UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

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What's HAPpening in NHS Grampian? An audit of the expectations and experience of Honorary Assistant Psychologists in NHS Grampian

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NHS Grampian

KEY FEATURES OF THIS AUDIT:

Honorary Assistant Psychologists are psychology graduates who work in an unpaid role in a practitioner setting (BPS, 2016).

Local NHSG guidance means HAPs are now recruited on a 11-month, 7.5 hour per week contract. **Typical tasks a HAP can carry out are:** Example tasks completed in NHS Grampian: FND database; Wellbeing Group; major trauma rehab plan pilot; 1:1 Mindfulness; service development; primary care database; risk assessment reports etc

CLINICAL:
- Individual therapeutic intervention
- Group intervention
- Patient resources

RESEARCH:
- Literature Reviews
- Audit
- Service Evaluation
- Collect/ analyse data

1 WHY AUDIT THIS?

- Paid NHS Assistant Psychologist (AP) posts are increasingly competitive and therefore rare (Zarathustra, 2012).
- AP posts provide clinical and research experience with formal supervision from a Practitioner Psychologist – often making them seen as essential for entry into postgraduate Clinical Psychology Training (Clare,1995).
- Given the competition for paid AP posts, prospective trainees are typically keen to take up voluntary positions to gain relevant experience such as HAP posts (Williams, 2001).
  - **The British Psychological Society** (BPS, 2016) set out good practice guidelines for ethical protection of unpaid volunteer APs from potential exploitation, inadequate monitoring systems and to ensure access to appropriate supervision.
  - Recommendations include; clear governance; role distinction; fair and equitable application; equality of access; commitment to diversity and limited length of contract.
  - **NHS Grampian (2016)** set out local guidance to ensure adherence to BPS guidelines in order to safeguard service-users, HAPs and supervisors. NHSG have implemented an standardised recruitment with an 11-month, 7.5 hour honorary contract.
  - If such a regulated and standardised programme aiming to reduce exploitation, limit elitism and safeguard individuals is successful, it is more likely to be welcomed within clinical psychology (Burniston et al, 2016).

AIM 1: To audit the **expectations** of working in the new HAP role in NHS Grampian and expectations of practitioner psychologists supervising HAPs

AIM 2: To audit the **experience** of working in the new HAP role in NHS Grampian and experience of practitioner psychologists supervising HAPs

2 METHOD:

Sample: *N* = 29 HAPs (age range 19-51 years, *M* = 27.5). *N* = 24 Supervisors (experience range 1 - 20+ years , *M* = 11.4 years)

Design and procedure: A mixed-methods design combined questionnaires with HAPs and supervisors; a focus group with current HAPs in post; semi-structured interviews with supervisors and a semi-structured interview with the lead of the HAPs programme.

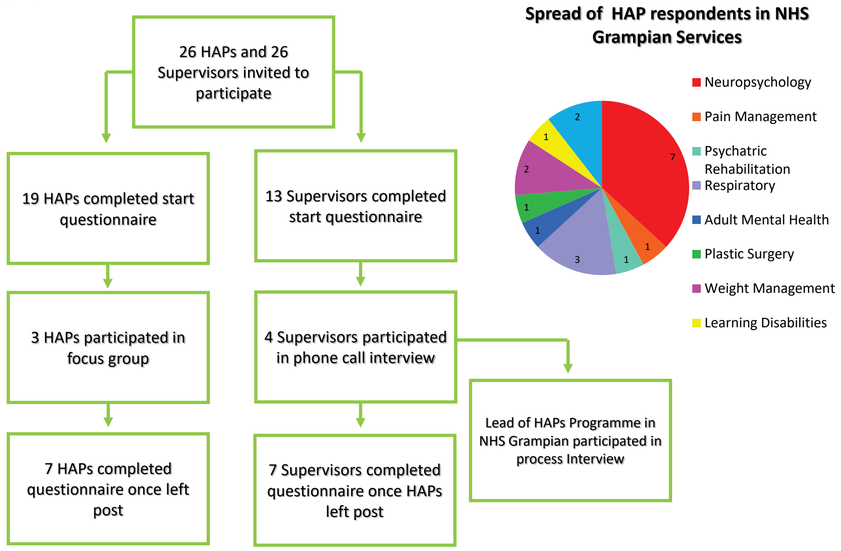
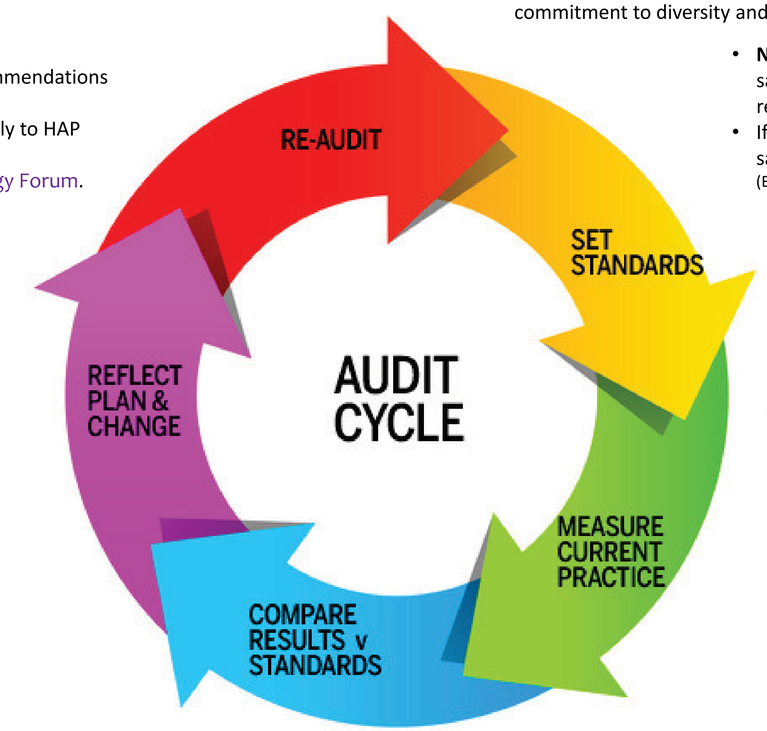


Figure 1. Methodology



3 RESULTS:

AIM 1: Exploratory data analysis, descriptive statistics and preliminary thematic analysis indicated **all audit standards were partially or fully met**.

AIM 2: Given the limited outcome data, this could not be explored at this stage. Outcomes from this sprint audit have been successful in generating key recommendations.

No Unmet Standards

3 Partially Met Standards – Supervision; Induction; Reasons for recruitment

4 Fully Met Standards – HAP motivations to apply; contract lengths; part-time working and financial reimbursement

Figure 2. Results of audit standards.

COST OF EMPLOYING A HAP:

Costs incurred to NHSG	Costs incurred departmentally
• Protecting Vulnerable Groups check - £59 • Recruitment time (estimated 4 hours) – £58.40 • Pre-employment health screening - £35.50	• Half a day application Shortlisting (two clinical psychologists) – £228.77 • One day interview panel– £219.03 per clinical psychologist • Supervision (one hour monthly at £30.35) - £364.20 per annum • Formal induction (two hours) - £60.70
Total: 152.90	Total per HAP: £872.70

Total cost of employing an Honorary Assistant Psychologist for 12 months:

£1,025.60

There is a financial cost to recruiting HAPs. This is the cost of safeguarding HAPs, supervisors and service-users.

4 KEY RECOMENDATIONS:

Full Audit:

A full audit is required to assess whether the experience of HAPs and supervisors in NHS Grampian comply with national and local guidance.

Training/ Information areas:

Dissemination of FAQs to HAPs and supervisors in post may inform expectations of the role.

Video FAQs disseminated alongside HAP recruitment advert and shown as part of HAP induction may inform HAP expectations.

5 RE-AUDIT:

•Data is currently being collected to re-audit this area with implementation of key recommendations from this sprint audit.

•Areas of interest for future direction of this audit could explore undergraduate accessibly to HAP posts and costs incurred to NHS Grampian if HAPs leave post early.

Plans to disseminate findings of this audit include a submission to the Clinical Psychology Forum.

References: British Psychological Society (2016). Applied Practitioner psychologist internship programmes and unpaid voluntary assistant psychologists posts. Burniston, L.D., Borgen, W. A., Piggott, K., & Sawer, F. (2016). Trainee clinical psychologists' perceptions of unpaid assistant psychologist positions. *Clinical Psychology Forum, 284,* 43-47. Clare, L. (1995). Successful applicants for clinical training: A descriptive profile of one trainee cohort. *Clinical Psychology Forum, 125,* 17-20. NHS Grampian (2016). Employment of Honorary Assistant Psychologists Guidelines. *Internal NHS Guidance.* Williams, W. (2001). Relevant experience: Alternatives to the assistant psychologist post? *The Psychologist, 14,* 188-189. Zarathustra . (2012). *NHS trust advertises clinical post as unpaid internship*. The Not So Big Society.

Thanks to all who participated.

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