

This is a pre-publication version of the following article:

Hawker, D. (2007). Four new trainees. *Clinical Psychology*, 28, 41-43.

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### Four new trainees

*Despite the growth in places on DClinPsy courses, competition is becoming ever tougher. Recently four trainees were secretly recorded on the first day of a course. To protect anonymity, all identifying names, locations, and diagnoses have been altered. Any resemblance to actual psychologists, clinical cases, remote Scottish islands, Yorkshire accents, Monty Python sketches etc. is purely conventional.*

- A Who'd have thought it that this time last year we'd be sitting here today, starting our clinical psychology training.
- B Aye, we've got a secure job at last. No more application forms.
- C I never thought we'd make it.
- A You know most people don't appreciate what we've been through to get here.
- C Even the course staff.
- A And our supervisors.
- B I bet those third years who've just finished don't realise neither.
- C Pretty much all qualified psychologists really. It were a far sight easier for them.
- D Qualified psychologists? They ain't got a clue. The work we put in these days to get 'ere is far more than they could ever 'ave dreamed of in their worst nightmares.
- C Aye, that's too right. Took me three years' work as an assistant to get 'ere.
- D Took me four.
- C Bet you didn't 'ave five years' work as nursing assistant before that though.
- B I *qualified* as nurse five year ago. And then I 'ad to be an assistant psych for three.
- A You lot 'ad it easy. I did four years as nursing assistant, trained as nurse, trained as OT, dropped pay for five years as psychology assistant on spine point 2, and only then got on t' course.
- C Aye, the money we got were worth nowt on those low spine points.
- A That's right. Those years on spine point 2, I 'ad to live in a caravan in t'middle of Tower 'Amlets.
- B Spine point 2?! I got paid £3 an hour to be assistant in Mosside, Manchester. If we'd 'ave lived in caravan it would 'ave been nicked. We used to live on t' side of t'street.
- D At least you got paid. I 'ad to work for nowt in Glasgow council estate for two year. Me and me partner used to squat in broken prams outside Spar.
- C I 'ad to pay ten thousand pound a year to be assistant. That were in Orkney Isles. I 'ad to live in freezing rockpool by t'side of t'sea. And when tide came in at night, I 'ad to tread water and 'old me breath for four hours before it went back out again.
- B Aye, we 'ad to work in some remote places. My first post were on remote island in Outer 'Ebrides. I were t'only person under 60 on t'island.
- A I were behaviour support worker for autistic lad in remote Irish farmhouse. At weekends 'e used to laugh at me mercilessly 'cause I 'ad nothing better to do than memorise the contents of sheep catalogues.
- C You 'ad it easy. I worked for mental 'ealth project with Bedouin tribe in Saudi Arabia. I used to spend whole weeks in desert with no company but camel.
- D Company! I worked for two years as research assistant in British Antarctic Survey. My supervisor came to see me once every six months, with a boat full of KwikSave pot noodles.

When I came home it took me two months to stop talking to Penguin biscuits.

- A It were getting t'research experience that I found difficult. I 'ad to do PhD before getting a place.
  - C I 'ad to do two. By the time I applied after me first one, all t'other candidates 'ad PhD already.
  - D After working in t'Antarctic, I 'ad enough research experience to *apply* for first PhD. But that were in geology. After that first PhD, I 'ad enough clout to do proper Psychology PhD, with Aaron Beck. But because 'e were psychiatrist, no course would even consider me until I'd done three years post-doc with David Clark.
  - B Luxury. I did 3 PhDs in Psychology. One with Dave Clark, one with Alan Baddeley, and one supervised by a whole consortium of course directors. But I couldn't get on a course until after ten years as Director of the MRC Applied Psychology Unit at Cambridge. Even then, I nearly lost a place to t'ex-Director, until she took up job as UN Commissioner for Human Rights instead.
  - C But it would 'ave been much easier if it 'and't been for some of those....supervisors.
- All Arrrgh! Supervisors! Too right etc.
- A This supervisor I 'ad in Tower 'Amlets. Used to be old army drill seargent. Trained in 1940s. 'E used to shout continuously at me in 'is office for an hour every Thursday morning.
  - D Shouting's nowt. I 'ad to work 20 hour a day in council estate, without secretarial support. I used to 'ave to run parenting programs for 12-year-old mothers, and football teams for their boyfriends. And my supervisor used to visit every Friday, stab me with a piece of broken glass in front of the clients, and threaten to 'ave me done for sexually abusing them if I reported 'er to the BPS.
  - B We 'ad it tough. Us assistants in Mosside, we used to 'ave to get up at four in the morning from sleeping by t'side o' t'road, make supervisor's breakfast, mug a passing pimp for a suit to wear to work, do 'ome visits to paranoid schizophrenic drug barons who the police wouldn't go near, write 10,000 word court reports with pen and paper five times a week, which would get ripped to shreds by QCs who regularly sent us death threats. And, when we 'ad supervision, our supervisor used to inject us with petrol, using HIV-infected needles, to 'elp us empathise with the clients.
  - C Right. After I'd waited for tide to recede from rockpool, I 'ad to heat up rockpool using the sun and a pair of broken glasses; boil supervisor's breakfast, lunch and supper in it; make work clothes from seaweed; swim out to work on remote barren island, scale up 100-foot cliffs; run therapeutic community for a group of 100 convicted paedophile serial killers, with quadruple diagnoses of OCD, heroin addiction, ADHD, and borderline personality disorder; swim back to shore; write up case notes onto the cliffs using broken shells from t'rockpool; go to school; pick up supervisor's seven kids and babysit them in rockpool, without letting them get wet or cold, until supervisor got 'ome drunk next morning. And every Wednesday in supervision, my supervisor would publicly burn me at the stake with all the islanders standing around and cheering.
  - D Aye. We 'ad 'ard time getting on this course. All those qualified psychologists don't realise it.
  - A It's such a shame that when you put all that on your application form they just think you're exaggerating.