

13 September 2010

Mr Mark Harrison

Dear Mark

Thank you for your Open Letter to members about the statutory regulation of counsellors and psychotherapists in the Health Professions Council (HPC). We will not be publishing this letter in *Therapy Today* in the immediate future for the reasons set out below.

The regulatory landscape you refer to has changed considerably in recent weeks. In May 2010 there was a change of Government and it is now unclear if the policy of the previous administration will be continued by the Coalition Government with regard to the regulation of counsellors and psychotherapists. Economic factors and rationalisation of resources are currently uppermost in the Government's agenda.

The HPC itself is undertaking a consultation on its generic standards of proficiency. The proposed revised standards may be more in keeping with the philosophy of counselling and psychotherapy. The consultation can be found at

<http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10003033Consultationonproposedchangestothegenericstandardsoproficiency.pdf>

The HPC's 2009 consultation on the proposed protected titles, standards of proficiency and levels of entry drew an overwhelmingly negative response. As a result the Professional Liaison Group has been reconvened and will meet from September 2010 to February 2011. There are therefore no substantive proposals on the detail of the regulation of counsellors and psychotherapists in the HPC.

The Coalition Government has decided that the HPC is to take over the work of the General Social Care Council, which regulates social workers and the social care workforce. Because of this change, the Government will need to review the title of the HPC and this will require primary legislation. This will clearly impact on any future entry of the counselling and psychotherapy profession into the evolved HPC.

The issues you raise in your letter have no current context within which members would be able to consider the options open to them. This is because the regulatory landscape continues to shift. In recent history, BACP was a lead body in the move to generate an alternative regulatory body for counselling and psychotherapy – the proposed *Psychological Professions Council*. However, the Department of Health (DH) refused to develop this idea. The political, economic and professional landscape is in constant flux. However, when we have a clear indication from the Government on the direction and timetable of statutory regulation BACP will, as usual, consult with members. We have worked hard to best represent counselling and psychotherapy to both the previous Labour Government and the present Coalition Government. We will continue to lobby on regulation and will keep members informed through regional

events, the journal, the website and the Chair's Column in *Therapy Today*. We will also shortly be introducing a discussion site on the BACP website, where members can dialogue with BACP and other members to discuss a wide range of issues, including regulation.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Gabriel
Chair of the Association