

ANNUAL REPORT

The National Counselling Society and
The National Hypnotherapy Society

Presented by Dr. Phillip A Rees

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Independent Assessor for Governance and Audit

National Counselling Society and National Hypnotherapy Society

INDEPENDENT ASSESSOR REPORT FOLLOWING SITE VISIT ON NOVEMBER 17th, 2022



This Report is submitted by Dr. Phillip A. Rees, Independent Assessor responsible for Governance and Audit within the National Counselling Society and the National Hypnotherapy Society. The Report is the written outcome of an on-site/in-person visit to the the national administrative and management hub of the Societies at 19 Grafton Road, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 1QT on Thursday November 17th, 2022.

The Report is intended to focus on three specific areas:

- The Purpose of the Visit
- The Content of the Visit
- The Outcome and Conclusions of the Visit

The Purpose of the Visit

The primary purpose of the visit was to fulfil the decision made at a meeting of the Societies Governance and Audit Committee of February 6th, 2013 in London. The decision of that meeting was that the Independent Assessor should make a site visit *‘to the administrative offices and monitor processes and procedures in real time as they occur. This may involve examining relevant files, databases, and procedures.’*

This was subsequently discussed and ratified at the Societies Council Meeting held in London on April 9th, 2013; this meeting outlined and acknowledged the function and role of the Independent Assessor, and identified the importance of regular visits (Annually) to the Societies head offices as a means of supporting and monitoring the foundational procedures, combined with underscoring the accountability and standards of the Societies, and to fulfil the demands of the PSA accreditation process.

The primary function of this annual visit, as with previous on-site visits, was to examine how the policies, protocols and procedures of the Societies are administered and managed, and to focus on how the Societies seek feedback and involvement with registrants, members, and a range of service users. To enable internal scrutiny of the Societies policies, protocols, and procedures, which form the basis of this Report, the Chief Executive arranged an agenda of meetings for the Independent Assessor on Thursday November 17th, 2022. This agenda included conversations with:

Jyles Robillard-Day : CEO

Faye Blackwell : Head of Engagement and Development

Kate Mahoney – Head of Training and Professional Standards

Rachael King : Professional Conduct Officer

Meg Moss: Head of Policy and Public Affairs

Camilla Hyland : Head of Membership Services

The principal reason for the annual site visit of the Independent Assessor is to reinforce the Societies commitment to the standards of transparency and accountability towards members, registrants, service users and the Professional Standards Authority, through regular and ongoing assessment and analysis of administrative and management systems and processes.

The Content of the Visit

Content of the site visit involved conversations and discussions with Society personnel including the Chief Executive Officer, Head of Engagement and Development, Head of Training and Professional Standards, Professional Conduct Officer, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, and Head of Membership Services.

Meeting with Jyles Robillard-Day, Chief Executive Officer.

The CEO had been the Interim CEO, whilst the previous CEO had been on maternity leave. From August 2022 the previous CEO returned to take on a new and exciting role as Head of Policy and Public Affairs, and the Interim CEO became the substantive CEO.

The role of the CEO is crucial to the upholding of both the reputation and national development of the Societies, combined with the responsibilities of overseeing administration within the national office and, in addition, to addressing the needs of Registrants and prospective Registrants. The maintenance of ethical and professional standards and quality of services also falls within the remit of the Chief Executive.

The CEO is also responsible for preserving membership of the Accredited Register (AR) status with the Professional Standards Authority (PSA). As a result of recognition by the Professional Standards Authority, the Societies retain a large footprint on the national therapy map. There are a growing number of Professional Bodies, throughout the UK, who have achieved AR status with the PSA, and this recognition and status accords both prestige and credibility to both Societies. However, neither Society accepts this status and recognition lightly, remaining cognizant of the importance of constant reviewing of policies, procedures, and protocols to ensure that standards are preserved and maintained. The Chief Executive Officer also accepts the responsibility of addressing any PSA Action Points to further enhance the Societies PSA status, whenever and wherever they may be required. The Chief Executive Officer works closely with the Independent Assessor in ensuring that the auditing and governance of the Societies remains of paramount importance in terms of public recognition and accountability.

The Chief Executive Officer ensures that standards are maintained *vis-à-vis* Registrants of the Societies and works closely to ensure that the standards and quality of training provided by external training organisations, and accepted by the Societies, are upheld – for the purposes of the Accredited Register. In addition, the Chief Executive shoulders the responsibility of contacts with the public, Registrants and Prospective Members and training providers; this involves close liaison and shared responsibility with all members of staff in the national office.

The structures of the Societies have been addressed to enable the CEO to focus and prioritise on developmental areas for the Societies.

A range of important topics were considered by the Independent Assessor and the CEO, in reviewing what had changed over the past twelve months. This included discussions on the challenges and problems that constantly need to be addressed.

Areas which have been part of the remit and influence of the CEO, and formed part of the discussions with the Independent Assessor, included:

- (i) Developing structures of NCS management and administration.
- (ii) Re-branding of the NCS – this is scheduled for March 2023 when the NCS will become the ‘National Counselling and Psychotherapy Society’ (NCPS).
- (iii) Overseeing the work of Committees, Managers, the team in Worthing, and the new satellite office in Exeter which now holds responsibility for the Societies magazines, together with targeted campaigns.
- (iv) Overseeing the dedicated team of staff who work with Members and Registrants to promote the influence of the Societies within Counselling and Hypnotherapy sectors.
- (v) Movement and development of SCoPED, which the CEO has been involved with, and the continuing way that it is impacting upon the counselling landscape. The sharing of relevant information to Members and Registrants on the Society website has been applauded by Members, Registrant and Training providers for its clarity and user-friendly language.
- (vi) The Children and Young People’s Accredited Register has recently been launched and is already attracting a lot of interest – there are over 200 Registrants now listed on the website as Children and Young People specialists. It has been well received by both members and those working in this sector.
- (vii) The launch of the Relationship Therapist Register is a recent development. Once launched, a submission will be made to the PSA for it to be recognised as an Accredited Register. The process of setting up this register has led to a great relationship being built between NCS and Relate. Relate now view themselves as a partner and have said that they will be actively marketing the register to their members.
- (viii) Consultation work on a Life Coaching Register, and this will be launched in the coming months.
- (ix) Development of the new website, using ‘Wattle’, for the Societies.
- (x) Working with Head Office staff and Ambassadors to maintain the continuing growth of membership within the Societies.
- (xi) Reviewing the barriers to recognition and Accreditation status for both the NCS and Members and Registrants in general.

The above highlights the influence of the CEO in underscoring the involvement and influence of the Society within the professional sectors, together with the growth of its collaboration with training centres and organisations and Healthcare Professionals. This is combined with the multiplicity of challenges that continue to face the NCS. The NCS is fortunate to have an CEO who is a experienced communicator, and provides experience, dedication, and rigorous commitment to the upholding of Standards and to the ongoing recognition, growth, and development of the Societies.

Meeting with Faye Blackwell - Head of Engagement and Development.

Although Engagement and Development is a recent development within the Societies, it has continued to prove a very important means of promoting the work of the Societies, particularly in areas where there is some negativity towards the Societies; a principal role for the Head of Engagement and Development is to challenge organisations that fail or refuse to recognize the NCS. The benefits of this new role have included:

- i. An increase in Organisational Membership applications.
- ii. The NCS is becoming more prominent within Northern Ireland – meeting with Organisational Members – such as Educational Groups - and Registrants.
- iii. Developing the awareness of NCS through Regional Groups
- iv. Development of NCS Ambassadors – specialising in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Sexual Violence and Abuse/Trafficking.
- v. Engaging with Mental Health Champions.

The head of Engagement and Development carries the responsibility of nurturing and developing existing relationships within the Counselling sector and beyond, as well as creating new ones.

In addition, the role and remit of the Head of Engagement and Development has been to challenge education and healthcare institutions, as well as businesses and EAPs, who have not included NCS in their course provision, or job advertisements. This involves raising the profile of the NCS by attendance at Conferences and related meetings of those involved in the Counselling and Psychotherapy sector.

The Head of Engagement and Development is involved in challenging the lack of recognition for the NCS, and at looking for ways of expanding the understanding and influence of the NCS within the Counselling and Psychotherapy sector.

The Independent Assessor acknowledges that the role of the Head of Engagement and Development will further help with the development and growth of the NCS locally, regionally, and nationally and not only promote the NCS but also challenge those who would exclude the NCS from professional involvement in the counselling arena. The Independent Assessor affirms the initiative of the Society in continually assessing new ways of extending the influence of the NCS across all sectors, which includes the therapeutic community and the political community. The Independent Assessor also records that the NCS has their own Champion in the Head of Engagement and Development.

Meeting with Kate Mahoney, Head of Training Services & Professional Standards.

The Head of Training Services & Professional Standards carries the responsibilities of overseeing and advising on the following:

- Policy and procedures of applications for course recognition
- Managing standards for the Accredited Register and associated sub-registers
- Individual members' audits
- Training provider audits

- Government and regulation issues
- Relations with other professional associations
- Registrar
- Chair of the Professional Standards Committee

The brief of the Professional Standards Committee is to review and update the Society's internal processes and procedures where professional standards are concerned and maintain an awareness of all external issues that may impact upon the profession of counselling and psychotherapy.

The Head of Training Services & Professional Standards has an influential impact on the reputation and development of Professional Standards for training and individual memberships and remains committed to extending the reputation of the Society upon training, and, in particular, accredited training, within the sector of Counselling and Psychotherapy.

The role of the Head of Training Services & Professional Standards is also to consider the delivery of recognized courses by Training Providers. This involves examination of course content and the assessment process. An important, if not crucial, part of the role is to maintain and extend/develop standards. This involves fielding questions about training information, combined with considering complex membership applications. As with membership of the Societies, there is an exponential growth of recognized and accredited training providers.

The last twelve months have been very challenging for Training Standards as they have worked to support training providers emerge from meeting the demands of online learning with the added complexities around virtual assessment of learning. Many training providers now talk about blended learning: Training Standards have also been involved in developing the understanding of Synchronistic Tutoring - working at enabling teaching staff to develop their roles from simply teaching online to tutoring online and being involved in all aspects of the group learning process; that is, involvement in role-play, in the classroom discussions and presentations, essays and reflective learning and exploring the transition between levels and qualifications. Since the ending the pandemic lockdown, most Centres are now working 'in the classroom' whilst some have retained the blended learning approach; the latter meeting the demands of the NCS in working to the agreed ratio of 70% in the classroom and 30% online.

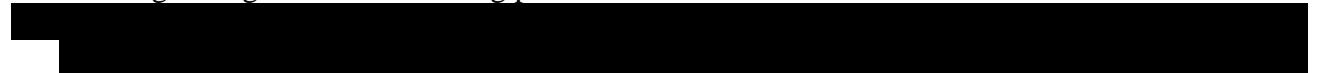
In keeping with online working – the department now manages all applications and assessments online with application content being shared securely via WeTransfer and being stored securely in SharePoint.

As of 17.11.22 the following reflects the numbers of Actual and Projected figures of course(s) recognized in 2022:



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In addition to the above, the involvement and influence of the Society is extending in different sectors and with a growing number of training providers.



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3. Over the past year there has been several colleges and training providers who have expressed an interest in the Societies training recognition. This indicates the growing influence of the NCS and HS in both private and public sectors.

3. The Training Standards Assistant & CPD Co-Ordinator, Nicola Semple, has been with the Society since January 2022 and has been a huge asset to the team. Nicola manages all the administration for the department including processing all new applications, course renewals and re-accreditations. She also has full responsibility for running the annual calendar of CPD events.

[REDACTED]

Online training has been exceptionally effective with no courses having to be cancelled due to lack of attendees. Offering CPD training in this way has helped the membership, too, in that there are no geographical boundaries so the full membership can take advantage of this service benefit irrespective of where they are based.

The Independent Assessor acknowledges that, through the leadership of the Head of Training Services and Professional Standards, together with the Professional Standards Committee, Professional Standards remains fundamental to the credibility and accountability of the work of the Societies and recognises its importance to the overall effectiveness of the work of the Societies.

Meeting with Rachel King, Professional Conduct Officer (Complaints)

The Professional Conduct Committee oversees the Societies role in responding to all concerns and complaints made against Members and Registrants of the Societies. They review all complaints and oversee and advise on how each case will be handled.

As well as fulfilling the role of handling specific complaints, they also report to the Societies Council about any related issues that may be of relevance to policies and procedures – thus ensuring that the Societies have a constantly evolving approach to all issues relating to public safety.

The current Professional Conduct Officer was appointed in November 2020 and continues to provide a wide range of skills and experience to the post of PCO. A separate Report, from the meeting with the Professional Conduct Officer, will be submitted by the Independent Assessor following the annual site visit.

Meeting with Meg Moss, Head of Policy and Public Affairs.

This is a new and exciting role for the Societies. Moreover, it is headed by someone who has a depth of experience and sector knowledge within the NCS – having held the roles of Administrator, Administration Manager, Deputy CEO (Interim) and Chief Executive Officer from 2019 to 2022. Returning from maternity leave, the former CEO stepped into the new, challenging, and demanding role as Head of Policy and Public Affairs. This new post took effect from August 2022. The overview of the role is, therefore, relatively brief as it is a work in progress and development. There will, obviously, be more to report on the development of this new role following the IA Annual visit of 2023. The Head of Policy and Public Affairs describes her role as “*aimed at growing and refining NCS policies alongside key stakeholders, both in the profession and beyond.*” In the coming months, this will include responsibility for:

- i) Internal and External Policies.
- ii) Talking to politicians involved in Health and Education, and including the Shadow Mental Health Minister.
- iii) Being present to respond to relevant political concerns.
- iv) Being seen, becoming known, and having a sector voice on behalf of the NCS.
- v) Involvement in Code of Ethics/Safeguarding

This new role carries responsibilities for the expansion and growth of the Societies, for being the voice of accountability in the therapeutic sector and beyond. The NCS is fortunate to have someone fronting Policy and Public Affairs who has a wealth of knowledge and understanding of the NCS and has been part of its development over 8 years. The Head of Policy and Public Affairs is also someone who is eager to promote the work of the NCS, and will continue to seek new and different ways of achieving this.

Meeting with Camilla Hyland, Head of Membership Services

Membership Services act as a front door into the provision of services offered by the National Counselling Society. To achieve this day-to-day management and administration of the Societies business, there is a strong administrative team led by Camilla Hyland, Head of Membership Services assisted by a team of five Membership Services Officers. The Independent Assessor affirms the ongoing and valuable contribution that Membership Services makes to the efficient operation of the Societies. The ongoing streamlining of the Membership Services structure and provision has further improved the service delivery to Members, Registrants, Training Providers and Organisations and to the wider Counselling and Hypnotherapy sectors.

Membership Services audits general enquiries, student applications, membership, and Registrant applications in addition to the processing of payments. The Administration team meet regularly together to share concerns, questions or pressures that may emanate from the counselling and hypnotherapy sectors, and these are generally relayed to the team through members, registrants, and service users.

Important aspects of the work of the Membership Services include:

1. Applicants can now apply directly through the website. This information feeds through to the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system ready for the team to assess. This new process is much slicker, faster and has reduced human error. The feedback from applicants has

continued to be positive regarding the application process. The awaited development of the NCS website and CRM system, due for implementation in 2023, will further improve the services provided to members and the general public.

2. Membership Services records monthly Membership totals highlighting net growth and loss. In addition, there is a record kept of all emails received, applications processed and applications awaiting assessment. This allows more direction for the Membership Services Team to prioritise different tasks, as required.

3. [REDACTED]

The Independent Assessor acknowledges the range of skills within the Membership Team and their importance to the success and profile of the Societies, and records that the ongoing growth and development of the Societies is due, in no small measure, to the skills and talents of the dedicated Membership team. The Independent Assessor also acknowledges, from conversations with individuals and organisations across the UK - in various training establishments as well as individuals who have joined either the NCS or NHS - that there is high regard for the Membership Team and their responses to enquiries and enquirers.

The Independent Assessor can confidently report that the Societies have an excellent Membership Services Team, who collectively provide a wide range of skills and levels of competency, and not a little commitment to the ethos of the Societies, and work to ensure that good communication is preserved between the Societies and the Registrants, and the wider therapeutic communities and service users. Membership Services also ensure that there is a consistent approach to communicating the benefits of membership of the Societies, in addition to the upholding of standards.

This is continuing to be reflected in the Membership consolidation of the Societies. To reiterate comments above, however, no-one underestimates the importance of commitment to high standards and quality service provision. The view of the Independent Assessor is that the Membership Services Team achieves its aim of being the front door to the Societies, and in no small part contributes to the increase in the quality and development of services provided by the Societies.

The Outcome and Conclusions of the 2022 On-Site Visit

The Independent Assessor visits the Societies offices on an annual basis to ensure that an objective view of the work of the Societies can be guaranteed, and to ensure that transparency and accountability are clearly evidenced, and to ratify the demands of quality assurance. The following comments and observations echo and consolidate the conclusions proffered in previous Annual Reports, and taking into consideration that the past twelve months has also seen the NCS developing its influence in the caring sectors, by becoming more professional and removing any sense of silo mentality:

- **Communication.** There is continuing and excellent communication processes in place to ensure that enquirers speak with members of a team who are able to provide a constant, consistent and

knowledgeable voice on the work of the Societies; this includes established members and Registrants of the Societies, potential members and Registrants, corporate bodies and organisations, training providers, professional bodies in the world of counselling, psychology, psychotherapy and hypnotherapy, and educational/awarding bodies seeking information about accreditation status. The Independent Assessor's conclusion is that this is being achieved through the leadership of the CEO, the managements structures of the Societies, and the obvious cohesion of the team of staff based in Worthing.

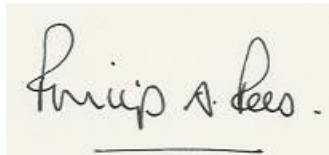
- **Competence.** Scrutiny of the Societies by the Independent Assessor demonstrates a collective range of skills and abilities from the Chief Executive, Public Protection Officer, Head of Professional Standards and Training Services, Head of Engagement and Development, Head of Policy and Public Affairs and Head of Membership Services, and includes all members of the Societies administrative team. This is contributing to the ongoing development of strong marketing and advertising strategies, including the Societies website; saturation of the internet with excellent advertising; and the development of online CPD programmes, Facebook and Twitter and Monthly Magazines. There is sound knowledge and understanding of the Societies, and all its policies including Complaints and the DBS (and enhanced DBS) and GDPR requirements. The collective competencies also ensure quality of management and administration in addition to the dissemination of accurate information. This on-site visit also echoed the ongoing commitment to quality and standards. Quality assurance underpins and reinforces the governance work of the Societies, and underscores good practice.
- **Commitment.** The visit of the Independent Assessor is designed to provide an impartial overview of the Societies; how they function; how they work to maintain the principles of the Societies, and how they can effectively communicate this to interested individuals and organisations. This Report concludes that there is strong executive management and leadership within the Societies, and solid collegiality throughout the management and administrative team. The commitment to the Societies is clear, and the management and administrative team are dedicated to developing the work and reputation of the Societies through increased knowledge and understanding of the therapeutic world, as well as enhancing the important principles and policies of an emerging, growing, and influential professional body.
- **Collective Responsibility.** One factor was again outstanding during the virtual visit of the Independent Assessor to the Societies, and that is the clear intention to continue growing and developing as a major contributor and influence within the professional therapeutic community of the United Kingdom, and beyond. The recognition by the Professional Standards Authority, and the achievement and maintenance of AR Register status will not lead, however, in the view of the Independent Assessor, to complacency within the Societies. There is clear recognition of the responsibility in maintaining the demanding standards, principles and values of the Societies, meeting the needs of its members and Registrants, upholding its professional status, overseeing complaints and public protection, and continue to grow and develop within the therapeutic arena.

There is also awareness that nothing is ever perfect, and that there will always be opportunities and challenges for improvement. Changes are inevitable in all areas of marketing, advertising, communication, and the promotion of all that the Societies represents. The Societies recognise that there is no room for complacency. The site visit by the Independent Assessor concluded that the Societies remain committed to maintaining the standards and principles of a Professional Body seeking to represent a large and growing cohort of professional and would-be professional therapists and counsellors, together with training bodies and organisations.

The purpose of this Report has been to provide an appraisal and overview of the work of the Societies as observed during the Independent Assessor's site visit on Thursday November 17th, 2022, and to highlight good practice and identify areas for ongoing development and improvement. The Independent Assessor's remit is also to raise awareness of any concerns identified and/or discussed during the visit. This Report concludes that no major or minor concerns were identified for action in the immediate future.

It is important to also record that all objective and action points from previous Independent Assessor Reports have been addressed.

The Independent Assessor presents and commends this Report as representing the comprehensive findings of an extensive analysis of the Societies work considered during the annual visit of the Independent Assessor with the National Counselling Society and National Hypnotherapy Society on Thursday November 17th, 2022.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature reads "Phillip A Rees" in a cursive script. Below the signature is a horizontal line.

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Fellow of the Royal Society for Public Health
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