

The United Kingdom Standing Conference for Psychotherapy: The Psychotherapy Register

MICHAEL R. POKORNY, Chairman, UKSCP, 167 Sumatra Road, London NW6 1PN

UKSCP was inaugurated in January 1989 as a sequel to the "Rugby" Psychotherapy Conference, itself a sequel to the Sieghart Committee. In 1990 UKSCP resolved to establish psychotherapy as a separate profession and to seek to establish itself as the competent authority in relation to EC regulations, present and impending, which regulate the freedom of movement of professional people in the EC. The key to being a competent authority lies mainly in holding a register for the profession.

With increasing interest in the sequence and process of moving towards the formation of a psychotherapy register, I thought it might be helpful to spell out the process that will be taking place over the next few months.

Draft proposals for entry requirements and curriculum content were circulated earlier this year to all our member organisations for critical comment. At a Special General Meeting, held on 12 October 1991, we reached agreement on two critical issues. The first, that psychotherapy should be a post-graduate profession so that we fit into the first draft directive of the EC which concerns what are called "liberal and social profession". The second, that psychotherapy training requires analysis and self-exploration for the benefit of the client as well as the practitioner. This means that people who wish to train in psychotherapy must have a qualification which is of degree level, although it need not necessarily be academic, and that they must undertake a personal analytical or self-examination procedure, appropriate to the kind of psychotherapy that they will be training for. We have not yet agreed on the outlines of the curriculum contents that will be required for training, but there is broad agreement in the written responses to our original proposals, so that it will not be difficult to formulate acceptable standards for curriculum content.

We are now in a position to decide upon the functions and therefore the structure of the Registration Committee and we will be putting proposals to the Annual General Meeting in January 1992. We will have to make an appraisal of costs and draw up a realistic budget which will form the basis of applications for grants from appropriate Government

departments. We hope to have a good chance of getting a grant for what will, in effect, be a national project of forming a register of psychotherapists. We should, therefore, be in a position to appoint or elect the new Registration Committee at the Annual General Meeting of January 1993. The new Registration Committee will then set up and maintain a register of the practising members of the Member Organisations of UKSCP. This register will not have any official status but we hope that it will achieve official recognition in due course.

There will have to be a transitional period during which practising psychotherapists can be registered by appropriate means that will have to be agreed upon. The ways in which peer recognition can be arranged for the purposes of a so-called "Grandfather" clause will also have to be agreed by the majority of the psychotherapy profession. When medical practitioners were first registered by an Act of Parliament after many false starts, a very significant proportion were unqualified. After an initial transitional period, only those who have completed an approved training will be eligible to be registered. It is quite clear that there will be organisations in membership of UKSCP whose members will not be eligible to be registered as psychotherapists.

We expect that there will be some form of on-going professional development required in order for psychotherapists to stay on the register.

The formation of the Registration Committee and the agreement on its Rules and Procedures will be a critical point in the development of Conference, because it is here that the real boundary will be drawn over the question of what qualifications are necessary in order to be recognised by the psychotherapy profession as competent.

There is every reason to believe that once we have agreement on entry criteria and training standards and have agreed at an Annual General Meeting on the structure and function of the Registration Committee, this will be pursued with vigour and a professional attitude and will be accepted by Conference members as being the right, proper, and agreed way of going forward.