



ACC RAP MEETING – Summary Notes

Date of Meeting: Friday 10th February 2023

Attendance – Online (Zoom)

Catherine Clarke BA BAI MSc; Solicitor (England & Wales) (CC) – Chair RAP
 Revd Dr Richard Needle (RN) Independent
 Doreen Rowland OBE (DR) Independent
 Fiona Stevenson (FS) Independent
 Dr Heather Churchill (HC) Independent
 Sue Monckton-Rickett (SMR) ACC Chair
 Kathy Spooner (KS) ACC CEO
 Gillian Stuart (GS) ACC Head of Membership Services
 Sarah Palmer (SP) ACC Administrator
 Wien Fung (WF) ACC Board Member

Apologies

Tim Warren (TW) Independent

1. Welcome and Apologies

CC opened the meeting and welcomed everyone and acknowledged TW apologies. As SP was attending for the first time, RAP members introduced themselves.

2. The meeting was opened in prayer.

3. Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

There was a discussion regarding the practicalities of the 3.30pm visit by Melanie Venables and Dan Scott of the PSA, as well as what questions may or may not be appropriate to ask. It was agreed that HC would ask a question as to how the PSA moderate across such different registers, and even across all the counselling registers. DR would ask how the PSA defined a public body.

KS raised a concern that the PSA would use this meeting to feed back on the targeted review and it was agreed that CC would restate the purpose of their joining this meeting (training/awareness) and that the results of the review would be more appropriately shared in another forum.

It was noted that Rosie Tringham, one of the Lead Assessors, would join the meeting for the PSA presentation.

4. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

December 2022 minutes:

Correction to minutes – next meeting was 2nd December 2022.

There was a discussion concerning the format of minutes and the move to a brief summary of the discussion followed by action points has been appreciated, particularly the clarity.

It was queried as to where the minutes go, and are they sent to the PSA? KS confirmed that they are not shared with the PSA, but that they should be redacted and uploaded to the website (although the website is not up-to-date at the moment).

A point was raised concerning the use of titles along with names, and it was agreed that SP would email the RAP committee to ask what titles they would prefer to be used in the minutes going forward, and that SMR would ask ACC board members. CC suggested colour-coding the action points so that it was clear to see at which meeting the actions had originated. It was noted that several small corrections were needed to the December minutes, including that RN's surname had been misspelt. It was suggested that the comments on the minutes and the matters arising should be separated out for minutes of this meeting.

A point was raised about problems with access to the SharePoint directory, which has not been resolved. It was suggested that links be sent to the higher-level SharePoint folder. It is possible to send two separate types of link within SharePoint, and when sending links we must ensure that it is the external, not the internal link.

Actions	Name	Date
Email RAP committee to ask for titles	SP	March 2023
Email members of the ACC Board to ask for titles	SMR	March 2023
Corrections to the December minutes, including spelling of RN's surname	SP	March 2023
Send RAP committee link to higher level SharePoint folder	KS	March 2023

December 2022 matters arising:

The Table of Actions was updated with outcomes. Although the membership statistics have not yet been circulated, RAP was informed that there were 909 registered counsellors as of 1 February 2023.

Regarding statistics for RAP, a point was raised that figures need to be longer term in order for committee to see any changes in the numbers that might impact on the viability of ACC.

There was a discussion about the issues around the expiry of memberships and that memberships on the database are not automatically 'disabled' if the member does not renew. However, it was confirmed that the public register (at <https://www.acc-uk.org/the-acc-register/check-the-register.html>) and the Find a Counsellor search (at <https://www.acc-uk.org/find-a-counsellor/search-for-a-counsellor.html>) are always up-to-date.

It was agreed that SMR will produce some principles for redaction for both the RAP committee and ACC Board minutes.

KS will add a link regarding PSA standards to the agenda for the March RAP meeting. Formal processes to onboard TW to RAP have now been completed.

Actions	Name	Date
Update table of actions with those that are now closed	SP	March 2023
Produce some principles for redaction for RAP committee and ACC Board meeting minutes	SMR	TBC
Add a link re PSA standards to the March agenda	KS	March 2023

5. ACC Update

PSA Targeted Review:

KS gave an update about the PSA targeted review – the deadline to submit the reports and a plan was met and we now await the outcome. A huge outstanding task for ACC is the scope of the complaints process. The PSA wants the complaints process to be for registered members, but ours currently also includes students and affiliated organisations. It was queried whether there could be a different form of complaints process for organisations and whether students should be accountable to their training institution rather than ACC. A concern was raised about complaints regarding students going to training institutions as clients are more likely to report concerns to registered body rather than training institutions, and training institutions do not have robust systems in place to deal with complaints. Another related issue raised was confidentiality, if more people are involved in the complaints process.

A point was raised that, although the PSA are only focussed on the complaints process in relation to registered members, RAP have a responsibility to protect the public from harm. A question was asked as to whether there is a deadline for this task, and an internal deadline of June 2023 has been set, with the expectation that the new complaints process would go 'live' from September 2023.

RAP feedback from the targeted review documentation was that it was excellent, particularly the quality of scrutiny.

ACC's self-assessment against evidence framework:

KS stated that ACC's work plan flows from the self-assessment against the framework. Changes to the website are being made but there is nothing that can be reviewed yet. ACC will be changing how we articulate who we are and checking that there is consistency in what we say. However, the risk with the new website is that there will be areas ACC don't quite meet.

6. ACC Counselling Update

SCoPEd Adoption & impact on accreditation

All members of SCoPEd have received a letter from the PSA regarding changes in accreditation, recognising courses etc. as the implementation of SCoPEd begins. Now that SCoPEd has been formally adopted, it was queried as to whether there has been a sufficiently clear statement for members outlining what it means for them. This has been communicated to members via the email bulletin, but it was also suggested that there be an article included in *accord*. KS stated that there will be an article, but that we are limited in how much we are able to say at the moment regarding some aspects, for example, Column C. It is possible that we could develop a transfer process for members who would like to move to Column C, but this would need to be approved by the PSA first.

It was highlighted that there has been some scaremongering and misinformation about SCoPEd on social media and a question was raised about the monitoring of social media (particularly Facebook). KS mentioned that we should be doing this and it is one of the 'gaps' that has been highlighted. It was agreed that FS would ask the PSA a question about guidance regarding monitoring members' social media.

Rosie Tringham joined the meeting and was introduced to RAP. CC reminded RAP of the PSA Standards ahead of the presentation.

Visit from PSA Accreditation Team

Melanie Venables and Dan Scott joined the meeting at 3.30pm and were welcomed and introduced. It was agreed that the results of the targeted review would be communicated separately. Melanie and Dan gave a presentation about the PSA, including its history and powers of accreditation under Section 25(2) of the NHS Reform and Health Care Professions Act 2002.

RAP raised several queries with Melanie and Dan following the presentation. Firstly, when ACC would like to change any policies or procedures, how much information does the PSA require? (i.e. how is a balance found between providing enough information to fulfil register requirements, yet not bombard the PSA with too much detail.) Melanie recognised that ACC will be making changes a lot of the time but that the PSA are always willing to chat through what is needed, depending on the change being made.

A query was raised regarding public bodies' compliance and Melanie stated that the PSA recognise that ACC are not necessarily a public body (although some PSA registers may be). Melanie described the situation as being 'complex' but that there is something around the

‘spirit’ of accreditation and how ACC discharges its functions, depending on which aspects of the law are involved.

A question was asked regarding the PSA’s Quality and Improvement procedures and how they moderate across the different professional bodies. Melanie conceded that it is a tricky area but that it is the rationale behind decisions, policies and procedures that is considered – how does it fit with the ethos and what justification is that register making.

RAP queried how the PSA took into account the relative size and resources of professional bodies, as some relatively small organisations are constrained by lack of staff and/or financial resources. A specific example raised was the vast difference in the handling of complaints between counselling registers. Melanie suggested setting clearer thresholds for complaints, as long as a rationale for this is given. It was noted by RAP, however, that a rationale can be quite subjective and that it is not an overall standard that can be easily met. Melanie stated that there are minimum requirements in place but acknowledged she could hear that more was needed – there are areas of inconsistency that the PSA are trying to level out – and heard the point around proportionality.

It was queried with the PSA as to what guidance there is regarding members’ social media and/or advertising claims. Dan said there should be a proportionate sample checked to ensure that registrants are not advertising incorrectly or saying inappropriate things in public forums. He suggested that checks of websites and other public information should be added into our processes at a proportionate and appropriate level.

Lastly, a general question was raised as to whether there will ever be a move to a statutory register. Melanie replied that they do not get a sense from the government that it will be a priority.

Melanie and Dan left the meeting, and it was acknowledged that there had been no clarity in the responses to the queries, apart from the monitoring of members’ advertising / social media. It was discussed how difficult it is to outline the challenges of being a relatively small professional body, without inadvertently appearing to ask for lower standards to be applied to ACC. This is particularly pertinent to the complaints process, as some registered bodies can afford to run a quasi-judicial process and afford legal advice, barristers etc. This is financially unviable for smaller organisations.

Once reflections on the presentation were concluded, Rosie left the meeting.

Actions	Name	Date
Implement checks of a proportion of registered members’ websites and social media	GS	March 2023

7. Complaints (+ issues arising from)

There was a discussion on the Condition One paper, in response to the PSA Targeted Review, which relates to the ACC complaints process. Regarding section E2 (on page 6 of the report) a query was raised as to why ACC has only accepted this in part. KS responded that ACC would like to try and reserve the right to have an informal telephone call with members

subject to a complaint. It was suggested that this call should be made by someone outside of the complaints panel and that it should be clear it is a private conversation that would not be fed back to the panel. The call would need to be kept separate from the complaints process, but made by someone who knows the complaints process well. A question was asked regarding what would happen if the member asks the person who calls them for advice. Clear boundaries must be set around the purpose of the informal call, which is not to provide guidance or advice, only support around the complaints process. Another point raised was the belief that members should be able to see the whole complaint that has been made against them, as a matter of natural justice. RAP recommends sending the whole complaint form to the member.

Section E5 (page 7 of the report) and point 34.4 (page 9 of the report) were also discussed, around the balancing of confidentiality and public interest. It was suggested that there should only be a public hearing if a member was struck off or at risk of being struck off. However, SMR suggested that it is not about the hearing but about publishing the outcome. It was suggested that ACC could adopt a 'realistic prospect' test, similar to UKCP, or introduce 'minor/technical breaches' for issues that fall short of professional standards but are not serious enough for a formal complaints panel. RAP agreed with this sentiment, but KS highlighted that this may be difficult in practice as it would involve long conversations.

8. Practice Review

Not discussed at the meeting.

9. Risks to ACC & Register

There was a discussion about those who are refused entry to the register and whether there is an appeals process for this. GS shared that the issue with those ACC have to refuse is usually the training course not having enough tutor contact hours. However, there is a 'loophole' in that these applicants can join BACP by passing their Certificate of Proficiency (CoP) test, and then join ACC via the equivalence route. It was suggested ACC may need to consider introducing its own version of the CoP test in future. It was agreed that the appeals process needs to be transparent on the website.

RAP were asked what would be helpful to bring to the meetings in terms of the register, and it was suggested that it would be good to hear about applicants who were not approved to join ACC's register and the reasons why.

KS highlighted a policy gap relating to applicants applying to join the register after having had a break in practice – there is a policy for this, but it is not written down.

A query was raised about what ACC are doing to check the training courses and monitor their quality. KS explained that ACC used to recognise and accredit courses and that we use the Ofqual framework. However, SCoPEd has forced us to come up with a procedure for this and ACC are not going to 'accredit' courses, only 'recognise' them. KS stated that she would be going through and checking the criteria on the website during March.

Actions	Name	Date
Provide details at RAP meetings of register applicants who have not been approved and the reason	GS	March 2023
Create a policy for register applicants applying to join after a gap in practice	GS and KS	May 2023
Check criteria for joining the ACC register on the website	KS	March 2023

Dates of next meeting:

24th March 2023, 2-5pm (Zoom)

19th May 2023, 2-5pm (Zoom) TBC at March meeting.

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

Open – Actions

Cross Ref to Minutes	Action	Who	By When	Outcome
17/06/22 Item 4	DS to produce rolling report of membership numbers	GS	February 2023	Completed
02/12/22 Item 4	Consider how best to redact minutes for ACC website.	KS/GS/SMR	TBC	Completed
02/12/22 Item 4	Circulate membership statistics produced for board meeting	GS	ASAP	Completed
02/12/22 Item 4	Update November meeting minutes	GS	February 2023	Completed
02/12/22 Item 4	Redact November meeting minutes and publish as summary notes of discussion on ACC website	SMR and office team	TBC	Completed
02/12/22 Item 5	PSA standards to be included as standard item on RAP agenda going forward	KS	Ongoing	Completed
02/12/22 Item 5	A copy of the PSA standard should be included with each RAP agenda	KS	Ongoing	Completed

02/12/22 Item 12	Begin to look at advertising/pro-actively recruit for new members to RAP	SMR/KS	September 2023	Ongoing
10/02/23 Item 4	Email RAP committee to ask for titles	SP	March 2023	Completed
10/02/23 Item 4	Email members of the ACC Board to ask for titles	SMR	March 2023	Ongoing
10/02/23 Item 4	Corrections to the December minutes, including spelling of RN's surname	SP	March 2023	Completed
10/02/23 Item 4	Send RAP committee link to higher level SharePoint folder	KS	March 2023	Completed
10/02/23 Item 4	Update table of actions with those that are now closed	SP	March 2023	Completed
10/02/23 Item 4	Produce some principles for redaction for RAP committee and ACC Board meeting minutes	SMR	TBC	Ongoing
10/02/23 Item 4	Add a link re PSA standards to the March agenda	KS	March 2023	Completed
10/02/23 Item 6	Implement checks of a proportion of registered members' websites and social media	GS	March 2023	Completed
10/02/23 Item 8	Provide details at RAP meetings of register applicants who have not been approved and the reason	GS	March 2023	Completed
10/02/23 Item 8	Create a policy for register applicants applying to join after a gap in practice	GS/KS	May 2023	Ongoing
10/02/23 Item 8	Check criteria for joining the ACC register on the website	KS	March 2023	Ongoing

Actions on ACC's Workplan

Cross Ref to Minutes	Action	Who	By When	Outcome
30/09/22	List of system/process risks impacting register accuracy	KS/GS	Ongoing	Ongoing
30/09/22	Self-Assessment against July 2021 Accredited Register Standards	KS/GS	30 th March 2023	Ongoing

Completed/No Longer Required Actions

Cross Ref to Minutes	Action	Who	By When	Outcome
25/03/22	Okapi to look at SharePoint access for RAP panel	GS	ASAP	COMPLETED
17/06/22	SMR to send RAP the report / link from the last NHS service	SMR	By September meeting	COMPLETED
17/06/22	SMR to inform RAP of any request arising from current complaint for a member of RAP to attend the appeal panel	SMR	ASAP or as soon as they are known.	No longer required due to complaints policy change.
02/12/22 Item 4	Correct September minutes to reflect date of next meeting as 2 nd December 2022	GS	February 2023	COMPLETED
02/12/22 Item 4	Change format of minutes to include actions and decisions within body of minutes and use a summary notes approach rather than minuting.	GS	February 2023	COMPLETED
02/12/22 Item 4	Organise SharePoint access for TW	GS	ASAP	COMPLETED
02/12/22 Item 4	Follow-up to notes Forum	KS/GS	January 2023	COMPLETED
02/12/22 Item 5	ACC to consider making alterations to the decision impacts document,	KS/SMR	Ongoing	COMPLETED

	which have been recommended by RAP in notes above.			
02/12/22 Item 5	SMR to submit to RAP documents outlining ACC reasoning and decisions around complaint currently in appeals process	SMR	February 2023	COMPLETED
02/12/22 Item 5	SMR to provide RAP with Steve Johnston's report on proposed new complaints process	SMR	February 2023	COMPLETED
02/12/22 Item 5	RAP to respond to PSA EDI consultation	RAP	December 2022	COMPLETED
02/12/22 Item 5	RAP to contribute to ACC's response to safeguarding consultation	RAP	January 2023	COMPLETED
02/12/22 Item 10	Check if PSA had been informed about original accreditation pilot.	SMR	February 2023	COMPLETED
02/12/22 Item 14	KS and CC to organise onboarding process for TW	KS/CC	February 2023	COMPLETED

Completed actions will be archived after 12 months.