

Consultation on the Report of the HPC Professional Liaison Group on Statutory Regulation by Judith Lask

The Professional Liaison group has been meeting to advise the Health Professions Council (HPC) on the detail of a scheme for statutory regulation of psychotherapists and counsellors. Systemic Psychotherapists were represented by the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapists (UKCP). Kathy Murphy was the representative on the group. The HPC has now opened a consultation on their recommendations. This consultation is now open until October 16th and everyone can respond individually or through UKCP but AFT will also be submitting its own response and I am inviting you to send me your comments by the 1st of October so that I can collate views and ideas and submit them to HPC.

You can find the relevant documents on the AFT or HPC website or email me on Judith.lask@virgin.net.

Submissions to the consultation will be considered and a further 2 day meeting in November will consider them and finalise the report that will go to the Government. I will be an observer at the November meetings. If the timetable remains as it is then statutory regulation will come into force in 2011.

It is important to bear in mind the following

1. HPC is only interested in regulating basic entry level competence and training.
2. The Standards of Proficiency cover all 14 of the professions already regulated by HPC with some additions for psychotherapists and counsellors.
3. Professional organisations will have a role in developing the curriculum and also in developing gold standard trainings, specialist and post qualification training.

You will find below a few points which draw your attention to areas of particular importance to our modality. The consultation document as a whole does lay out some of the dilemmas and controversy that arose during the consultation process. It is very important that we ensure that this process is "fit for purpose" and your comments are really welcome. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Areas of Importance

Protected titles of Counsellor and Psychotherapists

Although it is important to differentiate between the 2 titles because the training requirements and practice can be very different, there is a dilemma for us in terms of employment. Many systemic psychotherapists have jobs as counsellors and also in some agencies the term "Family Counsellor" is used as it is seen as less threatening. There is a capacity to register as a counsellor and psychotherapist but we need to ensure that this will be possible for our members. I guess the argument is that actually our trainings allow people to fulfil both roles. I am interested in what thoughts you have about this.

We are also left with a challenge as the word “therapist” is not protected and this is the title of many jobs and the way in which Family and Systemic Psychotherapists are often referred.

Specific Standards of Proficiency for work with Children

There was some debate about the need for some differentiation between those who work with children and those who work with adults. There is always a tension in UKCP between the historic distinction in psychotherapy between work with adults and work with children and the way in which our modality straddles both. UKCP has not always been very good at keeping us in mind in the way documents get drafted. There was a strong push from UKCP and the Association of Child Psychotherapists to have some specific SOPs relating to work with children. Some examples of how this might be done can be found in the SOPs for Art Psychotherapists. I am not sure about this. Certainly if there were additional SOPs for work with children we would need to require all our members to adhere to these. However I wonder if some of the SOPs can be strengthened a little to more obviously include children (e.g. adding child protection) and leave the specific curriculum to the professional organisations. What would be the dangers in this? Again thoughts are very welcome.

SOPS

There are a few places in the SOPs that are a little unclear for our modality

In 1a)8 it sounds a little as if ongoing psychotherapy is needed. I do not think it means to but may need clarification of the wording.

The distinction 3a)1 between counsellors and psychotherapists seems to rest on a medical model that I am not sure is exactly appropriate for our modality. Comments and suggestions particularly welcomed.

Another issue of importance that has probably been sorted is that AFT is an accrediting organisation and training organisations have been recognised by HPC. They have given an undertaking to UKCP that accrediting organisations will also be recognised. This is very important for us because of the large number of courses at a pre-qualifying level. We need to ensure that this is the case.

Please find a little time to look at this consultation which is a document that will have implications for the shape of the profession and for employment.

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July 2009