

DR NATASHA ALEXANDER

Qualifications

2003-2005: Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Systemic Theory, Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust/Tavistock Clinic, London

1998-2001: Doctorate in Clinical Psychology, North Thames/University College London

1992-1996: B.A. (Hons) 2:1 in Applied Social Psychology, University of Kent at Canterbury

Other training

2016: Using metaphors when working with children who have experienced hardships (2 days), Skattle, Brisbane.

2016: Respectful Relationships Education, (1 day), True Relationships and Reproductive Health, Brisbane.

2014: Critical Components of Risk Assessment and Management, (1 day), Queensland Centre for Mental Health Learning

2009: Expert Witness Training: Presenting Evidence in Court; Essential Knowledge of Being an Expert Witness; Writing the Court Report (3 days), British Psychological Society, London

2013: RU Ready... Or Not Quite Yet? (1 day) SHINE Young People's Sexual Health Services, London

2011: Sexuality and People with Learning Disabilities conference (1 day), Pavilion: London

2011: Management and Leadership for Clinicians Programme, (5 days), Kings Fund, London

2008: CBT with Psychosis: Modules 1 and 2, (6 days), Association for Psychological Therapies/ East London Foundation Trust

2008: Behavioural Family Interventions for Psychosis (5 days), Meriden/East London Foundation Trust

2006: Systemic Practicum for Working with Organisations (1 year), Kensington Consultation Centre, London

2003: Risk Assessment - Working with Learning Disabled Sex Offenders, Respond, London

2002: Introduction to Cross-dressing and Gender Reassignment for People with Learning Disabilities, (1 day), Consent, Hertfordshire

Work History

5th January 2015 to 2016: Clinical Psychologist with the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, Brisbane Region. Based at Oxley Service Centre for 6 months, before transferring to Mt Gravatt Service Centre.

My role included providing clinical assessment, therapy and intervention for young people and adults with a range of disabilities; facilitating staff consultation and training; and carrying out some case management tasks.

Achievements:

- Acting as a sexuality champion within the service, increasing the capacity of others to carry out work with sexuality and relationship issues
- Designing and facilitating sexuality and disability training for staff, and co-facilitating training across different service centres
- Consulting to various individuals and organisations about sexuality and disability related issues

25th August to 21st November 2014: Full time case manager in the Psychosis Academic Clinical Unit, Burke Street, Woolloongabba, Brisbane, while completing my three month transitional program requirements as a qualified clinical psychologist transferring from the UK to Australia.

August 2009 to December 2013: Senior Clinical Psychologist Newham Community Team for People with Learning Disabilities, London UK

My position was as a senior clinical psychologist working four days per week in the Newham Community Learning Disabilities Team within the National Health Service (NHS). I had a clinical lead role in supporting the transition of young people from the disabled children's team to adult services, and I deputized for the Consultant Clinical Psychologist as necessary. I also acted into her role while she took a career break for three months in 2011. The team works with people with wide ranging levels of ability, from mild learning disabilities to severe and profound learning disabilities/multiple disabilities.

My role involved joint work with other disciplines including psychiatry, community nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech and language therapy. Newham is a very culturally diverse inner city borough with over 100 languages spoken. This gave many opportunities for lots of cross-cultural work, using interpreters when necessary, and working to ensure that the assessments and interventions I carried out were culturally appropriate.

Due to financial cuts and restructuring in the service, my manager's post was deleted, resulting in my post being redefined as the head of specialism (Psychology) in the learning disabilities team from October 2013.

Core duties:

- As the head of specialism for three months, my core duties were to manage and provide a highly specialist clinical psychology service to people with learning disabilities and their families/carers
- Carrying out duties as a member of the senior management team and deputizing for the clinical service manager as needed
- Management responsibility for three clinical psychologists and two trainee clinical psychologists on placement

Prior to this my role as a senior clinical psychologist involved:

- Assessment and intervention regarding various referrals e.g. behaviour that challenges others, bereavement, anxiety and depression, loss of functioning, anger management, transition, sexual behaviour, dementia and serious mental health problems.
- Care management for clients who were 100% health funded
- Capacity assessments e.g. financial, welfare, understanding of and ability to consent to sexual relationships, understanding of health problems such as diabetes and breast cancer
- Systemic family therapy and staff consultation using a reflecting team
- Cross-cultural assessment and consultation regarding newly arrived immigrants, for example where there is a query regarding intellectual ability and functioning, and English was not their first language
- Liaison and joint work with external agencies such as community mental health teams
- Assessment of parents from various cultural backgrounds who had been identified as having learning needs, and making recommendations regarding their care plan.
- Supervising clinical psychology trainees on 6 month/ 1 year placements.

Achievements:

- Setting up a Sexuality Champions program for support staff, with two colleagues from external agencies. This program ran for one year, and involved a three-day training program, with regular follow up workshops and supervision. The aim was to increase the capacity and competence of workers in appropriately supporting individuals with learning disabilities with their relationships and sexuality.
- Designing and co-facilitating a 'Tree of Life' full day workshop for people with mild learning disabilities, with a focus on building self esteem, community, personal resources and wellbeing
- Developing and supporting transition pathways for young people in transition from child to adult services and liaising with a local special school that caters for young people aged 16-19 years with complex needs, including profound and multiple learning disabilities and autism spectrum conditions

December 2007 to June 2009: Clinical Psychologist, Hackney Community Psychiatric Rehabilitation and Recovery Team

As the sole clinical psychologist in the community team, I was responsible for developing the psychology service within the team, increasing the psychological understanding of non-psychology colleagues, and having a clinical and care co-ordination caseload. I used a recovery model approach in my work and met with clients in various informal contexts within the community to increase engagement with sessions. My responsibilities within the team included:

- Carrying out Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) interventions for psychosis, writing recommendations regarding managing difficult behaviours, contributing to risk assessments and assessments of capacity, conducting cognitive assessments and providing staff consultation
- Carrying out screening assessments and comprehensive initial assessments for clients newly referred to the team
- Staff consultation with residential and day services regarding various issues, such as managing transition from an inpatient ward to community accommodation, managing forensic issues, dealing with inappropriate sexual behaviour

Achievements:

- Setting up a 'Coffee and Cake' women's group, focusing on empowerment, community, connection and highlighting personal strengths
- Setting up regular consultation sessions for residential staff to provide support and increase motivation, confidence and skills
- Increasing the capacity of the team by recruiting and supervising a Psycho-Social Intervention Practitioner within the team; supervising an honorary psychology assistant and a trainee clinical psychologist on placement

April 2007-October 2007: career break – travelling in Africa, Thailand and Australia

January 2006 to 2007 and 2008-2009: Freelance clinical supervisor for five managers at an organisation for people with learning disabilities: The Tamarisk Trust.

This work involved facilitating monthly supervision sessions, meeting with the managers individually. We discussed various issues in relation to their service users and staff members, including supportive sessions for workers when a service user died suddenly and unexpectedly; managing challenging behaviour, and managing concerns about staff performance and safeguarding issues.

November 2001 to April 2007: Clinical Psychologist, Newham Community Team for People with Learning Disabilities

My responsibilities within the multi-disciplinary team included:

- Therapeutic work with individuals and couples
- Family therapy using a systemic approach, often with a reflecting team
- Assessments – including cognitive assessments, assessments of functioning, dementia screening, assessments for therapy, and behavioural assessments and interventions
- Staff consultations in various day and residential services
- Developing and facilitating training programs and workshops for staff teams
- Contributing to multi-agency assessments regarding the needs and ongoing support of parents who themselves had learning disabilities

Teaching and training experience

I have developed and facilitated the following training sessions:

- Working with self-injury
- Talking about death and dying
- Working with people with challenging needs/behaviour
- Moving home/transition
- Growing older with Down's Syndrome – issues of ageing and dementia
- Young people with learning disabilities and mental health problems
- Young people in transition to adulthood – sessions for parents
- Autism awareness
- Three day sexuality champions program – for staff working with people with learning disabilities
- Assessing and working with parents who have learning disabilities
- Facilitating staff consultation

Teaching to trainee clinical psychologists:

- Introduction to learning disabilities
- Sexuality, relationships, parenthood and people with learning disabilities
- Working systemically

Consultation and supervision experience

I have 15 years post qualification experience in providing consultation and supervision sessions to a range of residential and day service staff as follows:

- Consultation sessions to a staff team in a Jewish organisation around the needs of a young woman with complex mental health needs
- Consultation sessions to a large staff team at a specialist refuge that provides therapeutic support and accommodation for twelve women with learning disabilities who have been, or are at risk of being abused physically, sexually or emotionally
- Regular consultation to staff teams from a range of day services and residential staff teams around working with particular service users and issues
- Consultation to the teaching staff team of students with learning disabilities aged 16 - 19 years around issues of transition, mental health, liaising with families, and dealing with issues of independence and interdependence, sexuality and relationships

2003 to 2013: Role with trainee clinical psychology courses at the University of East London and University College London

- Regular supervision of trainee clinical psychologists on placement, individually and in groups
- Facilitating clinical and personal/professional development groups for clinical psychology trainees
- Member of an external supervisor panel for short-listing and interviewing applicants for the clinical psychology courses at University College London and University of East London
- Teaching sessions to trainee clinical psychologists, including introduction to learning disabilities; people with learning disabilities: sexuality, relationships and parenthood; systemic approaches
- External marker for trainee assignments e.g. essays and case reports
- Mentor/Professional advisor for a trainee at the University of East London
- Member of diversity group for clinical psychologists which aims to promote clinical psychology within undergraduate courses. The group organises a yearly conference for undergraduates from black and minority ethnic groups to find out more about clinical psychology

Publications

Baum, S. and Alexander, N. (2010) 'Pregnancy and early parenting support for women with learning disabilities'. In McCarthy and David Thompson (eds.) *Sexuality and Learning Disabilities: A Handbook*. Brighton: Pavilion Publishing.

Alexander, N. (2006). 'Commentary: Gender identity, cross-dressing and gender reassignment and people with learning disabilities'. *Learning Disability Review*.

Alexander, N. & Clare, L. (2004). 'You still feel different': The experience and meaning of women's self-injury in the context of a lesbian or bisexual identity. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 14, 70-84.

Lynggaard, H. & Alexander, N. (2004). 'Why are my friends changing?' Explaining dementia to people with learning disabilities. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 32, 9-15.

Conference Presentations

Baum, S and Alexander, N. '*Pregnancy and early parenting support for women with learning disabilities*. (Presentation to Pavilion Sexuality and Learning Disabilities Conference, April 2011)

Alexander, N. '*You still feel different*': *The experience and meaning of women's self-injury in the context of a lesbian or bisexual identity*. Presentations to:

The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis Conference London, 2002

Psychology of Women Conference Brighton, 2004

Community Psychology Conference, Lancaster, 2004

Book Reviews

Allen, J.D. (2003). *Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender People with Developmental Disabilities and Mental Retardation: Stories of the Rainbow Support Group*. Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press. Reviewed by Dr Natasha Alexander in *Tizard Learning Disability Review*, vol. 11, Issue 2, April 2006.

Goldstein, E.G and Horowitz, L.C. (2003) *Lesbian Identity and Contemporary Psychotherapy: A Framework for Clinical Practice*. Mahwah, NJ: The Analytic Press. Reviewed by Dr Natasha Alexander in *Lesbian and Gay Psychology Review*, vol.7. no. 2. July 2006.

Allen Lev, A.I. (2004). *Transgender Emergence: Therapeutic Guidelines for Working with Gender-variant People and Their Families*. New York: Hawarth. Reviewed by Dr Natasha Alexander in *Lesbian and Gay Psychology Review*, vol.6. no.3. November 2005.