

psychotherapists from the more intractable clients, although I would like to see promising counsellors and therapists given opportunities to work under supervision with problem clients, in order to learn sharp-end work. There are also those practitioners (who assume different titles) who specialise in particular work

which the majority would not tackle.

Any tables I draw up in future will be more carefully worded, assessing suitability on the basis of levels of experience, and sometimes the basis of therapeutic approach, but not on training background or registered status. The counsellors have proved me wrong.

Further Reading

J.A. Durlak, 'Comparative effectiveness of para-professional and professional helpers', *Psychological Bulletin*, 1979

Michael Jacobs, *Swift to Hear*, SPCK, 1985

Michael Jacobs, *Psychodynamic Counselling in Action*, Sage, 1988

Michael Jacobs, 'Psychodynamic Counselling — identity achieved?' *Journal of Psychodynamic Counselling*, 1994

C. Sherrard, 'The rise in demand for counselling', *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 1994

What is the British Association for Counselling?

David Jones

The Standing Conference for the Advancement of Counselling was founded in 1970, in London, with help from the NCVO, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. (It was the NCVO which advised the AHP on the wording of its constitution in 1971.) The British Association for Counselling (BAC), founded in 1977, grew out of the Standing Conference and then itself became a member organisation of the NCVO. In

1978 it moved to Rugby, funded by grants from the government's Voluntary Services Unit.

'Counselling' covers a very wide range of activities, including giving information and advice (for example on finance and careers), helping people in crisis (as after accidents or bereavement) and facilitating personal development (as in relationship and family counselling), where it can become indistinguishable

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from psychotherapy. The BAC is clear that counselling can never be a compulsory activity; it is 'voluntarily and deliberately undertaken by both counsellor and client' (BAC leaflet). It takes place in a variety of settings, including use of the telephone (as in crisis hotlines, although the Samaritans say they are not counsellors), in hospitals, drop-in centres, GP surgeries and elsewhere. Although counsellors are often paid for their work they still have many roots in the voluntary sector and to their clientele the cost of counselling ranges from free, through nominal to full fee. Many counsellors have experience in running relatively 'open door' policies in that they are accessible, often without any delay, to people in crisis.

The main approaches to counselling involve helping people to define and focus on the issues they are facing and to choose and maintain a clear and appropriate resolution of any difficulties they are experiencing. Some counsellors pay more attention to expressing feelings, others to the processes of learning or rationality. The form of counselling most favoured by humanistic practitioners is probably the client-centred approach in which the counsellor conveys an attitude of 'unconditional positive regard' (to use Carl Rogers' term), only clarifying and reflecting back what the client says and expresses. There are also approaches, specific to particular client needs, for bereavement, alcoholism, cancer support, sexual abuse and other sources of distress.

BAC sets standards for training and supervision; monitoring the skills and resources of qualified counsellors; codes of practice and ethics; and complaints procedures. It can also be turned to by other

organisations or individuals as a resource for information about counselling. It is coming to view itself as a professional body with elements of a Learned Society in the making, made up of a wide range of professionals with skills in working with people.

Currently (1996) more than 700 organisations are members of BAC and there are nearly 13,000 individual members, of whom 940 are Accredited Counsellors (the bulk of individual members are, in effect, subscribers). The intention now is to publish a United Kingdom Register of Counsellors. Names are currently held on a database and are available on request. Several accredited counsellors are also on the UKCP Register or are chartered psychologists of the BPS (British Psychological Society). At the time of writing accredited counsellors need to re-apply for accreditation every five years and some have now been through this process three times! The procedures for accreditation and re-accreditation are currently under review and may change.

Members of BAC have many and diverse trainings, spheres of interest and qualifications. Many BAC members use counselling skills in their employment, for example social workers and nurses. Others are clearly 'counsellors' and some of these are in private practice. It is very difficult to say what range of remuneration a counsellor can expect, but for most it is probably at the lower end of the range of professional salaries. Training costs are equally varied.

BAC enjoys good relationships with other professional bodies, particularly clergy and ministers (of almost every religion and denomination), social

workers, doctors, nurses, teachers, students and employers' organisations, especially those involved in EAPs (Employee Assistance Programmes). Links are growing with the legal profession through the development of family mediation services. BAC provided the facilities and administrative back-up in the initial stages of the development of the UKCP (United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy).

The development of an NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) in Counselling raises questions about the boundary

between counselling and psychotherapy and could be a subject for discussion and differences of opinion with the UKCP and the BPS. Client-centred counsellors, for example, who have a training comparable with the standards of the HIPS (Humanistic and Integrative) section of UKCP might want BAC to develop a suitable scheme for accrediting them as psychotherapists independently of the UKCP. The UKCP is involved with the BAC and other organisations in developing the criteria for an NVQ in psychotherapy.

BAC may be contacted for names of counsellors (including those who are psychotherapists), trainers and supervisors, a list of publications and information about training courses. Their information telephone line number is 01788 578328 and the address is 1 Regent Place, Rugby, Warwickshire CV21 2PJ.

