



Faheem Parkar

BSc(Hons) Joint Honours, 2005,
MSc Research Methods in Psychology,
2007 and PgCert Mental Health, 2010
High Intensity Therapist Trainee, NHS

A career in mental health

Upon completing his undergraduate degree, Faheem planned on becoming a clinical psychologist. However, the difficult jobs market meant that he had to think more broadly about his options. In order to get some experience and contacts, Faheem undertook further study. *'My MSc certainly helped get 'foot in the door' experience as I worked in several in-patient psychiatric units within the NHS as a support worker.'*

Over the next four years, Faheem worked as a trainee Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner (PWP), before moving into an Assistant Psychologist role, and then becoming a Senior PWP. All roles were part of the Government's Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) scheme, focusing on individuals with mild to moderate depression or anxiety. *'PWP roles within IAPT involve delivering low-intensity interventions to a high volume of clients, often through telephone-based sessions. I would often have a caseload of 50 – 70 clients, with six to eight appointments a day.'*

Advancing CBT

The PWP training included a further post-graduate certificate at the University, involving learning how to conduct assessments for common mental health problems and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT)-based techniques

including Cognitive Restructuring, Behavioural Activation and Exposure.

Faheem has recently started working for the NHS as a High Intensity Therapist Trainee, also known as a Cognitive Behavioural Therapist in training, which is again part of the IAPT service. Part of Faheem's week is spent in training, learning advanced CBT skills and techniques for a Diploma in Evidence-Based Psychological Therapies. The rest of the week is spent seeing clients, who have been referred for depression or anxiety disorders.

Planning for change

As Faheem reconsidered his career options, he recommends being aware of the different roles available. *'If you want to pursue a career in mental health ask yourself what attracts you to the profession, so that you can consider the different opportunities available. It's important to persevere and acknowledge that it may take time and effort before you get to where you want to be. It's also important to have perspective, so think about having a plan B or C, if things don't work out the way you want.'*

Faheem's goal is to continue working for an IAPT service using a CBT approach. Alongside this, he hopes to get involved in teaching one day, whilst exploring the potential of private CBT work.



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