

Minutes of Societies Council Meeting

Tuesday, 10th March 2015

At the Oxford & Cambridge Club London

In attendance:

Liz McElligott (CE Societies)
Gerry Willmore (Societies' Head of Professional Standards)
Vicky Parkinson (Society Administration Manager and Acting Secretary for Council)

Faith Clarke (Lay Council Member)
Steve Roche (Lay Council Member)
Colin Irvine (Lay Council Member)

Apologies:

Dr Chris Forester (Chair of Societies)
Wayne Bateman (Lay member)
Susan Archer (Membership & Marketing Manager)
Freya Bottomley (Deputy CE Societies)

The Minutes of the last Council Meeting on 25th November 2014 (circulated to all ahead of the meeting) were agreed by Council.

CE Update on Societies' staffing

CE welcomed Gerry Willmore to the role Head of Professional Standards for both Societies – [REDACTED] His extensive experience within the profession brings valuable to the Societies as they continue to grow.

Details of current staffing responsibilities was shared with all – CE emphasised that this would evolve in response to the growth of the Societies. Explained that all staff had been involved in setting the new role divisions and then all approved by Societies Chair, Dr Chris Forester.

- Freya Bottomley is now Deputy CE and will support the CE – with a view to taking responsibility for the PSA / AR renewal in 2016. Freya is also now Public Protection Officer and first line of contact for members of the public who want to report concerns or complaints about members of the Societies.
- Susan Archer is now Membership Services and Marketing Manager.
- A new administrator, Megan Nunn, has joined the admin team.

All above staff are settling in well to new roles – and there has been minimal upheaval in the day to day running of the Societies.

The Societies have completely reviewed their complaints policies and procedures (see below) and in relation to this have created a new Complaints Assessment Panel, chaired by qualified and experienced professional.

Minutes of Societies Council Meeting

Tuesday, 9th June 2015

At the Oxford & Cambridge Club

In Attendance

Freya Bottomley (Deputy CE Societies)
Susan Archer (Membership & Marketing Manager)
Gerry Willmore (Societies' Head of Professional Standards)
Vicky Parkinson (Society Admin Manager and Secretary for Council)
Steve Roche (Lay Council Member)

Apologies:

Dr Chris Forester (Chair of Societies)
Liz McElligott (CE Societies)
Colin Irvine (Lay Council Member)
Wayne Bateman (Lay member)
Faith Clarke (Lay Council Member)

The Minutes of the last Council Meeting on 10th March 2015 (circulated previously) were agreed by Council.

Report to Council from Head of Professional Standards

[REDACTED]

The NCS hope to be able to quality check a bereavement service/hospice who recently approached The Head of Professional. The Society will also be able to offer non-registrant level membership to

their unqualified staff who have vast training and experience but not enough to be placed on the Register.

On the whole the Societies are in good shape for training providers.

A summary of proposals for the membership grade revision was subject to consultation. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The Professional Standards Committee will look at course levels to establish it meets minimum level requirements. The hope is that the new membership grades will be easy to understand and by the next council meeting we should be able to confirm exact details of membership.

Report to Council from Deputy CE

The Deputy CE gave an update on complaints received by the Societies, so far 7 complaints about individual members and none about the society. There has been one complaint that proceeded to a panel hearing and the outcome was a sanction of 5 years suspension. Also one registrant has been suspended due to police investigation. The revision of the complaints process is making processing complaints clearer, this includes changes to CRM which has been adapted. Complaints have been increasing slowly and now that we have a clearer process in place, complainants feel more comfortable coming forward, possibly explaining the increase in issues being raised.

The Deputy CE attended the 'We need to talk' meetings working towards better access for talking therapies. It was discussed that mental health charities were expecting a coalition government,

[REDACTED]

It has been noticed that the Accredited Register status brings greater awareness and other bodies & charities coming to us now to be included in talks.

[REDACTED]

NCS and HS achieved renewal of accreditation in 2015 by the Professional Standards Authority.

In 2014 the Independent Assessor carried out a site visit and observation of the Council meeting. The independent Assessor has also carried out an initial review of new complaints procedures and will follow up with a full assessment and report at the end of 2015.

The Deputy CE read the CE report to Council. [REDACTED] A meeting was held with the Independent Assessor in March to look at the complaints report. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Report to Council from Admin Manager

Societies Admin Manager updated Council on membership (registrant numbers) and related growth.

The Society websites have now had the content written and finalised. The next stage is with the digital team creating the staging sites for the websites for us to review. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

A new phone system has been approved and we are awaiting an installation date, which should be within the next 3-4 weeks. The system will allow for automated call direction, meaning that members and the public will be able to talk to the relevant person straight away. We are limiting the number of options to choose from to avoid endless button pressing.

We will be having a change around of offices within the admin team to create more working space as we continue to grow. New network cabling will be installed alongside this move, removing all wireless connections currently in place. This should eliminate problems with an unreliable connection.

The new registrants rolling audit process has begun. We believe that this change from the previous annual audit will be more efficient and identify any issues on an ongoing basis. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

Report to Council from Membership Services and Marketing Manager

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

A.O.B

Future Project include visiting our offices in Worthing, individual lay council members to contact us and arrange directly. Input to newsletters is always welcome (will include an introduction to lay members). No other business.

Next meeting 20th November 2015

Report to Council from Head of Professional Standards

Copies of the revised complaints procedures (January 2015) were circulated to Council ahead of the meeting.

Gerry talked through the new procedures and the reasoning behind the changes. Having carried out a full review of the existing complaints procedures it was decided that the system of having Tier 1 and Tier 2 complaints process was somewhat unwieldy and potentially confusing to the public. The new procedure aims to give clear guidelines for all parties.

Feedback from Council was very positive and when compared to complaints procedures in other professions the new NCS procedures was considered to be transparent and fair.

CE read a report from PPO with details of the Independent Panel Hearing (December 2014) to illustrate how the new procedures worked in practice (including the option available to both parties to appeal against the IP decisions).

Council discussed the requirement to inform a practitioners other (non-involved) clients, of any sanctions such as removal from the register. Clarified the difference between Suspension and Removal from the Register. Also explained that suspension/removal from an AR would not stop a therapist from practising. The information is published on the Society website – and the Society will notify other organisations who hold an AR.

Further related discussion about the DBS scheme and the ‘loopholes’ around self-employed workers – the Societies membership application requires applicants to give details of any previous criminal convictions.

[REDACTED]

The Professional Standards Committee has engaged a new lay member, Susan King

[REDACTED]

The project to upgrade the NCS and HS membership grades structure is a work in progress and Gerry will give an update at the next Council Meeting.

Report to Council from Admin Manager

Societies Admin Manager updated Council on membership (registrant) numbers and related growth. The Societies have held an initial ‘scoping meeting’ to plan the new websites - Vicky will be project managing this [REDACTED]

New admin staff are settling in well and during the changeover period the level of customer service to members and other third parties has not been adversely affected.

Report to Council from Membership Services and Marketing Manager

CE read out a report on behalf of Membership Services and Marketing.

Susan is settling in well to her new role and the firewall between the register and membership services of the Societies is firmly in place.

Social media is more interactive.

Radio 4 ‘You and Yours’ programme featured complaints about a ‘scam’ advertising campaign for a ‘GP register’. The Societies had identified this before Christmas and advised all members via the newsletters and the PSA. Harry Cayton (PSA) was interviewed and promoted the AR scheme - and the NCS register was mentioned. (Link will be added to next NCS members newsletters).

[REDACTED]

New branding in relation to the change from 'AVR' to 'AR' is being phased in by the Societies.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A list of the Societies' 2015 CPD calendar shared with Council – commented on expansion and good value.

[REDACTED]

A discussion about the different types of CPD activities that are relevant – not just workshops.

[REDACTED]

External recognition of the NCS and HS continues to grow.

Report to Council from CE.

The PSA Annual Review of accreditation is currently taking place (explained about name change from AVR to AR). The completed application and supporting documentation must be returned to the Authority by 20th March 2015.

In preparation for the annual renewal of accreditation a copy of the Societies' Risk Assessment Matrix was sent to Council to read ahead of a discussion at the Council Meeting. All agreed it was very robust and CE explained that the Societies also use any 'themes' identified from complaints during the year to update the identified risks. CE explained about the concept of 'Professional Boundaries' as related to risk analysis and mitigation.

The Societies also sought feedback from members by sending a survey to ask for their feedback about risk and mitigation – and we will be able to share 'anonymised' responses with the Authority if this is helpful.

The AR first annual report is due to be launched on 12th March and copies of this will be sent to Lay Council members.

CE gave out the Societies 2014 'year-end report' to Lay Council members and confirmed that they are all receiving the monthly newsletters.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

CE updated Council on main external meetings attended since last Council meeting:

[REDACTED]

A previous invitation to Lay Members (in 2014) to visit the Society Offices was discussed. The initial plan was that the Worthing Offices be used as a venue for a Council Meeting. The decision taken by all was that it is more convenient for Lay members to contact the Societies and arrange individual visits. Have asked them to contact the Societies with potential dates to be agreed.

The Societies Independent Assessor (Dr Phillip Rees) produced 2 reports for the Societies in 2014 and will be attending the Societies Meeting in November.

CE proposed that at the next meeting of Societies Council to review Lay Council Members participation

A.O.B.

No other business to discuss

2015 Council Meetings will be on 9th June and 10th November 2015 in London

Minutes of Society Council Meeting
Tuesday, 10th November 2015
Oxford & Cambridge Club, London

In attendance:

Chris Forester (Chair of Societies)
Liz McElligott (Chief Executive)
Vicky Parkinson (Chair of Meeting and Admin Manager)
Gerry Willmore (Head of Professional Standards)
Freya Bottomley (Deputy CEO)
Susan Archer (Membership Services Manager & Council Secretary)
Steve Roche (Lay Council Member)

Apologies:

Faith Clarke (Lay Council Member)
Wayne Bateman (Lay Council Member)

The Minutes of the last Council Meeting on 9th June 2015 (previously circulated) were agreed by Council. No conflict of interests declarations were made.

Report to Council from CE

The CEO gave an update to Council on PSA AR renewal and external activities since last meeting. Accredited Register successful with annual renewal with 3 learning points and 1 instruction.

Learning Points

1. The Societies should consider developing indicative sanction guidelines and documenting their procedure for publication of sanctions with clear timescales for length of publication.
2. The Societies should consider whether the Assessment Panel should decide sanctions to be issued for minor breaches that are not referred to the Independent Panel instead of the Public Protection Officer.
3. The Societies should consider including timescales in their published complaints procedures and clarifying their appeals process.

The Council asked what the Indicative sanction guidelines are and they were advised an in working project meeting is set for 11th November on sanctions to clarify when working on AR renewal. It was noted that the panel should set the sanctions not just one person deciding another's fate, agreed by all.

Instruction

1. The Panel noted that sanctions currently issued by the PPO are not published on the Societies' website and decided to issue an instruction requiring the publication of sanctions issued by the PPO (or Assessment Panel depending on the Societies consideration of the above learning points).

The CE will start information gathering for 2016 renewal in January.

All AR (Counselling profession) complaints procedures were reviewed and a table created for reference when we review our own procedures.

[REDACTED]

We have one lay member for council standing down, and we do need to have a greater pool of people. Currently advertised with National Voices, and Voluntary Action Worthing with no response so far. We have also sent out to all our organisational and training members to see if they can help too.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Report to Council from Head of Professional Standards

The Head of Professional Standards gave an update to Council on the PSA AR renewal and external activities since last meeting which included new membership grades/training provider update.

A good response to the membership grade survey sent out to all members and after full consultation and much discussion, the following will be the new Membership grades and fully implemented from 1st January 2016.

- Accredited Member (MNCS Accred)
- Senior Accredited Member (MNCS Snr Accred)
- Fellow (FNCS)

The following non registrant grades are not listed on our register.

- Associate
- Companion
- Student
- Honorary Fellowship (HonFNCS)

[REDACTED]

[Redacted]

Report to Council from Deputy CE

The NCS Panel hearing took place on 7th October with no case to answer being the outcome. One registrant remains suspended pending a court case – the nature of the case is serious.

[Redacted]

There is a new system in place to record the types of complaints we receive and new members have been recruited for the Independent Panel.

[Redacted]

Report to Council from the Membership Services Manager

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Report to Council from the Society Admin Manager

The Societies Admin Manager gave an update to Council. There has been a delay with the new website due to issues trying to enable the CRM database and website to talk to each other. Changes have now been made and we hope to have staging sites soon.

New phone system has been installed and overall is running well. Some calls go through to incorrect person and it was commented that we call in as ourselves to check the system is filtering properly and to eliminate this problem.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

AOB/Future Projects

[REDACTED]

Proposed dates for 2016 are 7th June and 22nd November. There will be a date in March (tbc) when the Independent Assessor will be invited to attend.