

# Personal Construct Psychology for ‘Paranoid Delusions’

Kev Harding

*Dr. Kev Harding works as a clinical psychologist in North West England*

**ABSTRACT:** ‘Adam’ is a representation of a number of people the author has worked with in ‘clinical practice’. He is created from real experiences with people who presented similar themes when describing their distress. The aim is to highlight a way of working with ‘paranoia’ informed by Personal Construct Psychology and the influence of the late Don Bannister.

**KEY WORDS:** psychosis, delusions, don bannister, community of self, kellyan hostility

## *The ‘Person’*

‘Adam’ had been admitted to a psychiatric unit following an incident when he had confronted his former social worker at a supermarket and made verbal threats, while heavily intoxicated, to kill him. Adam was subsequently arrested but admitted to a psychiatric unit as he was deemed to be ‘psychotic’ and ‘delusional’. Adam said he believed his former social worker had previously drugged and attacked him at his home. A previous investigation into this allegation had concluded there was no evidence to support Adam’s claims. Therefore, Adam’s ‘paranoid’ beliefs had been labelled as ‘delusional’ and a manifestation of his ‘mental illness’ (First et al, 1997).

Adam reluctantly agreed to engage in sessions with me on the recommendation of his consultant psychiatrist and assigned nurse. However, they were hoping that I could use cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT; Beck, 1991) to ‘challenge and modify’ his ‘delusional’ beliefs. I said I would meet with Adam to see if he would find it useful to talk about and explore his problems with me.