

Psychotherapists and Counsellors Professional Liaison Group (PLG)
12 May 2010

Psychotherapists and Counsellors PLG – discussion paper

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

This short paper briefly summarises progress to date and invites the PLG to discuss the issues to be addressed in the continuing phase of this work.

Decision

This paper is for discussion.

Background information

Please see paper.

Resource implications

None at this time

Financial implications

None at this time

Appendices

None; please see papers to note at this meeting

Date of paper

12 May 2010

Psychotherapists and counsellors PLG – discussion paper

1. Introduction

This short paper summarises the progress made with regard to drawing conclusions about the potential statutory regulation of psychotherapists and counsellors. The PLG is invited to discuss the progress made to date and to help inform the delivery of the remainder of this work.

2. Consultation on the report of the PLG

A consultation was held on the report of the PLG between July and October 2010. A copy of the consultation responses document is included in the papers for this meeting. In summary, the trends identified in the consultation were as follows (given against each of the headers of the PLG's original terms of reference):

Structure of the Register

- The majority of respondents disagreed with the proposal that the Register should be structured to differentiate between psychotherapists and counsellors. This trend was less marked amongst organisations compared to individuals who responded.
- The majority of respondents agreed that the Register should not differentiate between different modalities. This was less marked amongst organisations who responded compared to individuals who responded.
- There was no clear agreement amongst respondents as to whether the Register should be structured to differentiate between those qualified to work with children and young people and those qualified to work with adults.

Protected titles

- The majority of respondents agreed with the proposed protected titles for psychotherapists and counsellors.
- The majority of respondents agreed with the proposed approach to dual registration.

Voluntary registers and grandparenting

- The majority of respondents agreed with the criteria and the process and did not provide detailed comments.
- There was no clear or overall consensus about whether the grandparenting period should be two years long.

Standards of education and training (threshold level of qualification for entry to the Register)

- The majority of respondents disagreed with the proposed threshold levels for psychotherapists and for counsellors with different trends amongst organisations and individuals.

Standards of proficiency

- There were a variety of different views put forward about the draft standards of proficiency.
- The majority of respondents agreed with the proposed English language proficiency level.

The responses to the consultation have helped further refine the issues to be addressed in this continuing work.

3. Conclusions

Following the consultation period the HPC Council made a number of initial conclusions about the potential regulation of psychotherapists and counsellors:

- A part of the Register should be established for psychotherapists and counsellors.
- Modalities should not be reflected in the structure of the Register.
- The titles 'psychotherapist' and 'counsellor' should be protected.
- The approach to dual registration outlined in the report and conclusions documents should be adopted.
- The inclusion of names in the HPC Register from other eligible registers [voluntary register transfer] should be performed by means of a three stage process as outlined in the conclusions document.
- The transitional 'grandparenting' period should be three years long.

The remaining areas where no decision was reached and where it was felt further work (supported through more meetings of the PLG) should take place:

- The question of whether the structure of the Register should differentiate between psychotherapists and counsellors.
- The question of whether the structure of the Register should differentiate between those qualified to work with children and young people and those qualified to work with adults.
- The standards of proficiency for psychotherapists and counsellors.

- The threshold level(s) of qualification for entry to the Register.

4. Terms of reference

The workplan and plan of activities for the PLG's work including terms of reference is included in the papers being considered at this meeting.

The workplan includes plans that at the PLG meetings between September and December 2010 external groups should be invited to attend and present to the PLG. Information would be provided to these groups about the issues that should be addressed.

5. Questions and discussion

The PLG has been reconvened for a short meeting in order to assist in shaping the continuing work in this area and the content of future meetings

This meeting provides the PLG with an opportunity to review the progress made to date and to further refine the salient issues for ongoing work. In particular, the PLG is invited to discuss the following questions, the answers to which would assist the HPC Executive in producing papers and reports and making arrangements for subsequent meetings. As the remaining issues are those that the PLG has previously discussed, the questions are designed around ensuring that the PLG has the material it needs in order to make progress.

1. What additional information, evidence or analysis is needed in order to resolve the outstanding issues?
2. What additional perspectives or expertise might assist the PLG in its work?
3. What are the key issues, questions or issues that should be addressed by stakeholders invited to present to the PLG?

Some examples of potential issues to be addressed in the continuing work are given below, drawn from the comments made in the consultation. They are included for illustrative purposes only and are not intended to be exhaustive.

Differentiation

Understanding the impact of differentiation, and of failing to differentiate, upon education and training, service provision and practice. In particular:

- What are the differences between and across entry level education and training in psychotherapy and counselling?
- What would the impact be upon service provision of differentiating or failing to differentiate?
- What would be the impact upon practice of differentiating or failing to differentiate?
- What steps could be taken to mitigate any of the above? (e.g. conversion programmes etc.)

Children and young people

Understanding the impact of differentiation, and of failing to differentiate, upon education and training, service provision and practice. In particular:

- Is differentiation on this basis feasible across psychotherapy and counselling?
- What would be the impact upon service provision?
- What are the differences in the competencies required to work with adults and those required to work with children and young people and what is the link with entry level education and training; post-registration education and training; and CPD / experience?
- To what extent would an 'undifferentiated structure' be sufficient or insufficient?