

Centre Profile: The Bath Centre for Psychotherapy and Counselling History

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In 1984 Peter Hawkins set up a one-year course in psychotherapy in Bath which eventually led to the foundation of the Bath Centre for Psychotherapy and Counselling (BCPC). The original course was set up in an area in which there were at that time very few psychotherapists or counsellors, and no psychotherapy training apart from some short courses in counselling and group facilitation. If you wanted to train as a psychotherapist you had to go to London. There was nothing available locally to equip people to work privately with individuals, and our course was started to meet this felt need. In the first year Peter was joined by Alix Pirani and in the following year by Judy Ryde.

It soon became clear that a one-year course was far from sufficient. By 1986 three further years had been added, two preceding and one following the original. A gap was created after year 3 so that students could practise under supervision until ready to take year 4. Completion of a dissertation and a case study would then

qualify them for a diploma. Anthony Elman and Judy Ryde taught the first two years and Peter Hawkins and Alix Pirani the second two. It was at this time that BCPC joined the HIPS section of what was then the Standing Conference of Psychotherapy, now the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy. In 1987 Tish Feilden and John Kirti Wheway joined the staff team, bringing its number to six.

Over the years we have continued to develop the course to meet felt needs and it is under review to this day. The changes made have been too numerous to mention, but I will describe the most fundamental ones.

When our course started there was little coherent training in the humanistic tradition available. Most people trained by putting their own portfolio of short courses together. As a result few people expected a training to provide a holding environment for students. Over time this expectation rightly changed and one of our major developments has concerned the gap

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between our third and fourth years. Students had begun to feel that they had been 'dropped' during this period, though they also appreciated being free to develop at their own pace. We decided to try to keep the best elements of the gap by retaining its flexibility but also providing sufficient holding, together with a learning community. In 1991 we made the gap period into a definite 'stage' of the training, in which students have an individual tutor and work to an individually negotiated training contract. Each student has their own programme of study, supervision, therapy and tutorials. Courses and workshops are arranged for them to buy in to when the time seems right. In addition some days and half days are arranged for the whole stage to attend. Students remain in this stage from one to five years, depending on their readiness to continue toward accreditation.

We next decided to call all the years 'stages'. This allowed each to be longer than a year if necessary. The gap year became Stage Four and what had been Year Four became Stage Five. There are now five stages and the training takes from five to ten years to complete. It leads to a Diploma in Psychotherapy which in turn leads to entrance to the UKCP Register of Psychotherapists.

In 1991, at the same time as the creation of the stages, we also decided to offer a Counselling Diploma. Our first two years are common to both diplomas, honouring the overlap between the two. At Stage Three the course divides into 'C' (counselling) and 'P' (psychotherapy). Counselling students write a dissertation and case study at the end of Stage Three C. Our

course became recognised by BAC in 1995, and it provides the training hours necessary for BAC accreditation.

Since 1986 our legal status has been that of a non profit-making company limited by shares, and in 1994 we became a charity. The Trustee Directors of the charity are responsible for the running of the organisation. They include professional people from the community and graduates of BCPC. In 1991 we formed an Association of students and graduates. This provides a Graduates Association in which graduates are autonomous. It is this body which ensures the ethical practice of its members and is in charge of reaccreditation proceedings. It now also provides the Chairs of important committees such as the Training Committee and the Standards and Ethics Committee. Students are Associate Members and become Full Members on accreditation. Students nevertheless play a very active part in the activities of the Association and it is run by a committee made up of members of all stages of the training as well as graduates. The Association provides a Newsletter and runs an annual conference, the library, the garden and social events.

Peter Hawkins was Chair of the Training Committee until September 1996, though he had not taught on the course for several years. Of the original staff only Judy Ryde and Kirti Wheway remain. Our staff are now a mixture of our own graduates and those trained elsewhere, combining cultural and theoretical continuity with fresh ideas and energies. We have made the transition from a course run by founders to one run by Directors of Charity with Full Members of the Association in key professional positions.