

ANNUAL REPORT

The National Counselling and Psychotherapy Society
and

The National Hypnotherapy Society

Presented by Dr. Phillip A Rees

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Independent Assessor for Governance and Audit

National Counselling and Psychotherapy Society and National
Hypnotherapy Society

**INDEPENDENT ASSESSOR
REPORT FOLLOWING
SITE VISIT ON
NOVEMBER 14th, 2023**

This Report is submitted by Dr. Phillip A. Rees, Independent Assessor responsible for Governance and Audit within the National Counselling and Psychotherapy Society and the National Hypnotherapy Society. The Report is the written outcome of an on-site/in-person visit to the the national administrative and management hub of the Societies at 19 Grafton Road, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 1QT on Tuesday November 14th, 2023.

The Report is intended to 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 principal purpose of the visit was to fulfil the decision made at a meeting of the Societies Governance and Audit Committee of 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 underscoring the accountability and standards of the Societies, and to fulfil the demands of the PSA accreditation process.

The central function of this annual visit, as with previous on-site visits, was to examine how the policies, protocols 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, protocols, and procedures, which form the basis of this Report, the Chief Executive arranged an agenda of meetings for the Independent Assessor on Tuesday November 14th, 2023. This agenda included conversations with:

Jyles Robillard-Day : CEO

Faye Blackwell : Head of Engagement and Development

Kate Mahoney – Head of Training and Professional Standards

Rachael King : Professional Conduct Officer

Meg Moss: Head of Policy and Public Affairs

Camilla Hyland : Head of Membership Services

The main reason for the annual site 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

Content of the site visit involved conversations and discussions with Society personnel including the Chief Executive Officer, Head of Engagement and Development, Head of Training and Professional Standards, Professional Conduct Officer, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, and Head of Membership Services. In addition, the CEO provided a Report on Communications and Marketing which outsourced.

Meeting with Jyles Robillard-Day, Chief Executive Officer.

The role of the CEO is central 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 the new satellite office in Exeter, 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 with 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, throughout the UK, who have achieved AR status with the PSA, and this recognition and status accords both prestige and credibility to both Societies. However, neither Society accepts this status and recognition lightly, remaining cognizant of the importance of constant reviewing of policies, procedures, and protocols to ensure that standards are preserved and maintained. The Chief Executive Officer also accepts the responsibility of addressing any PSA Action Points to further enhance the Societies PSA status, whenever and wherever they may be required. The Chief Executive Officer works closely with the Independent Assessor in ensuring that the auditing and governance of the Societies remains of paramount importance in terms of public recognition and accountability.

The Chief Executive Officer 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 and shared responsibility with all members of staff in the national office.

The structures of the Societies have been addressed to enable the CEO to focus and prioritise on developmental areas for the Societies.

A range of important topics were considered by the Independent Assessor and the CEO, in reviewing what had changed over the past twelve months. This included discussions on the challenges and problems that constantly need to be addressed.

Areas which have been part of the remit and influence of the CEO, and formed part of the discussions with the Independent Assessor, included:

- (i) Continuing development of the structures of NCPS management and administration.
- (ii) Re-branding of the NCPS – implemented in 2023.
- (iii) Overseeing the work of Committees, Managers, the team in Worthing, and the new satellite office in Exeter which now holds responsibility for the Societies magazines, together with targeted campaigns. The new satellite office provides all relevant statistics regarding the magazine distribution figures and has highlighted the ongoing increase in all areas of social media.
- (iv) Overseeing the dedicated team of staff who work with Members and Registrants to promote the influence of the Societies within Counselling and Hypnotherapy sectors.
- (v) Movement and development of SCoPED, which the CEO has been involved with, and the continuing way that it is impacting upon the counselling landscape. The sharing of relevant information to Members and Registrants on the Society website continues to be applauded by Members, Registrant and Training providers for its clarity and user-friendly language. The conversation with the CEO

identified the concerns that some members have regarding future Accreditation and Professional Accreditation status because of SCoPEd.

- (vi) There are now three specialist accredited registers with PSA – Children and Young People, Relationship Therapy and Person Centred Experiential Therapy. There is also non-accredited specialist register for coaching.
- (vii) Relaunch of the website has been placed on hold, and an alternative is being explored for rebranding launch in 2024.
- ██████████ First NCPS in-house Conference focusing on Children and Young People; ██████████
██████████
- (ix) Looking ahead to another Conference in March 2024 – maybe, look at Children and Young People – and similar conference is being considered for Northern Ireland.
- (x) Working with Head Office staff, Regional Support Groups and Ambassadors to maintain the continuing growth of membership within the Societies.
- (xi) Reviewing the barriers to recognition and Accreditation status for both the NCPS and Members and Registrants in general.
- (xii) PSA Annual renewal – submission of relevant documents has been completed. This was a light touch renewal; a full (3 year) renewal is due in 2024.
- (xiii) Workflow plans for 2024 were explored.

The above highlights the influence of the CEO in underscoring the involvement and influence of the Society within the professional sectors, together with the growth of its collaboration with training centres and organisations and Healthcare Professionals. This is combined with the multiplicity of challenges that continue to face the NCPS. The NCPS is fortunate to have an CEO who is an experienced communicator, and provides experience, dedication, and rigorous commitment to the upholding of Standards and to the ongoing recognition, growth, and development of the Societies.

Meeting with Faye Blackwell - Head of Engagement and Development.

For the past two years, the Head of Engagement and Development has consolidated the profile of Engagement and Development by creating new connections in a range of different areas and sectors, to promote and advance the NCPS brand name and raise awareness of its influence and reputation within the various therapeutic, education and healthcare sectors. This has had a positive impact within the membership of NCPS and resulted in greater confidence in and within the NCPS.

The benefits resulting from the role of Head of Engagement and Development have included:

- i. An increase in Organisational Membership applications – ██████████
██████████ It is a measure of the commitment and dedication of the Engagement and Development team that there was some disappointment that this did not achieve the numbers hoped for.
- ii. The NCPS is becoming more prominent within Northern Ireland and is hoping for greater acceptance and inclusion within the counselling and psychotherapy sector over the coming year. This has been enhanced by the establishing of a Regional Support Group in Northern Ireland, and this has generated significant interest.

- iii. Developing the awareness of NCPS through Regional Groups [REDACTED]

- iv. Development of NCPS Ambassadors – specialising in Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion; Sexual Violence and Abuse/Trafficking. The work of Ambassadors has been consolidated over the past year.

The Head of Engagement and Development carries the responsibility of nurturing and developing existing relationships within the Counselling sector and beyond, as well as creating new ones.

In addition, the role and remit of the Head of Engagement and Development has been to challenge education and healthcare institutions, as well as businesses and EAPs, who have not included NCPS in their course provision, or job advertisements. This involves raising the profile of the NCPS by attendance at Conferences and related meetings of those involved in the Counselling and Psychotherapy sector.

The Head of Engagement and Development continues to be involved in challenging any lack of recognition for the NCPS, and at looking for ways of expanding the understanding the influence of the NCPS within the Counselling and Psychotherapy sector, and the past year has evidenced the success of this involvement and inclusion.

The Independent Assessor acknowledges that the role of the Head of Engagement and Development will further help with the development and growth of the NCPS locally, regionally, and nationally and not only promote the NCPS but also challenge those who would exclude the NCPS from professional involvement in the counselling arena. The Independent Assessor affirms the initiative of the Society in continually assessing new ways of extending the influence of the NCPS across all sectors, which includes the therapeutic community and the political community. The Independent Assessor also records that the NCPS has their own Champion in the Head of Engagement and Development.

Meeting with Kate Mahoney, Head of Training Services & Professional Standards.

The Head of Training Services & Professional Standards carries the responsibilities of overseeing and advising on the following:

- Policy and procedures for standards of training and associated applications for course(s) recognition.
- Managing standards for the Accredited Register (AR) and associated sub-registers.
- Managing assessments for complex applications for the AR.
- Advisor for members' ethical queries.
- Individual members' audits
- Training provider audits
- Government and regulation issues
- Relations with other professional associations
- Registrar
- Chair of the Professional Standards Committee
- Member of SCoPED partners collaboration

The Head of Training Services & Professional Standards has an influential impact on the reputation and development of Professional Standards for training and individual memberships and remains committed to extending the reputation of the Society upon training, and, in particular, accredited training, within the sector of Counselling and Psychotherapy.

The role of the Head of Training Services & Professional Standards is also to consider the delivery of recognised courses by Training Providers. This involves examination 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 recognised and accredited training providers.

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.

10/11/23 to date 45 16 2023:
[Redacted text block]

The CPD calendar for 2023 has predominantly offered online (synchronous) CPD training with over 140 events being offered this year across both Societies. The calendar for 2024 is filling up currently offering over 100 events with more courses/dates being submitted as we speak - again the majority being offered online but with a few being offered face-to-face/in the room.

CPD training has been exceptionally effective with only 2 courses having to be cancelled due to lack of attendees. Offering CPD training in this way has helped the membership, too, in that there are no geographical boundaries so the full membership can take advantage of this service benefit irrespective of where they are based.

The Independent Assessor acknowledges that, through the leadership of the Head of Professional Standards and Training Services, together with the Professional Standards Committee, Professional Standards remains fundamental to the credibility and accountability of the work of the Societies and recognises its importance to the overall effectiveness of the work of the Societies.

SCoPEd

This year there has also been a focus on how the SCoPEd framework will affect training and the Training Services and Professional Standards team have been very instrumental in supporting Training Providers (TPs) (and individual members) with regards to this upcoming change. TPs have been issued with frequent communications with regards to how the new framework will be transitioned into the Society's Policies and Procedures. TPs have expressed their gratitude with regards to the transparency of developments and support received from the department with regards to the upcoming requirements because of the introduction of the SCoPEd framework.

Column A mapping documents have been issued to all TPs who hold Accredited training recognition with the NCPS with the deadline for submission being 2028. Several TPs have already submitted their mapping documents for assessment.

Column B mapping documentation has been finalised and will be issued to TPs once Column A mapping has been confirmed.

Meeting with Rachel King, Professional Conduct Officer (Complaints)

The Professional Conduct Committee oversees the Societies role in responding to all concerns and complaints made against Members and Registrants of the Societies, and any complaints relating to Training Providers. They review all complaints and oversee and advise on how each case will be handled.

As well as fulfilling the role of handling specific complaints, they also report to the Societies Council about any related issues that may be of relevance to policies and procedures – thus ensuring that the Societies have a constantly evolving approach to all issues relating to public safety.

The current Professional Conduct Officer was appointed in November 2020 and continues to provide a wide range of skills and experience to the post of PCO. A separate Report, from the meeting with the Professional Conduct Officer, is submitted by the Independent Assessor following the annual site visit.

Meeting with Meg Moss, Head of Policy and Public Affairs.

The Head of Policy and Public Affairs has now been in post since August 2022 and has been progressing the role and responsibilities of involvement in policy and public affairs.

The Head of Policy and Public Affairs has also engaged in seminars with the Westminster Health Forum on a range of healthcare topics, including mental health, and this has seen another area of development for the Societies.

Two campaigns were launched in 2023 – the first of these was Direct Access to Counselling and the second was Access for Counselling for every child. These are accessible through the NCPS website. There will be a consolidation of these two campaigns in 2024, with ongoing review to ensure their impact. A third campaign is planned for 2024 on ‘Real Counselling’ within the context of nascent AI therapy.

These campaigns are assisting in the growth and development of the Societies involvement in the wider Policy and Public Affairs sectors.

To further the Societies involvement, the Head of Policy and Public Affairs has attended a wide range of meetings and conferences throughout the year – from All-Party Parliamentary Groups, to meeting with MP’s and attending the Labour Party Conference, to Children’s, Healthcare, and Mental Healthcare meetings. In addition, the Head of Policy and Public Affairs has contributed a wide range of articles for the NCPS’s magazine ‘Counselling Matters’ and the blog.

The Head of Policy and Public Affairs has described her role as “*aiming to grow and refine NCPS policies alongside key stakeholders, both in the profession and beyond.*” To achieve this, the Head of Policy and Public Affairs is involved in:

- i) Internal and External Policies.
- ii) Talking to politicians involved in Health and Education and including the Shadow Mental Health Minister.
- iii) Being present to respond to relevant political concerns.
- iv) Being seen, becoming known, and having a sector voice on behalf of the NCPS.

- v) Project managing the new website.
- vi) Involvement in Code of Ethics/Safeguarding

This role carries responsibilities for the expansion and growth of the Societies, for being the voice of accountability in the therapeutic sector and beyond. The NCPS is fortunate to have someone fronting Policy and Public Affairs who has a wealth of knowledge and understanding of the NCPS and has been part of its development for nearly 10 years. The Head of Policy and Public Affairs is also someone who is eager to promote the work of the NCPS and will continue to seek new and different ways of achieving this.

Meeting with Camilla Hyland, Head of Membership Services

Membership Services act as a gateway into the provision of services offered by the National Counselling and Psychotherapy Society [REDACTED]

[REDACTED], Head of Membership Services. The Independent Assessor affirms the ongoing and valuable contribution that Membership Services makes to the efficient operation of the Societies. The ongoing streamlining of the Membership Services structure consolidates the service delivery to Members, Registrants, Training Providers and Organisations and to the wider Counselling and Hypnotherapy sectors.

Membership Services audits general enquiries, student applications, membership, and Registrant applications in addition to the processing of payments. The Administration team meet regularly together to share concerns, questions or pressures that may emanate from the counselling and hypnotherapy sectors, and these are generally relayed to the team through members, registrants, and service users.

Important aspects of the work of the Membership Services include:

1. Membership Services records monthly Membership totals highlighting net growth and loss. In addition, there is a record kept of all emails received, applications processed and applications awaiting assessment. This allows more direction for the Membership Services Team to prioritise different tasks, as required.
2. [REDACTED]
3. The future development of the website and the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. This is currently on hold.
4. Adjusting to the changes and developments around SCoPEd which has involved an unprecedented number of applications from members looking to upgrade to Accredited Professional status.

The Independent Assessor acknowledges the range of skills within the Membership Team and their importance to the success and profile of the Societies, and records that the ongoing growth and development of the Societies is due, in no small measure, to the skills and talents of the dedicated

Membership team. The Independent Assessor also acknowledges, from conversations with individuals and organisations across the UK - in various training establishments as well as individuals who have joined either the NCPS or NHS - that there is high regard for the Membership Team and their responses to enquiries and enquirers.

The Independent Assessor can confidently report that the Societies have an excellent Membership Services Team, who collectively provide 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 and service users. Membership Services also 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. The view of the Independent Assessor is that the Membership Services Team achieves its aim of being open access to the Societies, and in no small part contributes to the increase in the quality and development of services provided by the Societies.

The Outcome and Conclusions of the 2023 On-Site 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 previous Annual Reports, and taking into consideration that the past twelve months has also seen the NCPS developing its influence in the caring sectors:

- **Communication.** There is 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, training providers, professional bodies in the world of counselling, psychology, psychotherapy and hypnotherapy, and educational/awarding bodies seeking information about accreditation status. The Independent Assessor's conclusion is that this is being achieved through the leadership of the CEO. the managements structures of the Societies, and the obvious cohesion of the team of staff based in Worthing and Exeter.
- **Competence.** Scrutiny of the Societies by the Independent Assessor demonstrates a collective range of skills and abilities from the Chief Executive, Public Protection Officer, Head of Professional Standards and Training Services, Head of Engagement and Development, Head of Policy and Public Affairs and Head of Membership Services and includes all members of the Societies 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; and the development of online CPD programmes, Facebook and Twitter and Monthly Magazines. There is sound knowledge and understanding of the Societies, and all its policies including Complaints and the DBS (and enhanced DBS) and GDPR requirements. The collective competencies also ensure quality of management and administration in addition to the dissemination of accurate information. This on-site visit also echoed the ongoing commitment to quality and standards. Quality assurance underpins and reinforces the governance work of the Societies, and underscores good practice.

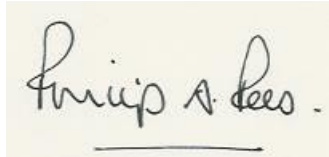
- **Commitment**. The visit of the Independent Assessor is designed to provide an impartial overview of the Societies; how they function; how they work to maintain the principles of the Societies, and how they can effectively communicate this to interested individuals and organisations. This Report concludes that there is strong executive management and leadership within the Societies, and solid collegiality throughout the management and administrative team. The commitment to the Societies is clear, 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 virtual visit of the Independent Assessor to the Societies, and that is the clear intention to continue growing and developing as a major contributor and influence within 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, however, in the view of the Independent Assessor, to complacency within the Societies. There is clear recognition of the responsibility in maintaining the demanding standards, principles, and values of the Societies, meeting the needs of its members and Registrants, upholding its professional status, overseeing complaints and public protection, and continue to grow and develop within the therapeutic arena. There is also awareness that nothing is ever perfect, and that there will always be opportunities and challenges 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 site visit by the Independent Assessor concluded 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 Tuesday November 14th, 2023, and to highlight good practice and identify areas for ongoing development and improvement. The Independent Assessor's remit is also to raise awareness of any concerns identified and/or

discussed during the visit. This Report concludes that no major or minor concerns were identified for action in the immediate future.

It is important to also record that all objective and action points from any previous Independent Assessor 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 annual visit of the Independent Assessor with the National Counselling and Psychotherapy Society and National Hypnotherapy Society on Tuesday November 14th, 2023.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature reads "Phillip A Rees" in a cursive style.

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