Our ongoing commitment to increasing access to counselling for Scottish people

Thursday 4 September, 2014

A recent BACP membership survey suggests that there are enough BACP counsellors in Scotland to help an additional 100,000 people per year with six sessions of talking therapy. This figure is based on the capacity among our members to see more clients if they were fully employed or funded.

Therapy has been shown to be an effective intervention for a range of psychological problems, as well as alleviating entrenched social, family and relationship issues in individuals and on a community level. More decisive action is urgently needed from those governing Scotland to prioritise funding for counselling and psychotherapy and to work with health boards and local authorities to make sure that these vital services are effectively delivered.

Louise Robinson, BACP's Healthcare Development Manager, says:

"With an increasing demand for counselling among Scottish people, and trained and qualified workers ready to provide this vital service, effective and timely access is both needed and achievable.

"Unfortunately, improving access to counselling is not currently a priority for the NHS. For example, in two major Scottish health boards the number of NHS counsellors has reduced by more than half over a ten-year period. We need to see that trend reversed."

It is also the case that Local Authorities have not collectively prioritised counselling in schools, leaving Scotland behind Wales and Northern Ireland which now has counselling freely available for children of secondary school age – either in their schools or in their communities.

As part of our ongoing commitment to supporting improvements in the provision of publically-funded counselling that meets BACP standards for safe and ethical practice, we ask those wishing to govern Scotland after 18 September to commit now to increasing access to psychological therapies by taking forward policies that enable better use of BACP's membership.

BACP's Lead Advisor for Scotland, Shane Buckeridge, adds:

"We are looking forward to working with the post-vote government, in whatever form it takes, to deliver more publicly funded therapy for those most at need in Scotland. In particular, although the Scottish Government is to be commended for committing to a maximum waiting time for accessing psychological therapies, we have concerns that health boards are delivering on this target in a way that sidelines the role of counselling and psychotherapy.

"With our ongoing support and specialist guidance, we hope to be a major force in putting wellbeing high on the national agenda and helping those in power to develop a flourishing Scottish nation."

Notes to editors

BACP is a professional body and a registered charity that sets standards for therapeutic practice and provides information for therapists, clients of therapy, and the public. We have over 40,000 members with 1,800 in Scotland, working within a range of settings, including the NHS, schools and universities, workplaces and private practice, as well as third sector environments including voluntary, community and pastoral settings.

We are committed to providing prompt responses to media enquiries, drawing on our extensive member network of experts and spokespeople. For all media enquiries, call our media team on 01455 883 342, or email media@bacp.co.uk. *For non-media enquiries please call our main switchboard on 01455 883 300.*

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