



ACC REGISTER ADVISORY PANEL (RAP) MEETING

Sutton Surrey

Friday 9th November 2018

1.00pm – 5.00pm

Minutes of Meeting

Attendees

Independent.

Catherine Clarke, Chair RAP

Doreen Rowland, Lay member RAP

Richard Needle, Lay member RAP

Heather Churchill, Lay member RAP

ACC

Kathy Spooner, ACC Director of Counselling

Dawn Sherry, ACC Registrar

Tony Ruddle, ACC Exec Chair

Apologies

None

Opening Prayer

CC - reflection on bereavement and loss

1. Notes of last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the last meeting (13th April) were accepted as a true record by the chair of the RAP with a few minor amendments.

Page 3 – 20% to read 10% of members for audit

Page 8 – correction: GDPR

Actions Brought forward from April meeting:

TR to consider who would be appropriate to include in an internal risk panel to rule on unspent convictions. **Action Completed** [Details covered later in the meeting notes]

TR to review the risk matrix to ensure that this risk associated with unspent convictions is adequately described and mitigated against. (The header of the risk matrix needs to be updated) This has now been done by TR – **Action Completed**

Actions from April Meeting

DS/KS to review/redraft criteria for selecting Registrants for audit and a list of extenuating circumstances that are allowable reasons for postponing an audit & how to manage postponements. **Completed.** [Incorporated into the revised audit form which was circulated to the panel.]

KS to check that the information given to Registrants about the audit selection process is clear and details the consequences of this, i.e. that they may be selected more than once over a five year period. **Completed – as above**

KS to draft profile for register applicant’s sponsorship and the form of words relating to the sponsorship itself. **KS** to also make ACC’s Board aware of the panel’s recommendation and to consider implementation issues. **Completed – paper presented to RAP.**

KS – Update TOR and RAP membership selection criteria documents with agreed changes. **Completed**

KS to investigate and consider providing improved guidance for counsellors as to what can be said on Find A Counsellor – **Action Carried Forward**

KS to notify the Supervisor that without being willing to give his/her name and raise a complaint, ACC can take no action as a result of his/her recent communication. **Completed**

KS to contact the Law Society about disclosure requests relating to domestic violence and legal aid (i.e. for counsellor to name the perpetrator). **KS** consulted with experienced practitioner with domestic abuse background who said that there should be no issue with using the words “identified by the client as [perpetrators name]” on the form. **Completed.**

Meeting Notes

1. Matters Arising – Complaints

The panel had previously raised a concern that although ACC follow a process of discussion and discernment with issues raised about a counsellor in the context of another professional membership or legal proceedings – the process has not been written down, reviewed and accepted as policy.

TR put forward a proposal that reflects what happens in these circumstances. The proposal is that the Executive Chair, when notified of an issue with a counsellor in these circumstances, convenes a pre-assessment panel. The panel will consist of the chair or deputy chair, the director of counselling and one member of ACC's Board. Where required other members of the Board who are suitably experienced can substitute for any one of the other panel members. This situation may arise if the Chair and/or Director of Counselling are unavailable.

The pre-assessment panel will convene at each key point of the complaint process for example notification, and when the outcome of the complaint hearing undertaken by the other professional body is known. The panel will meet to discuss the situation with the counsellor and determine a course of action.

The panel asked whether ACC would always follow the action taken by another professional body following the completion of a complaints process. For example, if BACP suspended a counsellor, would ACC suspend the counsellor from ACC's Register? TR explained that the default position would be to do so under a mutuality agreement. It would only be in exceptional circumstances that ACC might (on the recommendation of the pre-assessment panel) choose a different sanction from that of the other professional body.

The panel concluded that this seemed a good way forward and should be drafted as a new policy.

Action: KS to draft a new policy based on TR's recommendations to present to ACC's Board, RAP and the PSA.

2. Audit Processes

Counsellor Members Audit

The new revised audit forms are proving to be more acceptable to members.

A proposal put forward by KS to ACC's internal Accreditation Team to separate out audit from membership renewal was rejected for now. At the moment members need to complete their audit prior to renewing their membership. This creates some logistical issues when for example a member needs to delay their audit. Importantly it means that the 10% random selection is only random if it takes place once per year – we cannot achieve an even result if we select 10% of January renewals, and 10% of February renewals across our membership.

However, the Accreditation Team felt that there have been quite a lot of changes recently to the audit process and forms and to the Accreditation forms – and as they are at present only 2 members of the team, they want to have a period of stability.

ACC have asked their software application supplier for an estimate for producing a 10% audit generator. Currently we would rather not spend the development days on this project and are investigating whether this can be done in-house. The specification is:

- Report of 10% of all counselling members with the exception of: students; counsellors in their first year of membership; counsellors on a practice break
- Subsidiary report of a further 5% of members to replace any selected above who are have a legitimate reason for postponing their audit for 12 months.
- The creation of additional fields in ACC's member records to record when they were selected for audit and the outcome.

Audit of Supervisors

ACC's internal Accreditation team are producing a draft form for the supervision of audit practice. When available this will be circulated to RAP for review.

3. Additional Register checks

KS presented a paper in response to discussion at the previous RAP meeting about introducing identity check on new registrants.

DS confirmed that a process for checking new registrants is in place. Currently she checks registrant's qualifications and insurance details. She also contacts their Christian sponsor and Supervisor by email. If the Supervisor gets back first with confirmation, this can be enough to approve a new registrant, whilst waiting for Christian Sponsors confirmation. If a new registrant is newly qualified and is not in clinical practice and has no supervisor in place, then ACC can check with the Counselling tutor or placement supervisor. Similarly, for anyone joining on a practice break, their last supervisor or placement manager can act as a professional sponsor.

In addition to these identity checks, DS also verifies whether they are a member of another professional body (if they have stated that this is the case) and also that their website is appropriate and for example if they work for an agency or in private practice.

The RAP panel discussed if this ACC process was enough to identify new registrants or whether further checks such as a national identity number/passport number or utility bill was needed. The panel determined that if the person was known in two separate contexts (professional and Christian) by their given name, then further checks were not required and might introduce an unjustified administrative burden.

Also, there was a question as to whether ACC require counsellor members to have DBS checks. ACC do not require this and see this as dependent on the setting that the counsellor works in. For example, some counselling agencies may require this, but for those working in Private Practice it is a matter of personal/professional judgement as to whether the counsellor wishes to invest in this. This was seen to be acceptable by RAP.

4. New Routes to the Register

The focus of the PSA / ACC back in 2015 when the register was awarded was to get all members on the register through different routes. This was firstly the Accreditation Route (those with ACC Accreditation could automatically go onto the register), then it was the Experience / Grandparenting Route which was open to current members who held continuous membership prior to April 2015 and had a level of qualifying training. Along-side this route, we had the Affiliate route where counsellors who worked for ACC Affiliates but who were not individual members of ACC (in effect their membership was through the Affiliate membership) could join the register if they met qualifying criteria. All these routes were due to end in December 2017 but were kept open until April 2018 to give members time to join if they had not done so. From April 2018, the only way to join ACC and become a Registered Counsellor Member was if an applicant had a Level 4 Diploma or above qualification in Counselling and / or Psychotherapy.

KS spoke to her paper outlining the idea to have a restoration policy in place, so that ACC registrants who do not have a Level 4, who left ACC can return. KS was thinking along the lines of "Once a member, always a member", e.g. If a previous registrant left ACC to join another professional body such as BACP, could they return without a Level 4 if there was no break in membership of either professional body.

HC argued that if ACC were to agree this policy it could result in a dilution of the integrity of the register. Counselling has developed as a profession and the level 4 diploma is the safe basis of training for all counsellors – irrespective of previous training and experience, as it covers issues relating to current ethical practice that were not part of previous training. Counsellors should rather be made aware that leaving registered membership requires them to undertake a level 4 diploma so that standards in the profession can be upheld.

HC said that the same argument applies to the historic qualification / experience route (also in KS paper). The recommendation is that counsellors who have trained years ago should undertake a level 4 diploma if they want to join a register which is offering assurances to members of the public about the qualifications relating to membership.

The RAP panel agreed with HC's recommendations and KS agreed to no longer pursue with the PSA either of these routes to the register. Concern was expressed about members falling into the 'restoration' category that may have left ACC without understanding that they cannot re-join because ACC has not clarified this issue before now. ACC also need to inform members in this category, who in the future do not renew their membership so that they are making informed decisions.

As a point of clarification, it was confirmed that those who apply to Join the ACC register who are living in the UK but trained abroad, can join via the Equivalence route. The ACC TDAC committee will ask for the course transcript and modules undertaken from their place of study to check it is equivalent to UK training.

Action

DS will identify and email those registrants who have left ACC (from the Experience / Grandparenting routes) to inform them they cannot re-join ACC in the future without a Level 4. DS to ensure that office staff adapt their processes so that when notified of overdue renewals registrants who fall into this category are informed that they will not be able to re-join as a registered member unless they complete a level 4 diploma.

5. General Update on ACC

1. Conference update – The ACC conference is almost fully booked. At this time of year the Conference takes up a significant proportion of ACC resources.
2. The ACC executive had two strategy days during October to look at key projects that need to be resourced and progressed if the charity is to grow in the direction laid out in the strategy formulated in 2017. It is likely that additional funding may need to be raised for some desired developments.
3. Further work has been done to define/refine a proposed new membership offering for coaches and mentors
4. KS reported that ACC had been approached by a member who has developed a prototype interactive website to encourage exchange of ideas and knowledge amongst members and to act as an additional showroom for ACC. The Board are currently considering whether to invest in this product or not.
5. New Accord layout – All the RAP panel liked the new look of the Accord magazine layout.
6. ACC looks if they will break even with their finances in 2018.

6. Complaints

RAP were informed that a complaint had been received by ACC Board's of Directors. The Complaint is being handled according to the ACC's complaints policy and an Independent Investigator has been appointed. The RAP panel were satisfied that ACC had taken appropriate action.

AOB - There was no any other business

DONM – Either the 15th or 19th February 2019 at Sutton.