

Dear ACC Members and Affiliates

We hope that you are well and adjusting to this challenging time. We wanted to let you know about some shared initiatives in the wider counselling and accredited registered membership communities, give an update on our plans to respond to a set up a volunteer counselling service for NHS staff and the bereaved and share some resources that been gifted to us (and some feedback on others).

Letter to Secretary of State and a New Petition Supported by Counselling Membership Bodies.

A letter signed by all the main counselling and psychotherapy membership bodies has been sent to Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

The letter is requesting three things of the government. To..

1. Work with us to ensure there is a workforce to deliver a comprehensive mental health response to the Covid-19 crisis
2. Provide further support for independent professionals and the self employed
3. Signpost the public to the very best mental health support –to ensure that key workers and members of the public are supported to access qualified therapists, through a dedicated page on the main Government Portal to signpost to practitioners on PSA accredited registers.

You can see the full contents of the letter and this link <https://www.bacp.co.uk/news/news-from-bacp/coronavirus/covid-19-campaign/>

To sign the petition, follow the link above or go directly to <https://bacp.e-activist.com/page/58143/petition/1?ea.tracking.id=2k53gp0e>

For a helpful digest of the current arrangements to support the self -employed please see <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/26/coronavirus-support-package-for-uk-self-employed-how-does-it-work>

Letter from the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) to the Government on behalf of the Accredited Registers (AR) Collaborative.

The PSA have been in discussions with the Department of Health about the AR workforce (which includes counsellors and psychotherapists) being recognised as key workers. The letter that ACC and others have drafted will be sent to the Government this week. The letter will include the following statements:

There are 80,000 healthcare practitioners on the current range of Accredited Registers. In light of the healthcare crisis arising from the prevalence and spread of COVID-19, we request that all of them who provide services should be recognised as key workers.

This will enable them to work where it is essential and necessary, supporting the health and wellbeing of the nation, where without intervention, service users may require short term primary or secondary care from NHS services.

The benefits would be as follows

- *To facilitate continued access to essential and necessary healthcare services.*
- *To be of assistance in easing the pressure on our NHS.*
- *To lessen the negative economic impact on the high number of self-employed practitioners on Accredited Registers*

If this request is successful, a counsellor/psychotherapist will be designated a key worker, when providing essential and necessary support to clients who would otherwise have a high risk of self-harm, suicide or hospitalisation due to psychological distress. Key worker status is helpful for those who might need to access childcare cover for example. We will keep you posted.

Supporting the NHS and the Bereaved

We were moved at the overwhelming response to our call for counsellors willing to consider working in a voluntary capacity in support of NHS staff and the bereaved. The request to members came in response to an approach we had from a senior public health consultant based in a hospital who felt that there was a gap in the volunteer army ‘Your NHS Needs You’ as there was no provision for psychological support. The consultant spoke of the levels of distress that were being experienced by staff, compounded by the fact that they simply cannot support the bereaved families in the way that they normally would be able to.

We appreciate that for a few of our members this request went against the grain of recent moves to respect counsellors as professionals whose work should be appropriately remunerated. However, we believe on balance that these are exceptional national circumstances, and especially as Christians, we wanted to facilitate a service to support people in greatest need of help from trained counsellors and psychotherapists who are willing to volunteer.

We are hoping to get the service up and running in the next few weeks, and anyone who has volunteered will be contacted shortly with further details and a request for further information.

This is what we have decided and envisaged so far:

- The volunteer scheme is open to registered counsellors from any of the counselling and psychotherapy accredited registers, irrespective of their faith position
- There will be a reserve list of level 4 student counsellors, who have been on a placement, and who must be members of ACC. If there is more demand than can be met, students on the reserved list will be contacted to work with bereaved clients.

- ACC are exploring options to provide insurance and supervision for counsellors who find themselves without current cover (for example because the agency they work for has closed)
- There will be one main counselling agreement for all counsellors and clients, although each counsellor will insert details of their membership body and its code of ethics
- It is likely that the agreement will provide counselling for clients (which may include couples and families) for up to ten sessions. *Each counsellor can at their own discretion offer further sessions under the same agreement and on the same voluntary basis.*
- The service will not be publicly advertised, but will be managed under an agreement with individual hospitals and organisations who will act as gatekeepers and refer staff and the bereaved to us
- We will provide all the centralised support, guidance and co-ordination for the scheme

If you would like to be included as a volunteer, please email office@acc-uk.org.

If you would like to offer help in a different capacity, please email counselling@acc-uk.org. We would especially welcome people willing to pray for this service.

Resources

We have had some feedback from some of our members who found the resource link which we circulated last week, offering free training in working on-line offered by PESI was less helpful than other training resources.

Attached is a paper gifted to us (and freely available for onward circulation) which is entitled “Making Sense of Covid-19, A trauma informed guide to engagement” by Nicola Lester.

Also, ACC Board Member Wien Fung has shared two papers written for pastoral settings on Burnout and Shalom (recovery).

Finally, we would like to thank all our members who have sent messages of support to us. We in turn hope that you are staying well and coping with the challenges of the current situation.

Best wishes

The ACC Team