



Minutes of Societies Council Meeting

Wednesday 16th of December 2020

Via Zoom

In attendance:

Meg Moss (CEO Societies)
Elaine Lighten (Societies Communications Manager)
Amy Bristow (Societies Head of Membership Services)
Jyles Robillard-Day (Societies Assistant CEO)
Kate Mahoney (Societies Head of Professional Standards)
Freya Bottomley (Societies Deputy CEO)
Rob Kidd (Lay Council Member)
Ros Wright (Lay Council Member)
Ted Sangster (Lay Council Member)

Apologies:

Chris Forester (Societies Chair)
Rachael King (Ethics Officer)

The meeting was opened, and all were welcomed to the meeting. Thanks were given to all for attending.

It was confirmed by all that there were no declarations or conflicts of interest.

The minutes of the last Council Meeting were agreed by the Council, with no changes to make and no questions.

Report from the CEO

Chris Forester will be stepping down as Chair and will be replaced by Liz McElligott. Those of you that have been on the Council for a few years may remember Liz from her role as CEO of the Societies. We are sad to see Chris go, but wish him all the best for his retirement. Liz will be chairing the Council Meetings going forwards.

The Professional Standards Authority have still yet to publish our Accreditation renewal information, however they have promised they will have it to us today (16th of December). We know from conversations with them that there is one Condition around hypnotherapy and advertising language, which we have been aware of from the beginning of the renewal period and we are happy to work with them and the ASA on. For clarity, this is around using the term, "hypnotherapy can help with...".

We have recently been engaging with the PSA as part of their strategic review of the Accredited Registers programme. One of the proposed ways in which they would like to strengthen the programme is by introducing a licensing model, either profession-specific or broad, or umbrella bodies for professions. This may be tied to title, or it may be tied to occupation. There are no final decisions being made at this point, as they are still very firmly in the consultation stage. We will continue to engage with the Authority on this, and have found them to be very willing to listen and take on board feedback thus far.

We have recently produced a Bulletin related to SCoPEd and our work on the project. It has thus far been well-received by members, who all were keen to have more information on the role the NCS has taken and our actions thus far. The next meeting of the SCoPEd Oversight Committee is on the 2nd of February, and the CEO will be attending this.

The recruitment of Lay Council Members is still ongoing to find the right people for the position, but we have two interviews lined up in January for some very promising candidates and hope to have a full complement of Lay Council Members for the 2021 meetings.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Ted Sangster, Lay Council Member, asked if we had noticed or were aware of any concerns of the impact of Covid on training and on students' learning and moving forward in their careers.

Kate Mahoney, Head of Professional Standards, replied that yes, we have noticed impacts on training, and we have done our best to provide guidance and support for students and training providers. Any decisions we make are grounded in not wanting to impact their learning going forward. We have supported training providers with guidance and good practice ideas. We have to balance this with making sure their training doesn't query or risk competence when they've graduated. We've also supplied information about how to look for placements and continue training during pandemic. We have made a huge effort with regard to supporting our membership through this time, and have had lots of positive feedback about the support we've offered; our members are really seeing the value of belonging to the Society. So where we can we are offering that support, and ensuring that everything continues in line with Government guidance.

There were no further questions from the Council.

Report from the Head of Membership Services

The Head of Membership Services extends her gratitude to the Membership Services Team who have been working so hard this year to ensure our members receive the best possible service. They have done a fantastic job especially during the challenges that have occurred this year.

The current role of Head of Membership services is incredibly diverse and is essentially two roles in one, which has become a juggling act the busier the Societies have become, so we have decided to split the role in two to allow for focus and growth in those areas.

Going forward the role will become the following two roles:

- Business Operations Manager
- Membership Services Manager

Starting in the New Year, the current Head of Membership Services will move into the Business Operations Manager role, and will continue looking after and growing the side of the role that looks after the business.

We have recruited a Membership Services Manager, Camilla Firth, who will be starting with the Societies in the New Year.

This is an exciting opportunity and will benefit the Societies greatly, especially the Membership Services Team who will have someone who can support them more fully, and then in turn better support our Members.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

We are in regular contact with our website developers to ensure the website is working as well as it can. So far they have been fantastic, providing excellent solutions to any issues that have arisen. They are also busy implementing new features for us which will hugely benefit the Societies and our members.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

There were no further questions from the Council.

Report from the Deputy CEO

Since October's meeting, the Deputy CEO has attended the Diversity and Inclusion Coalition, a PARN Special Interest Group event on The EDI Challenges Facing Membership Bodies in 2020, and a Northern Ireland Regional Committee Meeting.

We helped set up the coalition for Diversity and Inclusion, which has members from across the profession, including Place2be who now Chair the meetings. We are working together to improve diversity in the counselling profession which includes increasing/improving cultural diversity in training. We are currently organising an event for training providers which is to be held in February 2021.

In terms of the NI Regional Committee meeting, this was the first meeting and it was a pleasure to be a part of it and to hear the passion and enthusiasm that all of the members had.

Upcoming events include the Diversity and Inclusion training event in February.

New and progressing partnerships since the last meeting include work with organisations around Good Practice Guidance documents; new Online CPD courses including telephone and online counselling and creating a Therapeutic Will; the Being Well Together and Think Talk Together initiative, and our work with Paranimo.

We're collaborating on an Innovate UK pilot study to help vulnerable groups get access to mental health support through the Paranimo platform, with therapy provided by our Registrants. We are also working closely with Paranimo to ensure that those that need therapy can easily match with our Registrants who have signed up to their platform.

Our HS and NCS Ambassadors provide a wealth of knowledge and information for us. After speaking with one of our HS Ambassadors recently we will be starting a regular Ambassador feature in the HS members magazine as a place to share their knowledge with other members.

New organisational members since the last meeting include Atrium Clinic, Counselling Tutor, and Paranimo, with another four approved and awaiting payment, and a further three going through the assessment process.

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[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

There were no further questions from the Council.

Report from the Assistant CEO

The Assistant CEO has continued in his work to break down barriers and forge new relationships for the Societies.

We have had great success this year increasing recognition for the NCS with a number of EAP providers. These include Bupa, Care First, Optima and WPA. The Assistant CEO attended a recent EAPA branch meeting and after this meeting gained recognition from The Retail Trust. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

Members continue to contact us when the NCS is excluded from the eligibility criteria in recruitment campaigns. We generally have success in this field and many employers, both large and small, are adding NCS membership to their criteria.

A consistent lobbying campaign has been undertaken to make sure that the NCS is recognised by parliamentarians.

[Redacted]

[REDACTED]

The NCS has continued its involvement with the SCoPEd project. The main work so far has been in setting up the structures and agreeing the governance for the project. The next meeting is in February and will discuss the aims and objectives of SCoPEd now that it has an enlarged group with four Accredited Register organisations added to the original collaboration of three.

We have had our inaugural Northern Ireland Regional Committee meeting. The committee comprises 5 NCS members who bring a range of experience to the group – from a student, to a recent graduate, to a chair with over 20 years’ experience in the counselling profession. The first project for the group is to collate a series of questions which will form a questionnaire in February to find out the predominant issues facing Northern Ireland members. The results will help decide on the initial direction and emphasis for the group. If the Regional Committee is successful it could then be rolled out to other areas of the UK.

There were no questions from the Council.

Report from the Ethics Officer

Rachael King began in the post of Ethics Officer (formerly titled as Public Protection Officer) in Mid-November. She is working three days per week, Wednesday to Friday. She is still finding her feet in this busy environment and is enjoying a steep learning curve.

Due to the worldwide pandemic, our members have faced huge changes and challenges over this extraordinary year, with many learning to work online, via platforms such as Zoom. It is to their credit that we have received just one complaint this year relating to the pandemic. It was an issue of no contact from the counsellor, and the NCS were able to step in swiftly to ensure the welfare of the client. The complaint was then withdrawn as a satisfactory outcome was achieved.

There are currently four open formal complaints, two possible formal complaints, three concerns, and four cases have been closed.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

There were no questions from the Council.

Report from the Head of Professional Standards

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[REDACTED]

Since October we have had numerous expressions of interest for course recognition from both new and existing training providers. We continue to develop relationships with these interested parties and offer support and guidance with regards to the application process.

Since the last meeting the Jacqui has been focusing on compiling the event calendar for 2021 CPD for both Societies. The calendar is well under way with 116 confirmed events. Some tutors have already confirmed they are happy to run additional dates for their most popular courses and I am hoping to finalise these events by early next year. Event invitations have already been sent out for January and early February courses. At the moment there are no events scheduled for July and August as per previous years. However, if restrictions are still in place and/or there is a demand additional courses can be added as they were this year. I will also look at changing some events to Face to Face later in the year subject to restrictions/demand.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] An interim Professional Standards Committee meeting was held on 8th December to further assess/comment on any queries with regards to individual assessments and/or audits.

Numerous activities and additional guidelines have been shared in the past few months to support Training providers and students during the Covid pandemic.

Information shared with regards to managing training and placements during this time can be found on our covid hub at: <https://nationalcounsellingsociety.org/help/covid-19-hub/coronavirus-procedures-standards>

The next application assessment meeting of the Professional Standards Committee will be held on 8th December 2020, which will be an assessment review only. The next full committee meeting will be held on 16 March 2021. We are still keen to increase the Committee by one new member and have started the search/recruitment process for this. Our rationale for this is to ensure sufficient and impartial support for the extra work now being carried out by the committee.

Ted Sangster asked for a bit more information about training providers, courses, and accreditation. In terms of the total market, are there lots more courses out there that the Society has not yet engaged? Is there more opportunity out there? Is there any financial benefit you get from accrediting those courses? Is the process that you or your members identify courses? Or is your reputation such that people come to you?

Kate replied that from a finance perspective, we are a not-for-profit – the fees for course recognition and accreditation reflect that in that they are relatively low. We do offer a very fair fee for what we do; assessing a course is a considerable amount of work, and we spend a lot of time working with training providers and giving them constructive feedback. It's not a finance-making scenario, but we do have to be sensible about overheads and the time and cost in terms of staffing. With regard to how we find courses, we do get approached and think our reputation is growing well in the profession. However, that being said, Freya, Meg, Jyles are all doing a lot of recognition work and talking to different organisations throughout the profession; we're sharing information with each other about potential opportunities which we follow up on as well. But mostly training providers are now coming to us.

There were no further questions from the Council.

Report from the Communications Manager

Since the previous council meeting in October, the Communications Manager's main focus has been on generating monthly member magazines (Counselling Matters and Hypnotherapy Today). These remain well-received, and the goal of becoming more collaborative with members has been successful. In December's edition of Counselling

Matters, 51% of the magazine was member-submitted content, compared to 42% in November, 12% in October and 9% in September.

[REDACTED]

Advertising within the magazines is generating revenue, which has so far covered the cost of the software used to create the magazines. We have only received advertising submissions for CS magazine so far.

[REDACTED]

We have now published two Therapists in Private Practice guidance booklets to our members, with four more ready to be formatted. We are publishing roughly one per month.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

For 2021, the Communications Manager plans to schedule a minimum of 2 posts per week, per Society, on each platform.

She is also planning to integrate more automations within our mailing system so that members receive more regular resources and answers to FAQs.

[REDACTED]

There were no further questions from the Council.

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