

Report following the UKCP March 2008 AGM –The Current Picture regarding statutory regulation, by Katherine Murphy Metanoia representative

Background

Since its inception over twenty years ago the U K Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) has worked to establish training standards for psychotherapists across the profession. Recently the UKCP has been in negotiation with the Government concerning the statutory regulation of all psychotherapists and psychotherapeutic counsellors registered under UKCP. To this end, The UKCP, as one of the major representatives of psychotherapists in the United Kingdom, is active in the variety of projects that have been initiated by Government departments, particularly the Department of Health and the Department of Work and Pensions.

These projects include:

- * A longstanding involvement in the consultations between the Department of Health and representatives of the talking therapies in relation to developing a framework for Statutory Registration. Ros Mead is the senior Department of Health civil servant overseeing this work;
- * Involvement in the Skills for Health project which is looking to develop National Occupational Standards for different approaches to/modalities within, the psychological therapies;
- * Involvement in the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) initiative which has a specific brief in helping people back to work who are currently signed of as suffering from anxiety and/or depression;
- * Consultations, along with other representatives of the profession, with members of the Health Professional Council (HPC), a quango answerable to the Privy Council, who will be the statutory registering body.

Although each of these initiatives has its own brief there clearly will be some overlap between them. It is not always clear just how this works as the stated positions often change.

Bearing all this in mind the major focus and cause for concern at this March AGM was twofold. The first concerns a seeming change in the Skills for Health remit to develop humanistic and Integrative National Occupational Standards alongside developing National Occupational Standards for a variety of other approaches to the psychological therapies. In the original consultations and subsequent papers Humanistic and Integrative was named as an approach that would be included in this work. Integrative was then detached from Humanistic, without active consultation with the UKCP or the HIPS section itself, and Humanistic was redefined as Person Centred/Experiential. The UKCP in general, and the HIPS section in particular, is very involved with Marc Lyall, the Programme Manager of Skills for Health, about this and is making robust representation to have 'Integrative Humanistic Psychotherapy' re-included as an approach in its own right. Katherine Murphy, one of our delegates has been part of a team of people, deputized by HIPS, to work on this. Vanja Orlans has also been asked by HIPS to get involved with the relevant research committee.

The second area of concern is the position currently stated by one of Ros Mead's colleagues in the Department of Health, and repeated on the Prime Minister's website, about having only three professional titles: Psychoanalytic/Psychodynamic, Cognitive/ Behavioural and Family/Systemic. This statement came as a complete shock to all parties to the current consultations with the Department of Health as there has been no explicit consultation about this position and indeed this runs counter to all discussions between professional groups and the Department of Health thus far. It is not clear if this is the position that the Health Professionals Council will adopt in terms of registered titles as the Health Professions Council has always expressed the view that all practitioners will be registered, nor have they formally expressed a view about professional titles. This is still under consultation. Everyone involved finds it hard to believe that the Health Professions Council can or will disenfranchise thousands of currently registered psychotherapists, and trainee psychotherapists in currently recognized trainings. This goes against their ethos and it is fair to assume that there would be serious implications in terms of rights to work, employment opportunities and so forth if this were to become the case. Ros Mead has not yet been available for discussion on this issue since the letter announcing this was received.

The UKCP, often in partnership with other professional bodies, is looking into all these matters as a matter of urgency. Both the UKCP as a whole, and the HIPS section, have specific task forces dedicated to this work. The UKCP is dedicated to protecting the high standards of education, training and professionalism of all its registrants and prospective registrants currently in UKCP accredited trainings and to ensuring that statutory registration will cover both these groups. The inclusiveness of this project has been a commitment in UKCP since its origins.

At the AGM there was unanimous agreement that the UKCP argue for the professional title of 'Psychotherapist' or 'Psychotherapeutic Counsellor' in all the arenas where it is active. This would leave the professional groups to manage their modality titles internally. This will be the position they will take in the ongoing consultations with the Department of Health and the Health Professions Council.

There was unanimous agreement that the Chair of the UKCP write to the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Health, and the Shadow Minister of Health, expressing their grave concern about the statement from the Department of Health, repeated on the PM's website, about 3 professional titles and seeking an explanation about how this has come about. Other professional bodies are doing the same. The Chair of UKCP is also drafting a letter for any registrant, and/or trainee, to send to their MP seeking similar information. This will be circulated as soon as it is ready and will be available on the UKCP website.

UKCP representatives will also be taking this up with members of the Health Professions Council.

Metanoia, as a member of HIPS/UKCP, is actively providing support and input to the work of HIPS and the UKCP, both through our delegates and by involving other specialist people and resources as requested.