

## Open Letter: Fighting to save counsellor education

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### **Commentary by the Open Letter organizer and former editor of *Self & Society*, Dr David Murphy**

The climate for counselling and psychotherapy education in the UK is placing some courses under threat. In Higher Education, courses are under increasing pressure to increase recruitment and reduce staff. The prestigious person-centred counselling courses at the University of Strathclyde, Scotland, are the latest to be placed under the threat of closure as recruitment to courses was recently suspended. While rhetoric surrounding the suspension points to a new MSc course in the future, it appears that such a course would not fulfil the requirements for a professional training. Part-time staff employed on these courses are likely to lose their jobs. An Open Letter was produced and sent to the Vice Chancellor of the University of Strathclyde as part of a mounting campaign to save the Strathclyde courses.

Please lend your support by visiting the Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/savecounsellingtraining/>) and Share with your colleagues and friends. The important task at this time is to keep the pressure on the institution to rethink their decision, and so preserve professional training at the University of Strathclyde. Thank you.

Dear Vice Chancellor,

This Open Letter is our response to the recent announcement of the suspension of recruitment to person-centred counselling courses at the University of Strathclyde.

Over the last two decades University of Strathclyde has developed and built up an international reputation as one of the world leading centres for education in person-centred therapy. In addition to the excellent training available, the Counselling Unit has created the gold standard in UK counselling research clinics – a venture that has now commenced inter-institution collaboration with the University of Nottingham. University of Strathclyde has achieved the highest standing in the field of person-centred therapy and receives international recognition evidenced through the list of signatories to this letter. The suspension of entry to courses has the potential to seriously adversely impact the University of Strathclyde's standing in the field of person-centred therapy and psychological therapies more generally. A four-year suspension of recruitment to training will seriously damage the supply of highly skilled and well qualified counsellors and psychotherapists, both locally to Glasgow, in the wider regions of the UK and more broadly across Europe.

As academics we understand the current pressure on Higher Education and see the benefits for a sustainable counselling training that allows a path from undergraduate studies through to postgraduate professional training. There is also a clear need within

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the profession, and specifically at this time for the University of Strathclyde, to invest in further training for PhD researchers and to enable the development of a local workforce that can provide a sustainable supply of staff to counselling courses going forward.

Thus, based on these points we urge the University of Strathclyde to release the current freeze on the search for replacement posts following the loss of two members of staff in the Counselling Unit. Whilst this search for appropriately qualified and trained staff is conducted we call for at least one of the postgraduate diploma courses in person-centred therapy to be allowed to continue throughout the proposed four-year period of transition. This will ensure the progression of students that are currently enrolled to achieve a level of qualifying suitable for professional practice; this will also enable a number of part-time tutor posts to be retained. This action, we believe, will enable the University of Strathclyde to maintain its reputation and position, and continue to contribute to the strategic development of the counselling profession both in the UK and internationally.

We believe the move to course closures (in all but name) will cause such significant damage to the standing of the University of Strathclyde in the field of person-centred therapy training that the loss of both academic and professional contributions to the psychological therapies will be permanent. We urge you to enter a process of consultation with all stakeholders and to reconsider the drastic action of course suspension.

Yours sincerely,

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**Prof. Stephen Joseph**, Ph.D., C.Psychol., University of Nottingham

**Andrew Samuels**, Professor of Analytical Psychology, University of Essex; Former Chair, UK Council for Psychotherapy

**Brian Thorne**, Emeritus Professor of Counselling, University of East Anglia

**Mick Cooper**, Professor of Counselling Psychology, University of Roehampton

**Windy Dryden**, Emeritus Professor of Psychotherapeutic Studies, Goldsmiths University of London

**Alberto S. Segrera**, Emeritus Professor, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico

**Andy Rogers**, PGDip Couns., MBACP Registered Member, Head of Counselling, Sparsholt & Andover Colleges of Further Education

**Anne Goldie**, Trainer, Counselling Certificate, Glasgow

**Arthur C. Bohart**, Professor Emeritus, California State University at Dominguez Hills, Fellow of the American Psychological Association

**Belinda Harris**, Ph.D., University of Nottingham

**Bernie Neville**, Ph.D., Honorary Professor, Swinburne University of Technology, Australia

**Catherine Hayes**, Counselling for Depression Coordinator, University of Nottingham

**Clair Higgon**, MA Counselling Course Tutor, University of Edinburgh

**Colin Feltham**, Emeritus Professor of Critical Counselling Studies, Sheffield Hallam University

**Craig Hutchison**, Lecturer, University of Edinburgh

**Del Loewenthal**, Professor of Psychotherapy and Counselling, University of Roehampton

**Douglas W. Bower**, L.P.C., Ph.D.

- Dr Brian Rodgers**, Senior Lecturer, Psychotherapy and Counselling / Tari Whakaora Hinengaro ā Whakangārahu, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand
- Dr Caroline Kitcatt**, MBACP (Snr Accred), Centre Director, The Norwich Centre Managing Director, Norwich, UK
- Dr Gillian Proctor**, Assistant Professor Counselling, University of Nottingham
- Dr Irene Dudley-Swarbrick**, C.Biol., M.Sc., MA, Ph.D., Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Health & Social Care, Edge Hill University
- Dr Judy Moore**, former Director of the Centre for Counselling Studies, University of East Anglia
- Dr Liz Ballinger**, MA Counselling Programme Director, University of Manchester
- Dr Sue Pattison**, School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences, University of Newcastle upon Tyne
- Fiona Ferry**, Course Tutor, Children and Young People, Simpson House in association with Middlesex University
- Gail Evans**, Director, The Academy: SPACE, Sheffield
- Germain Lietaer**, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor, Unit of Clinical Psychology, KU Leuven, Belgium
- Godfrey T. Barrett-Lennard**, Ph.D. (Chicago), Hon Doc Univ (Murdoch) FAPS & Fellow, APA; Adjunct Professor in Psychology and Health Professions, Murdoch University, Perth, Australia
- Graham Westwell**, Senior Lecturer in Counselling and Psychotherapy, Edge Hill University
- Greet Vanaerschot**, Ph.D., Professor of Psychotherapy, Universiteit Antwerpen, Belgium
- Iguaraya Morales**, Ph.D., Chair of Scientific Committee, World Association for Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies & Counselling
- Isobel Urquhart**, MA, Tutor/Supervisor, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge
- Ivan Ellingham**, Ph.D., C.Psychol., formerly of University of Hertfordshire
- Jeffrey H. D. Cornelius-White**, Psy.D., LPC, Professor of Psychology, Missouri State University
- Jo Hilton**, Course Tutor, Counselling and Psychotherapy, University of Edinburgh
- John Marsden**, University Centre Blackburn College
- Lisbeth Sommerbeck**, Psychologist, M.Sc., Danish Carl Rogers Forum, Denmark
- Maggie Robson**, Ph.D., Programme Director, Keele University
- Manu Bazzano**, M.Sc., Primary Tutor – Metanoia Institute, London; Visiting Lecturer, University of Roehampton, London
- Marjorie Witty**, Ph.D., Professor and University Fellow, Illinois School of Professional Psychology
- Martin Wilks**, C.Psychol., Counselling Psychologist
- Michael Behr**, Ph.D., Professor of Psychotherapy and Counselling, University of Education Schwäbisch Gmünd, Stuttgart
- Michael J. Lambert**, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology, Susa Young Gates University
- Patricia Joyce**, Counselling Trainer, Aberdeen
- Patrick Joyce**, Course Tutor, Children and Young People Courses at Simpson House, Edinburgh
- Paul Wilkins**, Ph.D., Author and Trainer in Person-Centred Therapy, formerly Manchester Metropolitan University

- Pete Sanders**, Author, retired therapist, supervisor and educator, PCCS Books  
**Peter Pearce**, Faculty Head, Metanoia Institute, Praha, Czech Republic  
**Prof. Dr Akira Ikemi**, Kansai University, Japan  
**Prof. Liz Bondi**, Counselling and Psychotherapy, University of Edinburgh  
**Rhonda Goldman**, Ph.D., Illinois School of Professional Psychology, Argosy University, Schaumburg  
**Richard House**, Ph.D., C.Psychol., former Senior Lecturer in Psychotherapy and Counselling, University of Roehampton  
**Rose Cameron**, Ph.D., Course Tutor, Counselling and Psychotherapy, University of Edinburgh  
**Sheila Haugh**, MA, Associate Lecturer, Prážská vysoká škola psychosociálních studií, Praha, Czech Republic  
**Sissy Lykou**, MA, UKCP, ADMP, Senior Lecturer and Programme convener – MA Dance Movement Psychotherapy, Edge Hill University  
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**NOTE**

A copy of this letter has been sent to members of staff at University of Strathclyde – Douglas Brodie, Robert Elliott, Lorna Carrick, Susan Stephen; Psychotherapists and Counsellors Union (PCU); Andrew Reeves from the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP); Chair PCT Scotland.