

Psychotherapists and Counsellors Professional Liaison Group

Minutes of the ninth meeting of the Psychotherapists and Counsellors Professional Liaison Group held as follows:-

Date: Wednesday 15 December 2010

Time: 10:30 am

Venue: Commonwealth Room 1, Woburn House, 20 Tavistock Square, London
WC1H 9HQ

Present: Carmen Joanne Ablack
Sally Aldridge
Malcolm Allen
Fiona Ballantine Dykes
Jonathan Coe
Mick Cooper
Peter Fonagy
Katy Grazebrook
Jeff Lucas
Brian Magee
Annie Turner
Nick Turner
Diane Waller (Chair)

In attendance:

Mr C Bendall, Secretary to the Group
Ms T Etmuss-Noble, Scheduling Officer (part of item 6-item 16 inclusive)
Mr M Guthrie, Director of Policy and Standards
Ms L Hart, Secretary to Council (part of item 6-item 16 inclusive)
Ms B Rayment, Youth Access
Mr S Rayner, Secretary to Committees (item 1-part of item 6 inclusive)
Ms C Urwin, Policy Manager
Dr A van der Gaag, Chair of Council
Ms C Wilson, Youth Access

The Group noted that the Chair of Council had attended a hearing of the Administrative court on 10 December 2010. The hearing had considered an application for judicial review by six psychoanalytic and psychotherapeutic organisations of HPC's recommendation to the Department of Health that it should regulate psychotherapists and counsellors.

The court had decided that the case should proceed to a full hearing, as the judge had ruled that the application for judicial review had not been 'out of time'. The judge had decided that, although there was a great deal of common ground between the parties, there was not enough to conclude the case at this stage and therefore it should proceed to the next stage, namely a full hearing. It was expected that there would be a delay of up to six months before the hearing would be listed in the High Court. In the meantime, HPC was committed to the process of finding common ground as the judge had directed.

The Committee noted that the Group would continue its work pending the outcome of the judicial review and any decision by the government on whether the profession should be regulated by HPC.

Item 1.10/39 Apologies for absence

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Julian Lousada (Malcolm Allen attending instead) and Linda Matthews (Katy Grazebrook attending instead).

Item 2.10/40 Approval of agenda

- 2.1 The Group approved the agenda.

Item 3.10/41 Minutes of the Professional Liaison Group meeting held on 19 October 2010 (report ref: PLG 20/10)

- 3.1 The Group agreed that the minutes of the eighth meeting of the Professional Liaison Group should be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

Item 4.10/42 Matters arising

- 4.1 There were no matters arising.

Item 5.10/43 Presentation from Youth Access (report ref: PLG 21/10)

- 5.1 The Group received a paper for discussion from the Executive.

- 5.2 The Group received a presentation from Catherine Wilson and Barbara Rayment of Youth Access.
- 5.3 The Group noted that Youth Access was a national network of youth information, advice and counselling services, which had been founded approximately 35 years ago. It comprised over 250 providers of services and included qualified counsellors and counsellors who were in training. It also included a mix of volunteers and paid employees. The Group noted that the voluntary sector had driven development of services, so provision of services was piecemeal, with typically between 12 and 50 staff in a service.
- 5.4 The Group noted that Youth Access provided a common set of standards for its members, including quality standards for organisations (core values and principles); standards for research and policy work; standards for service development; and standards for training, including Masters-level qualifications and continuing professional development.
- 5.5 The Group noted that Youth Access believed that it was important that counsellors who worked with young people had specialist training in the following areas:
- how to work with young people;
 - how youth counselling was different from working with adults (for example, different areas of risk, where young people might be more likely to experiment with risky activities);
 - confidentiality issues (Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines on whether a client was competent to give consent for treatment); and
 - a greater understanding of the safeguarding responsibility and procedures
- 5.6 The Group noted that Youth Access believed that the majority of current training did not equip counsellors to work with young people. Youth Access believed that a separate protected title was needed for counsellors who worked with young people, in order to ensure equal treatment of this client group; to recognise the risks to young people's health and well being; and to give the regulator an opportunity to correct deficits in this area of provision.

- 5.7 The Group noted that the term ‘young person’ could be defined as being various age ranges (for example, 13-18 or 16-25). The Group noted that, in Ms Rayment’s opinion, it usually applied to people aged 13-18.
- 5.8 The Group noted that, if psychotherapists and counsellors did become regulated, practitioners would need to work within their scope of practice. The Group noted that organisations such as Youth Access offered training which would qualify practitioners to extend their scope of practice to work with young people.
- 5.9 The Group noted that Youth Access had prepared some supplementary information, which would be circulated to members of the Group by e-mail. The Group noted that it was due to discuss the issues around the structure of the Register at its next meeting, including whether there should be a separate protected title. The Group thanked the representatives of Youth Access for the presentation.

Item 6.10/44 Differentiation, standards of proficiency and the threshold level of qualification for entry to the Register (report ref: PLG 22/10)

- 6.1 The Group received a paper for discussion from the Executive.
- 6.2 The Group noted that, at its meeting on 19 October 2010, it had been reported that the Psychological Professions Alliance Group (PPAG), a group of professional bodies, had been developing a proposed model of regulation. The proposed model involved the adoption of three protected titles, with two threshold entry training levels. The model proposed that the titles should be: counsellor (with a threshold entry training level at National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 5); an ‘adjectival titled counsellor’ (with a threshold entry level at NQF level 7) and psychotherapist (with a threshold entry level at NQF level 7).
- 6.3 The Group noted that, since its last meeting, members of PPAG and other stakeholders had worked together to draft standards of proficiency for counsellors at level 5 and level 7 and standards of proficiency for psychotherapists at level 7. The draft standards were included in the papers considered at items 7 and 8.
- 6.4 The Group noted that members of PPAG and other contributors felt that the draft standards reflected current practice. The Group noted that the process of drafting standards was iterative and work would continue. The revised draft standards would be brought back to the next meeting. Participants felt very positive about the work to date.

- 6.5 The Group felt that the draft standards of proficiency for psychotherapists and counsellors clearly differentiated between them and could be justified for public protection. The Group noted that a 'level 5' counsellor would be expected to work with clients with marked or moderate mental health issues, while a 'level 7' counsellor would be expected to work with a full range of mental health problems. The proposed model envisaged that 'level 5' counsellors would need to undertake conversion training in order to work as a 'level 7' counsellor. The Group noted that, if the proposed model was implemented, conversion training would need to be developed by training providers.
- 6.6 The Group noted that further discussion would be needed on the distinction between a 'level 7' counsellor and a level 7 psychotherapist.
- 6.7 The Group noted that some members had concerns that the distinction between 'level 5' and 'level 7' counsellors did not fit with existing practice in some parts of the UK.
- 6.8 The Group noted that, at its next meeting, it would need to decide whether to recommend the proposed model to the HPC Council. The Group noted that, if the proposed model was implemented, the government would need to decide which voluntary registers should be transferred to the HPC register.

The Group received the following papers for discussion from the Executive:

Item 7.10/45 Standards of proficiency for psychotherapists (report ref: PLG 23/10)

Item 8.10/46 Standards of proficiency for counsellors (report ref: PLG 24/10)

The Group noted the following papers:

Item 9.10/47 The structure of the Register: children and young people (report ref: PLG 25/10)

Item 10.10/48 Consultation draft of standards of proficiency (report ref: PLG 26/10)

Item 11.10/49 Responses to the draft standards of proficiency from the consultation on the proposed statutory regulation of psychotherapists and counsellors (report ref: PLG 27/10)

Item 12.10/50 Generic standards of proficiency (report ref: PLG 28/10)

Item 13.10/51 Information for organisations invited to present to meetings of the Professional Liaison Group (report ref: PLG 29/10)

Item 14.10/52 Timetable and plan of activities (report ref: PLG 30/10)

14.1 The Group noted that, at its meeting on 2 February 2011, it would need to reach decisions and make recommendations in these areas:

- as far as possible, to agree the draft standards of proficiency, recognising that further work and further iterations were likely to be necessary and that a consultation would be held prior to the opening of any statutory register, to shape the standards;
- the structure of the Register, including agreeing whether the Register should differentiate between psychotherapists and counsellors;
- to agree in principle the threshold level or levels of entry to the Register, recognising that this would be subject to further consideration in the light of the finalised standards and subject to a consultation held prior to the opening of any statutory register; and
- to make final conclusions with regards to the variety of issues raised about differentiation between those qualified to work with children and young people and those qualified to work with adults.

14.2 The Group noted that, if statutory regulation was introduced, the proposed structure of any statutory register would affect how individual practitioners on voluntary registers transferred to the statutory register.

Item 15.10/53 Any other business

15.1 There was no other business.

Item 16.10/54 Date of subsequent meetings

16.1 A subsequent meeting of the Group would be held on Wednesday 2 February 2011, at HPC's office.

**Chair
Date**