

The Benefits of the Accredited Registers Programme for Counselling and Psychotherapy

What is the Accredited Registers programme?

The Accredited Registers (AR) programme, overseen by the Professional Standards Authority (PSA), is a scheme that ensures professionals meet high standards of ethics, training, and accountability. It provides public assurance that practitioners on these registers are safe, qualified, and committed to

professional development. For counselling and psychotherapy, the AR programme is a proportionate and effective approach to regulation that supports public safety while preserving the diversity and accessibility of therapeutic practices.

What do we mean by proportionate regulatory solution?

The AR programme strikes the right balance between protecting the public and maintaining flexibility in the profession. Unlike statutory regulation, which typically focuses on protecting titles, the AR programme allows for diversity in practice and training pathways while upholding rigorous standards. This flexibility ensures that the counselling and psychotherapy professions remain

accessible and diverse, meeting the varied needs of clients. Additionally, statutory regulation risks driving practitioners away or forcing them to change their titles, reducing the availability of services. The AR programme avoids this by providing a framework that safeguards public safety without imposing unnecessary burdens on practitioners.

Isn't statutory regulation needed for public safety?

While statutory regulation might seem like the obvious choice for ensuring safety, it has limitations. Protecting a title like "counsellor" or "psychotherapist" doesn't prevent unregulated practitioners from using alternative titles, such as "wellbeing coach" or "talking therapist." This loophole could undermine the intention of statutory regulation.

The AR programme provides a more practical solution. By requiring therapists to meet high professional standards, it acts as a robust safety net for clients. It also enables directories and employers to ensure that practitioners meet recognised benchmarks for safety and competence.

Is the AR programme working in practice?

Yes. The AR programme has become the de facto form of regulation in the counselling and psychotherapy profession. Many therapist directories, including those that the public use to find support, require practitioners to be on an Accredited Register.

Similarly, hiring organisations often stipulate AR membership as a minimum requirement for professional roles. This widespread adoption demonstrates the effectiveness and trust in the AR programme.

What more could we be doing to improve public safety?

The AR programme is an effective regulatory framework, but its benefits will only be fully realised if the public knows how to use it. A Government-led public information campaign is needed to educate people on how to find a counsellor or psychotherapist safely. This campaign should:

- Promote the importance of choosing a therapist on an Accredited Register.
- Explain what the AR programme is and why it matters for public safety.
- Empower the public to make informed choices about their mental health care.



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