

# *PsyPraxis - the Changing Context*

## **Research Report 59** 9 July 2010, *Janet.Low@mac.com*

Apologies: the last report went out with the wrong number on the page, it was in fact Report 58 as noted in the header. Last week, there was no report, as I was at Manchester Metropolitan University's annual conference at the Research Institute for Health & Social Change, where I presented the first part of a serialisation of Dr Malcolm Cross's Fitness to Practise case, which I am analysing closely. You can read this on <http://hpcwatchdog.blogspot.com>.

At the HPC Council Meeting this week, the Chair (Anna van der Gaag) and the CEO (Marc Seale) made their habitual reports. The Chair's report comprises a short list of meetings, which report that she has met with representatives of the pro-HPC group Integrity. She also met with Mind and Witness. These meetings all relate to the potential regulation by the HPC of counsellors and psychotherapists.

Marc Seale's report runs to 68 pages, and the front page bears a new insignia – a pentagon declaring the five elements of Process Management: Improve, Identify, Document, Measure, Manage. In it he notes that, following the C&P PLG meeting on 12 May 2010, "it was confirmed that the earliest date the new Register could open was April 2013" (p10). There is no mention of **Dance Movement Therapists** in his report. However, they had received a letter from the HPC telling them that "it is unlikely that any new professions will be regulated for the next few years.." The DM therapy members have been urged

by their institution to lobby their MPs against this perceived injustice.

No similar letter, as far as I can make out, has been sent to any of the counselling and psychotherapy organisations, but I understand that pro-HPC factions are pushing Anne Milton to let them to go under the HPC.

**Stuart Griffiths at the Department of Health** (responsible for writing the relevant Section 60) said that they were still waiting for the Government to make a decision on their regulation policy, that nothing had been decided yet, and that it was news to him that the Dance Movement Therapists had been so informed.

In the **Education Section** of the CEO's report to the HPC Council the head of education reveals how the HPC Standards begin to effect education in universities up and down the country: "Education providers have requested that the HPC and [British Psychological Society] work more closely in relation to standards so that there is greater clarity of expectation. The BPS have expressed willingness to use the same documents as HPC whenever possible and collaborative working between the organisations has been successful at the recent practitioner approval visits."

The Council also saw a PowerPoint presentation of the IPSOS Mori survey Increasing Understanding of Fitness to Practise. Allegations are on the increase, and the UK regulators' spending on FTP is increasing every year. They note the

erosion of trust as a social impact, and that the 'blame culture' erodes public trust in professionals and professionals don't trust the system to be fair to them. In spite of this, the slides declare that the HPC's approach to justice is rehabilitative and restorative. The IPSOS research explored the expectations of complainants, stakeholders and members of the public about the HPC's FTP process. They used interviews and discussion groups. They found that there was: lack of clarity about the role of the regulator, confusion about roles, a desire to see mediation, an expectation that things be dealt with in 3-6 months, registrants and employers were concerned by the stress caused, and by the impact on careers.

The minutes of the **Education & Training Committee** meeting, on 8 June 2010 included a report of the discussion arising about the concerns over Standard of Education and Training Level 1. There have been mentions of these concerns in several of the PLG meetings for C&P – Eileen Thornton (Chair of E&T) has let it be known that the SET 1 seems to be provoking turf wars in educational establishments. The minutes note that the issue of generic standards was extremely complex because of the diversity of scopes of practise across the Register, and that neither the option to remove the standard nor to change it or even keep it was a good idea. But then decided to do nothing.

For info – from this month's **FTP list of impending hearings**.

### **Occupational therapist**

1. During the period November 2008-April 2009;
  - i. you engaged in a sexual relationship

- with the male patient;
  - ii. stayed in a hotel overnight with the male patient;
  - iii. were present whilst the patient rolled up cannabis joints on several occasions; and
  - iv. on several occasions you took the patient to a snooker hall where you were aware the patient purchased cannabis
2. The matters set out at paragraph 1 amount to misconduct; and
3. By virtue of that misconduct, your fitness to practise is impaired.

### **Biomedical Scientist:**

- 1) On 29 October 2008 and 31 October 2008, you made racist remarks about an absent colleague in the presence of other work colleagues with words to the effect of,  
“I have an idea of what XX could do as her other job - a suicide bomber”
- 2) The matter set out in paragraph 1 constitutes misconduct,
- 3) By reason of that misconduct, your fitness to practise is impaired.

On July 2<sup>nd</sup>, a hearing was due to be held of a man whose **suicide attempt led his employer to report him to the HPC**. The man appealed against the hearing which had been scheduled on a very significant day for his family. His appeals were all rejected. On the day of the appeal, the HPC themselves decided to adjourn it! Is this an example of the restorative justice practiced by HPC?

Thanks to colleagues for bringing news to my attention. Do contact me with news or questions you would particularly like to be reported.