Interviews with Psychologists in Parliament

As part of gaining a better understanding of the work of the APPG on Psychology and the way that psychologists may become more involved in parliament I interviewed Dr Lisa Cameron (Member of Parliament and Clinical Psychologist) and Lea Beretti (Trainee Clinical Psychologist).

Dr Lisa Cameron MP

Lisa led the Addictions Service in NHS Lanarkshire, then went to work at The State Hospital as the Consultant Lead for the Forensic Addiction Service and Consultant Lead for the Forensic Psychology Service in NHS Argyll & Clyde. During her NHS career, Lisa was a shop steward with Unite the Union for a period of fourteen years.

Why did you initially stand for election as a MP?

I was keen to champion mental health and disability work in parliament and policy making. I am the first Clinical Psychologist to be elected to the UK Parliament and believe it is imperative that we develop a biopsychosocial model moving forward rather than a medical one which is very prevalent.

How have you used your psychological knowledge and skills?

I have used my psychological knowledge in chairing the All Party Groups for Health, Psychology and Disability over the past 8 years. It has been such a privilege to be able to contribute to the parliament from my understanding of psychological principles and theory.

What are your stand out/memorable moments as a MP?

Developing the Speaker's Disability Internship Programme in 2016 was a stand out moment as we were able to offer paid placements to people in parliament across party meaning that disability was no longer a barrier to the interns achieving their full potential and providing a role model for business and for other parliaments.

Have you still continued to practice as a Clin Psych and if so in what area of practice?

I maintain my registration through teaching training and CPD. For the first few years until the trials of Brexit I continued to work in adult mental health one session each week.

Would you encourage other Clinical Psychologists to become more engaged in parliament and if so then how?

I would encourage applied psychologists to respond to government consultations, to engage with APPGs in parliament and to keep abreast of the health select committee. I would suggest meeting and speaking with your MP, keep in touch with them about your thoughts

on policy making in mental health as you are the expert on the front line and they will appreciate your input.

Lea Beretti

Lisa is a Trainee Clinical Psychologist at Royal Holloway University of London (RHUL) on a final year training placement in the office of Dr Lisa Cameron

Why did you choose to take a training placement in Westminster?

Throughout my career, I have always been outspoken and taken a broader, systemic lens. As well as undertaking my clinical tasks, throughout my training, I found myself critically observing systemic processes in place and formulating ideas of change in my mind. I also found myself drawn to responsibilities which fall in the 'leadership competencies', such as facilitating reflective practice, speaking out about inappropriate workplace behaviour and practices, and offering thoughts on projects for change, aiming to become more psychologically minded.

Although I was initially going to continue specialising my clinical skills, the placement in Parliament felt like a 'once-in-a-lifetime' opportunity that I could not let pass. When I took on this placement, I immediately felt this was a great fit. I felt it was an opportunity to move outside the clinical room and into a space where I could contribute to making impactful sociopolitical change, which I never thought possible.

What range of tasks have you undertaken on the placement?

This placement has been incredible. I do not have a dull moment, and no one day is the same, which is well suited to me!

Despite being in the heart of Politics, I have little political involvement. My primary role has been working with All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs). As Dr Lisa Cameron MP is the Chair of the APPG for health, global health, psychology, and disability, I have focused on working closely with them.

My main roles have been meeting with related organisations, hearing about their work, and seeing how I could best support them on behalf of Dr Cameron. These have ranged from organisations representing Advanced Therapy Medicinal Products to researchers or mental health organisations. This has varied from writing articles about a recent campaign published in a political magazine (e.g. Politics Home or Comment Central), tabling Oral or Written questions, writing an Early Day Motion, or connecting them with other organisations, members of Parliament, or APPGs. I have also attended several health and mental health-related events, where I build connections and offer similar support. I have also supported with hosting events, such as the APPG event on NHS Staff Wellbeing which was held in July 2023. So far, I have learned more about mental health and health in the community than my entire career. I have spoken with various organisations and charities and heard about the challenges they all face. It has been eye-opening.

I have also engaged in casework and supporting Dr Cameron's constituents with health-related complaints they may have.

Lastly, but most certainly not least, alongside the Speaker of the House of Commons, Rt Hon Sit Lindsey Hoyle, I have been working on a Wellbeing Survey for Parliamentary Staffers.

How have you used your psychological knowledge/clinical skills on placement?

My therapy skills have been slightly less prominent in this placement, but other soft skills have been beneficial. In my view, this placement is ideally suited for a third-year trainee who is gaining more agency and confidence in their work. In this placement, I have gained a lot of trust and confidence in myself, my knowledge, my skills and my credibility through being given the agency to meet and network with various professionals, some of whom I did not know much about. These experiences have helped me to build on networking skills, but also on communication skills. I have learned to write in different and unique styles depending on the demand.

Lastly, an invaluable skill has been listening to people and their needs.

Do you see a future career in this area?

I most certainly do! Although I do not see myself as suited to 'Politics' per se, working with Dr Cameron and the APPGs has undoubtedly been one of the most memorable and unique experiences. Dr Cameron's vision of the role of psychology in Parliament embodies what I have always believed in but did not realise was possible.

I will undoubtedly be looking to foster and nurture the connections that I have gained throughout this placement, and hope to continue encouraging psychologists to feel empowered to make broader systemic change.

5. Nominate for one of the DCP awards

Our 2023 awards are open for nominations until 1 October.

The M.B. Shapiro Award is a late career award for psychologists who have achieved eminence in the profession, while the May Davidson Award recognises clinical psychologists who have made a significant contribution to the profession during the first ten years of their career.

Our Pre-Qualification Award promotes and encourages the contribution of pre-doctoral clinical work, while the Trainee Research Excellence Work and the Trainee Excellence in Practice Award both recognise the work of Clinical Psychology trainees.

Find out more about the awards and how to make a nomination.

6. Upcoming events

BPS Webinar : Applying learnings from African psychology to Supervision

14 September 2023 9:30am – 11:30am

This webinar is very relevant to all Psychologists – please share across your networks

<https://www.bps.org.uk/event/applying-learnings-african-psychology-supervision>

The discipline of African Psychology will be applied to supervision in an interactive way to consider relevant issues. Supervision should be a safe space for personal and professional development. The discipline of African psychology will be applied to this area in an interactive way to consider issues such as: Eurocentric and African centred approaches to supervision, discrimination and the 7Ds of oppression, power, applying African psychology both for and beyond people of African ancestry, supervisee/supervisor issues, and tools for emotional and spiritual upliftment.

DCP Events

There are a number of DCP events taking place from September onwards. Details can be found on the BPS website from the DCP homepage <https://www.bps.org.uk/node/1105>

Click on the 'Events' button to take you directly to the DCP Events listings

Dr Roman Raczka

DCPUK Chair