

Brief Notes of the RAP Special meeting 10 November 2022 - PSA Targeted Review

In attendance

All Panel Members

Introduction

Catherine Clarke (Chair of RAP) opened the meeting and asked KS to provide an update on the actions taken to inform the report for the Professional Standards Authority (PSA).

KS gave a brief update on the progress so far. Following contact with the PSA and confirming that ACC agreed to the conditions but not the narrative the PSA suggested completing a tentative appeal.

KS reported that an email has been sent to the members of ACC alerting them to the conditions and apologising for them, and work has begun on the action plans to address the conditions requested by the PSA to be completed by January 2023.

The Aim of the meeting was for KS to talk through a PowerPoint presentation on the Insight Survey previously sent to the ACC management team, Board and RAP members. The intention of the survey was to give insight into governance and decision making to try to identify what had contributed to the conditions placed on us.

General comments and reflections made in the meeting included the following

- RAP take shared responsibility with regard to situation that led to the conditions.
- Helpful to have some training/familiarisation with the standards and to meet with the PSA's accreditation team.
- Although the PSA is standing agenda item at meetings, it was considered whether this has this given us a false sense of security - there, is not enough challenge and checking as we progress through agenda items
- Nonetheless remains a challenge to know how to apply such broad standards in a way that will be found to have met the criteria.
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The results of key questions in the survey were considered.

Q3: Which of the following stakeholders do you normally consider when contributing to impact assessments and decisions?

The discussion by RAP included the following points:

- Results were good in many areas and as expected.
- RAP perhaps tend to focus on internal management/operations/progress, and pay less attention to impacts and external factors, e.g. complaints process, it was mentioned that a pilot was taking place but the panel did not ask if the members had been informed/were happy regarding this action.
- Value in developing further our consultation with other relevant organisations to communicate plans and share ideas and learning. Balance this with commercial considerations and reciprocity (i.e. very unlikely that other AR's will consult with us). We need to consider counselling training course providers also in decision making.

Q4: What legal, regulatory and other frameworks do you similarly consider when evaluating impacts in decision making?

- We tend to think implicitly but do not always record points in the minutes.
- As there is no in house legal team we need to have "go to" people we can consult.
- It has been accepted by the Board that there is a need to buy in expertise. We also need to acknowledge that changes that may seem small in themselves, can accumulate and together have more significant impact.
- SMR gets updates from Company House and Charity commission and NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations) changes to the regulatory framework. These could be shared more widely with RAP and Board, as they affect ACC.

Q5: Influencing factors

- There is a tendency to trust in good intentions. There is a need to make more time for some discussions in meetings.
- There is also a need to understand fully all the PSA standards and how they impact on the work RAP does.
- The structure of the meeting was not seen as a problem, there is a requirement to have good, detailed minutes produced in a timely manner. May be helpful to outsource this as experience tells us that this is an ongoing issue with time pressure on ACC staff.

Q7: What do you think would help prevent this situation occurring in the future and what do you believe will be the relative impact/effect of the proposal?

- Producing a check list for decision making.
- Communication and consultation, we need to know who we consult and inform about things.
- Board should have a member that is specifically responsible for standards and regulation, e.g. the PSA, Data Protection etc. They will be the "go to person" for that topic. This will help share the load.
- Concern that we don't know what we don't know and how to become more aware.
- Should we be more proactive in meeting with other organisations to share ideas and good practice?
- There is a high fee paid to the PSA but we don't receive a lot of support. Should the PSA be asked to provide more support? Some of the smaller groups have met to share ideas and this has been helpful.

- Some of the larger ARs have access to the legal teams and employ people dedicated to compliance, could experience and knowledge be shared

Reflecting on the Insight Survey are there things we need to do differently in 2023?

- RAP is for the registrants as well as the clients and the public.
- RAP enables ACC to see things from a different perspective, from people outside the organisation who think differently and use their professional expertise which is outside of the counselling profession. The Board is internal, RAP is external.
- There is an intention to recruit others to RAP but also a recognition it is not an easy process.
- Things are taken to the Board from RAP. Review if this should be more formal using the RAP minutes and a check list for points to be raised and actions considered. Also, to consider having an observer from the Board at the RAP meetings to help ensure that the Board has another person, outside of KS and SMR to report and liaise between the two.
- Setting up a better structure for action points in minutes would also help.

Actions

- RAP members to commit to accessing and checking the accredited register standards and to be more challenging with ref. compliance with the standards.
- KS to investigate minute taking service.
- GS/KS to look at structure of agenda and action log