



Open Letter to the Therapeutic Community and beyond

An Open letter to businesses, charities, universities and organisations with a declared interest in working with therapeutic professionals.

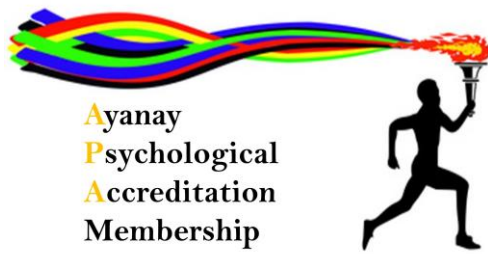
For many years, the vital connection between psychologically trained, qualified and experienced professionals and the business world has been shaped by the contribution of membership bodies. This has been led by the largest UK based membership body the BACP. (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy).

In recent times, many therapeutic professionals have come to discover that there is a growing perception among many businesses, charities and organisations, that affiliation or accreditation by BACP is a prerequisite to being employed, consulted, referred for work or accepted for inclusion on directories. Many employers and organisations report that they believe the BACP to be the 'Governing Body' for the therapeutic profession. This is in fact incorrect. This misunderstanding reduces the talent from which employers (and clients) are able make a positive selection. The misperception not only negatively impacts employers, service providers and clients but also forces professionals into membership of a body that they feel compelled to engage with. There are many to choose from and membership of professional bodies is entirely voluntary for therapeutic professionals. It is APA's belief that accepting and allowing this misperception to continue, cannot be morally right, as it goes against the very principles of the therapeutic relationship, if employment or inclusion on a directory is withheld because a professional is not a member of one particular body. While such restrictions on employment of appropriately qualified professionals exist, this is effectively indirect discrimination against that professional. However unwittingly, by insisting on qualified professionals being a member of a specific membership body, (that has no regulatory authority) employers and service providers are, it could be argued, creating a closed shop approach to the selection of therapeutic professionals. We would hope that as the new year starts, you might give some consideration to developing a more open engagement approach with the therapeutic sector, based on some additional knowledge.

- The only protected therapeutic roles in the UK (must be affiliated to a governing body) are. Psychiatrist and Clinical Psychologist.
- There is currently no Government Regulatory Body for the sector.
- Membership of any body is voluntary and there are several for practitioners to choose from.
- Baseline qualification to practice Counselling or Psychotherapy is a Level 4 Diploma that includes a supervised placement in therapeutic delivery.

We are pleased to note that Increasingly employers are expanding the membership bodies with which they will accept potential employees' affiliation or accreditation. This reflects the rise of smaller membership bodies that have come into existence as a result of, professionals feeling disenfranchised by the larger membership bodies. Professionals are increasingly moving away from the larger membership bodies, choosing instead, memberships which better suit their needs and the needs of their clients. The





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therapeutic process is wholly based on the interaction between the professional and the person requiring their support. The success of this interaction relies on the professionals' level of self-awareness, just as much as

their learning and qualification.

APA is the only membership body in the UK that does not rely only on written submission for accreditation. As a result of this additional level of assessment, we are confident, that the practitioners included on our register are qualified, self-aware, competent and safe professionals.

So, what can be done to redress the negative impacts? APA is requesting that where employers wish to engage with a therapeutic professional, the importance of the professional's affiliation to a membership body is made a preference rather than a requirement.

In a further display of APA Transparency, we include an exert from the following clarification APA received from BACP management:

"I have discussed BACP accreditation with our Workforce Policy team to gain some clarification. BACP do not insist that organisations specify accredited BACP members for specific roles, employers are at liberty to set and apply their own criteria / standards for recruitment – within the scope of the law – which BACP are not accountable for.

If MIND in London are delivering an IAPT service then this does mean that they will ask for accredited members as part of the criteria. If they have given a timescale of March 2020, this is likely to have been stipulated by the funding / commissioning body rather than the organisation themselves. Due to this, we would recommend contacting the commissioning body for MIND London to provide feedback on the impact such action could be having on therapists you've spoken to.

It is certainly not our aim to make anyone believe we are a governing body, nor is this something we have ever stated, it wouldn't be beneficial to our members if we tried to affect their financial wellbeing. We do recognise that our members are our existence and BACP is working to ensure we're providing the best service possible as a membership organisation. Due to this we do not feel it would be necessary to make a public statement as you have requested."

We trust this communication will be received as intended, in that APA seeks to inform and support best practice in the therapeutic sector and the wider community.

If you have any questions about APA or our membership, we would be happy to discuss these with you. You can contact APA

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