

Counselling in the UK

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Some historical highlights....

- 1960s/1970s counselling theory imported from USA
- Origins of British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy 1970
- From mistrust to public acceptance
- Competition & confusion with psychotherapy, clinical psychology and psychiatry
- Foster Report 1971 distanced counselling/therapy from scientology
- BACP over 25,000 members; first accreditation scheme 1981
- Codes of ethics brought together in 2002 *Ethical Framework*

Ingredients of professionalisation

- The processes and structures involved in the path towards professionalisation are mainly the following:
- A representative professional body with a membership base, with necessary committee structures and AGM.
- A clear memorandum or mission statement, preferably including a clear definition of counselling, its aims and scope.
- A body of theoretical knowledge and skills that can be shown to be distinctive.
- A code or framework of professional ethics; a complaints procedure.
- An annual conference and/or other means of coming together.
- Divisional and regional structures if necessary and appropriate.
- A funding source or sources.

Ingredients of professionalisation

- A group of active promoters, including figureheads, spokespeople and benefactors.
- Media/public relations, publications (a journal or newsletter) and general publicity functions.
- Criteria regarding training norms: these may include theoretical models, academic level, hours, placements, personal therapy, CPD, specialist qualifications.
- (Probably) acceptance by the higher education system.
- A scheme for accreditation, practitioner quality control or licensing.

Ingredients of professionalisation

- A voluntary register of competent practitioners.
- A clear stance on supervision.
- Research and evaluation possibilities; concern for evidence-based practice.
- An employment structure including role specifications, salaries, accountability and means of exclusion.
- An avenue of communication with the relevant government department and a means of communication with allied professions
- A realistic timescale and step-by-step agenda.
- Protection of title.

Problems

- Lack of epidemiological base-who needs counselling for what?
- Employment of counsellors-how many needed?
Glut of courses.
- Perhaps about 37,500 paid counsellors in the UK
- Need for a broad, shared training model (a core curriculum?) instead of dozens of models?
- Critics are still not satisfied

Objections to professionalisation

- Patriarchal and class assumptions of the professions
- Centralised professional bodies
- Rising costs & 'occupational colonialism'
- Value of volunteers downplayed
- Independent Practitioners' Network as alternative model
- Professionalisation not inevitable but highly probable

Local needs

- Counselling theory imported largely from USA
- 83% BACP members female
- Most counselling models remain Amero-eurocentric and urban
- Socio-economic, socio-cultural and other local needs (e.g. Northern Ireland)

Where to from here?

- National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE)
- Layard & the call for 10,000 extra CBT therapists
- A core curriculum to overcome obstacles to statutory regulation via Health Professions Council
- 'Increasing access to psychological therapies' (IAPT) pilot project
- Promotion of CBT and of counselling as a healthcare intervention
- Need for further research and promotion of humanistic and psychodynamic models
- Growth of recognition of mindfulness and relationship strands in counselling practice & theory
- Possible (if slow) recognition of social, historical and evolutionary contexts of suffering (anthropathology) and counselling
- Need to factor in environmental challenges