

The British Dietetic Association Volunteer Role Descriptor Research Officer; Mental Health Specialist Group (Research Symposium Lead)

Aims and objectives of the group

- To promote the role of the dietitian in the care and treatment of children, adolescents, adults and older people with mental illness and learning disabilities.
- To promote communication between dietitians working in the field of mental illness and learning disabilities
- To provide specialist evidence-based advice and information
- To promote the development of evidence-based practice in the field of mental illness and learning disabilities
- To promote the role of the dietitian in mental illness and learning disabilities at a national level
- To address and contribute to emerging national policy related to mental illness and learning disabilities

What the role has to offer

As the specialist group research officer, you will work closely with the committee to develop research and audit opportunities for group members. You'll use your expertise to guide and shape the group's approach to research and evidence-based practice support, working with the BDA's education, practice and policy team to contribute to the BDA's education work.

As lead for the MHSG stream at the BDA's research symposium, you'll work with the committee to encourage members to participate in research, embed it in their day-to-day practice and disseminate within the wider profession.

Through this role you'll develop an overview of the strategic developments affecting the specialist group from both within the BDA and externally to the profession. Using your knowledge and skills to represent specialist group members interests, advocate for the specialism and the dietetic profession.

We don't expect you to do it alone, as a research officer you'll work closely with the specialist group committee and with the support of the BDA staff team to deliver your specialist group aims and objectives. Our committee supports our Research Officers as a role share, meaning you will work closely with our existing Research Officer, both supporting the groups overall research engagement aims whilst leading distinct objectives. Specifically, you would lead the MHSG strand at the annual BDA Research Symposium.

Through this position you will gain organisation, communication and project management skills, which can translate directly into career development. It will also give you an opportunity to work with colleagues across your speciality, building networks, sharing knowledge and skills

Main tasks and responsibilities

- Overall responsibility for the group's research strategy.
 - Lead the group's stream at the annual Research Symposium, including promoting abstract submissions to members, coordinating the peer review process (including identifying, supporting and quality assuring reviewers), managing the group bursary scheme, and representing the group at the event.
 - Encourage members to participate in research embedding this into their day-to-day practice.
 - Keep the committee up to date with relevant conferences, abstract submission deadlines or funding relating to the specialism.
 - Co-ordinate the committee responses to key consultations e.g., NICE, Parliamentary evidence requests.
 - Collaborate with the website editor and social media officer to promote research opportunities through BDA and MHSG communication channels.
 - Work closely with the BDA's volunteer manager and education, practice and policy team, seeking advice and guidance where needed.
 - Support fellow MHSG Research Officer with management of MHSG journal club.
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Training, support and resources

As the research officer you'll work closely with the Volunteer Manager and the education, practice and policy team who offer support, guidance and advice to the postholder. Support for this role is offered by key committee members including our existing Research Officer, our two Education Officers our Chair, and our Vice Chair.

We have a variety of resources, tools and training available to support this role including:

- Induction with BDA staff and joint working with existing committee Research Officer.
 - Training and development opportunities to help build personal and professional skills including workshops, webinars and the BDA's annual volunteer conference.
 - Access to our volunteer hub with a wide range of website editing tools and resources.
 - Access to our volunteer handbook and volunteer hub providing a range of resources and guidance.
 - Regular communications including a monthly volunteer newsletter with BDA updates and opportunities.
 - Networking with other volunteers through events, webinars and access to our volunteer forums.
 - Funded training and event attendance including the annual BDA Research Symposium and MHSG study events.
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Length of service and commitment

You will be elected for a two-year term of office and have the option to extend for an additional two-year term. Reasonable notice can be given if you are no longer able to fulfil this role.

There are several training and development opportunities available, including a detailed induction with BDA staff and governance training to be undertaken upon commencement of each term.

Committee meetings are regularly throughout the year and can be attended virtually if required. There is a varying and flexible amount of work in between meetings which is dependent on the strategy, workplans and projects agreed to by the committee.

The specialist group holds a minimum of one event for members a year which includes the Annual General Meeting, it is typical for the committee to attend these events.

Recruitment method

To apply for this role please complete a nomination form by **September 18th 2026**. Nominees must be a member of the group and provide the names and signatories of two BDA members to support their nomination.

If you would like an informal, confidential discussion about the role and the nomination process, please contact the committee on mentalhealthspecialistgroup@bda.uk.com with the subject 'FAO Steph and Cliona: Research Officer Interest'. Your email will then be passed to Steph Smith (MHSG Chair) and Cliona Brennan (MHSG Research Officer) who will be able to support.
