

# Mental health treatment under the NHS is at extreme risk

7 January 2016, by Charlotte Anscombe



The NHS of 2015 is in danger of being unethical for mental health counsellors to work in, according to a new paper from The University of Nottingham.

In *Therapy Today*, Dr Gillian Proctor who trains counsellors from The University of Nottingham's School of Education reflects on the predictions she made on the future of the NHS in a paper in 2002 and how the current services are impacting on the treatment of [mental health](#) today.

Dr Proctor said: "The privatisation of the NHS has continued by stealth, with the result of increasing bureaucratisation and medicalisation of mental healthcare. All the new money put into [mental health care](#) through IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) has resulted in patients being treated as numbers to be measured in spurious ways and treated as though counselling was a drug, offered a small dose and then discharged.

## 'Conveyor-belt services'

"Despite the false rhetoric of increasing choice of therapy for patients, models which prioritise the therapy relationship struggle to fit in such a one-size-fits-all system. Counsellors who respond to patients with distress with humanity and care are being driven out of such conveyor-belt services and patients are dropping out and being left with

nothing."

In her paper Dr Proctor identifies that:

- Mental healthcare has moved away from the idea of relationships, and professionals further away from the idea that who and how we are as people matters.
- Healthcare professionals are working towards performance-related pay—and are judged by the numbers of people seen and 'improving' on arbitrary symptom-based scales of mental health, rather than by their ability to respond to personal distress.
- Mental health services are now dominated by IAPT—meaning services are more about structured standardised short term interventions than personalised or longer term therapy.
- The privatisation of the NHS is continuing surreptitiously.
- The UK is still managing to maintain the line that the NHS—is 'free healthcare for all'—but for how long?
- The only way for private companies to deliver better care to [patients](#) at a lower cost than the NHS, is by reducing the pay of its employees.
- The pay and employment conditions of NHS jobs have reduced substantially in the last five years.

Dr Proctor adds: "I'm disappointed that my previous predictions which I feared have been surpassed and I'm very disillusioned about the possibility of working as an ethical counsellor and providing a humane [service](#) to distressed clients in the NHS."

**More information:** A full copy of the report can be viewed at [www.therapytoday.net/article/s ... 051/the-nhs-in-2015/](http://www.therapytoday.net/article/s...051/the-nhs-in-2015/)

Provided by University of Nottingham

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