



ACC REGISTER ADVISORY PANEL (RAP) MEETING

Sutton Surrey

Friday 30th August 2019

1.00pm – 5.00pm

Minutes of Meeting

Attendees

Independent.

Catherine Clarke, Chair RAP

Doreen Rowland

Richard Needle

Heather Churchill

ACC

Kathy Spooner, ACC Director of Counselling

Sue Monckton-Rickett, ACC Chair

Apologies

Dawn Sherry, ACC Registrar

1. Notes of last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the last meeting (03/05/19) were accepted as a true record by the chair of the RAP.

Matters Arising

Presentations from PSA Conference on risk have been circulated to RAP members. [Completed action]

KS to investigate and consider providing improved guidance for counsellors as to what can be said on Find A Counsellor – **No further progress, Action Carried Forward**

KS – to update RAP's terms of reference following review [completed]

KS – to circulate relevant presentations from the PSA conference on risk [completed]

KS /SMR to look at the role of the RAP in the complaints processes reflecting on what RAP's role in relation to complaints should be and how this can be best supported. [to be addressed in meeting].

KS will update the proposed additions to the audit form covering the supervision practice and send a copy to the RAP - **No further progress, Action Carried Forward**

KS to feed back the suggestions about the audit of supervision practice to ACC's accreditation team and to produce a revised audit form for 2020 (as previously recommended by the lead assessor that no further changes to forms are made in 2019) – ACC 's accreditation team informed, no further progress on amending the form, **Action Carried Forward**

Voting members – to feedback comments on draft complaints process to KS [completed]

KS – to write out the draft process with supporting narrative and re-circulate for review at the next meeting [completed]

KS/SMR – to consider what role RAP should have in the overall complaints processes and incorporate it within the draft. [To be discussed in meeting].

Meeting Notes

1. ACC Re-structure

SMR explained the recent restructure within ACC which has been approved by the Board and communicated to members. The target structure is to have a CEO, supported by a Director of Counselling and Psychotherapy and a Director of Pastoral Care and Coaching and Mentoring.

As part of the re-structure the position of Director of Counselling and Psychotherapy has ceased to be on a contract basis and has become a permanent position with employee benefits. Also, the position of Director of Communications and Operations ceased at the end of August as the organisation is not in a position to support a CEO and a Director of Operations. The role of Director of Pastoral Care will continue on a contract basis until the recruitment process for the Director of Pastoral Care and Coaching and Mentoring is completed. The recruitment of the new CEO is planned to begin in the autumn.

SMR also updated the Board on recent appointments to ACC Board. There are three new members:

- Peter Roberts who is a Chartered Accountant (retired) and has also been appointed as ACC's Finance Director
- Wien Fung who is a leader in the Chinese Church in London, and is a coach and mentor
- Phil Martin who is a Chartered Electrical Engineer (retired) and is a counsellor

These appointments mean that ACC's Board is at full complement, but there is not a maximum number. The Board will take some time to assess their skills and competencies, and if there are significant gaps then will look to recruit additional trustees.

RAP was satisfied that the interim risk associated with the re-structure were being managed and that one aspect of ongoing risk related to the permanency of the position of the Director of Counselling and Psychotherapy has been reduced.

2. Review of the Draft Complaints Process

There was a comprehensive discussion about the draft complaints process which had been reviewed by all present. A summary of the main discussion points and outcomes are listed below.

2.1 The role of RAP in the complaints process.

ACC's existing complaints process actively seeks to notify the Chair of RAP at key stages in the management of a complaint. The draft of the revised process presented to the meeting replicated this, but KS asked the question: what should RAP's role be in monitoring complaints against counselling members (students, registrants, overseas counsellors and affiliated counselling organisations) in the new process?

The conclusion of the panel is that RAP has responsibility for monitoring that ACC fulfil its stated (published) obligations in conducting the overall complaints process, but does not have any responsibility for managing complaints and should not be presented with any the details of the complaint, other than a summary when it is resolved or concluded for risk assessment purposes.

In order to be able to fulfil this responsibility ACC should produce a summary report for each RAP meeting presenting enough information for the panel to see that complaints are being progressed in line with the published process and timescales. As stated above, when a complaint process concludes, ACC will report both the outcome and also summary details of the nature of the complaint. Any information that could identify the complainant, counsellor/organisation or any third party will not be reported.

If a complainant or counsellor/organisation wishes to appeal a decision relating to a complaint, an independent officer of ACC and the Chair of RAP can determine whether the grounds of appeal apply to process or to the outcome and sanction of a complaint. RAP will consider an appeal that relates to the process followed by ACC in managing a complaint. However, the Chair of RAP cannot and should not be a point of appeal where the complainant counsellor/organisation is unhappy with the outcome of the complaint or the sanction given. This aspect of the appeal should be considered by a senior practitioner who has been independent of the complaint process/management.

Action: to present to RAP at next meeting first cut of report on complaints in progress. SMR/KS

2.2 Guidance to counsellors with reference to their counselling/supervision agreements.

Where a registrant is a member of more than one counselling register / professional body, ACC

should not be giving any guidance as to which membership bodies should be named in the registrants counselling or supervision agreements, nor which bodies should hear the complaint. It is entirely up to the complainant which professional body they raise a complaint with. Good practice would be for the registrant to name all their professional memberships in their agreements, making it clear to clients and supervisees that they work within the code of ethics and practice of each. Information about how to raise a complaint with any of the membership bodies should also be made available to clients and supervisees. The same principles will apply to a counselling affiliate.

2.3 Areas for further clarification in the complaint's guidance documents include:

- a) including a statement that vexatious complaints will not be progressed
- b) with regard to advice to members to avoid entering dual roles to insert 'where possible' and add to a statement to say that where dual roles cannot be avoided then due regard needs to be taken of measures that reduce the risk to the people involved, and rationale and boundaries need to be clearly set out (or similar wording)
- c) consideration needs to be made of the need to alert other professional bodies or relevant organisations e.g. employers, churches as relevant where there is a potential safeguarding issue raised by a complaint
- d) ACC need to check how long it is reasonable to retain complaint information under GDPR and also double check whether there is a 'right to be forgotten'

2.4 It was felt that the diagrams could helpfully be replaced by flow chart diagrams if appropriate in any final published document. There were also some spelling errors.

2.5 Review cycle – suggested that the complaints process be reviewed after its first year, and then subsequently every two years

2.6 RAP wanted to formally record thanks to KS for the amount of work that has been input to the proposed new complaints process.

3. Extension of accreditation transfer route to include supervisors.

There is an accreditation transfer route for BACP accredited counsellors and for registered members of UCKP. If an applicant for this transfer has not studied in a Christian setting, they are required to write a 2k word reflective essay on how faith informs their practice.

ACC have had an enquiry from a registrant who is an Accredited supervisor with BACP. KS reported that the PSA were happy for us to extend the transfer route, but to report this in the annual review. HC reported that there are five senior accredited status with the BACP, only two of which are accredited as supervisor. So, providing that applicants have accredited with BACP under one of the two accredited supervisor processes, she felt that there would be no issue with the proposal. The panel agreed and recommended that the requirement to write a reflective essay should apply also to this transfer category.

The question was raised as to when and whether the panel should review ACC accreditation process.

KS explained that there are plans to review internally with a potential for updating in 2020. There are two situations which may influence the content of any revised accreditation process. The first is an application by ACC to IAPT (NHS service: Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) for ACC's accredited counsellors to be eligible for recruitment to this service. Currently it seems that only BACP accredited and UKCP registered counsellors are able to apply for roles in IAPT. It could be that IAPT ask ACC to make changes to their accreditation process before they open their recruitment processes to ACC's accredited counsellors. Secondly there is another accrediting body which has a specialism in trauma and which wants to assess ACC Accreditation process. Similarly, they currently only award their accreditation to BACP accredited counsellors and UKCP registered counsellors. Finally, there are grounds to review ACC's accreditation process to ensure that it remains aligned with others in the same field which have increased more self-reflective elements into the traditional case study assessment.

4. Updated Practice Break Guidelines

KS explained that the previous guidelines were written during the register transition and were long out-of-date. The significant change in the current version is to remove the absolute requirement for counsellors to undertake CPD whilst on a practice break because there are some situations where this may not be appropriate, for example where a registrant has a serious illness or is suffering from 'burn out'. HC suggested an amendment on page 2 that the registrant confirms that they have discussed taking a practice break with their supervisor. DR suggested that we ensure that throughout the document we make it clear that the registrant informs their supervisor and their insurers the date of their impending return to practice.

5. Ethics and Practice

KS reported lack of desired progress on ethics and practice due to other priorities/workload. Notes were circulated following an internal meeting and the panel confirmed that they had received this. Points to note include:

- Desire to extend membership to wider Christian denominations which means that the statement of faith will need to re-drafted. The suggestion on the paper is to use 'Churches Together' statement
- Values statement on our current statement are valuable because members / prospective members can have an emotional response to aligning themselves with these values.

RN suggested that current ethics statement is out of date and unlikely to deal with some of the issues that are current today. CC asked whether they included statements on diversity. SMR said that they did and there were supplementary statements on the Memorandum of Understanding on LGBT+ clients.

HC asked whether ACC continue to be able to restrict membership to Christians who can sign the statement of faith. This might be especially applicable to someone who is sympathetic to the Christian faith and the values of the organisation. After some discussion it was confirmed that as we

are providing a service to members of the public looking for counsellors or supervisor who self-declare as Christians then it was reasonable to continue to restrict membership to Christians.

6. Template for Equivalence Decisions for Applicants to Register for those trained overseas

KS explained that this is formalising a process that already exists. Part of the challenge is uncovering the detail of the curriculum, because sometimes e.g. the title does not reflect the content of the course and also because the different academic standards are hard to fathom without using an organisation like NARIC.

RN asked about who does the investigations, evaluation and recommendations with ACC. KS explained that it is the assessors under her. The process involves detailed investigation of what has been studied and what practice experience has been gained.

The panel agreed that the process was challenging – and the template was helpful in supporting the process.

7. Competency Framework

HC explained that part of her PHD studies involves looking at building a competency framework for working with spiritual and religious issues in therapy. The framework would be put together/reviewed by various experts in the U.K. KS expressed enthusiasm for this framework to come into being in support of counsellors in the U.K.

CC asked whether counsellors joining ACC would have to prove that they can meet the competency framework. KS explained that in an ideal world this might be the case, but due to issues around training etc that would not be possible at the moment. However, it can work as a guide for counsellors and supervisors and we can anticipate that people will develop CPD around this.

KS reported that in a linked development there is a piece of academic research taking place in Australia but including UK counsellors in the use of spiritual and religious interventions in counselling from a Christian perspective.

8. AOB

KS- The audit review will be presented by DS in the next meeting. The main issues currently are to do with people not ticking boxes, signing forms etc. Where there are professional issues these are to do with unusual activities in CPD (i.e. training or activities that are not aligned to the persons professional interests). There was a question raised by HC as to why ACC did not allow personal counselling to be included as a CPD activity. KS said that she would review this. SMR said that the next bi-annual conference will be looking at providing training around the different aspects of the equalities act.

The next meeting will be on Friday December 13th at 2.00 pm in Sutton

First meeting in 2020 is on Friday 24th April