



## Mental Health: Unregistered Practitioners QSD on 2 March 2020

On 2 March 2020, Baroness Jolly (Liberal Democrat) is due to ask Her Majesty's Government "what assessment they have made of the impact of treatment by unregulated and unregistered persons offering psychotherapy or counselling services upon the mental health and wellbeing of their clients".

### Summary

- The [NHS Health Careers website explains that](#) psychiatry is the study of mental health problems and their diagnosis, management and prevention. Psychiatrists are medical doctors who have qualified in psychiatry. It says that psychotherapists "help people to overcome stress, emotional and relationship problems or troublesome habits". These may be psychiatrists or other health professionals who have had additional training. The NHS notes that "increasingly, there are a number of psychotherapists who do not have backgrounds in the above fields, but who have undertaken in-depth training in this area".
- In the UK, the General Medical Council (GMC) [regulates doctors and holds the medical register](#). The medical register is an online database that lists all doctors qualified to practice medicine in the country. Prior to joining the medical register, the GMC checks a doctor's identity, qualifications, and experience to ensure that the doctor can safely practice medicine in the UK. Doctors who hold a license to practise medicine in the UK are required to renew their licenses through a process known as 'revalidation'. This takes place every five years and allows the GMC to identify that doctors were fit to practise.
- In relation to psychotherapy, the UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) [holds a national register of psychotherapists and counsellors](#) (other bodies also hold registers, [such as the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy](#)). In order to register with the UKCP, individuals must meet the UKCP's standards and training requirements. The UKCP states that training for psychotherapists is a four-year, postgraduate masters, or masters-equivalent level specialist training. Whilst training for counsellors is degree level or equivalent. However, the UKCP notes that therapists do not have to register with either the UKCP or any other organisation. The UKCP says this means that anyone can call themselves a psychotherapist. Requirements for other registers may vary.
- In November 2018, the UKCP, British Psychoanalytic Council and the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy began a collaborative project to develop a draft competency framework—known as a Scope of Practice and Education (SCoPEd)—detailing the minimum training requirements, competences and practice standards for psychotherapists and counsellors working with adults.

Eren Waitzman | 25 February 2020

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## Further Information

- House of Lords, [‘Written Question: Counselling and Psychiatry—Training’](#), 30 October 2019, HL259

*Written question asking what plans the Government had to introduce legislation to regulate the qualifications and training of psychotherapists and counsellors. In its response, the Government stated that, at the time the answer was written, it had no plans to extend professional regulation to psychotherapists or counsellors. It also noted that “the Professional Standards Authority currently accredits ten voluntary registers relating to psychotherapy and counselling and covering approximately 50,000 talking therapy professionals”.*

- Professional Standards Authority, ‘About Accredited Registers’, accessed 25 February 2020; and ‘Find An Accredited Register’, accessed 25 February 2020

*Webpage detailing the role of the Professional Standards Authority in assessing organisations that register health and social care practitioners; and a webpage listing accredited registers.*

- General Medical Council, [‘The Medical Register’](#), accessed 25 February 2020

*Guidance by the General Medical Council on the medical register. This includes information on the types of registration which allow doctors to work in different posts in the UK and the checks employers can make on the register.*

- UK Council for Psychotherapy, [‘About Our Register’](#), accessed 25 February 2020

*Webpage detailing the UKCP’s national register of psychotherapists and counsellors. This includes information on the standards and training requirements that psychotherapists and counsellors must take to be on the register.*

- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, British Psychoanalytic Council and the UK Council for Psychotherapy, SCoPEd: A Draft Framework for the Practice and Education of Counselling and Psychotherapy, November 2018; ‘FAQs About SCoPEd’, accessed 25 February 2020; and ‘Statement of Initial Results of SCoPEd’, accessed 25 February 2020

*Joint draft framework which was sent to members of the three organisations for consultation outlining the minimum training requirements, competences and practice standards for counsellors and psychotherapists; a webpage detailing frequently asked questions on the project, including information on such standards and how the framework would help a client when seeking therapy from a member working in a private practice; and a press article summarising the initial results of the consultation. Initial results revealed that 40 percent of respondents believed that the framework would make it easier for patients to find the “right kind of help to meet their needs”, with 24 percent contending that it would make the process more difficult.*

## Parliamentary Questions

- A selection of written questions from both Houses: [HL260](#) (30 October 2019); [198268](#) (6 December 2018); [196142](#) (3 December 2018); [196143](#) (3 December 2018); [196144](#) (3 December 2018); [HL8293](#) (13 June 2018); and [140596](#) (9 May 2018)

## Press Articles and Comment

- Gina Davidson, '[Major Review Launched into Patient Records of Fake Psychiatrist](#)', *Scotsman*, 15 August 2019
- J Meirion Thomas, '[Is Your Doctor Faking It?](#)', *Spectator*, 29 June 2019
- BBC News, '[Electrotherapy Warning Over Bogus Psychiatrist Zholia Alemi](#)', 18 May 2019
- BBC News, '[I Was Treated by a Fake Psychiatrist](#)', 4 December 2018
- Alex Matthews-King, '[Jailed NHS Psychiatrist Who Practised for 22 Years Without a Licence Sparks Review of 3,000 Doctors Who Qualified Overseas](#)', *Independent*, 19 November 2018
- May Bulman, '[Mentally Ill 'Exploited' by Unaccredited Online Counselling](#)', *Independent*, 13 January 2018