

Association of Christians in Counselling and Linked Professions

Minutes of Annual General Meeting 2023 (online)

Saturday 15 July 2023

Members: 52 members attended

The meeting opened in prayer led by Phil Martin.

Apologies:

Board Members - Christine Pinder, Sean Charlesworth, Tony Ruddle and Peter Roberts

Members - Ange Harris, Malcolm Steves and Helen Wightwick

Minutes of previous AGM held on 16 July 2022

- One correction at the start of the minutes change to “the Board decided to support members” from “the Board decided not to support”
- With this one correction the minutes were accepted as a true record of the previous meeting. 33 attendees (who attended in 2022) approved the minutes and 1 voted NO. The person who voted NO, explained that she had not actually attended the AGM and voted NO on that basis, not appreciating that it was only for those who attended.
- There were no matters arising.

Annual Report for 2022

Sue Monckton-Rickett explained the requirements for what needed to be included in the Annual Report under Company and Charity Law.

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The General Fund had a deficit of £57,380 in 2022 due mainly to approximately £35,000 being paid for the first part of the development of the new database and website and additional staff costs resulting from recruitment to enable ACC staff to work on these projects. The deficit therefore represents an investment for the future growth and improvement in services provided by ACC.

The deficit meant that the General Fund Balance as at the end of the year was £123,702 of which £62,00 is a contingency in-line with Charity Commission recommendations. It was expected that the excess of funds over contingency would decrease in 2023 due to on-going development of the website and database.

Restricted Funds increased by £57,948 in the year. Income included grants of £30,000 from Brighter Lives and £10,000 from Garfield Weston, some of this money has been spent in 2022, but the majority will be carried forward for development work in 2023. It will be used for the specific purposes that the grants were provided, being promoting the work and raising awareness of counselling and pastoral care and developing pastoral care materials. There is also some residual income from the NHS Counselling Service. The service closed to new clients in May 2023, but there are some clients receiving counselling and the money carried forward will pay counsellors, who have provided sessions in 2023 and some will be released into ACC General Funds to cover the administration and management of the service.

Total Funds £197, 632 (General and Restricted).

The balance sheet shows that Cash in Hand and in the Bank was £157,306, there were debtors of £67,643, the majority of which is £40,000 to be paid by the NHS, which was not received until 2023 and there are Creditors of £27,317.

Questions from members:

- How much of the Charitable Activities were Annual Subscriptions from members?

Reply: £148,915 was from this source and also highlighted the other elements.

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- Is there a time restriction on when the grants in restricted funds need to be spent?

Reply: Brighter Lives open, Garfield Weston have to report within a year, but no absolute timelines for spending the grants. Sue highlighted that there were further notes explaining these grants in the accounts.

Sue highlighted some of the variances in terms of income and expenditure between 2021 and 2022, being

- income and expenditure on the National Conference in 2022
- staff costs increasing to resource the development work and the Head of Membership Services and Head of Training and Communications both being in post for the whole of 2022
- the investment in database/website development.

It was highlighted that the cost of producing *accord* in 2022 was virtually all of the Printing cost of £31,679 and it was made clear by the publisher that these costs were likely to increase. The Board considered carefully the move to an online version of *accord* and came to the conclusion that financial resources at this level could be used much more effectively and so decided to adopt *accord* online from Summer 2023.

It was highlighted that there are only 4 FTE working as Head Office staff and that such a small number of people deliver an amazing service. Staff and many others (contractors and volunteers) give so much commitment and time to the work of ACC and they were all thanked and greatly appreciated.

Stewardship had acted as Independent Examiner and had no concerns with regard to the Annual Report and Accounts for 2022.

Thanks was expressed to Peter Roberts and Keith Payne for all of their work in managing ACC's finances and preparing the Annual Report.

The following votes were taken:

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- The Annual Report was accepted and the Accounts approved for the year ending 31st December 2022 with 75 votes in favour and 1 against.
- Stewardship were approved as Independent Examiners for period to 31 December 2023 with 76 votes in favour and none against.
- The Board were authorised to fix the remuneration of the Independent Examiners with 75 votes in favour and none against.
- No proxy votes had been received for any of the above.

Appointment and Election of Trustees to the Board of ACC

There were 3 existing Board members who had stated that they wished to stand for re-election. ACC had asked for nomination of new Board members, but unfortunately none had been received. Sue Monckton-Rickett encouraged members to think about becoming a Trustee, ACC are always looking to diversify the Board both in terms of the individuals themselves and also the skills and experience that they bring. She said that she was always willing to discuss with members what being a Trustee involved, that there was the possibility of co-opting Trustees during the year and invited members to contact her.

With three nominees standing for re-election and ACC Board had more vacancies than that, so whilst there is not going to be a competition between nominees there would still be a vote for each. If the majority of members were to say "NO" to a nominee, then they would not stand. The online voting poll that members were now invited to take part in was anonymous.

The voting for the three candidates was as follows:

- Gathoni Hamilton-Foster: 68 for YES -1 for NO - 1 proxy for YES
- Sue Monckton-Rickett: for - 79 for YES - None for NO - 1 proxy for YES
- Tony Ruddle: for - 74 for YES - 1 for NO - 1 proxy for YES

Sue announced therefore that all of the nominees had been duly elected and she looked forward to working with all of the Board.

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She thanked members for taking part in all of these votes.

ACC 2022 Achievements and Plans for 2023 - Presented by Sue Monckton-Rickett, Kathy Spooner

At the National Conference we shared the acronym CARE to describe the essence of ACC as an organisation and also reflects in some way the work of our members' various roles.

We used the word CARE to say the work of ACC is about - CONNECT, ACCOMPANY, RESOURCE and ENGAGE.

Connect

- **clients with safe counsellors** - the only place in the UK where you can find Counsellors who are qualified and also Christians. All counsellors are encouraged to update or add their information to Find a Counsellor as this is a valuable resource for people seeking counselling/psychotherapy.
- **professionals with professionals** - through various means to provide professional support and Christian fellowship including:
 - counsellors with supervisors
 - members with each other
 - counselling and pastoral support groups
 - Specialist interest groups

Accompany

ACC sees itself as being part of members' journeys (professional, spiritual, life-events, etc.) and want to support members in them.

ACC staff are always willing to discuss and explore concerns, issues with members and try to help, for example in:

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- professional development
- ethical concerns
- life events
- complaints
- prayer and goodwill - we meet as a team of staff and Board members each week to pray and include any requests from members.

Resource

ACC resources members through various ways:

- free member forums
- guidance
- training
- *accord* journal
- website

Members were encouraged to share the depth of their knowledge and experience, through writing, joining forums, etc. so that members can resource each other.

Engage

ACC engages with the

- professional world - our reputation in forums, collaboratives, etc. is highly valued. Thanks were given to everyone who represents ACC and especially Kathy Spooner.
- Church - across denominations and individual churches. Members were encouraged to help ACC engage with churches.
- Christian world - maintaining good relationships with other Christian organisations, always seeking ways of working together. Our new pastoral care training is a resource to enable us to engage more with equip the church. Able to do this through a good team of Pastoral Care Trainers, Facilitators and those writing materials.

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ACC sees itself as inputting into the lives of members and building communities for them to feel supported and grow in, so that in turn members can input into the lives of others. An important way of doing this is through our various members groups.

Presentation from Children and Young People's Development Group (CYP) by Ange Harris

- Approximately six experienced counsellors who work with CYP in a variety of settings.
- Meet four to six times per year online as a 'think-tank' and developmental group
- A group that looks at working as counsellors with CYP and what it means to be a Christian in this area and what can we distinctively bring to this work as ACC.
- The group tries to input into developing and equipping counsellors and pastoral cares to work with CYP. The need and demand for this work is ever increasing with the increased pressure on CYP mental health services.
- The group has run member forums on topics such as CYP and Spirituality, Safeguarding, Working with Parents and provides article for each *accord*.
- Considering areas of training, ethics, being safe counsellors for CYP
- Keen to grow the provision of resources for members to work with CYP and would ask members to be part of this and make contact.

Presentation from Counsellors and Church Leaders Group (CCLG) - Malcolm Stevens

- Started in January 2023.
- The group is about sharing, exploring and supporting.
- A key benefit of the group is to be able to share experiences and perspectives from a wide variety of church leadership and counselling roles.
- Some topics explored have been- religious trauma, spiritual life maps.
- Sometimes devote the whole session to peer supervision, with small groups being able to explore issues at a much greater depth and bringing different perspectives.

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- Other members who are counsellors and church leaders were encouraged to join the group.

Presentation from Ethnic Tapestry - Leroy Harley

- Started in 2020 after the George Floyd murder. At that point as a black Christian counsellor Leroy felt alone and contacted ACC in frustration and that was the catalyst to start the group.
- The group meets on a monthly basis on Zoom.
- Approximately 12 members, with varying skills and abilities and includes counsellors and pastoral carers.
- The group is very supportive.
- Desire to help ACC in its work with Global Majority people and have done this through providing training forums (“Racism in Counselling” and “Black Men Don’t Do Counselling”) reviewing policies, etc.
- The intention is to run further forums and to keep the conversation going about how understanding different cultures will inform counselling practice.
- There is also a desire to see more black men engaged with counselling on both sides of the couch.

Leory shared a statement from Avril Parker a new member saying that she felt very welcome and valued as a person of mixed race and that being part of such a group was very important.

Members encouraged to join.

Presentation from Couples Counselling Group - Helen Wightwick

- Started in July 2022 with 25 ACC counsellors who expressed an interest.
- One year on there are 50 counsellors connected with about 14 attending each meeting on Zoom in an evening every two months.
- These groups have covered the following topics during the year:
 - Counselling couples when one partner is neuro diverse
 - Working with EMDR

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- Minimum competencies for couple counselling
- Offering individual sessions as part of couples work
- Different aspects of communications

There are also 4 Peer Supervision Groups that meet monthly during the daytime around 6 members in each group, facilitated by an experienced couple's supervisor. These groups are very popular, useful and free.

Sue thanked all of the groups for their invaluable work and said that ACC would circulate information about them all to members.

Change for the Future - Kathy Spooner

The intention since our 2017 Strategic Planning has been to "Reach Wider and Go Deeper". Wider in terms of the Christian world (different denominations, working with other organisations, etc.) and new membership categories - Coaching/Mentoring, Spiritual Direction, Chaplaincy, etc. which would mean:

- Fulfilling a vision to be One-Stop Shop for the public and a National Center for good practice and resourcing for expanded membership groups
- Cross promotion for all Christians in Counselling & linked professions
- ACC acting providing advice, triage and referral across the memberships
- Achieving synergies through mutual learning and raising of standards
- Building a Christian Community across professions

A key enabler to develop the new memberships is the development of the new website and database.

Yineng Hart demonstrated some aspects of the new website.

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The Wider Profession

Kathy explained that the SCoPEd Partnership was a group of PSA counselling accredited register holders, who for the first time have come together to agree a framework for standards of training and practice, including differentiated competencies. The intention of the framework is for the profession to be better understood and valued, including being an enabler for those looking to train and develop as a counsellor and for employers and commissioners. The SCoPEd framework has been published and adopted by the partner organisations, and now various groups with representatives from each body are looking at the practical implications of implementing it, for example, how members can move between different levels in a way that will be transparent and recognised across professional bodies, and emerging work to look at what are the potential future benefits of the framework for the general public, i.e. those looking for a counsellor

In terms of the relationship with the NHS, in the last couple of years the Psychological Professions Network has become more open to counsellors, i.e. ACC accredited counsellors and others being able to join IAPT training, and the SCoPEd framework should provide a way for the NHS to accept into employment and train counsellors who are members of any of the SCoPEd bodies. There has also been an emerging sense that within the NHS that faith, and spirituality are important to many people seeking psychological support.

Questions from members:

- SCoPEd seems to be moving to a degree level profession and a hierarchy of counsellors based on education rather than accreditation and experience, which is concerning, please comment?

Reply - the framework maps what is now and this differs across the bodies. There is a firm commitment from all bodies that the progression within the profession can be achieved through alternative pathways, for example through accreditation processes and not by academic achievements alone. There would then be a need

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to look at how accreditation can be accepted across the bodies at least to some extent.

- More people are entering the profession with degree/masters level qualifications. Much CPD is geared towards those with diploma / more experienced based entry and so would it not be possible to start to attach credits to CPD to allow people to build-up credits towards degrees/masters?

Reply - Unsure as to how and whether that would be possible, but there is work looking at Top-Up courses. The problem is that training courses are accredited in different ways. ACC tries to have the standard that courses are accepted if there is an OFQUAL accreditation, but not all bodies do this and rely much more on in-house accrediting processes. So, to try to establish some national/across profession accrediting process would be a major piece of work, which will take a long-time and be a major shift in how bodies operate.

It was re-emphasised that level 4 (diploma) is and will remain the entry level for registered counsellors and ACCs current requirements were explained and members with any specific questions were encouraged to e-mail into the office.

- A member has qualified through IAPT, but is not able to work in the NHS for three years and wondered what could be done about this?

Reply: this is not an issue that ACC can address, as it is the NHS as an employer issue. It is all part of what the SCoPEd group are trying to raise in discussions with the NHS.

Kathy then spoke about the challenges that ACC face:

- Raising Awareness of ACC and more widely the value of Accredited Registers and safe practice to the public, employers, stakeholders, etc.
- Ambition v Resource – we want to achieve progress but have limited resources.

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- Pressure of regulation – we had a targeted review in 2022 that involved a lot of work and there are new PSA requirements and standards that we have meet and show evidence of how we do so. Whilst we acknowledge the value of regulation and welcome it in the profession, it does have to be acknowledged that it takes a lot of resource and disproportionately so in a small organisation.
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion – is hard and we acknowledge that we make mistakes, there are unintended consequences of things that we do, and we are sorry when that happens. We are making progress, but we know that there is much to do in many areas of diversity. We are a small organisation that is trying to learn, and we appreciate it when members point out issues and work with us to try to improve and change.

There is always much work to do and as said before ACC only has a small team, so it is important to remind ourselves, what it is that sustains us as an organisation and individuals working within it:

- Our work matters – it transforms lives, save lives and impacts on families and communities.
- We live out a commission as powerful as ‘the great commission’ but shaped by humility and a servant heart: to ‘love one another as I have loved you’.
- Complex and demanding – need our whole self, intellect, learning, empathy, intuition, compassion, to radically serve another.
- In fellowship with one another – identify as Christian and demonstrate as far as we can our commitment to relate well with one another, to disagree well, to sit with discomfort without dismissing it, to love ‘our enemies’.
- In all of this and in our work with others we worship God.

The meeting ended with prayer at 15:40.

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