

ANNUAL REPORT

The National Counselling Society and
The National Hypnotherapy Society

Presented by Dr Phillip A Rees

BA(Hons), ThD, PhD(Psychology), DipCPC, DipPTSC, CertSuper, MISMA, FCIEA, FCollIT, FRSA

External Assessor for Governance and Audit

National Counselling Society and National Hypnotherapy Society

INDEPENDENT ASSESSOR REPORT FOLLOWING SITE VISIT ON OCTOBER 16th, 2019



This Report is being presented by Dr Phillip A. Rees, Independent Assessor responsible for Governance and Audit within the National Counselling Society and Hypnotherapy Society. The Report is the written outcome of a visit to the national administrative and management hub of the Societies at 19 Grafton Road, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 1QT on Wednesday October 16th, 2019.

The Report will focus on three specific areas:

- The Purpose of the Visit
- The Content of the Visit
- The Outcome and Conclusions of the Visit

The Purpose of the Visit

The primary purpose of the visit was to fulfil the decision made at a meeting of the Societies Governance and Audit Committee February 6th, 2013 in London. The decision of that meeting was that the Independent Assessor should make a site visit *‘to the administrative offices and monitor processes and procedures in real time as they occur. This may involve examining relevant files, databases and procedures.’*

This was subsequently discussed and ratified at the Societies Council Meeting held in London on April 9th, 2013; this meeting outlined and acknowledged the function and role of the Independent Assessor, and identified the importance of regular visits (Annually) to the Societies head offices as a means of supporting and monitoring the foundational procedures, combined with accountability and standards of the Societies, and to fulfil the demands of the PSA accreditation process.

Since the last visit made by the Independent Assessor, there is recognition of the continuing exponential growth and development in the numbers of members and registrants who are joining the Societies together with a growing number of Training Providers.

The primary function of the visit, as on previous visits, was to examine how the policies and procedures of the Societies are administered and managed, and to focus on how the Societies seek feedback and involvement with registrants, members and a range of service users. To enable internal scrutiny of the Societies policies and procedures, which forms the basis of this Report, the Independent Assessor met with Vicky Parkinson the Societies CEO, Interim Deputy Chief Executive Megan Nunn, Kate Mahoney the Head of Professional Standards and Jacqui Gumbrell Training Standards Assistant, Amy Bristow Administration Manager and the Public Protection Officer(PPO), Samantha Hurdley; there is a separate and dedicated Report covering the meeting with the PPO and the overview of the Societies Complaints Processes and Procedures. For the purpose of this Report, there was open access to all relevant files and documentation in compliance with the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

A principal reason for the annual visit of the Independent Assessor is to reinforce the Societies commitment to the standards of transparency and accountability towards members, registrants, service users and the Professional Standards Authority, through regular and ongoing assessment and analysis of administrative and management systems and processes.

The Content of the Visit

The initial part of the visit involved time spent with **Vicky Parkinson CEO of the Societies**. The role of the CEO is crucial to the upholding of both the reputation and national development of the Societies, combined with the responsibilities of overseeing administration within the national office, and in addition to addressing the needs of Registrants and prospective Registrants. The maintenance of ethical and professional standards and quality of services also falls within the remit of the Chief Executive.

The CEO is also responsible for preserving membership of the Accredited Register (AR) status through the Professional Standards Authority (PSA). As a result of recognition by the Professional Standards Authority, the Societies retain a large footprint on the national therapy map. There are a growing number of Professional Bodies who have achieved AR status with the PSA, and this recognition and status accords both kudos and credibility to both Societies. However, neither accepts this status and recognition lightly, and recognises the importance of constant reviews to ensure that standards are preserved. The Chief Executive also accepts the responsibility of addressing PSA Action Points to preserve the PSA status, whenever and wherever they may be required. The Chief Executive works closely with the Independent Assessor in ensuring the delineation of roles, especially between the role of Chief Executive, Registrar and Public Protection Officer. The Chief Executive also co-operates with the Independent Assessor in monitoring the decisions made by the Head of the Professional Standards Committee.

The Chief Executive ensures that standards are maintained *vis-à-vis* Registrants of the Societies and works closely to ensure that the standards and quality of training provided by external training organisations, and accepted by the Societies, are upheld – for the purposes of the Accredited Register. In addition, the Chief Executive shoulders the responsibility of contacts with the public, Registrants and Prospective Members and training providers; this involves close liaison with and management of the members of staff in the national office.

The site visit included very informative time spent with the **Chief Executive**. This time focused on what has changed and gone well, since the last IA visit. It also highlighted current changes, developments and anticipation of changes in the future. These included:

1. Confirmation that Accreditation for the Societies had been renewed for the period of 21 May 2019 to 21 May 2020. The Accreditation was renewed by a PSA Moderator following a review of evidence gathered by the Accreditation team and evidence supplied by the Societies. This

process is now significantly faster as the information required is given on an ongoing basis instead of gathering all together when renewal is due. There were no Conditions issued.

The following Recommendations were issued to be implemented by the submission of annual renewal documentation:

- i. The Societies should ensure that adjunctive therapies are included within its risk matrix. This is due to the boundaries being blurred between counsellors on the Societies Register who are also offering alternative therapies which are not recognised on the Accredited Register.
- ii. The Societies should consider whether its approach to receiving and holding information about spent convictions is in line with the requirements of GDPR.
- iii. The Societies should consider whether it required a lay member to be present for the Council meeting to be quorate and if so to document the requirement for lay representation at Council meetings.
- iv. The Societies should consider developing guidelines for its registrants about whistleblowing and duty of candour.
- v. The Societies to make the scope of the register clear to limit the potential confusion to the public.
- vi. The Societies should develop guidance on appropriate advertising (both within a registrant's online profile and through other channels such as websites) and use of adjunctive practices by its registrants.
- vii. The Societies to consider how it can make clear within its policies, procedures or guidance what complaints it will accept including complaints about adjunctive therapies.
- viii. The Societies to update its complaint process so that it is clear who can appeal a decision.

The above have been discussed at the Societies Council Meeting in July 2019 and are being implemented.

[REDACTED]

3. [Redacted]

A very helpful and informative discussion took place between the **Independent Assessor and Megan Nunn, the Interim Deputy Chief Executive** covering for the substantive Deputy Chief Executive who is on maternity leave.

The role of the (Interim) Deputy Chief Executive is to represent the Societies in a range of different settings and to promote the work of both the NCS and HS in the Counselling and Hypnotherapy sectors.

The meeting between the IA and the (Interim) Deputy Chief Executive highlighted some of the ways that this is being achieved. This has included;

1. Attendance at a number of meetings, including The Primary Care and Public Health Conference in Birmingham in June 2019; attendance at EAPA Branch Meeting in June 2019 to maintain contact with all EAP's; attendance at the Health and Care Conference in London, also in June 2019 where a number of contacts were [Redacted]
[Redacted] There have been meetings with MP's and attendance at a range of Healthcare Meetings are planned in the coming months, including additional EAP Branch Meetings.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[REDACTED]

The Deputy Chief Executive also discussed with the IA the streamlining of CPD programmes and the possibility of training Webinars becoming available in 2020.

The IA was also informed that there has been an increase in social media connections for both Societies, with the numbers rising each day. New relevant and professional news is posted regularly. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The above record of the conversation with the CEO highlights the involvement and influence of the Society within the professional sectors and the growth of its collaboration across Healthcare sectors.

To achieve the day-to-day management and administration of the Societies business, there is a dynamic administrative team currently led by **Amy Bristow, who is the Administration Manager** for the Societies. The IA was able to meet and discuss the major contribution of the Administration team to the smooth running of the Societies with Amy, who was appointed at the end of May 2019. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Administration team process general enquiries, student applications, membership and Registrant applications. The Administration team meet regularly together to share any concerns, questions or pressures that may emanate from the counselling and hypnotherapy sectors, and are generally relayed to the team through members, registrants and service users.

The Administration team work well together, and applications for Membership and Registration are being processed within the required time frames. The team has been receiving some excellent feedback including: *“Can I just say that already I am super impressed with the service and support from the NCS. Many thanks again”*. This has been very affirming for the team..

The discussion with Administration Manager included the following:

[REDACTED] Discussion around CPD courses, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

4. A recent and successful innovation is the 4 monthly keeping in touch with new members emails which has elicited very positive feedback from the (new) members.

The Independent Assessor can unequivocally report that the Societies have a very strong administration team, who collectively present a wide range of skills and levels of competency, and not a little commitment to the ethos of the Societies, and work to ensure that good communication is preserved between the Societies and the Registrants, and the wider therapeutic communities. The management and administrative team ensure that there is a consistent approach to communicating the benefits of membership of the Societies, in addition to the upholding of standards.

This is continuing to be reflected in the Membership consolidation of the Societies. To reiterate comments above, however, no-one underestimates the importance of commitment to high standards and quality service provision. There is a clear belief that the team spirit has, in no small part, contributed to the increase in the quality of service that the Societies provide.

An informative and vibrant meeting was held with **Kate Mahoney, Head of Professional Standards**. This role of Head of Professional Standards carries the responsibilities of overseeing and advising on the following:

- Policy and procedures of applications
- Individual members' audits
- Training provider audits

- Government and regulation issues
- Relations with other professional associations

The brief of the Professional Standards Committee is to review and update the Society's internal processes and procedures where professional standards are concerned and maintain an awareness of all external issues that may impact upon the profession of counselling and psychotherapy.

It is clear that the Professional Standards Manager has a huge impact on the reputation and development of Professional Standards and is committed to extending the influence of the Society upon training, and, in particular, accredited training, within the sector of Counselling and Psychotherapy.

The role of the Professional Standards Manager is to consider the delivery of recognized courses by Training Providers. This involves consideration of course content and the assessment process. An important, if not crucial, part of the role is to maintain and extend/develop standards. This involves fielding questions about training information, combined with considering complex membership applications. As with membership of the Societies, there is an exponential growth of recognized and accredited training providers.

[REDACTED]

In addition to the above, the involvement and influence of the Society is extending in different sectors and with a growing number of training providers.

1. There has been an increase in the number of training providers combined with the recognition of new courses - these include Quality Checked and Advanced Specialist training courses.
2. The Professional Standards Manager has been very busy with annual renewals and the Society has been receiving very positive and affirming feedback from Training Providers.
3. Since March 2019 there have been a number of colleges and training providers who have expressed an interest in NCS training recognition. This indicates the growing influence of the NCS .

[REDACTED]

5. The Training Standards Assistant position has been filled by Jacqui Gumbrell who joined the team on May 28th, 2019 fulfilling a wide range of tasks enabling the Professional Standards Manager the freedom to undertake visits and projects around the country.

The Outcome and Conclusions of the 2019 Visit

The Independent Assessor visits the Societies offices on an annual basis to ensure that an objective view of the work of the Societies can be guaranteed, and to ensure that transparency and accountability are clearly evidenced, and to ratify the demands of quality assurance. The following comments and observations echo and consolidate the conclusions proffered in the previous Annual Report (2018):

- **Communication.** There is continuing and excellent communication processes in place to ensure that enquirers speak with members of a team who are able to provide a constant, consistent and knowledgeable voice on the work of the Societies; this includes established members and Registrants of the Societies, potential members and Registrants, corporate bodies and organisations, professional bodies in the world of counselling, psychology, psychotherapy and hypnotherapy, and educational/awarding bodies seeking information about accreditation status. The IA conclusion is that this is being achieved through the leadership and managements structures of the Societies, and the obvious cohesion of the team of staff based in Worthing.
- **Competence.** Scrutiny of the Societies by the Independent Assessor reveals a collective range of skills and abilities from Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Professional Standards, Public Protection Officer, across to all members of the Administrative Team. This is contributing to the ongoing development of strong marketing and advertising strategies, including the Societies website; saturation of the internet with excellent advertising; evolving CPD programmes including online and Regional meetings across the country, Facebook and Twitter and Monthly Bulletin updates. There is sound knowledge and understanding of the Societies, and all its policies including Complaints and the new DBS (formerly CRB) and GDPR requirements. The collective competencies also ensure quality of management and administration in addition to the dissemination of very high levels of information. This visit also acknowledged the ongoing commitment to quality and standards. Quality assurance underpins and reinforces the governance work of the Societies, and underscores good practice.
- **Commitment.** The visit of the Independent Assessor is designed to provide an impartial overview of the Societies; how they function; how they work to maintain the principles of the Societies, and how they can effectively communicate this to interested individuals and organisations. This Report concludes that there is strong executive management leadership within the Societies, and solid collegiality throughout the management and administrative team. The commitment to the Societies is clearly evident, and the management and administrative team are dedicated to developing the work and reputation of the Societies through increased knowledge and understanding of the therapeutic world, as well as enhancing the important principles and policies of an emerging, growing and influential professional body.
- **Collective Responsibility.** One factor was again outstanding during the visit of the Independent Assessor, and that is the clear intention on the part of the Societies to continue growing and developing as a major player in the professional therapeutic community of the United Kingdom, and beyond. The recognition by the Professional Standards Authority, and the achievement and

maintenance of AR Register status will not lead, in the view of the Independent Assessor, to complacency within the Societies. There is clear recognition of the responsibility in maintaining the demanding principles and values of the Societies, meeting the needs of its members and Registrants, maintaining its professional status, overseeing complaints and public protection, and growing into a leading player in the therapeutic arena.

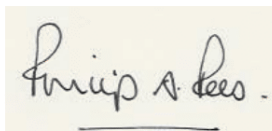
There is also awareness that nothing is ever perfect, and that there is always room for improvement. Changes are inevitable in all areas of marketing, advertising, communication and the promotion of all that the Societies represents. The Societies recognise that there is no room for complacency. The visit by the IA concludes that the Societies remain committed to maintaining the standards and principles of a Professional Body seeking to represent a large and growing cohort of professional and would-be professional therapists and counsellors, together with training bodies and organisations.

The purpose of this Report has been to provide an appraisal and overview of the work of the Societies as observed during the Independent Assessor's site visit on October 16th, 2019 and to highlight good practice and identify areas for development and improvement. At the same time, the intention is also to raise awareness of any concerns observed during the visit. This Report concludes that no major concerns were identified for action in the immediate future.

It is important to record that all objective and action points from any previous IA Report have been achieved.

The Independent Assessor presents and commends this Report as representing the comprehensive findings of an extensive analysis of the Societies work considered during the visit of the Independent Assessor to the National Counselling Society and Hypnotherapy Society on Wednesday October 16th, 2019.

The date for the next IA Annual Site Visit has been entered into the diary for Wednesday October 14th, 2020.



**Dr. Phillip A Rees BA(Hons),ThD, PhD(Psychology), DipCPC, DipPTSC, CertSuper, MISMA, FRSPH, FCollT, FCIEA, FRSA
Independent Assessor**

**Registered MBACP Senior Accredited Counsellor/Psychotherapist
Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors
Fellow of the Royal Society for Public Health
Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts
Fellow of the College of Teachers**

