

Present Post

Broad remit

I am consultant psychologist and professional psychology lead to the Brighton & Hove learning disability service with further responsibilities as shared professional lead across the Trust. I lead and manage a team of qualified and pre-qualified psychologists, therapists, and behaviour support specialists and provide training placements to doctoral clinical trainees in addition to occasional placements to undergraduates and behaviour specialist trainees from the University of Kent, Tizard Centre. I also provide consultancy and supervision to agencies outside the Trust and support other members of the team to offer this and training in order to develop a psychologically minded service infra structure for our service users.

Legal consultations

I am frequently consulted as an Expert in legal cases involving adults with learning disabilities and provide specialist reports to legal teams across the south east, including matters involving the Official Solicitor. Over 23 years, I have assessed and reported on matters of child protection, false confession, rape, alleged spurious claims of a learning disability for gain and, increasingly, capacity in relation to the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

Specialist training

Since researching the cognitive Interview (CI) for my dissertation in forensic psychology in 1997/8 I have developed and extended this technique to apply to the assessment of capacity to consent in vulnerable adults. Modelled on the police witness interview methodology developed initially in the 1970s and now led by Professor Ray Bull and Dr Becky Milne at ICJS, University of Portsmouth, the procedure minimises contamination of information by the interviewer and so elicits as 'clean' a response from the service user as possible. We have applied this technique to consent assessments in our service for ten years and I have conducted training sessions in the south east for multi-professional groups, including the Independent Mental Capacity Assessor (IMCA) group which has recommended national adoption of this training. The modified CI is a key component of the virtual environment research just beginning and is also at the heart of all consent protocols used for treatment and research.

Research

I have initiated and chair a small local research group aimed at encouraging the translation of clinical questions into applied research methodologies with the support of our RDS. This has led to preliminary focus group work on service users' perceptions of nutritional labelling on food packaging, their understanding of nutritional guidelines such as '5 a day', and their appreciation of health-related concepts such as exercise and fitness. Earlier groups examining service user perceptions of provision for lesbian, gay and bisexual peers, the accessibility of Trust and council websites with regard to learning disability, and their understanding of concepts relating to mental health have enabled us to develop a model of consent practice that has successfully supported the dissertation work of subsequent clinical trainees.

The research group has also developed discussion documents and business cases based on audit and user surveys to examine services for adult with learning disability who need palliative or rehabilitative care (paper in preparation with Jo Lee, physiotherapist), the need for a carer counselling service (with Jane Steeples, psychotherapeutic counsellor) and the case for developing a model of care based on psychological safety and the professional family. In development are studies relating to the current proposal e.g. the use of Nintendo WiiFit technology to engage with and improve the health and fitness of adults with learning disability; the use of digital technology in the evaluation and implementation of positive psychology in supporting adults with learning disabilities; and the introduction of low intensity high frequency workers to support 'revolving door' service users whose need for support can result in frequent crises. Technologies such as webcam, instant messaging and virtual worlds seem likely to have a role, especially for clients with an autistic spectrum disorder whose preferred method of communication is not face to face or oral.

I am currently the holder of an NIHR research grant (Invention for Innovation stream) with Professor Val hall (Brighton University), Dave Taylor (Imperial College) and Eva Jarvis (Grace Eyre foundation) to examine the role of virtual worlds in enhancing the capacity of adults with learning disabilities to give valid consent. We anticipate submitting bids for the FD2 & 3 streams on completion. Success in this bid has allowed us to develop a close liaison with the Grace Eyre Foundation which provides day services and adult placements for service users and we have embarked on the establishment of a service user/carers consultative group there for research and training purposes. We will also be contributing, through the research funding, to development of their IT suite which we will be using for the research.

I am convenor of research for learning disabilities across the Trust.

Educational and Work History

Brighton College of Art 1967 – 68, student. Led to work designing packaging for Mary Quant cosmetics and later as PA/designer with Music Hire Group, Leeds.

North Middlesex Hospital 1971-74. Student nurse. Founded Student and Pupil Nurses' Association.

Guys hospital 1974 post registration student to undertake fast track RMN course.

Kings College Hospital intensive care staff nurse 1975-1981 p/t while under/post graduate.

Nursing Agency 1978-82. Specialist intensive care.

Dr Suzanne Conboy-Hill Consultant Psychologist CLDT (Brighton & Hove) Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

University of London Goldsmiths' College undergraduate 1975-78. Secretary of the Psychology Society during 1976-77 Awarded a BA (2:1) in Psychology.

University College London 1978-81 MRC funded Doctoral research in Psychology (neurosciences and animal behaviour) with Henry Plotkin.

Institute of Psychiatry/Bethlem-Maudsley Hospitals 1982-84. Clinical trainee funded by the Bethlem-Maudsley Scholarship.

Interpolated/part-time work.

- Ø Tutor/Lecturer ULGC 1978-81
- Ø Captain, Territorial Army, QARANC 1979-80
- Ø Tutor/Examiner University of London Diploma in Psychology between 1978-1986
- Ø Tutor WEA between 1978-86
- Ø Lisa Sainsbury Foundation 1984-88. workshop training for nurses in terminal care.
- Ø University of Sussex locum lecturer to MSW course and supervisor to four dissertation candidates 1993/4.
- Ø Field Supervisor to MA/PhD candidate from University of Surrey.
- Ø Supervisor to Doctoral Dissertation candidates with Salomons Clinical Training course
- Ø Expert Witness. Regular and relatively frequent assessments and testimony for both Family and Crown Courts.

Clinical Psychologist, learning disabilities service, Bromley, Kent 1984-88. With Alexis Waitman, established psychotherapy and counselling as legitimate therapies for people with learning disabilities. This may have been the first such community service in the UK outside the Tavistock Centre.

Mid Downs Learning Disability Service 1988-89. Principal Psychologist and head of service.

Brighton Health Authority, then South Downs Health NHS Trust, now Sussex Partnership Trust 1989 to present: lead/consultant psychologist for learning disabilities.

University of Brighton 2009: Visiting Fellow, Clinical Research Fellow on secondment from Sussex Partnership. Four sessions per week with the remit to develop and extend research activity among learning disability service clinicians across the Trust. Twelve month duration in the first instance.

Further Training

- Ø Advanced certificate in Counselling Skills: Crawley College 1995.
- Ø MSc Forensic and Legal Psychology University of Leicester. Awarded with Distinction 1998. Dissertation: 'The Cognitive Interview and Adults with Learning Disabilities'.

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- Ø Diploma in Web Design (The Learning Library) and membership of the Association of IT Professionals 2005. (one year p/t).
- Ø Diploma in Professional Management 2005. 100 hours on-line course recommended by the CBI.

Publications

I am the author of more than 30 papers and presentations, including the CLDT response to the Mental Capacity Bill Scrutiny Committee and, with Professor Jane Ireland, the BPS response to the government consultation on human trafficking.

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