

Briefing: Statutory Regulation of Counselling & Psychotherapy

Statutory regulation in the field of Counselling & Psychotherapy is often presented as a solution to some of the problems faced by the profession by people of all political persuasions and perspectives; however, unless fully considered, **regulation risks undermining the profession's core strengths**. The NCPS has a number of concerns about potential future regulation, as well as **suggestions around how to balance the need for regulation with the needs of the profession**. The NCPS is a professional body for counsellors & psychotherapists, representing over 16,000 therapists across the UK.

Things to Keep in Mind

Autonomy and Creativity: The therapeutic process thrives on autonomy and creativity. Over-regulation may stifle these essential elements, hindering the effectiveness and evolution of therapeutic practices.

Diversity of Modalities: Counselling and psychotherapy encompass a range of modalities. A uniform regulatory framework may not accommodate this diversity, potentially leading to a loss of varied and effective therapeutic approaches.

Professional Impact: Excessive regulation could drive practitioners to change their professional titles or leave the field altogether, reducing the availability of qualified therapists and impacting public access to diverse therapeutic services.

Client-Therapist Relationship: The unique and individual nature of the client-therapist relationship, crucial for successful therapy, resists standardisation. Effective therapy relies on this relational aspect, which cannot be uniformly regulated.

Current System Effectiveness: The current system of Accredited Registers adequately maintains high standards and allows for professional diversity. It balances quality assurance with the flexibility needed in therapeutic practices.

Why it Matters

To the General Public: Maintaining diverse therapeutic practices is vital for the mental health and wellbeing of the public. Restrictive regulation could limit therapy choices, affecting their effectiveness and public acceptance. People may seek unregulated therapies, undermining the intended safety benefits of regulation.

To Your Constituents: Regulation could reduce the availability and quality of mental health services in your area. Many rely on private therapy when NHS options are limited or unsuitable. A decline in local therapists may leave constituents without needed support, potentially leading to increased work absenteeism, community and family strain, and greater dependence on crisis services.

To the Government: Regulation may hinder national mental health strategies and public health outcomes. It could challenge government efforts to enhance service access and diversity, lead to a shortage of therapists, increase costs, and stifle therapy-related innovation and research, crucial for public health.

To Counsellors & Psychotherapists: Over-regulation in counselling and psychotherapy could restrict professional autonomy, hinder innovation, and limit therapists' ability to adapt and evolve in response to changing cultural contexts.

Calls to Action

- **Advocate** for the continuation of the Accredited Registers programme
- Continue to **call upon experts** in the Counselling and Psychotherapy profession to understand the complexities and challenges in our work
- **Explore non-regulatory methods** to support the goals of statutory regulation e.g. licensing models

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