

*Letters for the next issue of S&S should be with the editor by January 21st. Ed.*

---

Since the last edition of Self and Society, AHPB has sent its response to the HPC (Health Professions Council) on the current proposals about the state regulation of psychotherapy and counselling. Copies of the AHPB contribution to the debate can be obtained from the AHPB administrator, at [admin@ahpb.org.uk](mailto:admin@ahpb.org.uk).

*The Chair received the following response from the HPC:*

Dear Prof. Beaumont,

**Psychotherapists and Counsellors Professional Liaison Group.**

I am writing further to your nomination for membership of the Psychotherapists and Counsellors Professional Liaison Group.

We have allocated places on the group on the basis of the information provided in the nominations we received, considering the extent to which the criteria outlined in the group's work plan had been met or exceeded. We also wanted to ensure that we created a balanced group, which was manageable in size.

As we had anticipated, the number of nominations we received greatly exceeded the available places on the group. This has inevitably meant that we have had to disappoint a large number of nominees, many of whom also had the potential to effectively contribute to the group.

We regret that on this occasion we have been unable to invite you to join the PLG. Whilst I know that this decision will disappoint you, we want to reassure you that we very much want to keep you informed and involved in this work.

I have added your contact details to an electronic distribution list which we will use to keep stakeholders informed and involved in the work. We will send regular updates on the work, including links to papers and minutes. Meetings of the PLG will be held in public and you may wish to attend to observe. Please note, however, that seating is limited and we may be unable to accommodate all those who wish to attend. Our website will be updated shortly with information about attending meetings:

[www.hpc-uk.org/aboutus/professionalliaisongroups/](http://www.hpc-uk.org/aboutus/professionalliaisongroups/)

The first meeting of the PLG will be considering the outcomes of the 'Call for Ideas'. It is crucial that we consider all stakeholder views in this exercise and the call for ideas is a crucial way in which we can be guided by the field and ensure that the views of those not directly represented on the group are properly taken into account.

We also anticipate convening a wider group of stakeholders during the PLG process in order to further seek views on the developing work. We will be in touch again over the next few weeks and months to invite your participation.

We very much want this to be an open, transparent process and we are committed to continuing to engage with you and listen to your views throughout this work.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Guthrie

Head of Policy and Standards.

*We have also received this update on discussions with the HPC from Nick Totton:*

This is an update on the current situation. As you may know, the petition against State Regulation (<http://www.PetitionOnline.com/statereg/petition.html>) has reached well over 1200 signatures. Anything you can do to spread the word would still be much appreciated.

On the basis of this massive support, some of the petition organisers (Arthur Musgrave, Andrew Samuels, Nick Totton) met with Marc Seale, chief executive of the Health Professions Council. Here is a record of the meeting which we have agreed with him.

1) Marc Seale indicated his own expectation of what will happen: that a very short list of titles will be protected, perhaps starting with just 'psychotherapist' and taking more time to work out which qualifying terms would be protected in combination with 'counsellor'. Other titles would not be protected. A multiplicity of titles 'will not help the public'. This is MS's best guess as to the outcome of the process, which he stressed he will not himself be directly part of.

2) MS could not and would not guarantee anything about use of implied titles, but our sense was that he does not expect a wave of prosecutions.

3) MS was entirely clear that HPC will not conduct a poll of practitioners, but will instead consult with organisations and individuals. He was unmoved by our objections that the people who run the organisations do not necessarily represent their members.

4) MS was also unimpressed by the various radical alternative models of registration / regulation, on which Denis had briefed him. In particular, he saw no mileage in the idea of a 'register of refuseniks', which strikes him as illogical.

5) MS emphasised that to be effective, arguments against plans for HPC regulation need to be expressed simply, straightforwardly and succinctly.

6) At the end of the meeting MS suggested a re-meet in the New Year, and encouraged us to let him have a brief and simple outline of our objections before that meeting.

The implication of the above is that if we do not want to be regulated by HPC, we will probably have the option of using some titles other than 'psychotherapist' or 'counsellor', and are unlikely to be prosecuted for doing so. (They could in theory argue that we were using an 'implied' title.) This is good news, relatively speaking, but we still have the goal of persuading the government to change its mind about its regulation plans. Moves are taking place towards forming an Alliance for this purpose; we will let you know if this bears fruit.

Meanwhile, if you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact us. A great deal of information and argument around this issue is available at <http://ipnosis.postle.net>.

Nick Totton

*Self & Society Vol 36 No 4 Jan - Feb 2009*