

Minutes of Register Advisory Panel

Friday 8th December 2023

Attendance (Online – Zoom)

Catherine Clarke Solicitor (England & Wales) (CC) – Chair RAP
Doreen Rowland OBE (DR) Independent
Fiona Stevenson (FS) Independent
Dr Heather Churchill (HC) Professional
Revd Dr Richard Needle (RN) Independent
Tim Warren (TW) Independent
Sue Monckton-Rickett (SMR) ACC Chair
Kathy Spooner (KS) ACC CEO
Gillian Stuart (GS) ACC Head of Membership Services and Registrar
Christine Pinder (CP) ACC Board Observer

Apologies

Sarah Palmer, ACC Deputy Registrar

1. Opening prayer

GS opened the meeting with a short reflection and prayer.

2. Welcome and apologies

CC welcomed CP ACC Board Observer, to the meeting. Members of RAP introduced themselves to CP and she introduced herself to RAP.

3. Conflict of interests

HC declared that ACC had sent her a food hamper as she had done some lecturing on-line for ACC members and did not claim a fee for. She had also registered this on the conflict-of-interest register. CC confirmed that she had seen this on the conflict of interest.

4. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed with some minor amendments.

In matters arising KS reported that an 'advert' for RAP had not made it into Winter Accord but will be in the Spring edition.

GS addressed concerns that the ACC’s practice review was too challenging and reported that now it had been running for six months, the feedback from most members was that although initially the practice review seemed daunting most people had really gained from going through it. Also, a CPD certificate will be awarded for anyone going through a practice review to reflect the work that has gone through it. This will be for a standard time of 4 hours which we think is the average time it will take to produce.

Actions	Name	Date
‘Advert’ to recruit RAP members in Accord	KS	March 24
Publish Person Specification and other relevant documents on the new website	KS	When live

5. PSA standards – update

5.1 Targeted Review

KS reported that we have heard back from the PSA about the targeted review. This was in light of issues that had been raised with the ICO. during a complaint process. We have been told that there is a recommendation, but this has yet to be notified to us and the review is not yet published on the PSA website. ACC have already put some measures in place to mitigate against the risk of further complaints to the ICO. However, we have received another notification of complaint to the ICO., originating from the same person. This is currently under investigation so we will wait to hear back.

5.2 Standard One B

KS reported that we had heard back from the PSA on Standard One B, the public interest test. We have met the standard and received two recommendations.

Recommendation 1: The ACC should update its risk matrix to include the risk of spiritual abuse. We would expect the mitigations for this risk to include reference to the ACC’s Safeguarding Policy.

Recommendation 2: The ACC should consider supplementing its guidance for registrants with advice on working with people from other, or no, faiths.

SMR and KS met with the representatives of the PSA to discuss these recommendations. We argued that recommendation 1 should apply to all counselling and psychotherapy registers, not just ACC. We explained what spiritual abuse was, and how could be experienced by members of the public from many different faith backgrounds. Also, ACC’s safeguarding policy applies to ourselves as an organisation, or any service that we run (e.g. the NHS service), but members work in different settings and in private practice so will be operating under slightly different safeguarding policies.

We also highlighted that the Churchill Framework had been written in a way that could be applied to all faiths. However, we agreed to make a more prominent message in the document.

Finally, we asked the PSA to remove evidence that they had complied in support of the benefit from a research paper on Mormons. This is because ACC membership is not open to people belonging to the ‘restored’ Christian religions such as Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (Church of Mormon) or

Jehovah Witnesses, and therefore including this research could be misleading. The PSA agreed to remove this reference.

5.3 Notification of Change – ACC accreditation SCoPEd Column B and C

This process has stalled because some of the questions directed to ACC apply to all the partners. There were two risks in ACC responding outside of the SCoPEd partnership. Firstly we might say something that is not representative of all the partners, and secondly as what we say is subject to a freedom of information request, we risk members of the profession and the public being concerned about slight differences in responses across the bodies.

There was a meeting between the partners and the PSA where these issues and risks were discussed. It was agreed that the PSA would write to the partnership with a summary of the outcome of the meeting and proposal for having a Notification of Change for the SCoPEd Partners with each organisation to have to only answer questions relevant to their registers.

6. RAP Policies

KS reported that RAP policies presented at last RAP meeting had been presented to the Board in November and agreed subject to minor changes. CC said she had some further changes, mainly with regard to not disclosing personally identifying information.

Once finalised the documents will be published on ACC's website.

RAP members committed to completing the conflicts of interest form on an annual basis in December/January of each year.

Actions	Name	Date
Make final agreed changes to policy wordings for publication	KS	March 24
Complete conflict of interest forms	Panel Members	March 24

7. ACC update: new IT system

KS and SMR reported that a planned go live date in December was not feasible because of many issues relating to the readiness of the development, including that the data migration has yet to reconcile. ACC have had some meetings with the owner of the software supplier to raise concerns about the development and been reassured that it has her attention.

GS demonstrated the new system to RAP members, pointing out its features, including being able to view a counsellor's profile from view the register, the ability to find a placement and a training course and the new members area. Panel members thought the new system looked very good.

There was a question around whether ACC had any plans to resume accrediting training courses. KS confirmed that we did, and it was on the plan for 2026 resources allowing. There was some

discussion around what that accreditation should focus on, with KS suggesting that the level was assured by awarding bodies such as CPCAB, the curriculum by the SCoPEd framework and ACC could add accreditation for the training relating to understanding faith and spirituality, the relevant safeguarding (e.g. around spiritual abuse) and religious and spiritual interventions.

8. ACC update: complaints process

KS reported that there was some reformatting to do on the drafts submitted at the September meeting. Also, there is some work in the ARC collaborative on the design of a policy around applicants for the register who have criminal convictions which will be relevant for our final set of policies.

A question was asked as to whether there would be a legal review of the documents and KS confirmed that this was in the plan. There was a recommendation that we consider barristers as well as firms of solicitors as we may get a more affordable service from a junior barrister than with a specialist firm. It was agreed that it is important to ensure that the policy is as legally watertight as possible.

Two RAP members offered to review the proposal that ACC would submit for the review work when it was ready.

KS reported that there may be some further changes to the complaints process following a research seminar held by the PSA. One research project examined the experiences of witnesses in fitness to practice cases, which was often a stressful one. The findings from the research study are awaited, but one important point to note was that victim impact statements were rarely a factor in FTP cases.

Also, the PSA had held up the HGI policy as one that was good because it favoured a conciliatory process.

Review HGI process + ARC policy on criminal convictions	KS	When possible
Pass review proposal of complaint to two RAP members when ready	KS	When ready

9. ACC Update: SCoPEd B accreditation.

GS reported that due to the timeframe taken by the PSA to respond to ACC's notification of change relating to accreditation processes, we have not been able to introduce the new accreditation process within the previously announced timeframes. We had been hoping to publish the new process in the Autumn and close the old accreditation system in December. In order not to disadvantage members, GS plan is to extend the deadline for submissions under the old system to 31st March 2024. We will also launch the new accreditation as a beta version and hold a forum for members expressing an interest, to walk through the new application process. We would make clear to applicants that there could be minor changes to the Beta version when the notification of change process is complete.

10. ACC Update: review of blended learning.

KS reported that some work was in progress in the wider profession to look at the advantages and disadvantages of blended learning approaches in training counsellors and psychologists. It was reported that BACP had a 70/30 rule, and GS confirmed that ACC currently had a 75/25% split between in person and synchronous on-line training.

KS reported that there are advantages in terms of accessibility in offering more on-line learning provision and improved learning (this emerging from the universities). It was expressed that a particular difficulty is for students attending remotely, a training designed for in-person attendance (e.g. because they are unwell). It's a very poor learning experience for the student.

A concern was raised about whether there was any intention to introduce shorter, less comprehensive training courses as a RAP member had had experience of some of the pitfall of this in her previous profession. It has worked well where people had had relevant prior learning and experience. However, there is a real concern, especially in the NHS and maybe third sector providers of clients not getting the service they need if training courses become shorter/on-line etc.

11. ACC Update: Complaints

SMR reported that the 4th complaint on the ongoing complaint report was going to a disciplinary hearing in the next few days. All other complaints have been processed.

12. ACC Update: Practice Review

GS reported that each year ACC have to audit 5% of our registered counsellor members. The 5% is taken from how many registered councillors we had 1st of January (as reported to the PSA). In 2023, we had 899 members, so our audit target is 45. Anyone who has undergone the full accreditation process this year is counted in our practice review totals, as the accreditation process covers all that is required in a practice review.

ACC's practice review is, as discussed in this group before a comprehensive one. It takes time for members to complete and for completed audits to be assessed. The assessors are doing a good job in turning round practice reviews quickly. There are always cases where members have mitigating circumstances which mean that they can't complete the audit in the timeframe given.

In terms of outcomes and findings from audit, the biggest issue is around the length of time members have been with the same supervisor, closely followed by those that have no demarcation in their supervision time between the supervision of their counselling practice and the supervision of their supervision practice. However, it is noticeable that the review shows up areas of practice that members may not have considered. These include how they advertise themselves on on-line directories and on their website, whether they are registered with the ICO and have a professional will in place. This is the intention of the review, and GS is happy that it is proving successful in these areas. No one has failed or come close to failing an audit.

GS said that one other benefit in ensuring safe practice is being able to ask a follow up question when risks are identified. For example, a counsellor who is working with children and young people but whose supervisor has no experience in that area.

There was a comment that as register numbers increasing there will be more people to do in 2024. GS confirmed that this is the case, as we have had a net increase of 47 registered counsellors. We

have had 125 new people join and circa 70 leave, mainly through retiring. GS noted the importance of being able to market to a younger generation of counsellors and counsellors in training. She hopes that EDI data captured when the new system goes live will help us understand the demographics of our membership better.

Panel members discussed increased opportunities for ACC to grow in registered membership as a result of ACC's wider involvement in the profession, through projects such as SCoPEd. The new system will enhance ACC's profile further and allow for more targeted marketing campaigns. The hard work of the team in membership services and communications is beginning to bear fruit.

13. Proposal to change the Supervision Guidelines

GS proposed that ACC's supervision guidelines should be updated to have a requirement that an ACC registrant must have a supervisor who is based in the U.K. The reason for this is to reduce risk to members of the public who register with registrants by them not being fully aware of the regulatory process in the UK. This does not prevent them having an additional supervisor in another country.

There was a discussion around whether this would disadvantage registrants in having to have two supervisors potentially and it was agreed that it would be good to frame the requirement in that supervisors who work with ACC registrants have understanding of the professional and regulatory framework in the UK and are able to offer a space for reflection (from the discussion not offered in other countries' supervision practices) and the faith framework with a recommendation therefore that the supervisor is based in the UK, and the supervision guidelines will be updated to reflect this.

To consider the panels points and make changes to the Supervision Guidelines about supervisors needing to be in the UK or otherwise recognised as someone who can provide the knowledge required to supervise UK registrants.	GS	When possible
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14. Engagement

SMR reported that she had done a number of radio interviews on mental health matters. KS is doing a podcast for 'therapy natters' which is a podcast listened to by lay people interested in therapy.

Our engagement with CEO's of the SCoPEd partners continues. One of the advantages is that it gives a forum to discuss other issues that might impact on the profession in a contained space – which is helpful where there are sensitive and important issues.

AOB

None.

Dates of next meetings

22 March 2024, 2pm (Zoom)

28 June 2024, 2pm (Zoom)

27 September 2024, 2pm (Zoom) – TBC

13 December 2024, 1pm lunch, 2pm meeting (in person) - TBC

Table of Actions C/F added or noted as completed at the meeting.

Open – Actions

Cross Ref to Minutes	Action	Who	By When	Outcome
8/12/23 Item 4	'Advert' to recruit RAP members in Accord	KS	March 24	
8/12/23 Item 4	Publish Person Specification and other relevant RAP policy documents on the new website	KS	When live	
8/12/23 Item 6	Make final agreed changes to policy wordings for publication	KS	March 24	
8/12/23 Item 6	Complete conflict of interest forms	Panel Members	March 24	
8/12/23 Item 8	Review HGI process + ARC policy of criminal convictions	KS	When possible	
8/12/23 Item 8	Pass review proposal of complaint to CC and TW when ready	KS	When ready	
8/12/23 Item 13	To consider the panels suggestions and make changes to the Supervision Guidelines	GS	When possible	

Actions on ACC's Workplan / Ongoing Items

Cross Ref to Minutes	Action	Who	By When	Outcome
02/12/22 Item 12	Begin to look at advertising/pro-actively recruit for new members to RAP	SMR/KS	September 2023	Ongoing Spring Accord
10/02/23 Item 8	Create a policy for register applicants applying to join after a gap in practice	GS/KS	May 2023	Ongoing

Completed/No Longer Required Actions

Cross Ref to Minutes	Action	Who	By When	Outcome
10/02/23 Item 4	Email RAP committee to ask for titles	SP	March 2023	COMPLETE
10/02/23 Item 4	Corrections to the December minutes, including spelling of RN's surname	SP	March 2023	COMPLETE
10/02/23 Item 4	Send RAP committee link to higher level SharePoint folder	KS	March 2023	COMPLETE
10/02/23 Item 4	Update table of actions with those that are now closed	SP	March 2023	COMPLETE
10/02/23 Item 4	Add a link re PSA standards to the March agenda	KS	March 2023	COMPLETE
10/02/23 Item 4	Produce some principles for redaction for RAP committee and ACC Board meeting minutes	SMR	TBC	COMPLETE
10/02/23 Item 6	Implement checks of a proportion of registered members' websites and social media	GS	March 2023	COMPLETE
10/02/23 Item 8	Check criteria for joining the ACC register on the website	KS	March 2023	COMPLETE
10/02/23 Item 8	Provide details at RAP meetings of register applicants who have not been approved and the reason	GS	March 2023	COMPLETE
24/03/23 Item 6d	Update Table of Actions to include a, b, c etc.	SP	May 2023	COMPLETE
24/03/23 Item 10	Website updates	GS/YH	ASAP	COMPLETE
24/03/23 Item 4a	RAP members to check biographies on the ACC website	All RAP members	ASAP	COMPLETE
24/03/23 Item 4b	RAP to be kept updated via appropriate channels	KS/SMR	ONGOING	COMPLETE

24/03/23 Item 5	Ask Peter Roberts to update our confirmation status on Companies House website	KS	ASAP	COMPLETE
24/03/23 Item 6a	Update page 5 of February 2023 minutes	SP	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
24/03/23 Item 6b	Clarify whether the final paragraph of Item 7 (page 6 of February 2023 minutes) is correct	KS	MAY 2023	COMPLETE
24/03/23 Item 6c	Update report of membership numbers to swap axes	GS	MAY 2023	COMPLETE
19/05/23 Item 2a	Research guidance on scope of interests from e.g. charity commission	TW	Prior to next meeting	COMPLETE
19/05/23 Item 2b	Find out PSA recommendations on scope of conflict of interests	SMR	Prior to next meeting	COMPLETE
19/05/23 Item 2c	Make changes to conflict of interest register and set it up for ease of printing	KS	Prior to next meeting	COMPLETE
19/05/23 Item 3	Update March 2023 minutes, as above	SP	Prior to next meeting	COMPLETE
19/05/23 Item 5	Review of standing documents	All	Prior to next meeting	COMPLETE
19/05/23 Item 7	Amend the register number report to include reason for rejection of register application.	GS	Prior to next meeting	COMPLETE
30/09/22	Self-Assessment against July 2021 Accredited Register Standards	KS/GS	30 th March 2023	Complete

Completed actions will be archived after 12 months.