What are the perceived implications, if any, for non-IAPT trainee therapists working in an IAPT service?

The ‘Improving Access to Psychological Therapies’ (IAPT) programme began as a way of helping NHS patients gain easier access to psychological therapy. Although the national programme initially focused on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, IAPT services have recently expanded to include counsellors and psychotherapists from different training approaches that are not ‘IAPT-approved’ or ‘-accredited’.

A qualitative research study was conducted, using a version of discourse analysis, based on Foucault’s notion that we are comprised as a subject by ideological discourses of power. Participants appeared to draw on dominant discourses to construct IAPT as a powerful service provider. The way in which discourses were used seemed to create subject positions that were outside to, or excluded from, the IAPT system, not allowing much room for any kind of action to be taken except compliance, which may have served to legitimise feelings of powerlessness.

As IAPT continues to exert a strong influence over how psychological therapy is made available within the NHS, this study attempts to examine the power relations that may be in operation within this setting. It is suggested that further research is needed regarding the implications of IAPT and how it may impact on the way in which psychological therapists work.