



UKCP
UK COUNCIL FOR PSYCHOTHERAPY

Family, Couple, Sexual & Systemic Therapy Section – Inger Gordon, Chair

29 September 2009

Dear registrant of the Family, Couple, Sexual & Systemic Therapy Section

Exciting and important things are going on in the UKCP. I would like to let you know more about them and to stress how your own involvement in the pending ballot could be crucial for us all. Do read on! Please excuse the depersonalized aspect to this open letter which is being forwarded to you on email by your member organisation.

The good news is that the Board of Trustees has agreed that from 5 December 2009 when the new structure of UKCP takes shape, the Section will divide into two Colleges, The Systemic College and The Sexual and Relationship College. The former will be created by the existing member organizations of AFT, KCC and IFT along with those new organizations who wish to join, and individual registrants. BASRT will establish the Sexual and Relationship College in a similar way. Both groups will maximize opportunities to further their specific professional interests in relation to the wider community of psychotherapists and to the external world. Soon your member organization (MO) will be telling you more about how you can get involved with those responsibilities and activities which the new Colleges are seeking to develop.

The other news is about who we elect as the next chair of UKCP and the controversy surrounding the manifestos. When you follow the link on the UKCP website 'UKCP elections', you will see that three candidates have been nominated for the post and clicking on their names leads you to their election materials. Carmen Ablack and Sally Forster are both senior and experienced officers of UKCP who have been acting within the UKCP framework to promote the profession and to work towards a fitting form of regulation of all the modalities. Andrew Samuels, an eminent clinician and writer is campaigning on a single issue, i.e. to resist the statutory regulation of psychotherapy. In his manifesto he challenges the current strategy of the UKCP but does not offer any positive policies for our future direction.

As Chair of Section I am appealing to you to get excited about this election. Most of us let the MO delegates get on with it on our behalf but this is an issue where your individual vote could have a vital impact. Think of this as one of those rare occasions when you happen to live in marginal seat and it's worth going to the polling booth and staying up to hear the result!

I believe we are facing a crisis. This view is shared by the majority of the Section Chairs and by the officers of UKCP. Over the years UKCP has struggled to hold the tensions within and has recently transformed itself from an organization which could rarely make change happen, (partly because of its structure) to one which can pro-actively represent the broad church of psychotherapy in the wider contexts of employment, governance etc. For example, we are approaching the inevitability of government regulation, and officers of the UKCP look set to have achieved a good deal with the Health Professions Council. So much considered work has gone into finding an aesthetic relationship between our position as psychotherapists and the government agenda. At this late stage a new government will not act differently in this respect, and I do not think there is a credible alternative if one works in the public or voluntary sectors, which most of us do. The view proposed by Andrew and worryingly supported by many registrants in the large Sections, invites us to privilege the art of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis within the limited frame of the private consulting room. I am uncomfortable with this disregard of the external context and with the possible polarization this position might generate. I imagine we all want to think of ourselves as creative and independent psychotherapists whose primary concern is not regulation but those we work with. However in the times we find ourselves in, I am not sure we will all benefit from the freedom to act unless we are identified in the wider body of psychotherapy. In summary, I believe we put the psychotherapy profession in jeopardy if we do not support a candidate who will act as an effective Chair of the whole organization and who amongst other things supports statutory regulation. If we vote against statutory regulation we are in effect voting against maintaining a coherent professional identity with which other significant agencies can connect. Those of us working in multi-disciplinary contexts may find ourselves isolated from our colleagues. (The psychologists have just become regulated by the HPC.) At worst, jobs may be at risk because we are no longer involved in essential dialogue since we are not invited to participate. In the UK we are privileged to have the status of psychotherapist: in many European countries one has to be a psychologist or psychiatrist to be allowed to practice psychotherapy. Let's hold on to what has been achieved on our behalf and to that which allows people to receive our services.

I strongly urge you to vote since so much is at stake. This is about you! Please stay in touch with developments by visiting the UKCP website and by reading briefings from your member organization, which will have informed you of the current situation and will have taken a public position on statutory regulation. You will be able to vote online or by post throughout October. You are welcome to email me on inger.gordon@virgin.net about questions you have, or to contact the delegates from your MO. I will also be able to forward you materials distributed from the other Sections if you would like to explore the bigger picture.

With very best wishes

Inger Gordon

Chair of the FCSST Section