



ACC REGISTER ADVISORY PANEL (RAP) MEETING

Zoom Meeting

Friday 24th April 2020

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

Dawn Sherry, ACC Registrar

Apologies

None

1. Notes of last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the last meeting (3rd December 2019) were accepted as a true record by the chair of the RAP.

Matters Arising from previous minutes.

1 - Page 3 Error - **The competencies were an extract from HC's Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Public Works**

3 – Page 6 Section 8 - **There was a question raised by HC as to why ACC did not allow personal counselling to be included as a CPD activity. KS agreed to check whether personal therapy was able to be counted as a CPD activity by the BACP. The BACP do not seem to allow personal therapy, although they may have done so in the past. ACC reviewed the decision and confirmed on balance they would prefer not to include personal therapy as a CPD activity.**

4 – **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**

5 – Supervision guidelines are now completed and will be submitted to the PSA during the annual review process in March. They need to be implemented alongside the revised Audit 2020 process

6 – Complaints Process - **Completed as a final draft and submitted to the PSA as part of the annual review process**

7 – Audits - **Temporarily postponed. ACC / RAP to think of a way forward to get audits completed. If lockdown continues, potentially with a “light audit” without the requirement to meet with a supervisor.**

Meeting Notes

1. Audits

In March ACC took the decision to suspend audits. This was due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown in the UK. The audit requires ACC members to meet with their supervisor and as members were needing to cope with the impact of Coronavirus on their lives and practice it seemed a good decision to relieve them of this additional pressure.

Most counsellors and supervisors are adapting to the new situation with many equipping themselves with the skills to transition to working online or on the telephone. Therefore, audits will resume in May and be managed through on-line meet-ups with the counsellors’ supervisors. There is already provision within the audit process for members to postpone their audit if they have extenuating circumstances.

The implementation of Audit 2020 which introduces the audit of supervisors will be postponed till Autumn 2020.

2. Core Competencies Framework

HS commented that the paper she had submitted to ACC on the proposed competency framework was not in a format that was best suited to submit to the PSA for the annual renewal process. KS apologised, acknowledging that if there had been more time to prepare, she would have presented the information differently.

HS has a revised version which she has forwarded to ACC. The next stage is to have the framework reviewed by a panel of people who have expertise and knowledge in the field. **Action:** Set up review process with HC involvement **KS**

3. ACC’s COVID-19 Response Document

SMR went through the COVID-19 response document that was presented to the ACC board. Highlights include

- Decision for ACC’s Board to meet every month to consider ongoing risks and developments
- Postponement of the 2021 national conference. For the July 2021 conference to be successful bookings need to begin in the autumn, however with all the uncertainty about the pandemic’s longevity and delegates levels of confidence about booking to attend to an event in person, as well as the impact on income and livelihood, ACC felt it would be better to postpone.
- ACC have been continuing to pay the rent and insurance on the ACC head office. SMR will check if we are able to claim back any rent.
- The ACC AGM will take place online sometime in the summer
- ACC are looking to move training events on-line and potentially provide a service to members access to an on-line CPD library.

- As COVID-19 impact has caused more work to an already overstretched team – with two management posts identified but not recruited to, a temporary support resource for KS is being actively considered.

RAP said the Board COVID-19 risk response was an excellent document. HC commented that the information sent out to members from ACC far exceeded what she would have thought.

4. Crisis Counselling Support (COVID-19)

ACC has set up a COVID 19 Crisis - Counselling Support Service for NHS staff and people bereaved during the time of Coronavirus. The management and administration of the scheme sit with ACC, and the counselling will be provided by volunteer counsellors from any professional body holding an accredited register of counsellors. The structure of the scheme was discussed with thanks given to HS who had contributed by reviewing key documents and processes during the design phase. ACC was advised to check their insurance cover to see whether this work will be covered within our current insurance policy. ACC are also looking to provide insurance cover for those volunteers who do not have insurance. This could be because they are level 4 students on placement, or qualified counsellors whose insurance is tied into a place of work. The panel discussed the risks of ACC providing insurance for counsellors in relation to what that meant for the organisation's liability for the counsellors' actions.

ACC are applying to a government fund that has been set up to support COVID-19 mental health charities. Any fund received will be used to covers ACC's additional costs and distributed to volunteers supporting the scheme.

Action: SMR to investigate insurance issues

5. PSA Submission (renewal of registration) and Supporting Policies

KS has sent off the annual PSA ACC registration renewal form. ACC are still awaiting the outcome of the submission document.

Various Documents submitted to the PSA had been circulated to the panel for their information and comment

A general concerns was raised by RN about the need for clearer guidance for the panel with regard to what policies are within the remit of RAP, what the process is with regard to agreeing policies, and how to track where policies are in their revision/update and review cycles.

The panel discussed whether they should have sight of ACC's policies with regard to governance as they had some impact on the security and stability of the register. There was also a discussion about where policy reviews begin and end.

The panel's recommendations are that:

- Policies relating to the governance of ACC should be notified to RAP for comment/review
- Policies relating to standards of practice by ACC registrants should firstly be presented to ACC's Board, then presented to the RAP for suggested amendments/comment, with the final version being ratified in the subsequent Board meeting (Board to RAP to Board)
- Policies that need progressing between RAP meetings can be reviewed by exception through emails to the panel
- A catalogue of policies be produced with set review timescales and tracking of progress of draft revised policies
- RAP's agenda to follow a standard template which distinguishes clearly supporting documents that are provided under the following headings: for information, for approval, for attention

6. Risk Register

KS explained that she had overhauled the previous risk register/s which had been submitted by ACC to the PSA. This was to consolidate and rationalise the entries.

The risk register describes risks applicable to ACC's registrants and gives each two weighted scores, one to reflect the profession as whole and the other to reflect ACC taking into account areas of heightened or lowered risk because of our membership profile and mitigating actions. RN commented that it is hard to assess the risks of counselling in wider profession as there is not sufficient information available, apart from recent programmes on the issue of unregulated counsellors.

Complaints are the most tangible information that we have about issues in practice, although because of the nature of counselling it is likely that some complaints will be made by clients who are dissatisfied, even when the counsellor has operated in a competent and ethical way. The report provided to RAP by SMR is nonetheless of benefit in checking on scale and (once the complaint is resolved) the issues that give rise to complaints. The latter, key influence on mitigating actions that ACC need to put in place for recurring issues, for example dual relationships.

5. Duty of Candour

The RAP panel had been sent the draft copy of this document to read and note any comments. HC had a query on page 2 – can we add “communicating to clients what they expect in counselling may not be helpful”

RN said there were several typos in the document. He will email the changes needed to KS to change. RN also suggested we remove the wording “cause harm” from page 4.

Action: KS to make changes

6. Whistleblowing Policy

This is still a draft document as it has not been implemented yet. It needs to go to the ACC board for approval. ACC wanted RAP to look at it and give any advice on changes that may be needed. The document has also been shown to the PSA.

RN noted that the wording in the document was not consistent sometimes written as you or sometimes as the 3rd person. He has made suggested changes as well as correcting typos in this and the duty of candour and will send to KS.

Action RN to send KS corrected policies

7. NCS Accreditation Equivalence

ACC awards accreditations via a Transfer route to ACC members who have accreditation with another professional body such as BACP, UKCP. This means that the accreditation form is shorter as ACC know that all records, logs etc have been checked by the other body. ACC would now like to include The National Society for Counselling (NCS) on this list as they have raised their standards and their accreditation process is very similar to the ACC's process. IAPT confirmed their assessment of an equivalence in January 2020 when they accepted ACC accredited and NCS accredited counsellors as eligible for IAPT training. This will go to the next ACC board meeting for ratification. HC offered to evaluate NCS accreditation process to give a professional view prior to the Board meeting.

Action: HC to review NCS accreditation process and give a view as to whether she has any concerns.

AOB

1 - HC enquired if the practice break guidelines should be sent with the practice break application from each time. (she had not got a copy when she went on her ACC p/break.) Yes, this should be sent out with every form. DS to send HC a copy.

Action DS

2 – DR thanked CC for her annual report on behalf of ACC and RAP.

3 – TOR for RAP review. Carried forward to next meeting. KS / CC to meet with suggested reviews for next meeting.

The meeting ended at 5.00pm

Next meeting on 10th July 2020 and the following one on 25th September 2020. Venue / type of meeting (zoom) to be made at a later date due to lockdown guidelines.

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

| No In Meeting | What | Who | By When | Outcome |
|------------------|---|-----|-----------|----------------------------------|
| 1-03/05/19 | Guidance as to what to say on Find a Counsellor | KS | 2020 | |
| 2-03/05/19 | Update and finalise new complaints process | KS | 30/03/20 | Completed |
| 1-30/08/19 | Should personal counselling be considered as CPD activity? Review other counselling professional bodies policy and discuss with ACC assessors. | KS | 2020 | Completed |
| 1-13/12/19 | Updated draft policy on 'who can be a supervisor' to include words 'where possible' and to set out the need for clear rationale/ defence of dual relationships and mitigating factors/actions relating to the risks | KS | 30/03/20 | Completed in supervision policy |
| 2-13/12/19 | Revise audit process to include the posting of a formal letter, requesting evidence of postponement and setting out consequences of non-compliance with the process or unsatisfactory submissions | KS | 30/03/20 | Ongoing due to Covid-19 pandemic |
| 3-13/12/19 | Supply paper charting progress towards setting competencies for counselling in a Christian context | HC | 1/03/20 | Completed |
| 24/04/20 | Establish 'Peer Review' of HC's Revised Core Competencies Framework | KS | July 2020 | |
| 24/04/20 | To look at ACC providing a separate insurance policy for members who offer volunteer counselling during COVID-19. To check ACC's Insurance company to ensure that we are covered for the CCSS project | SMR | ASP | Completed |

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| 24/04/20 | RAP Complaints report document to be devised so that at each meeting RAP can see what complaints / potential complaints / near misses have come to ACC | SMR | July 2020 | |
| 24/04/20 | Send corrected copies of duty of candour and whistleblowing policies to KS | RN | ASP | Completed |
| 24/04/20 | Duty of candour policy wording to be changed and together with whistleblowing policy. | KS | ASP | Completed |
| 24/04/20 | Produce 'tracking catalogue' of policies, with current status and revision cycles | KS | July 2020 | In progress |
| 24/04/20 | Produce standard agenda template/meeting paper which sets out what is for information what is for approval and what is for action | DS/KS | July 2020 | Completed |
| 24/04/20 | To review current standing documents of RAP | KS/CC | July 2020 | Completed |
| 24/04/20 | Review and assess NCS's accreditation process and provide view as to whether equivalence to ACC is a reasonable decision | HC | asp | Completed |
| 24/04/20 | ACC to check internal process with regard to practice breaks following HC experience | DS | July 2020 | |