

Job Profile: High Intensity Therapist (HIT)

Firoozeh started as a trainee Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner (PWP) with Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust (HPFT) back in 2012. She was 22, full of ambition and energy. Eight years on, as a mum and working as a High Intensity Therapist (HIT), her life in IAPT is a bit different.

A day in the life of a High Intensity Trainee...

As a HIT I get to work with a range of difficulties from Depression, to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. I do not have a 'favourite' disorder as such but I do like groups as they can help normalise symptoms and take away that sense of being alone, odd and isolated in the struggles someone is facing.

What do you enjoy most about being a High Intensity Trainee?

It may sound like a cliché but I do love my job, always have and I enjoy helping others. I enjoy meeting different people, learning about them and their unique experiences. I enjoy learning something new every day. There are days or weeks where the space to prepare or reflect is very tight or sometimes non-existent. This became more apparent as I moved from a trainee High Intensity position to a qualified one, working full time. As you can imagine working at that intensity day in, day out can be tiring and so developing new and innovative ways of working becomes very important.

Challenges...

As with any job there are challenges in working as HIT. Sometimes it is the general pressure of knowing you have to make every session count as there are limits to how many you can offer. I am also very aware of other people who are waiting to start treatment and although there is no pressure from management, I find myself worrying if sessions do go over. Time management and organisation skills are paramount to managing some of the challenges.

Support...

I am now back at work, part time and I'm enjoying my job even more. Working part time leaves space for me to reflect, recharge and prep for next week's sessions. I did not feel very confident on my return but felt supported by my colleagues. A couple of months in and I am looking forward to running a group soon, developing new groups, materials and completing further training.

Key skills and knowledge...

Being kind, compassionate, non-judgement and treating everyone I come across with dignity and respect. A solid understanding of common mental health disorders such as Depression and anxiety disorders. I find using supervision or peer discussions are helpful too particularly as colleagues often have different backgrounds.

Future opportunities...

The latest project is to pilot delivering treatment digitally and although it may sound slightly alien, it is needed. I am looking forward to trying this new method out and learning to work more flexibly. Overall I feel more competent than I did eight years ago but I do firmly believe there is no end to what you can learn in this profession.

What advice would you give to a prospective a High Intensity Trainee?

Everyone takes a different route to becoming a HIT and some fear that perhaps not coming from IAPT or a PWP background might hinder their chances of application. I would say if you have a keen interest in therapeutic models and already work in a health setting such as Occupational Health or Nursing then you are have a good chance and you bring a set of skills and knowledge with you that benefits the team and your clients. The training can be intense and support is provided both at university and at work and for the time you are training you have a small caseload as you work through each case. So my personal advice would be to go for it if you would like to pursue a carrier in IAPT.