Peer-reviewed Papers

A Qualitative Study on the Rewards and Challenges of Being an Independent Practitioners Network Participant

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Rationale: **To date, relatively little research has explored alternative practices to those of the mainstream professional bodies within the field of counselling and psychotherapy.** ***Aim:*** **To explore the rewards and challenges of being an Independent Practitioners Network (IPN) participant.** ***Method:*** **Seven semi-structured interviews and five questionnaires from a self-selecting sample were subject to thematic analysis, alongside the researcher's participatory observations.** ***Findings:*** **IPN is a vehicle for multiple areas of support for a diverse group of practitioners, who encounter challenges from its structure, a high turnover rate and external forces.** ***Discussion:*** **Despite the limitations of selection bias, the findings provide a rich insight into an alternative model of practice.** ***Conclusion:*** **The IPN and the issues raised in this study have implications for all practitioners. Areas for further research are discussed.**

Research Proposal

The main objective of this paper is to ascertain the private thoughts and meanings of self-selected IPN participants in order to understand the workings of peer-to-peer networks among practitioners by undertaking telephone interviews, with the data being thematically analysed. Data validity will be tested by using participatory observations as a method of robust triangulation. The secondary objective is to contextualise the IPN's alternative approach by carrying out a comprehensive literature review.

Carl Rogers coined the term 'counsellor' in order to move away from the world of medicine and psychiatry and towards a humanistic landscape. In the present climate there is a movement to pull it back from where it dissented (Postle and House, 2009). Counselling has not yet become state regulated, and current self-regulation allows for flexibility and choice as to moral and structural accountability.

Students who undertake counselling courses could be forgiven for having a somewhat skewed interpretation of

PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLING & PSYCHOTHERAPY BODIES	MEMBERS (PARTICIPANTS*)
British Association for Counselling & psychotherapy	37,000
United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy	7,000
British Association for Behavioural & Cognitive Psychotherapies	6,500
British Psychoanalytical Council	1,450
The National Counselling Society	1,000 +
UK Association of Humanistic Psychological Practitioners	420
Independent Practitioners Network	150*

the governance of their profession, since training courses will either be accredited by a mainstream professional body or will focus strongly on the ethical framework of the largest professional body, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), often ignoring alternatives approaches (see table above)

Unlike other professional bodies, the Independent Practitioners Network has no executive; instead, there is 'a horizontal, non-hierarchical, low bureaucracy organisational approach' (Postle, 2000), where policies are agreed by its participants and where the emphasis is less on grievances and punishments, than on a conflict-resolution model (IPN, 2010).

Research Methods

For the purposes of this study, the researcher will be asking an ontological question as to what is real (Denzin and Lincoln, 2001). That is to say, the 'views, experiences and understandings' (Mason, 2002: 63) of the IPN respondents are to be explored in order to find the meaning of their reality. Directly linked to this approach, the researcher will be acknowledging the epistemology path of interacting with the IPN respondents as a way of generating data (Green and Thorogood, 2009).

As this study focuses on an organisation that is highly principled and represents an alternative to the mainstream, it is political by its very nature, and could be said to enter the domain of a critical inquiry: where power, oppression and the values of society come into question (Hartas, 2010). Because the ethos of the Network incorporates mutuality and cooperation, the researcher wished to invoke the spirit of a cooperative inquiry, a collaboration between co-subjects; hence, a relational and embodied manner was sought, allowing curiosity and openness (Etherington, 2007), rather than merely asking questions.

While it may not necessarily follow that the research undertaken here will be qualitative as opposed to quantitative, since neither methodologies have a solid philosophical base (Mason, 2002), the researcher's reasoning of his chosen methodology is given below:

- As this study seeks to explore the views of IPN participants, the use of a qualitative approach can provide a rich, nuanced and varied comprehension of data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).
- Rather than the quantitative method of standardising the collected data, this research project aims to be sensitive to the context in which the data is produced.
- Qualitative research allows for understanding to be multi-layered and complex.
- The pursuit of statistics is not the prime motivation of this project.

Ethics

The key ethical considerations in setting out this research were the possible consequences of private worlds becoming public (Kvale, 2007), the anxiety of the interview itself, and the unpredictable impact self-discovery can have on an individual. There is also a need to tread carefully when working with 'rare populations' (Lee, 1993: 65) such as the IPN. Finally, while the BACP (Bond, 2010) encourages its members to be attentive to the integrity of the 'dissemination... of the research', (p. 10), once published, the findings of this research paper could be open to a variety of manipulations and disfigurements.

Key Concepts

Professional Identity looks at personal values, philosophy and self-concepts within one's work-place role and the approach one adapts within this role. It evaluates the perception of self within one's place of work (Erikson, 1968), including how group members interact, how they differ from other professional groups, and how these identities are reshaped following an experience or self-reflection. Related issues include competence, status and role conflict

(Costello, 2005). Identity with one's professional role may also be tied to how much or little responsibility and empowerment an individual has.

State regulation: Mainstream professional bodies related to counselling and psychotherapy have moved away from prescriptions and rules, and invested in the values and principles of ethics (Carroll, 2007). However, the notion of state regulation in this arena has been on the table since the 1970s with a government report (Foster, 1971) looking into the practices of Scientology, and recommending that 'psychotherapy... should be organised as a restricted profession' (p. 150). A White Paper, 'Trust Assurance and Safety' (Department of Health, 2007), stated its intention to introduce the statutory regulation of psychotherapy and counselling. During the consultation period, the IPN made a stand not only against state regulation (Marefield Report, 2009) but also on how power was being used to stifle dissent. House and Postle (2008: 191) claimed that 'All of the major psycho-practice organisations have openly used fear of being left out, fear of not being able to work' and the 'trance inductions' of the 'inevitability' of statutory regulation. Their alternative to state regulation was the 'building of mature and congruent accountability institutions' at 'macro and micro level' (p. 198).

The Independent Practitioners Network

Within the field of therapy there is a shortage of research into radical alternatives to approaches such as the BACP. The IPN is a case in point. Here is a movement that challenges so many aspects of conventional wisdom within counselling and psychotherapy, and that is itself challenged and tested by the establishment. Yet with such a political battle having been played out since its formation 18 years ago, there is little mention of the IPN's ethos and practice within training, textbooks and in the reportage of therapy.

This review will attempt to rectify this imbalance by examining the movement from a number of key perspectives. It will seek to understand how IPN operates, with particular regard to accountability; to determine what societal context the IPN has originated from, including an exploration into its grounding as a peer-to-peer (P2P) network, as well as issues against which the IPN has rallied: professionalisation and state regulation. It will also look to place the philosophical and political approach of the IPN into a context of professional identify.

IPN is a peer-to-peer organisation that is based around practitioners engaging in face-to-face rapport within local support groups of between five and nine individuals. The purpose of such an arrangement is designed to foster mutuality, self-responsibility and autonomy, while eliminating the need for facilitation and coercion (IPN, 2007).

After a period of time, individuals within emergent groups, who have grown to know the practices of their fellow participants, will agree to 'stand by' the work of their peers (IPN, 2012a). When this process is complete and a declaration is produced as to the ethics of how the group works with their clients, the collective moves from a 'forming group' to a 'member group'. The final stage in the metamorphosis is then to become a full member group. This entails linking with two other peer groups who in turn, once satisfied, agree to validate the 'standing-by' process of the original collective. As this process is ongoing, groups and linking groups meet periodically in order to provide continuous 'support and challenge'. The underlining term for this process is 'civic accountability' (IPN, 2010). In this way, practitioners can therefore be said to be 'validated through the IPN process' (IPN, 2012b).

The protocols of the IPN are based on consensual decision-making at thrice-yearly national gatherings and allow for sharing of 'developments and difficulties'. IPN values can be distilled to put an emphasis on diversity, since the term 'practitioner' can include a multitude of occupations, no or low hierarchies, and transparency (IPN, 2010). Postle (2012: 64) states that it is 'a social process that draws on what we know about our own and others' behaviour so as to minimize, through continuing scrutiny, the likelihood of client/practitioner boundary violations'.

The inaugural IPN conference in London in 1995 had 60 participants, one of whom was Postle. In the 1970s he participated in the Human Potential Research Group (HPRG) under John Heron. The human potential movement focused on each person's independent and autonomous growth, as opposed to the reshaping of individuals to fit society's demands (Heron, 1996). A further thread in IPN's development is taken from Richard House, who spoke of 'the Norwich Collective, a peer group of innovative therapists' which 'had become a leading focus for disquiet at the trend towards the institutional professionalisation of therapy' (Popescu, 2005: 14).

The social peer-to-peer movement has a strong political element to its nature, linked to the Marxist slogan, 'Each according to ability, each according to need' (Green, 1985: 67). Themes of freedom, 'communal sharing' (Fiske, 1993), participation and support within its literature makes it stand apart from concepts connected with authority and centralisation. This is not to suggest that peer-to-peer networks are structure-less, rather that the structures are

fluid, dynamic, systemic and based on models of voluntary cooperation.

The IPN formation is therefore in part ideological, but also an active reaction to a perceived assault on the direction of counselling and psychotherapy. In the 1990s the psychological field was experiencing a volume of negative publicity, with many stories around sexual abuses and false memory implantations. Out of this climate, the government was preparing plans to regulate. Initially, the IPN stood largely solitarily against regulation, with the argument that matters of the mind should stay outside of state control.

To give substance to the IPN's isolated opposition to regulation came Mowbray (1995) with his seminal book *The Case Against Psychotherapy Registration*. Mowbray believed that the context of professionalisation, accreditation and registration was best seen in the light of 'a political process concerned with power and control' (p. 2). He saw fear as a guiding factor in this process, with practitioners uncertain as to whether they could maintain their work if they went unregistered.

One of the main conclusions to come out of the recent campaign against the Health Professions Council's intention to regulate counselling and psychotherapy was a lack of evidence to show that risks could be reduced through statutory registration (Rogers, 2009). As a footnote to this section, the coalition government has now abandoned these plans in favour of a voluntary register via the Council for Health Regulatory Excellence's Professional Standards Authority. The IPN is currently weighing up its options as to whether or not it will participate in such a scheme.

The final key concept in this paper relates to professional identity. In a recent study, Winning (2010) examined the experiences of lone counsellors, whom Hewitt and Wheeler (2004, cited in Winning, 2010) argued were isolated professionally and personally. The notion of a practitioner's fitness to practise (Bond, 2010) becoming impeded by being isolated, undervalued and misunderstood (Towler, 2003, cited in Winning, 2010) makes this a topic pertinent to all in the therapy field. For the alternative could be seen as a unity within one's personal and professional roles to aid 'a sense of belonging' and 'an understanding of self in one's chosen field' (Brott and Myers, 1999).

The concept of professional identity revolves around the integration of one's personal values, attitudes and beliefs with professional ethics and rules. Schön (1983) makes the point that part of one's professional identity may include 'memories, associations, habits, skills, concepts, and categorizations' (p. 45). Braumeister and Leary (1995) noted that the human need to form relationships is a significant driving force and that not achieving this 'belonging' is a trigger to a variety of mental health problems. When changes are imposed on an individual, such as working conditions and increased regulation, this can also be detrimental to one's identity and therefore one's well-being (Mason, 2012).

Winning found social isolation, professional isolation and organisational limitations at the core of her sample of nine lone working participants.

Method of Data Analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as 'a means to identify and analyse patterns from data' by organising themes into 'clusters of linked categories that each convey similar meanings' (p. 70). The researcher anticipates reading and re-reading over the transcripts of the interviews in order to build up awareness and familiarity of what is being said. During this time, notes would be made as to what he believed to be major issues. Thereafter the process of highlighting sections of text and putting codes in the margins would begin. When the researcher is satisfied that the codes are appropriate, he would then make a separate file on his computer and place extracts into a number of codes.

Issues Arising from the Process of Data Analysis

Data collection began in June 2012 with attendance at an IPN gathering. From a self-selecting sample, seven individuals agreed to undertake a recorded telephone interview, while two individuals completed the questionnaires during the gathering, the remaining three arriving at a later date. One individual undertook both methods.

The questions for the semi-structured interviews and the questionnaires were the same (see Appendix). The very nature of the interviews meant that there were a number of deviations that occurred that have implications for the findings. Some questions were answered out of turn, some questions were not answered, and some questions were added following a deeper inquiry.

Data Analysis

The over-riding themes from both interviews and questionnaires were as follows:

- Spiritual and personal support
- Professional and ethical support
- Diversity and equality
- Support for client
- Organisational support
- Structural challenges
  - Procedural and ethical challenges
  - Maintaining and recruitment challenges
- Geographical and time limitations
- Spiritual and personal challenges
- External challenges
  - Regulation
  - Accreditation
- Professional challenges

Data Analysis from Semi-structured Interviews:

All respondents took a large portion of time to explore how the IPN movement has affected them as individuals. The word 'support' came up in many different ways. Respondents talked about IPN giving them 'an enduring foundation' as well as 'a sense of belonging'. Another spoke of their pride at being part of the movement, while others mentioned having 'a sense of respect' and 'a sense of being connected' and these connections being 'meaningful.'

The IPN was also described as 'a synthesis of collaboration and autonomy' along with 'a combination of mutual need, compassion and kindness' and 'the real richness of person-to-person contact.' One voice equated IPN to an armchair, saying 'it's a bit battered and it has holes in it, but it is solid and it gives me that sense of: if I make a mistake or if something went wrong, I could sit there and say to the armchair, "okay, I need your support"'.

Part of the security afforded to IPN participants enabled them to talk freely, 'knowing you will be supported... and challenged'. Challenge came up many times in the context of improving one's practice. Other's spoke of IPN 'keeping ethical codes meaningful'; of having their work 'validated'; and of 'engendering responsibility'. One interviewee, accompanied by laughter, made the point that the IPN 'helps me to recognise myself as a professional practitioner', while another made the point that IPN 'mirrors the relationship [with] one's clients'.

One respondent, commenting on the standing by process, felt 'very secure professional[ly] in a way that having a piece of paper saying I am a member of such and such and paying so much money a year is quite different.... it doesn't offer me very much apart from an official rubber stamping.'

In the category of organisational support, a whole spectrum of single-entry benefits that the IPN provided are presented below:

- The IPN attracts 'hard working and astute people'
- There is 'a good flow of information'
- 'Learning how groups work'
- 'It's effective'
- Cheap/affordable
- 'IPN is non-doctrine'
- It 'resists government'
- Involvement fuelled by commitment to [IPN's] ideology

Over half of the respondents made a direct reference to enhanced client work and being a part of IPN, with one person stating that it 'improved the quality of my clients' lives'.

Interpersonal meetings within IPN were undertaken within a spirit of equality, with consensus decision-making mentioned, alongside the notion of being able to challenge elders as being no more and no less than 'just another participant'. The non-hierarchical process of the IPN was also voiced by three participants.

With regards to the rewards of being in a localised member group, there was a strong sense of sharing and connecting with a variety of practitioners, including body-workers, co-counsellors, massage-workers and hypnotherapists, who 'all talk differently'. Rewards were clearly seen in this arrangement, such as 'getting another perspective'; 'learning new ways of working', as well as the general benefits of 'a [shared] interest in the human condition'. The linking process was also mentioned in connection to 'sharing good practice' and experiencing how other groups operate. One respondent described their sense of what it meant to be in an IPN peer group as 'feeling held, deep, very deep, rather like a counselling session'.

There was also a clear recognition of the merits the peer groups plays with regard to 'continuous professional development', including:

- An opportunity to explore new strands of work
- Advice of wise people/Supported by skilled colleagues
- Improves practice and confidence
- [Peer] supervision is of a higher standard than that prior to joining IPN

The IPN national gatherings were also mentioned in association with the importance of debate and listening to material that is political, or therapeutic, or academic. 'People are really heard.... [and this] helps to make changes

as communities as well as individuals: it makes decisions embodied.'

The following data relates specifically to beneficial evidence of change as a result of being in IPN over a period of time, with the following points raised:

- 'Sense of belonging has increased'
- Recognised worth [of self]
- Recognised the value of my presence
- Aware that I have useful things to contribute [to the group]
- Developed a richer rapport with friends/colleagues
- Feel included and respected

As an overview of the category of challenges, the word 'frustrating' and 'frustration' came up with regularity with regards to IPN's structure: such as 'it's frustrating when we make decisions and they aren't carried out, or nobody remembers them'. On the specific matter of the standing-by process, two interviewees made the following stark announcements:

> What actually happens if someone says I cannot stand by [another's] work? There is no precedent, no equivalent, no structure for it, no way of saying either we'll split the network, or ask someone to leave. This is a real challenge: standing by someone's work or not, or staying with the struggle, the conflict.... Do we want to be harder, sharper with possible exclusions at a network level?

And this coupled with, 'We have no structure to exclude... so the challenge is putting down a line and saying "no" – to anyone the Network cannot stand by'.

Another participant noted, 'the very strength of IPN was its weakness'; 'there is no bridging, over-arching organisation holding it together', and that 'it requires a huge amount of discipline and effort on behalf of every participant to ensure its sustainability'.

On the specific matter of IPN accreditation, the following was voiced: 'The IPN can never accredit because we have no authority, no executive. The wording "accredited through the process" is a way of opting out of personal responsibility.'

On the subject of recruitment, one participant recognised that it was 'hard to sell to other people something that is experiential'. Another cited that 'newcomers are puzzled [by IPN]'. There was also the observation that 'We are getting old.... When we die who is going to replace us?'

External, political challenges were found to be exhausting, with one voice arguing that '...the bulk of the experience of being a participant is about the national political regulation scene rather than sharing therapeutic ideas and experiences'.

There was a recognition by most interviewees of the issues and implications of being accredited by the IPN or by BACP/UKCP, etc., and the real or perceived fears of losing out in the market-place as a result of one's decision.

Interpersonal struggles between participants were also acknowledged by three interviewees, with one voice revealing that 'There is a tension politically between people who want to make agreements and police them and those where nobody is going to tell them what to do'.

There was a strong sense of predictability in the notion that 'groups fall apart' and that 'people come and go'. Slow linking was found to be challenging, as was finding a group that is 'within easy distance'. The length of time it takes to become a full member group was noted, as was the idea that it was 'hard not to be impatient'.

There were also concerns about groups who did not attend gatherings, as well as groups 'not getting the concept of being in a peer network'.

In terms of how challenges change over time, one person noted a change in 'the great sense of vision' the IPN once had; while for a couple of participants there has been a change in the type of person that has come into the movement, leading one interviewee to ask, 'Does this movement attract oddballs?'.

The sense of unease at how external organisations affect the IPN led one participant to report, 'State regulation caused the Network to panic and split into two groups: one [that was] active, protecting, arguing and lobbying, the other passive'.

The average length of time that an interview respondent had been a part of IPN was 11.5 years.

Data Analysis from Questionnaires

The data from the questionnaires was particularly useful in that the responses appear to back up and validate the themes coming across from the interviews. The wide definition of 'support' came up many times as the main focus of the text. All of the respondents voiced the theme of 'Spiritual and personal support'. Professional support was also evident throughout this method of inquiry, both in terms of one's own practice and client support. The value of being surrounded by different practitioners was viewed as a component of the IPN's commitment to equality and diversity. This was particularly vivid with the following quotation: '[The IPN is] such a vibrant, equal, accepting group... They don't just talk equality, they live it.'

In terms of challenges, there were close links to the

interviews, although proportionally in less depth. The geographical and time limitations of IPN figured here, as were the procedural and ethical challenges, where a 'lack of structure' was cited, which one person noted as 'frustrating', and another 'irritating'. The difficulty of recruitment was also touched upon with regards to a high turnover rate for individuals and groups.

The average length of time that a questionnaire respondent had been a part of IPN was 7.3 years.

Data Analysis from the Researcher's Participatory Observations

The final piece of triangulation comes from the researcher's own participatory observations on attending the IPN national gathering. Much that the researcher saw and experienced would concur with the above findings. Getting to know the respondents prior to their participation, the researcher can confirm the congruency of those who imparted their thoughts and opinions.

The researcher found the IPN participants to be a highly supportive, highly principled and a caring group. There were visible power struggles between individuals, and that power was often noted and challenged. The researcher also experienced a felt sense of the strength and power of connectivity, of belonging, of being in a strong, voluntary community.

Discussion

Limitations

The success of qualitative research is often dependant on the skill of the researcher (Seale, 1999). Bias will also play a factor in limiting the potential of this project (Maxwell, 2005) Thus, expectation bias, attention bias, significance bias and contamination bias (Hartman et al., 2002) will undoubtedly figure, alongside unrecognised biases. This particular study was also restricted by having a small sample size, coupled with questions that were limited in their scope.

Issues of Reliability and Validity

There is a question mark as to whether or not these finding could be duplicated by another study. For as part of the general co-inquiry of this project, the researcher came into the field with similarities to the thinking of the participant, which may have aided and hindered the results in equal measure. For example, a participant may not have felt the necessity to supply footnotes to a subject that the interviewer was aware of or was perceived to be aware of. This may then have excluded the need to talk at length about major issues; whereas an interviewer with an unknown background may have drawn out different topics and different approaches from the interviewees. Conversely, the bond that the researcher perceived in the co-inquiry may have made this a uniquely revealing inquiry.

One may summarise that with the mixed-method approach yielding similar findings, the research project possessed a high internal validity rating. Conversely, with a combined average length of time within IPN being set at 9.4 years for the eleven respondents, there is clearly a selection bias here.

Ethical Issues

Certain sections of material were excluded from the findings as they may have compromised the anonymity of the respondents or led to areas that may be deemed inappropriate for wider consumption. In doing this the researcher recognised the subjective and arbitrary nature of his actions.

Linking Findings to Core Concepts and Secondary Literature

The core concept to figure in the finding was professional identity. Here the respondents spoke about how the IPN has helped shape or sustain their personal and professional development. The political concerns of IPN as written by certain high-profile IPN participants figured less so. The impact of the government, the spectre of state regulation and accreditation were all touched upon, yet the main challenges of the respondents appeared to be much more focused and concerned with in-house and more practical, localised matters. The impact of the diversity within the IPN cannot be overstated, yet it was a subject that was overlooked within the literature review.

Key Conclusion from the Findings

The IPN is an extremely supportive and self-celebrated community for a small number of like-minded professionally diverse individuals. It is continuously demanding work sustaining the high philosophical grounds that the movement aspires to; and as well as interpersonal clashes and external pressures, there are concerns around IPN's rapid turnover and a question mark as to where the next generation of aspirants will come from.

Main Themes from Research Findings

This research describes a multitude of rewards to being an IPN participant. These benefits generally fall into the wide

domain of support. The summary of this support comes in the overriding notion of being 'held' spiritually, personally and professionally, which in turn provides an indirect benefit of improving one's work with one's clients.

One of the main links to the research's key concept came with professional identity, with nine of the eleven respondents relating their ideological beliefs and values to being an IPN participant; while an overarching sense of belonging from the respondents appears to corroborate the theory of Braumeister and Leary (1995).

With regards to challenges, all respondents found being an IPN participant challenging in some way. Here there were fewer unifying themes, though there were commonly shared 'frustrations' around a lack of structure, with some respondents accepting this as an inherent part of IPN make-up, while others saw it as a flaw in the design of IPN. There were also misgivings surrounding an unresolved ethical issue of *not* 'standing by' a practitioner or a peer group, and the merits of whether or not IPN should have its own form of accreditation.

External factors perceived as threats to the autonomy of IPN also constituted a theme that came up within the key concepts. Cultural differences between long-standing IPN participants (the majority of respondents) and the new recruits was an area that permeated through the theme domains; while the difficulty of maintaining groups and recruits was also highlighted.

Recommendations Drawn from Data

- Counsellors should be aware that there is a humanistic alternative to mainstream professional bodies.
- Individual practitioners need not necessarily experience isolation within their profession.
- Traditional one-to-one supervision is not the only method of professional support for practitioner and client alike.
- There is an alternative to hierarchical structures, so long as there is a commitment to sustain egalitarian frameworks.

Recommendations for Continued Research

First, the IPN is but one alternative experiment, and there are other ways of working on a micro level that would be relevant to practitioners. Secondly, research could be undertaken which tests the assumption that supervision can only be given by practitioners in the same modality. As an annex to this project it may also be of interest to interview the sub-group of IPN participants who have left the organisation. What were the factors in their decision? Were there internal frictions or external pressures to bear? This would not only give a more wholesome picture of the IPN but may also be of use to the IPN itself. Finally, if the pursuit of best practice was to be diligently researched in the field of work and well-being, the study of peer-to-peer groups and networks such as the IPN could provide ample material as a comparison to current mainstream practices. This would fit the coalition government's agenda of localism, and act as a follow-up to the Layard Report (London School of Economics, 2006).

Appendix

Q1: How long have you been an IPN participant?
Q2: What have been the rewards for you as an IPN participant?
Q3: What have been the challenges for you as an IPN participant?
Q4: Have the rewards and challenges changed over the time you have been a participant?
Q5: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Simon Campbell is a counsellor in Tyne & Wear. He has a history of working with disadvantaged groups and specialises in bereavement and childhood abuse. In 2012 he established Community Counselling Cooperative (CCC), a consortia of qualified counsellors and group facilitators. CCC currently works in schools and with individuals engaged in the probation service in Gateshead. Simon also supports children and families through Barnardos Orchard Mosaic Project in Newcastle.

Janet Grace is a Consultant Neurosychiatrist working as the clinical lead in the Regional Neurobehavioural Unit (NBU) at Walkergate Park Hospital, which is an NHS service for patients with acquired brain injury. This service provides a behaviourally managed environment for people who have psychiatric and/or behavioural problems following acquired brain injury. The NBU works in a multidisciplinary model, and Janet works closely with psychology, speech and language therapy, physiotherapy and social work professionals. Janet has been a Consultant for eight years and over the last five years has done many reports for the Court of Protection, including some very challenging cases about capacity to consent to treatment, make decisions about residence, capacity to consent to sexual relationships and marriage.

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