

The challenge of recruiting men to the CWP role

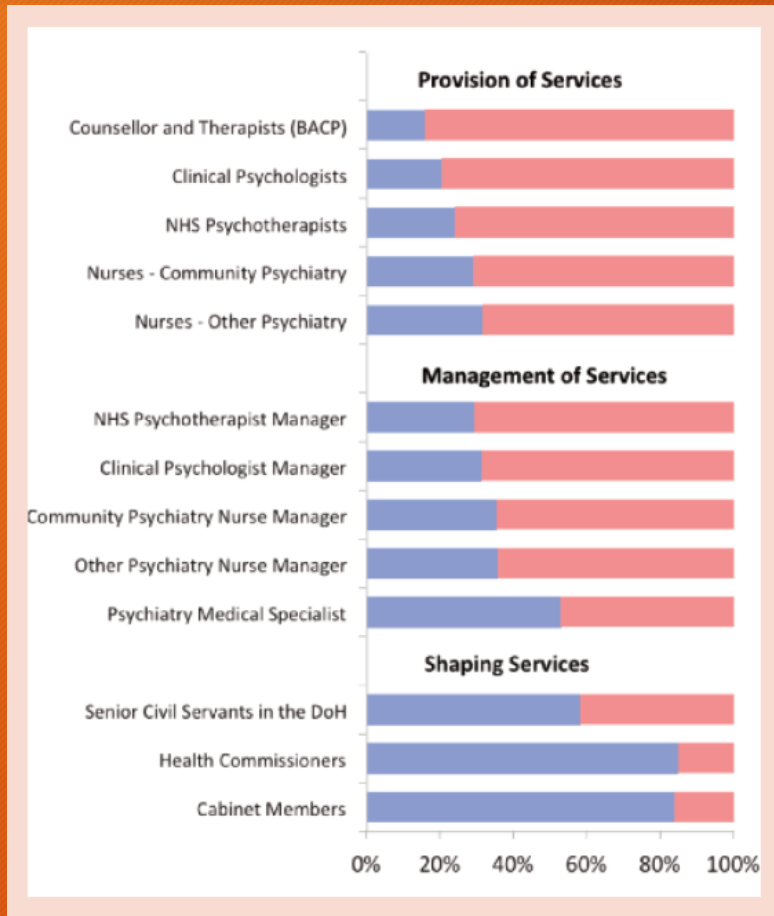
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Overview of what we will cover

- Ratio of men to women in CWP and other mental health roles
- Possible reasons for this imbalance in gender mix
- Interviewing David for his views as a male Trainee CWP
- Ideas for action to attempt to increase male CWP numbers
- Our commitment at the University of Sussex

Lack of men in psychological services



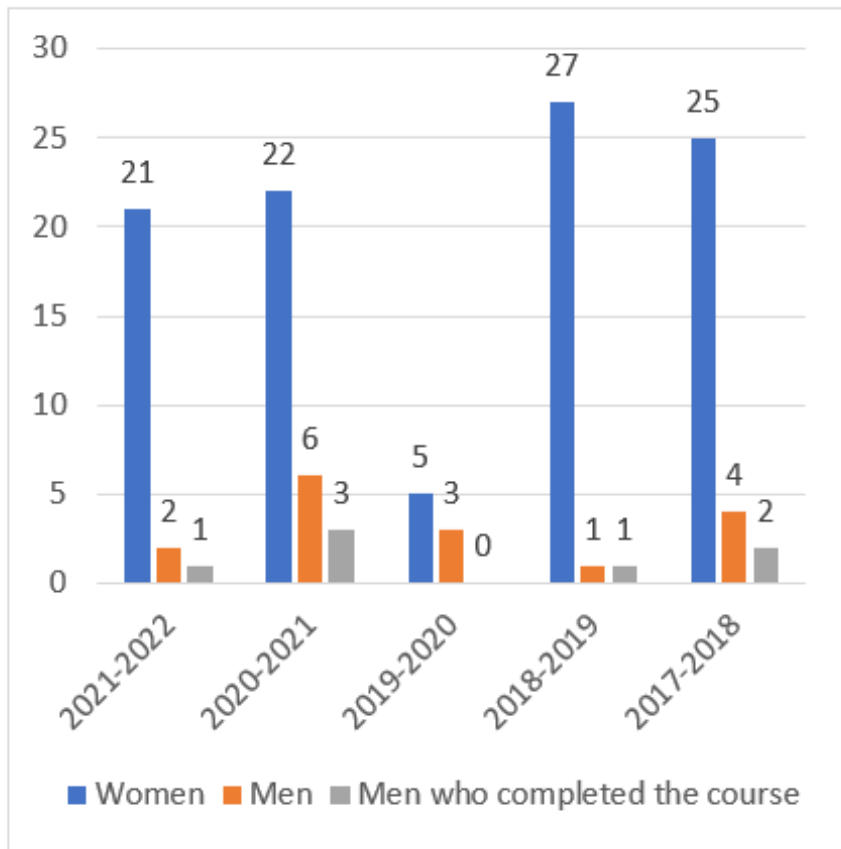
80% of psychology undergraduate students are female, translating to 80% of clinical psychologists and educational psychologists being women. This picture is not specific to the UK - e.g. similar gender balance in US

(Johnson, Madill, Koutsopoulou, Brown, & Harris (2020))

Children & Young People's Mental Health Workforce Census 2023: nationally the male % of the CYPMH workforce: NHS = 15%; Independent sector = 24%; Local Authority = 13% Voluntary sector = 12%

NHS Benchmarking Network (2023)

Trainee CWP male to female ratio locally - data from University of Sussex trainee numbers



CWP data from last 5 annual cohorts

For the current year, we have a CWP Trainee cohort of 18 including 2 men

From the last 3 completed years of EMHP training for some comparison



EMHP cohort data

Why does it matter?

Being representative of the CYP population. This is rightly seen as important in terms of cultural and ethnic diversity in the workforce, and should there not be equal focus on gender balance?

Encouraging boys to access early mental health support by having a choice of seeing a male or female CWP.

We can hypothesise that some boys would rather speak with a male CWP or at least have this choice.

Mental health problems are relevant for girls, boys & those identifying as non-binary. By having a predominantly female workforce - what message does this give?

Possible reasons for low number of male CWPs

Drawing on some evidence from the field of psychology:

- Male students perceived studying a psychology degree primarily as a route into health/education professions which they associated with women (*Johnson, Madill, Koutsopoulou, Brown, & Harris (2020)*)
- Perception of psychology as feminine; general public perceptions of psychology as 'soft science'; low existing representation in practitioners/ students; perception that psychology requires high emphasis on recognising, managing, interpreting emotions of their self and others, with some participants believing this was inconsistent with society's view of masculinity; steered away from psychology as a vocation by peers, parents, teachers etc.; financial factors such as earning potential - other STEM fields may be viewed to be more profitable (*Beasley, Sánchez, Butler & Chapman-Hilliard, 2021*)

Questions for David, a male CWP Trainee

1. Did you have any preconceptions about the CWP role and being a male in this role?
2. As a trainee CWP, what experience or reflections do you have now in relation to the role and being a male in a female dominated profession?
3. What would you want to tell a man thinking of coming into this role?

What could help to increase male representation in the CWP field?

The importance of male role models in psychology with these available and visible to the current students, as well as to prospective applicants who attend open days & national initiative for gender balance (*Johnson, Madill, Koutsopoulou, Brown, & Harris (2020)*)

Some recommendations from a study into 'Male participation in nursing and allied health higher education courses' (*Research Works Limited, 2020*)

- Develop mentoring programmes with male role models, and consider how to build greater awareness through open days, for example holding common events for nursing, allied health and medicine
- Healthcare employers to use their spaces with high public traffic to promote the diversity of healthcare careers and do so in gender sensitive ways, increase opportunities for work experience and shadowing, and increase opportunities for internal career progression
- Schools/colleges and career advisers should establish partnerships with local health employers and ensure information is provided to all students with interests and skills relevant to healthcare careers
- The government should encourage mature student entry into these professions and ensure the NHS People Plan drives action to increase male participation.

Our commitment at University of Sussex in collaboration with local services

As a University team we are engaging in the Psychological Professions Network (PPN) Equality, Diversity & Inclusion audit process (*Psychological Professions Network (2023)*) which covers the following areas:

- Improving access to training
- Adapting teaching
- Supporting trainees

This will help us to measure & monitor how effective we are being in increasing access to these training roles by providing an Undergraduate and Postgraduate route into training; continuing work to increase representation from diverse backgrounds; decolonising our teaching curriculum; and working on increasing male numbers of CWP Trainees.

Working with services to proactively advertise their trainee job roles to encourage applicants from a diverse background and gender mix, and aiming for gender balanced representation on joint service & university interview panels, and university open days.

References

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