

Council, 17 September 2010

Responses and decisions from the consultation on a change to the standards of proficiency for health psychologists

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

The standards of proficiency are the threshold standards necessary for safe and effective practice. A consultation was held between 9 November 2007 and 8 February 2008 on draft standards of proficiency for practitioner psychologists. The standards were subsequently agreed by the Committee and Council and were effective from 1 July 2009.

Since the publication of the standards, we have received feedback to suggest that one of the domain specific standards for health psychologists may potentially be confusing and is not a threshold standard.

We consulted between 12 April and 12 July 2010 on an amendment to the standards of proficiency for health psychologists. We consulted on removing the phrase 'including the use of cognitive behavioural therapy' from the standard:

'be able to integrate and implement therapeutic interventions based on a range of evidence-based models of formal psychological therapy, **including the use of cognitive behavioural therapy** (emphasis added)'

This paper brings back to the Council the outcome of that consultation.

Decision

The Council is invited to discuss and agree:

- that the standards of proficiency for health psychologists should be amended as outlined above; and
- the text of the consultation responses document (subject to minor editing amendments), for publication on the HPC website.

Background information

Previous paper considered by the Council, with the proposals for consultation:

<http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10002CF520100325Council-enc13-healthpsychologists.pdf>

Resource implications

The resource implications associated with this change include providing information to applicants and education providers about the change to the standards of proficiency. These have been included within the Policy and Standards workplan for 2010-2011.

Financial implications

The financial implications include reprinting the standards of proficiency for practitioner psychologists. These have been included within the Policy and Standards budget for 2010-2011.

Appendices

None

Date of paper

23 August 2010

Date	Ver.	Dept/Cmte	Doc Type	Title	Status	Int. Aud.
2010-09-06	a	POL	PPR	Health psychologists cover paper Council post consultation	Draft DD: None	Internal RD: None

Change to the standards of proficiency for health psychologists

Analysis of responses to the consultation on an amendment to the standards of proficiency for health psychologists and our decisions resulting from the responses we received.

1. Introduction.....	2
About the consultation	2
About us.....	2
The standards of proficiency	2
Changing the standards of proficiency for health psychologists.....	3
2. Responses to the consultation.....	4
Responses about the proposed change	4
Other comments	4
3. Our decisions.....	5
4. List of respondents	5

DRAFT SUBJECT TO AGREEMENT

1. Introduction

About the consultation

- 1.1 We are the Health Professions Council (HPC). We consulted between 12 April and 12 July 2010 on an amendment to the standards of proficiency for health psychologists. We consulted on removing the phrase 'including the use of cognitive behavioural therapy' from the standard:

'be able to integrate and implement therapeutic interventions based on a range of evidence-based models of formal psychological therapy, **including the use of cognitive behavioural therapy** (emphasis added)'

- 1.2 We sent a copy of the consultation document to stakeholders with an interest in health psychology, including education providers and professional bodies. The consultation was also advertised on our website.
- 1.3 We would like to thank all those who responded to the consultation. You can download the consultation document and a copy of this response analysis document from our website: <http://www.hpc-uk.org/aboutus/consultations/closed/>.

About us

- 1.4 We are a regulator, and we were set up to protect the public. To protect the public, we set standards that professionals on our Register (called 'registrants') must meet. Our standards cover a registrant's education, training, behaviour, professional skills and their health.
- 1.5 We publish a Register of registrants who meet our standards. If registrants do not meet our standards, we can take action against them which may include removing them from the Register so that they can no longer practice.
- 1.6 In this document, 'we', 'us' and 'our' are references to the HPC.

The standards of proficiency

- 1.7 The standards of proficiency are threshold standards for the safe and effective practice of each of the professions we regulate. Their primary role is as standards for entry to the Register. They describe the minimum skills and knowledge necessary to become registered.
- 1.8 We visit education and training providers to ensure that they meet our standards of education and training and that their programmes enable students to meet the standards of proficiency. Once a programme is approved, someone successfully completing that programme is eligible to apply for registration.
- 1.9 The standards of proficiency for practitioner psychologists were drafted in 2007 in preparation for their statutory regulation. A consultation on the draft standards was held between November 2007 and February 2008.

The standards were subsequently agreed and became effective on 1 July 2009 when our Register for practitioner psychologists opened. You can find a copy of the standards on our website: <http://www.hpc-uk.org/publications/standards/>.

1.10 The standards of proficiency are divided into generic standards which apply across all of the professions we regulate and profession specific standards which apply to an individual profession. The standards for practitioner psychologists also contain domain specific standards which apply to a psychologists practising in a particular area. There are specific standards for each of the following practitioner psychologists:

- Clinical psychologists;
- Counselling psychologists;
- Educational psychologists;
- Forensic psychologists;
- Health psychologists;
- Occupational psychologists; and
- Sport and Exercise psychologists.

1.11 We consulted on an amendment to the domain specific standards for health psychologists which are contained within the profession specific standards for practitioner psychologists.

Changing the standards of proficiency for health psychologists

1.12 As a result of the responses we received during the consultation held in 2007/2008 the following domain-specific standard was added for health psychologists:

'be able to integrate and implement therapeutic interventions based on a range of evidence-based models of formal psychological therapy, including the use of cognitive behavioural therapy'

1.13 The standard was added under 2b.4 within the standards of proficiency, which has the main generic standard 'be able to conduct appropriate diagnostic or monitoring procedures, treatment, therapy or other actions safely and skilfully'. This generic standard is not the subject of this consultation.

1.14 We subsequently received feedback which suggested that the phrase '...including the use of cognitive behavioural therapy' is confusing and implies that the therapeutic techniques used by health psychologists must include cognitive behavioural therapy, rather than cognitive behavioural therapy simply being an exemplar. We have also received feedback to suggest that education and training providers might not be able to meet the requirement specifically around cognitive behavioural therapy as it is not incorporated within all education and training.

1.15 However, the feedback we received suggested that the first part of the standard 'be able to integrate and implement therapeutic interventions...' is a necessary threshold standard.

- 1.16 As a result of the feedback we received, we consulted on removing the phrase ‘...including the use of cognitive behavioural therapy’ from the standard, whilst keeping the rest of the standard the same.

2. Responses to the consultation

- 2.1 We received ten responses to the consultation. You can find a list of respondents in section 4 of this document.

Responses about the proposed change

- 2.2 All respondents agreed with the decision to remove the phrase ‘including the use of cognitive behavioural therapy’ from the domain specific standard for health psychologists:

‘be able to integrate and implement therapeutic interventions based on a range of evidence-based models of formal psychological therapy, including the use of cognitive behavioural therapy’

- 2.3 Respondents gave the following reasons for supporting the amendment:

- The change was necessary to ensure that the standards were set at the threshold level.
- The standard as written implied that cognitive behavioural therapy is the most desirable evidence-based model to use in cases of psychological disorder, when other models might be more beneficial in some situations.
- The standard as currently worded might imply that health psychologists should only use cognitive behavioural therapy.
- If the phrase was retained, the standard would be more like a curriculum rather than a standard and might therefore require regular updating as practice changed.

Other comments

- 2.4 Two respondents proposed additional amendments to the standards of proficiency for health psychologists.

- 2.5 One organisation suggested that the standard should instead say ‘be able to integrate and implement interventions based on a range of evidence-based models’. They proposed these amendments because:

- the standard did not currently encompass other interventions such as those based on health promotion; and
- the standard implied that interventions used by health psychologists must be based only on evidence based models of psychological therapy.

- 2.6 One individual proposed that the HPC should review all the standards for health psychologists in relation to competence in devising and delivering psychological therapy to ensure that they reflected the practice of the profession.

3. Our decisions

3.1 We have carefully considered the comments we received in response to the consultation. In light of the support for the proposal, we have decided to remove the phrase 'including the use of cognitive behavioural therapy' from the domain specific standard for health psychologists:

'be able to integrate and implement therapeutic interventions based on a range of evidence-based models of formal psychological therapy, including the use of cognitive behavioural therapy'

3.2 We have also considered whether we need to make additional amendments to this standard following the other comments we received. We are satisfied that the standards for health psychology are consistent with pre-registration education and training and are considered to be threshold standards for safe and effective practice.

3.3 The change will be effective from 1 October 2010.

4. List of respondents

4.1 We received 5 responses from individuals and 5 responses from organisations. The names of the organisations that responded to the consultation are provided below.

- The Association of Heads of Psychology Departments
- The British Psychological Society, Division of Health Psychology
- The Board of Community Health Councils in Wales
- The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
- University of Southampton (Centre for Applications of Health Psychology)