



To the IACP
founding members, committee members,
volunteers and staff



The Irish Association
for Counselling and Psychotherapy

celebrating **30**
years



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SUSAN FELDSTEIN



THE IRISH ASSOCIATION FOR COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY



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UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND



Preface

There are many times in life when people need a listening ear, someone to talk to, and someone to provide them with advice and reassurance. All over Ireland, every day, people going through a difficult or worrying period of their life turn to trusted friends, neighbours and family members for that support. Often, that is sufficient. The problem is resolved, the difficult period passes and life goes on.

However, for many people there are times in life when a higher level of support is needed, times when they feel particularly fragile, vulnerable or alone. They might be trying to cope with problems or negative emotions that seem absolutely insurmountable. They might feel that they are dealing with an issue so difficult or unique that none of their friends could possibly understand what they are going through. Or they might have been through a particularly damaging or distressing experience that has turned their world upside down. Whatever the reason, there are times when many of us feel the need for an impartial, professional and expert listening ear, times when talking to family and friends is simply not enough.

For many years in Ireland there was a widespread stigma attached to the idea of professional counselling and a stereotypical image of the type of person who received therapy. This acted as a significant deterrent to those who needed help and an enormous challenge to those working in the profession. Thankfully we are now living in more enlightened days, and more and more of us recognise the valuable support that professional help can provide during the difficult times and experiences that life sometimes throws at us.

Much of this change in attitude is due to the hard work and dedication of the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. I would like to thank them for the tireless work they do in ensuring the provision of appropriate and skilled care and support to all those who need a listening ear or a helping hand to guide them through their darker days.

MARY MCALEESE
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

Foreword



In 2009, when a motion seeking approval and funding for the facilitation of this project was passed, there was great excitement and anticipation among the members of the IACP. Now, with the publication of this book, there is a deep sense of satisfaction, as well as a renewed appreciation of the Association's rich and productive past.

Who would have imagined, thirty years ago, that the IACP would grow to become the largest counselling and psychotherapy organisation in the country; that we would be an intrinsic part of the International Association for Counselling and the European Association for Counselling; or that we would play such a major role in developing and maintaining standards in the profession in Ireland?

The success of the IACP grew from the vision of its founding members and from the relentless commitment of their successors to making that vision a reality. It is reassuring and gratifying to know that the struggles and achievements of the Association and its members have now been set down on paper in a single account. Much of the information gathered for this book was obtained through the generous cooperation of those involved in the early years and those involved to this day, or by trawling through large quantities of paperwork stored in archives. Thanks to the author Susan Feldstein for her work in undertaking this research and compiling a book which encapsulates the history of the IACP so eloquently.

This book is not just about the past: it also looks to the future. It is a tribute to the dedication of the staff at the IACP office and to those many professionals, past and present, who have given voluntarily and so generously of their time and energy to promote the goals of the organisation, and in so doing, to safeguard the public.

On behalf of the Association, I would like to extend a big thank-you to all who have contributed towards this celebration of our thirty years, and indeed to all those whose commitment has helped to make the Association what it is today.

RAY HENRY
CATHAOIRLEACH

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ray Henry". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.



1981–91 **1** The first decade

In the Ireland of the late 1970s, the landscape of the counselling sector was very different from what it is today. In many senses, it was a terrain which was uncharted and uncultivated. The title ‘counsellor’ did not formally exist as a job description; the activity of counselling, such as it was, was taking place almost exclusively under the umbrella of voluntary sector organisations, many of which had their origins in the community activities of the Church. What few professional practitioners there were had either been trained in the United States or in Britain, or, if here in Ireland, under the aegis of the university system, in the disciplines of psychiatry, psychology and sociology. Many of the latter, who had emerged from an academic background, were well-versed in theory, but would only acquire specific practical therapeutic skills through their subsequent involvement in the voluntary counselling sector. The latter was undergoing a period of considerable growth at the time and had begun to develop bespoke training for its volunteers.

And so, many of the early pioneers in professional counselling in Ireland were originally operating in very disparate, disconnected settings – perhaps in family agencies as part of the social welfare system, or as volunteers in church-allied marriage guidance associations, or as voluntary counsellors addressing the problems of alcoholism and other types of addiction within government-funded initiatives (which were relatively rare).

From today’s standpoint, it is hard to imagine just how daunting the prospect of starting out in such a field must have been – a field where there were no nationally recognised standards, there was no specific training or set career path, and no cohesive sense of identity or community – in a profession which was not even acknowledged to be a profession at all.



Ursula O'Farrell, one of the founding members of the Irish Association for Counselling (the original incarnation of IACP), remembers well her sense of trepidation as she went about setting up her own private practice in the early 1980s, having just successfully completed a two-year Diploma in Psychology at UCD: 'I was a fledgling counsellor ... It was thrilling, I loved every busy minute of it ... but it was terrifying too.' In the Ireland of the time, it seemed, counselling as an activity, let alone a profession, was barely in the public consciousness at all, as Ursula also recalls: 'When I first began to speak of myself as a counsellor, several people expressed surprise, and asked if I were an elected county councillor!'

Many other early practitioners in this fragmented and largely undefined field of activity shared Ursula's sense of apprehension, as they too embarked onto the uncharted waters of private practice. But they too had the same boundless enthusiasm for what was at the time in Ireland a ground-breaking new profession.

Odette Thompson was one of these. The daughter of French parents, Odette had moved to Dublin in the late 1940s when her father was appointed French consul for Ireland. Having met and married an Irishman, she stayed in Ireland after the rest of the family had returned to their base in London.

Odette had varied experience in secretarial work, but, in 1968, at the encouragement of a friend, she applied for and was accepted onto a training course run by the CMAC (Catholic Marriage Advisory Council). After successfully completing this course, she worked for a number of years in the field of couple counselling under the CMAC umbrella.

When she had arrived in Dublin at the age of 21, one of the things Odette had noticed almost immediately was the very strong culture of drinking which held – and still holds – sway in this country. Being French and having a very different approach to such things, neither she nor anyone in her family could understand the strange and often destructive attitude the Irish have to drinking, and the sheer quantities of alcohol which it was – and is – considered normal to consume. As the years passed however, she



Odette Thompson



was to find that it was a phenomenon which deeply affected her own life and family, as it became painfully clear that her husband, Frank, was himself struggling with the affliction of alcoholism.

Odette's first-hand experience of the terrible, divisive effects of this condition – not only on the sufferer but on those in his or her immediate circle – made her intensely aware of the dearth of support in the community for alcoholics and their families. And so in 1978, she set up the Hanly Centre for Addiction in Dun Laoghaire. There was no government support available at the time for this initiative: any money was raised by the fundraising efforts of Odette and her supporters. With the cooperation of the authorities, they enlisted the help of some of the prisoners from Mountjoy Prison to complete the construction work on the building and to make some furniture and basic fixtures and fittings for the proposed Centre.

Meanwhile, at the beginning of the 1980s, a number of other very important initiatives in Ireland's emerging counselling sector were being set up in parallel. Among these was the Rutland Centre, a treatment centre for alcoholics, which was set up in Clondalkin in 1978 with government funding. There was also the St Catherine's Centre in Tallaght, which opened in 1982 under the auspices of Fr. Miceál O'Regan of the Institute of Psychosynthesis: it offered structured counselling services in a range of areas, including marital difficulties, the emotional fallout of incest, and problems with alcohol, for those preferring to seek help in a setting closely allied to the Church.

Keen to remain abreast with the latest developments in the counselling arena, Odette Thompson had joined the British Association of Counselling (the BACP as was) around the time she was setting up The Hanly Centre. She attended BAC training courses and conferences as often as she could, and as a result became increasingly aware of how poorly developed and unstructured the sector was in Ireland, in comparison with Britain. She felt dismayed by the realisation – shared, she was certain, by others working in the field – that counselling as a professional activity in Ireland was often dismissed and belittled by those in authority and indeed the public at large, because of a lack of



knowledge. The advent at the time of such ‘fluffy’, lightweight fads as ‘colour therapy’ and ‘style counselling’ was not helping the public perception of the talking therapies: people tended not to differentiate between what were of course vastly different approaches and concerns, and indeed areas of activity. With all of this in mind, Odette Thompson decided to explore the possibility of setting up some kind of Irish equivalent of the BAC.

Her first step was to contact BAC and ask whether they would be amenable to the idea of a counterpart organisation in Ireland. Very much in keeping with an excellent spirit of cooperation and reciprocity which would flourish over the three decades which followed, BAC were receptive to and supportive of the idea of an Irish association. At Odette’s request, they sent her a list of the thirty or so BAC members living in Ireland at the time, giving her permission to contact them in relation to her idea.

Odette wasted no time in writing to each person listed, asking if they would be interested in such an initiative, and suggesting the possibility of a preliminary meeting for further discussion. She quickly received a good many replies, the majority of them expressing a warm and enthusiastic response to her idea. Again, this was another early indicator of the tenor and spirit of the organisation which was to evolve.

1981

First Steps to an Association

The first meeting of the fledgling Irish Association for Counselling was held in early 1981, in the basement kitchen of the CMAC on Elbana Avenue, Dun Laoghaire. The attendance numbers for this meeting were certainly not overwhelming, as Odette and others recall – no more than ten people turned up on the day. But there was an atmosphere of excitement and enthusiasm, and many of those original ten – including Ursula O’Farrell, Ita McCraith, Joan McGowan and Kay Duffy – went on to become key figures of influence and many years’ standing in the significant organisation which was to grow out of such modest beginnings.

an association ‘for counselling’ – as opposed to ‘for counsellors’

Those who attended this seminal meeting resolved to forge ahead with the new venture, which, they agreed, would be called



the ‘Irish Association for Counselling’. The naming of the new organisation was crucial, Ursula O’Farrell remembers, in terms of delineating its function. By calling it an association ‘for *counselling*’ – as opposed to ‘for *counsellors*’ – it was being highlighted from the outset that its focus would be to establish and develop recognition for, and to promote knowledge in and define standards for the counselling profession as an entity – as opposed to being a merely professional body concerned with fostering and protecting its individual members as counsellors.

An Inauguration Conference, Some Formal Objectives and Much Positive Feedback

The founders of the new organisation set about the task of getting it established with verve and energy. Only months later, they were able to announce a forthcoming Inauguration Conference of the Irish Association for Counselling, which would take place on 21 March 1981. The venue was a ‘bijou’ theatre room in Dublin’s prestigious Royal College of Surgeons: this had been secured through the connections of Joan McGowan, whose husband was the Dean of the College at the time. As Ursula O’Farrell recalls, ‘In those days, if we looked for an expert in any area of counselling, we looked abroad’ – and so, the guest speaker was Michael Jacobs of the BAC. The event was chaired by Eddie Farrelly, while Geoffrey Magee of the Northern Ireland Association for Counselling and Odette Thompson also took the floor to address those assembled.



Royal College of Surgeons, Dublin

The rest of the day unfolded with a series of discussions and workshops. By the end of the conference, the key aims of the new association (as set out in contemporaneous minutes) had been defined as follows:

- To develop and promote national recognition of counselling
- To set and maintain standards of counselling training and practice
- To coordinate information concerning counselling in Ireland
- To offer support for counsellors, through the provision of



- workshops, seminars and personal development groups
- To represent counselling at national level

The conference ended with a wine and cheese reception which allowed the participants the opportunity to mingle socially for a short time and share with each other their impressions of the day. Although the numbers in attendance were relatively limited – there were 45 delegates in total – the general atmosphere had been one marked by a tangible sense of common purpose and excitement; of being involved in something new and significant. In the light of this and all the positive feedback which flooded into the small office in Elbana Avenue in the form of letters and telephone calls in the days which followed, the inaugural conference was deemed to have been a success.

A Generous Spirit and a Shared Vision

By this time, other personalities who would play a key part in the beginnings of the IAC had become involved and were already very much committed to its evolution. Among these were Carl Berkley, Celia Homan, Edel Thompson, Ann Lindsay, Ed Boyne, Barbara Mitchell and Chris Murphy. Each was involved in counselling activities in very different contexts: Chris Murphy, for example, was working as an addiction counsellor at the Rutland Centre; Celia Homan, who had studied Sociology and Psychology at Trinity College Dublin and had trained as a marriage guidance counsellor, was working with the Irish Family Planning Association; Barbara Mitchell was a tutor with the Marriage Counselling Service in Dublin, as well as with the National Marriage Guidance Councils in Northern Ireland and England.

But one thing which all of these early members had in common was a desire to benefit from the sort of support and professional validation which a national association could provide. They also shared a heartfelt wish that the practice of counselling would develop and flourish in Ireland, for the common good rather than for purely personal considerations of material gain and their own career advancement. This spirit of generosity and unselfish dedication to the profession is therefore something which was



central to the Association from its inception – and has been kept alive over the three decades of its existence by a succession of members who have unstintingly given their time and energy on a voluntary basis to the various committees at the heart of IACP that continue to ensure that progress is being made in many crucial areas of concern.

Workshops and Seminars: 1981–84

By the end of 1981, a Steering Committee for the fledgling IAC had been appointed, with Odette Thompson as Chairperson, Ursula O’Farrell as Secretary and Joan McGowan as Treasurer. With the dynamic assistance of Carl Berkeley and a number of others, they were able to organise a series of workshops and seminars over the next few years. As retrospectively recorded in the first issue of the Association’s newsletter, these events included:



Ursula O’Farrell

NOVEMBER 1981: *Basic Beliefs in Counselling* by Peter Daws

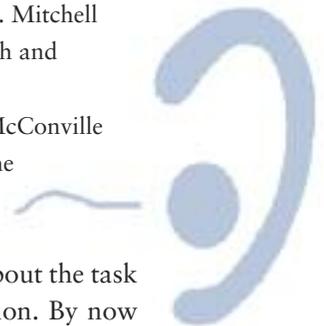
JULY 1982: *Grief* by Joe Guthroe

JANUARY 1983: *Sexually Speaking* by R. Simpson and B. Mitchell

APRIL 1983: *Making Counselling Work* by G. Applegarth and
B. Mitchell

JANUARY 1984: *Structuring the Helping Process* by B. McConville

MARCH 1984: *A Seminar on Alcoholism* presented by the
Hanly Centre



In the meantime, the Steering Committee had set about the task of drafting an official constitution for the organisation. By now the IAC also had an official letterhead with the Elbana Avenue address in Dun Laoghaire, and a logo of sorts – a simple line drawing denoting a listening ear. The Committee then focused on two other key objectives: the eventual formation of an elected Executive Committee, and what is simply referred to in minutes of that time as ‘official recognition’, which presumably was envisaged as recognition of the profession by government structures, and possibly legislation of some sort. As we know from the perspective of the present, progress in relation to this latter



aspiration would be slow, to say the least. But in any case, the aim was there as a key objective of the IAC from the very outset.

1983

An Early Alliance with the PSI

The setting up of a formal structure relating to specifically to counselling within the Psychological Society of Ireland in 1983 was an important coup from the perspective of the IAC, in terms of gaining recognition for the profession from other related disciplines.

The ‘Counselling Group’ within the PSI had come about as a result of a series of discussions arising out of the Society’s annual conference in 1983, at which Dr Eleanor O’Leary, of the Guidance and Counselling Unit at UCC’s Department of Applied Psychology, had delivered a paper on Counselling and Psychotherapy. The new Group was very much the crystallisation of a wide-ranging but unfocused interest in the field of counselling which had existed in the PSI for many years. This initiative quickly attracted support and new adherents, and in 1984 a Symposium on Counselling formed an important part of the Agenda of the PSI’s annual conference in Westport. The Symposium featured six speakers, and a subsequent report concluded that: ‘The counselling service is a relatively new one in this country and the success of the Westport Symposium was an encouraging pointer for the future.’

The IAC was quick to develop links with the PSI on the back of this new initiative, and in 1984, the committee of the Counselling

Group agreed to offer adherent status to the members of the

IAC for an annual fee of IR£5, which granted them

full membership to the Society (with the exception

of voting rights and office holding). In March

1984, the Hanly Centre hosted a series of

workshops run by the Society and led by

Professor Richard Page from the

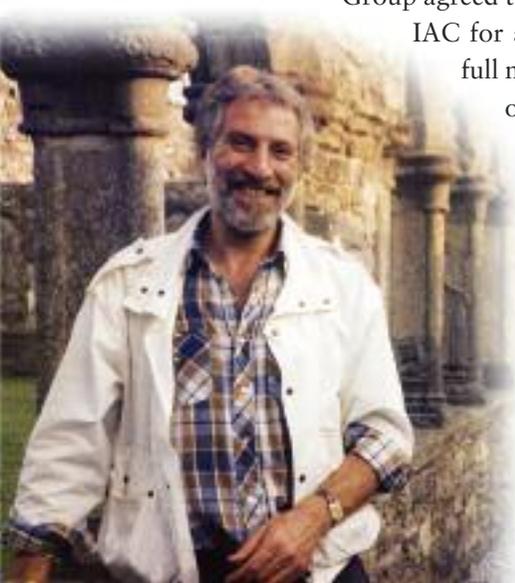
Counselling Department of the University of

Georgia, USA. It can be seen how, even at

this early stage, the IAC’s links with other

bodies in the field meant a broadening of

perspective for its members, by allowing



Carl Berkeley, one of the founding members



1981-91

1984

A Sounding Board for the IAC

The next important milestone for the early IAC was the advent of a dedicated quarterly publication, which was the brainchild of Carl Berkeley.

The first issue of *The Newsletter of the Irish Association for Counselling* was published in September 1984, with the inimitable Carl ‘acting as both parent and midwife’, in the words of an article written by Anne Dempsey many years later, to mark the publication’s 20th anniversary. In the same piece, Carl explained the rationale behind the *Newsletter* as he originally envisaged it: ‘It was my idea to give the association a sounding board... The aim was to be the voice of the [IAC], put ourselves on the map. In the early days, with so few of us, it was dangerous to give an idea – as soon as you would suggest something, someone would say: “Great, why don’t you do it?”!’



The inaugural edition of the *Newsletter* contained a kind of mission statement, on page 2, which further defined its proposed focus:

NEWSLETTER. The Newsletter will be published quarterly and will include articles on counselling in different areas, information on workshops and courses for counsellors, book reviews, and letters to the editor. Please assist us to make it interesting and useful by letting us have information and contributions.



In keeping with its stated purpose, the first issue and the next few would be largely news-based but, in tandem with the development of the organisation itself, the *Newsletter* would soon evolve and broaden its remit to allow for the exchange of ideas, enable reflection on the nature of the profession and represent a forum for learning in itself. But in September 1984, it was very much in its elementary stages, and, as Carl would later recall with typical humour, the rather basic nature of the production process reflected this (as well as the fact that desktop publishing was not yet in general use!): ‘I decided on the content, and put it together manually, typing it out with two fingers on an old portable typewriter. I used to cut out the IAC insignia and letterhead and glue it across the top. We photocopied the whole thing at the Hanly Centre, sending out less than 100 copies in those days. I think the postage was 10p each.’

The September 1984 issue featured reviews by Geoffrey Applegarth (then the Regional Officer of The National Marriage Guidance Council in the UK) of four associated workshops which he co-led with Barbara Mitchell in 1982–84, as well as a report by Ursula O’Farrell about a seminar on alcoholism, also facilitated by the IAC in March 1984 and which figured speakers from various organisations, including the Rutland Centre, Alcoholics Anonymous, St. Dymphna’s, the Hanly Centre and St John of God Hospital.

The final page of this issue was given over to a ‘Book Review’ section. The first review, written by Carl Berkeley, assessed the recently published *Practical Counselling Skills* by Richard Nelson-Jones (Holt Rinehart & Winston) and was typically sparky and irreverent: ‘I couldn’t quite understand why I had a feeling of discomfort as I was reading, until I realised that there is a sense of a recipe book about it, a feeling that if you read this book from

cover to cover, you would achieve the impossible and become a counsellor... Indeed, I had a picture in my mind of a counsellor keeping this book in a drawer or covered with papers on his desk, and consulting it when he reached a difficult point with a client!’





A Constitution, a Committee and a Sense of Adventure

The new publication was presented by Carl Berkeley at that year's AGM, which was held on 21 September 1984, again at Dublin's Royal College of Surgeons. The meeting marked important progress for the IAC on a number of other fronts too. A draft constitution was proposed and unanimously endorsed by the 40 members in attendance. The Steering Committee also presented their report, financial statement and an outline of negotiations on the adoption of 'Irish Association for Counselling' as a business name, and an application for charitable status for tax purposes. A Steering Committee for the following year was then voted in, with Odette Thompson as Chairperson, Ursula O'Farrell as Secretary, Joan McGowan as Treasurer and a Committee comprising Kay Duffy, Ita McCraith, Carl Berkeley, Barbara Mitchell and Chris Murphy.

Although the number of adherents to the fledgling IAC was still very limited, there was a great sense of positivity and purpose at the early AGMs and other meetings. One of the founding members summed up the general feeling at the time: 'It is hard to convey how invigorating it was to belong to a support group of like-minded people, to be able to discuss counselling theories and learn from each other... [Although small,] the group was warm and supportive and there was a ... sense of adventure and pioneering, as we organised workshops and drew up criteria for membership and our Code of Ethics and Standards.'

Early Subscription Fees and Criteria for Membership

As detailed in various minutes and notices, the fee structure in 1984 for annual membership of the newly formed IAC was as follows: Full Membership: IR£12; Associate Members: IR£8; Student Members: IR£5; Member Organisations: IR£20.

In terms of the criteria for membership, the requirements at the time seem almost unbelievably lenient and undemanding by today's standards:



'Full membership of the Irish Association for Counselling will be limited to counsellors who have a minimum of one year's counselling experience, including a minimum of six supervised hours per week, or the equivalent in training as regarded adequate by the Executive Committee.'

It is worth bearing in mind however that this is a measure of the extent to which counselling as a profession in Ireland was at an embryonic stage, rather than indicating that the early IAC was not exacting in its standards. At the time, these requirements were no doubt considered to be relatively onerous, in terms of the sort of formalised experience – or lack thereof – which those working in counselling had.

A First Course in Counselling Skills

The autumn of 1984 marked another key moment for the IAC, with the advent of the organisation's first Course in Counselling Skills, run by Celia Homan and Ursula O'Farrell on the premises of The Hanly Centre. The course, consisting of ten weekly sessions of two hours between October and December, was aimed at 'those who wish to learn basic counselling skills, for practical application in their work setting', and cost IR£85 in total, including a IR£10 registration fee.

For both Ursula and Celia, this first foray into teaching in a field which was still largely undefined in many ways, was somewhat daunting, as Ursula recalls: 'With much trepidation but encouraged by a group of colleagues ... we drew up a programme, and I think we were quite surprised when 12 or so participants arrived and looked to us for expertise. We consoled ourselves that, although we might not know a great deal, at least we knew more than our students!' The course however was a great success, and, when it was run again the following year, was fully subscribed well in advance of the start date. In subsequent years, both Ursula and Celia would go on to become tutors at St Patrick's College in Maynooth, where they would teach on the Extra-Mural Course for Counselling, an adult education course which would eventually be offered throughout Ireland.



1981-91

A Counsellors' Contact Group

The idea of a support group for counsellors was mooted in the very early years of the IAC, although the first meeting of an official 'Contact Group' would not take place until January 1985. There had been an awareness from the outset of the potential value of such a resource, as a report by Carl Berkeley from that time makes clear: 'Many counsellors work individually and rarely have the opportunity to discuss their work with others in the same field, which can often lead to a sense of isolation... It [is] recognised how easily motivation gets lost in the sheer pressure of work, and particularly in the case of those who work in some isolation and do not have the opportunity to relate to counsellor colleagues on a regular basis... There was also identified a need for a sense of "team" in counselling, lest isolation lead one off on an ego trip. This is a danger even for those whose basic integrity is not in question. In any case, counselling demands of those who purport to have and to use the necessary skills, a high degree of responsibility in reflecting on their motivation and how it affects their work...'



Within all of these observations of course was the core recognition of the need of each individual counsellor for some kind of supervision and debriefing and regulatory process. Out of this would ultimately grow the concept and then the structure for formal, regulated supervision, as an activity in parallel and very much related to the counselling of clients – but it would be some years before all of this was to be crystallised and put into effect.

Carl Rogers comes to Dublin

The February 1985 issue of the IAC's *Newsletter* announced a forthcoming event in July of that year, which many in the field would have regarded as nothing less than momentous – a visit to Ireland by Dr Carl Rogers himself, the man who is of course widely considered to be one of the founding fathers of psychotherapy research, the creator of the person-centred approach and arguably one of the most influential American psychologists of the 20th century. In the absence of records

1985



Dr Carl Rogers

confirming the precise circumstances of how the series of ‘Cross-Cultural Communication’ workshops facilitated by Rogers and his team of nine practitioners ‘with a variety of backgrounds’, came to be organised, it is to be presumed that his Irish visit was part of the extensive international tour which occupied much of the last decade of his life.

While it seems fairly certain that IAC did not instigate the event as such, it is perhaps significant that the week-long programme of workshops was held in Dun Laoghaire – at the Royal Marine Hotel – and hence in close proximity to the Hanly Centre. And it is clear that a number of IAC adherents attended as many of the sessions as possible. Although Rogers

was 83 years of age by this time, Celia Homan, who attended the opening event but was unable to go to the workshops because of other personal commitments, recalls that he made a very strong impression:

‘My memory is of a very old man who was amazing for his age. The reports I got back from people who were at the conference were that it was not like any normal conference. [Dr Rogers] had helpers who took group therapy sessions and discussion sessions. He started the first day with everyone in the hall: on that day, apparently he had people talking about themselves in the large group and breaking down, becoming upset and very emotional. The feedback I got was of a very unusual session.’

As *Newsletters* and other correspondence of the time show, the Rogers’ visit sparked some debate between IAC members, primarily because of his rather unorthodox approach – particularly during the session which Celia Homan recounts above, when all the participants were assembled in one room. Ursula O’Farrell and others shared the view that in some senses, the display of extreme emotion and obvious vulnerability on the part of a number of those attending when ‘sharing’ with the group was unwarranted and perhaps a little inappropriate. Ursula summed up her perspective in a subsequent report on the session:

‘If we are vulnerable in such surroundings, how can we lend our strength to those who come to us from incidents of physical and mental violence beyond our understanding?’



Other IAC members felt strongly to the contrary, however. In a letter published in the April 1986 *Newsletter*, Susan Lindsay, then Director of Training at the Creative Counselling Centre in Dublin, who had also attended the Rogers' workshops, wrote:

'I believe that it is very important for us as counsellors to have permission in ourselves to be vulnerable and willing and able to share that vulnerability in our counselling at times when it is appropriate ... If we cannot be vulnerable, we cannot be congruent and I would also doubt our ability to truly understand and be able to demonstrate our understanding to those who come to us for help.'

This is of course a debate whose key issues continue to divide opinion among counsellors and therapists to this day!

While individuals clearly differed in their responses to Carl Rogers' approach during the week in question, the degree of keen interest in the event itself was surely indicative of the dynamic growth and awakening interest in the sector at local and national level in the mid-80s.

First Regional Branch Committee: Waterford

In terms of the internal structure of the Association itself, 1985 saw a key development in the formation of a first Regional group. The report of the AGM of 6 December records the establishment of 'our first Regional Branch Committee in Waterford – thanks to the hard work of Eamonn Brennach of the Listening Ear Counselling Centre, who is ably encouraged by Father Lawless: both are based in Waterford.'

Accreditation

Undoubtedly the most important development for the IAC in its sixth year was the formal introduction of a 'scheme for accreditation for counsellors by the Association'. The advent of the new scheme had been officially announced at the AGM of 6 December 1985, and an excellent and very accessible resumé of the guidelines for accreditation and its key principles, drawn up by Chris Murphy, was made available for all members in the April 1986 *Newsletter*. The report in question starts with a bald



statement of the reality out of which the whole concept of accreditation and indeed the Association itself had arisen:

'Anyone in Ireland, no matter how unqualified, can set himself or herself up as a counsellor without breaking any law.' What is even more shocking of course is the fact that this premise still holds true today!

The scope and lucidity of this first set of Accreditation guidelines were clearly the result of many long hours of hard work, consultation and tenacious discussion between the members of the Association, and relevant external parties too. As the article states: 'The IAC has been searching for some years now for a system to ensure that a high standard of counselling is maintained.'

True to the core objectives of the Association, the new scheme of accreditation would have the dual benefits of protecting members of the public from the dangers of rogue practitioners and, as such, of safeguarding the future of the counselling profession as an entity. The notion of supervision was touched upon in this early draft of the scheme. The necessity of there being a panel of supervisors available on request was also identified, although the detail had yet to be worked out: 'It is too soon to define precisely who may be a supervisor: this will be defined later in the light of further evidence.'

The value and relevance of the work of those having many years of practical experience, yet little formal training in the field, was also recognised, in the mooting of a 'grandparent clause'. All of these aspects of the scheme point to a carefully thought-out strategy which was the result too of input from outside agencies of longer standing in the field – and in particular, the British Association for Counselling, who had 'grappled with the same problems already' and whose spirit of collaboration was richly acknowledged in minutes of the time.

The same report by Chris Murphy also identifies the main problems inherent in developing a scheme of accreditation for a field of professional activity featuring such a wide range of approaches (**non-directive, confrontative, group, individual**, and so on) and specialist areas of focus (**addiction, relationships**,



bereavement, crisis, sexuality), undertaken in a very diverse range of contexts (**social services, charities, church-allied organisations, private practice**) by so many different types of practitioners (**full-time professional, voluntary, part-time self-employed**). Compounding all of this, the report acknowledges, was the current availability of so many different types of training of such varying degrees of relevance and rigour. This issue of the lack of standardisation in training possibilities would be something which would of course be addressed in later years.

First Accredited Members

The first formal meeting of the new Accreditation Committee took place on 19 August 1986. Again however, weeks of preparation and hard work had preceded this event, at which full, accredited membership was awarded to the following members: Odette Thompson, Chris Murphy, Ursula O'Farrell, Jean Mackey, Alice O'Neill, Kay Duffy, Carl Berkeley, Celia Homan and John Byrne. By the beginning of 1987, the IAC *Newsletter* announced a further increase in accreditations: 'We now have 15 Accredited Members, whose names will be given out in answer to enquiries for counsellors.'

The pace of progress on all of these matters was impressive to say the least, particularly considering that everything was being done on a purely voluntary basis – testament again to the generous and pioneering attitude of the early members of the IAC.

A First Counselling Open Day

In the final *Newsletter* of 1986, plans were announced in relation to an event aimed at heightening public awareness about the counselling sector in general, as well as highlighting the work of the IAC and the various resources being developed by them: 'The Open Day [will be] geared towards what is on offer in counselling. The plan is to have a city centre venue, and to invite all counselling agencies to have stands giving information about their work. Throughout the day, there will be short lectures on counselling. [The event] will be open to the public, and well-publicised through the media ...'





Dr Michael Corry

The IAC's first Counselling Open Day was held on 21 February 1987 in the Mansion House in Dublin. Later minutes would record the event in jubilant terms, as 'one of our greatest successes to date, with over 40 counselling agencies taking up the offer of display space, and over 1000 members of the public visiting during the course of the day, keeping everyone well on their toes, [with] giving information and answering questions'. An opening address was given by Odette Thompson as Chairperson, who then passed over to the guest speaker, the renowned psychiatrist and psychotherapist, Dr Michael Corry. Dr Corry, who would go on to found the Institute of Psychosocial Medicine in Dublin in the same year, gave a typically thought-provoking and articulate address which challenged popular perceptions from the outset:

'Thankfully, there are no "experts" in our field – the field of human nature and conduct, unless of course they are speaking from the bowels of an institution which upholds its brand of reality by such tools as intimidating power, a judgemental God, the "objective" sciences and in some cases, an enormous medical and pharmacological industry ...'

The Open Day received excellent press and media coverage and generated a plethora of follow-up requests for further information, both from members of the public in search of counselling services and from counsellors and would-be counsellors looking for advice about professional training, including of course the now routinely oversubscribed course being run by Ursula O'Farrell and Celia Homan. For those in the IAC, the event also 'highlighted the desperate need that the public have for information on what help is available and where to go for it'.

AIDS Workshop at the Hanly Centre

By the mid to late 1980s, the scourge of HIV and AIDS which had hit the country at the beginning of the decade was looming large in the public consciousness. Although media focus on this new and frightening disease with no known cure was becoming ever more intense, the level of ignorance about how it could be transmitted and what the prognosis was for those who contracted it was appalling, by today's standards. With tabloid papers reporting



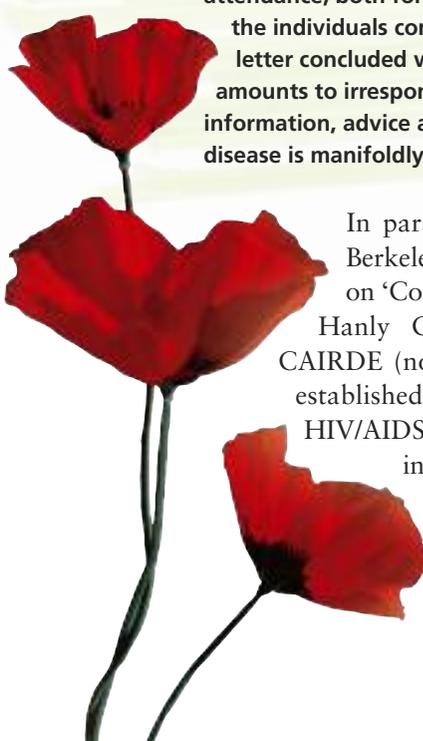
scare stories as news, many people believed that AIDS could be ‘caught’ from toilet seats, from using public baths, and even from sharing Communion wine. Victims were often viewed as falling into two groups: haemophiliacs, who were often labelled ‘innocent victims’, and gay men and drug users, who were frequently referred to as ‘authors of their own misfortune’.

As well as all the prurient and ill-informed media speculation, public ignorance was compounded by the fact that governments in both Ireland and Britain were slow off the mark to adopt coherent public strategies on AIDS and HIV, both in terms of the dissemination of accurate information on transmission, treatment and prognosis, and in providing adequate support for those who had been diagnosed as carrying the HIV virus or as suffering from full-blown AIDS. In this climate, it is hard to imagine the degree of isolation and fear which would have been experienced by those with a positive diagnosis for HIV, and by their families and friends.

In June 1987, the IAC sent an open letter to the then Minister of Health, Rory O’Hanlon TD, in order to draw attention to the issue of the lack of counselling facilities available to those testing positive for HIV, and calling for this to be addressed urgently:

‘Every testing agency in the country should have a trained counsellor in attendance, both for pre-test counselling and post-test counselling, not only for the individuals concerned, but also for the concerned families and friends.’ The letter concluded with a stark warning: ‘We believe that this lack of counselling amounts to irresponsibility on the part of the Minister for Health, as without information, advice and counselling being given, the risk of the spread of the disease is manifoldly increased.’

In parallel to this, in the summer of 1987, Carl Berkeley facilitated the first of a series of workshops on ‘Counselling on AIDS’ under IAC auspices at the Hanly Centre, with much valuable input from CAIRDE (now known as AIDS West), an organisation established in 1987 to provide support to people with HIV/AIDS. The workshops, which ‘highlighted the intense human dilemmas elicited by the advent of the AIDS virus’ would continue to be well-subscribed in subsequent years.





1988

Consolidation and Growth

1988 was a year of consolidation and growth for the IAC. The report on the AGM of 29 January 1988 confirmed that the number of IAC Accredited counsellors now stood at 20, with 155 fully paid-up Associate Members. The second Counselling Open Day had been another major success, with over 50 counselling agencies signing up to participate and equivalent public attendance figures as for the previous year. Media coverage, it was noted, was not quite as extensive as for 1987, with perhaps less of a novelty factor at play – but had nevertheless been substantial, and valuable in terms of raising the profile of counselling as a profession.

With the increase in membership and an ever more ambitious programme of events and activities, the volume of administrative work was becoming overwhelming for the existing Committee, who were after all, as Carl Berkeley reminded everyone in a report of the time, ‘a group of volunteers ... endeavouring to continue their own professions’. The decision was taken to employ a part-time secretary, and in December 1988, it was announced that Anne Hennessy had been appointed to the position. In the absence of any kind of funding, the new post would be financed by a very modest increase (approximately IR£2 per category) in members’ subscription fees.

In the meantime, despite heroic efforts and his legendary energy and commitment, Carl Berkeley too was finding the ever-increasing demands of producing the *Newsletter* ever more onerous. He was delighted therefore when Angela Driscoll, who had recently established herself as a training consultant in adult education, volunteered her services as Assistant Editor of the quarterly production, which now included a *Good News on the Grapevine* segment, giving details of the career developments and other initiatives of individual member counsellors. This would later to evolve into the *Notice Board* section which is still a feature in contemporary editions of *Éisteach*.





1981-91

First Steps in Counselling

September 1988 saw the publication of the first edition of Ursula O'Farrell's book, *First Steps in Counselling* (Veritas Publications, Dublin). Written as a companion guide of sorts to the Maynooth Extra-Mural Introduction to Counselling course which Ursula was facilitating at the time, the book, which is still in print today and in its third revised edition, was and is in many senses a seminal work in the field of counselling in Ireland. A 1988 review by Agnes Webster of the IAC highlights some of the key contributory factors in the book's appeal: 'It is [enlightening] to read a book on counselling which has been written with an Irish background, sensitive to the culture in which we live, with its particular problems of guilt and inhibition ... Ursula's integrity, balance and sense of humour as well as her regard for others is reflected in the book, and makes it a very sound introduction to the subject.' As of 2011, *First Steps in Counselling* has life sales of over 50,000 copies and continues to sell approximately 1,000 copies annually in the Irish market.



1989

'This is a Tidal Wave'

As the 1980s drew to a close, the field of counselling both as a professional pursuit and as a highly sought-after service for the public was entering a period of exponential growth, to a degree which would not have been imaginable just a decade previously. There was greater client demand than ever before, and, in order to meet that demand, more and more counselling practitioners were emerging in a now buoyant employment market. In an interview for *The Irish Times* in July 1990, Dr Ivor Browne summed up the phenomenon in dramatic terms: 'This is a tidal wave.' But, as *Irish Times* journalist, Kathryn Holmquist also noted, the same basic concern remained as previously: 'So you want to be a counsellor ... well, you could hang out your plaque tomorrow and try your luck, since there are no overall standards in Ireland and [there is] no official system of certification.'



Theme for the Year: 'On Being a Counsellor'

Against this backdrop, the theme which IAC had chosen to focus on for 1989 – 'On Being a Counsellor' – was therefore a very fitting and indeed timely one. The choice of such a theme had been mooted after an extremely successful synonymous workshop run by Susan Lindsay in the previous year, and was based on the recognition that, as a *Newsletter* editorial of the time put it:

'While there are many workshops offered on techniques, theories and expertise in counselling ... there are none offering the basic functional knowledge that we all need and yet for some reason feel uncomfortable talking about, such as: how do we charge?'; when are we ready to start counselling?; how do we get our clients?; how do we avoid burn-out?'

July 1989: IRTAC Conference

As far as exploring the whole question of the 'nuts and bolts' of being a counsellor, while hoping to also address as a matter of urgency the major concern of there being still no nationally, or internationally, recognised consensus on what constituted adequate training and qualifications for the role of professional counsellor, 1989 was to be a pivotal year for the IAC. One of the high points of the year took place in July 1989. This was the 14th Conference of the International Round Table for the Advancement of Counselling (IRTAC), which was held over four days in Dublin at Carysfort College and hosted by the IAC under the auspices of UNESCO, the Departments of Education and Social Welfare, and University College Dublin. Entitled 'Counselling: The Profession and the Community', the two main themes of the conference were the professionalisation of counselling and the relationship between counselling and the community.

The conference attracted some 150 participants from 25 countries and represented a valuable opportunity for Irish practitioners to meet and exchange views with those who were working in very different environments and systems, but shared many of the same basic dilemmas and issues. Speakers included Dr Michael Rustin from London, Professor S.P. McCabe from the



USA, Professor J. Patterson from Canada and Professor D. MacConalogue from the Netherlands. A series of workshops and seminars was complemented by receptions in the State apartments of Dublin Castle and the Mansion House, as well as a banquet in Carysfort College.

The event was clearly a very worthwhile occasion from the IAC's standpoint, not least because of the media coverage which it attracted – heightened by the presence of the Minister for Social Welfare – did much to raise public awareness of the key importance of some of the most pressing issues of that era. Valuable links had been established with international organisations too, with, for example, Odette Thompson being asked to participate in the next conference of the IRTAC, to be held in Helsinki in 1990.

A Forum on Training

Keen to take advantage of the momentum created by such successes, the IAC Committee wasted no time in setting a date for another key event in that year's calendar. Again, in keeping with the theme of training and the issue of establishing some kind of uniformity in course recognition and standards, it was decided to hold a Forum on Training for all those currently involved in the education of counsellors.

In preparation for this, Ed Boyne, a member of the Executive Committee, was sent over to the BAC Annual Conference, which was held in Bristol from 7–9 September. BAC had already started, some years previously, to tackle this issue of an agreed accreditation system for trainers and training organisations offering courses in counselling. Ed came back from the conference with much valuable information, which he presented in a very cogent report for all members in the *Newsletter* of October 1989.

As already mentioned, the whole issue of some kind of independent system for assessing the value of training in counselling was becoming ever more urgent because of the explosion in demand for counsellors and





the resulting emergence of all sorts of training possibilities. In an article in *The Irish Times* just a few years previously, journalist Mary Maher summed up the situation in relation to training in professional counselling in a rather alarming way:

'... much of what passes for training in counselling is equivalent to what used to be known as "sitting by Nellie" in the textile trade. The trainee picks up the trade by watching a [seamstress] until she – and it is usually "she" – feels able to tackle the job herself. Practice, it is hoped, makes perfect.'

While by the end of the decade, the situation had definitely improved, it was very far from perfect. In an interview in 1991, Ursula O'Farrell stated the problem in rather more concrete terms: 'We became aware that there were a lot of people doing "bitty" courses, people were attending courses that maybe did not have much validity that we could see – perhaps they were very short or maybe more of a series of workshops than a course – and from that, people were beginning to feel that they were ready to work as counsellors. This was terrifying to watch, I think, but at the same time, it was hard to condemn it out of hand. The demand was there and people who were not qualified were going to feel, out of the goodness of their hearts maybe, "Well, these people need help, they have nobody else to help them, so I will do what I can." We felt that people who wanted to train as counsellors had no guidelines. So we found a very simple formula and I think it worked like a dream.'

The 'simple formula' in question would be the organisation of the Training Forum, which was held on 20 October 1989 in the Royal Marine Hotel in Dun Laoghaire. The day would be an open day of sorts (albeit aimed at a more specific group of participants: all those in the field of counsellor training): a conference for which the theme would be standards of counselling training in Ireland. Preliminary notices about the event were sent out to everyone in the country known to be involved in any kind of training in counselling. Up until the very last moment, IAC members were forwarding information to any interested parties – the importance of the list of invitees being as exhaustive as possible



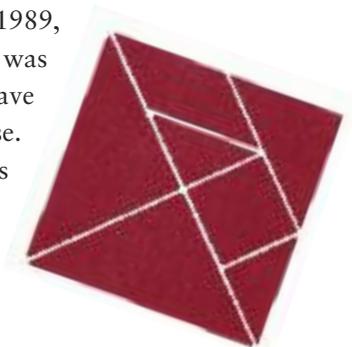
had been impressed on everyone.

The initiative was a huge success, as Ursula recalls: ‘We were very impressed by the way people pitched in and spent a day talking about this [issue of training]. They spent a whole day thrashing out the idea of accrediting courses – what was needed for the basic minimum – and again, we had someone over from BAC (because they had been through that procedure two years earlier), who gave us a very clear picture as to how they operated, where they had made mistakes and where things had gone well for them.’ The guest speaker for the day was Ms Kathleen Baker, a member of the BAC Working Party on Recognition for Counsellor Training.

Directly on the back of the Forum of 20 October, an IAC working party was set up to explore the whole area of how best to go about setting a system for standardising training. The members of the working party were relentless in their enthusiasm and drive for progress, and would go on to meet on a monthly basis over the next year and a half. At the end of this time, the group, who were in essence the fledgling Course Recognition Committee, were able to present a draft set of guidelines for the accreditation of courses which, once refined and teased out, all were very satisfied with. As the editorial of the *IAC Newsletter* of April 1990 pronounced with some pride, the Forum had ‘herald[ed] the first move in setting up minimum standards of training for counsellors in Ireland’.

Formation of IAC Dublin Branch

In parallel with all these exciting developments regarding the profession as a whole, and in which IAC had played such an important part, positive things were happening at an organisational level too. At the AGM of 21 January 1989, the formation of a dedicated Dublin branch of the IAC was announced. The Dublin Committee would go on to have their inaugural meeting on 30 May 1989 at Broc House. At the meeting, the role of the Dublin branch was defined as, ‘to be a self-funding group who provide educational events of interest to the membership ...





and to fill the gaps that training courses are leaving ...?’

On the Committee were: Sr Ellen Galvin RSC, Chairperson, Philippa Conaty, Secretary, Kay Conroy, Treasurer, Noreen Doherty, Education Officer, John Lindsay, Publicity Officer – as well as Alan O’Dwyer, Patricia Toal, June Quinn-Berger, Val Woods and Bonita Scott.

As the organisation grew, the need to have more paid staff became pressing. In December 1989, plans were announced to make applications for a grant, either from the EEC or from the Lotto fund, which could be used to finance the creation of more administrative posts for the Association, particularly for the full-time manning of the telephone, which was an essential point of contact for members of the public seeking help and information.

1990

Consolidation

If 1989 had been an exciting year for the IAC, the beginning of the next decade would bring more key developments for the organisation.

At the AGM of 9 February 1990, which was held at Broc House, a comfortable and spacious venue in Dublin city centre which was now increasingly being used for workshops and other events, the Executive Committee were pleased to be able to report that the number of Accredited Members had doubled in the previous year – there were now 54 in total, ‘covering different areas of counselling from across the country’– and the number of fully paid-up Associate Members stood at a very encouraging 300.

Two new Committee members were voted in – June Quinn-Berger and Alan O’Dwyer – and the formation of an Editorial Board, to assist Carl Berkeley and Angela Driscoll in compiling material for the *Newsletter*, was proposed, with Dr Bernard Stein and Susan Lindsay being the first to offer their services. At the same time, heartfelt tribute was paid to two Committee members who were standing down because of other personal commitments – Celia Homan and Kay Duffy. Both Celia, as Membership Secretary and Kay, who had been acting as Treasurer since the





founding year of IAC, had given unstintingly of their time and energy to the organisation.

Supervision

Meanwhile, the issue of the accreditation of individual members had given rise to other pressing questions relating to supervision, as highlighted in the opening Editorial of the April 1990 edition of the *Newsletter*: ‘The Accreditation Committee are faced with the decision of whether the supervisor who gives the report on the applying member is recognised by the Committee – in other words, who accredits the supervisors?’ In response to this realisation, a small working group was formed to look at this issue and other areas of supervision. This initiative would be the genesis of the Supervision Committee.

Another significant step forward was made in October 1990, with the publication of a draft Complaints Procedure in the December 1990 issue of the *Newsletter*: ‘The purpose of such a procedure is to provide a means of resolving where possible any complaint about an infringement of the IAC Code of Ethics on the part of an Accredited Member of the IAC.’

Odette Thompson Steps Down

The April 1990 issue of the IAC *Newsletter* featured a double-page profile of Odette Thompson, along with the announcement that this would be her final year as Chairperson of the Association, due to family illness. What is abundantly clear from the profile, apart from the great respect and affection with which she was held by all in the Association, was the level of commitment she demonstrated to furthering the field of counselling in the broadest possible way, over and above even her involvement with the IAC: ‘Odette is currently Vice-President of Zonta International, Dublin, a member of the National Association of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Counsellors USA, and an affiliate of the Royal Society for Health ... The 1990 IRTAC Conference is being held in Helsinki and Odette has been invited to attend as a Consultant, which is an honour for IAC and a great send-off for her final year as Chairperson ...’ The lady who had initially been known by



Odette and Ursula
in Brittany, 2011

many in the early days of her work for CMAC as ‘the little foreign counsellor’ had come a very long way indeed and had made a tremendous contribution to her chosen field. And she would continue to do so for many years to come.

Today Odette is 87 years old and lives with one of her daughters and her family in a beautiful 300-year-old farmhouse in Brittany. The author of this book was unable to meet her but did have a very informative and entertaining chat with her on the phone about the beginnings of the IAC. As she recounted the events of the early years of the Association – in the lively, melodious voice of someone decades younger – Odette’s great warmth and energy, knowledge about the field, and mischievous sense of humour quickly became evident.

December 1990 – A New Address

The Association’s move from ‘borrowed’ premises in Elbana Avenue, Dun Laoghaire (‘a shelf called an office’, as Alan O’Dwyer referred to it in a recent interview!) to its own office premises at 9 Tivoli Terrace East in the town was a very significant step forward at the end of 1990. Having dedicated office space for administrative work, committee meetings and if necessary, visits from the public meant that everyone could look forward to a new level of organisation and efficiency. With Anne Hennessy’s



departure, Monica Guckian took over as part-time secretary, but it was clear that more staff were urgently needed.

The Committee had applied in previous months for the funds to employ more secretarial staff under the SES workers' scheme of the time. It was hoped that this might ensure at the very least that there would be cover for reception each weekday morning. There was a palpable sense of jubilation at the announcement – communicated in the form of a last-minute 'Stop Press' notice at the bottom of the December 1990 edition of the Newsletter – that the SES funding had been granted to the Association – as well as a IR£6,000 award from People in Need to finance the publication of a directory of counselling.

A Guide to Counselling and Therapy

One of the biggest developments for 1991 was the publication of the IAC's first *Guide to Counselling and Therapy* in November of that year by Wolfhound Press. The idea of producing such a directory had been under discussion for several years prior to this, as Ursula O'Farrell explained in an article for the Winter 1991 edition of *Inside Out* (The Journal of the Irish Association for Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy): 'The thing that seemed to underline the need was that people were coming to me from the country, from the West of Ireland, travelling all the way to Dublin for an hour or an hour and a half with a counsellor and going home again. This suggested that their desperation was sufficient to make it worthwhile, but it seemed to me a terrible waste of their time and energy, if there was someone nearer, and I felt sure that there must be... The accreditation scheme was a way of making sure that the supply was there, and this was a way to put that supply in touch with the demand ...'

The compiling of the *Directory* was a demanding and time-consuming task, but fortunately the grant from People in Need, as well as a small award from the Department of Health Information Unit meant that the IAC had the funds to employ a very able research assistant, Irene Feighan, to work on the project. In consultation with the Committee, Irene was able to put together a detailed questionnaire which was sent out to as many individuals



and agencies working in the sector as possible. The aim was to provide as comprehensive a listing as possible of ‘those engaged in therapeutic practice’ on a nationwide basis. The finished *Guide* comprised about 500 entries, categorised by province and with details about areas of specialisation, training and approximate fees per session. Many of the practitioners listed were not members of IAC, and, as such, as Ed Boyne, Secretary of the Association at the time, made clear in an interview for *The Irish Times*: ‘We can’t be held responsible for everyone listed, and there is a disclaimer to that effect.’

The *Directory* undoubtedly represented an enormous contribution to the profession, as an information resource both to members of the public and practitioners. In a review of the new publication, *Irish Times*’ journalist Helen Meaney hailed it as ‘a [comprehensive] guide to the bewildering array of therapies and techniques available for treating psychological problems’.

1991 brought a number of internal changes for the organisation too. Odette Thompson stood down as Chairperson and her huge contribution to the organisation was feted at the AGM of March 1991. Ursula O’Farrell was nominated to be Odette’s successor as Chairperson and a new Executive Committee was voted in, with Chris Murphy as temporary Vice-Chair.

There was great sadness among members at the news of the death, in February 1991, of Kay Duffy, founder member and long-standing Treasurer of the Association. In an emotional address to those assembled at that year’s AGM, Odette Thompson paid tribute to Kay’s ‘no-nonsense, practical wit’ and well as the ‘magical catering’ for which she was also renowned and her ability ‘[to produce] hot dishes for cold winter, lunchtime meetings’.

A Trainers’ Conference

In April 1991, a Trainers’ Conference was held at the Royal Marine Hotel in Dun Laoghaire in order to consider the proposals on standards for training courses which had been drawn up by the IAC Working Party on Training, and to reach a consensus on a set of criteria for recognition by the IAC. The conference was attended by delegates from many of the major counselling training



organisations and agencies, including the universities of Maynooth, UCC, UCG, UCD, TCD, the Irish Gestalt Centre, CMAC, The Reality Therapy Institute, Cuan Mhuire and The Creative Counselling Centre. Ed Boyne, the convenor of the Working Party, presented the proposals, which were the result of many months of hard work on the part of the group, which had been formed in December 1989.

A day of intense discussion led to substantial agreement on the key tenets of the proposals, which covered such issues as the means of the selection of candidates, the qualifications of course staff, the nature and quality of self-awareness work required of students, the need for work with clients under supervision, theory and how it should be taught, and the modes of assessing students. At the conference, the setting up of an IAC Course Recognition Group was also agreed upon. The first task of the Group would be to finalise and publish the Criteria for Course Recognition, so that these would be made available to trainers as soon as possible.

Conclusion

As the first decade of the IAC's existence drew to a close, there was an opportunity to pause and reflect about what had been achieved thus far, as well as to look to the future in anticipation of what the years to come would bring for the Association. Within ten years, the landscape of the talking therapies' sector had changed beyond all recognition. The activity of counselling, which had barely registered in the public consciousness and was being conducted largely on a voluntary basis with little or no acknowledgement from the established healthcare services, was now being heralded as the 'profession of the 1990s'. From very modest beginnings with just a few dedicated pioneers, the IAC had taken tremendous strides in terms of helping to define, establish and set standards for practitioners of this burgeoning profession, providing at the same time a valuable structure of community and support for counsellors and a reliable information resource for the public.

**the activity of
counselling now the
'profession of the 1990s'**

In terms of the future, the advent in 1992 of European



integration and a single market was of course just around the corner, and there had already been much reflection as to what this would mean for the field of counselling and psychotherapy. For some years already, European member countries had been engaged in consultations over the future homogenising of the sector in terms of training requirements and overall standards, so as to enable those in the profession to work in any EC country, should they wish to do so.

In the Irish context, it was becoming clear that the biggest priority for the near future would be to attempt to establish some kind of national consensus as to the boundaries and areas of overlap between the many different approaches and models of practice, which could then be presented to the EC and the Irish government from a unified stance. In the words of Emmy Van Deurzen-Smith of the UK Standing Conference for Psychotherapy: 'As is so often the case, it is the fact of having to talk on an international level to the rest of Europe that has made it necessary to begin defining our terms nationally.'

In the simplest terms, much of the associated debate would focus on one core issue: what differences, if any, could be determined between counselling and psychotherapy? It was an issue which would fuel many hours of heated discussion and reflection for some time to come.

Naturally enough, with 1992 just on the horizon, many people in all sectors of commercial and professional activity were feeling apprehensive about the imminent changes which closer association with their European counterparts would inevitably bring. Regarding the IAC however, it is surely a sign of an organisation with an already secure core, a sense of confidence and a refreshing lack of complacency, that the Association and its members showed a positive readiness to welcome and embrace the challenges of transition.

As Mairead Kavanagh noted in a *Newsletter* editorial of the time: 'The IAC has surged forward to meet, greet and mingle with our new [European] colleagues with much energy and enthusiasm.' The organisation was clearly in a position to anticipate the coming years with a sense of optimism and excitement.

Carl Berkeley

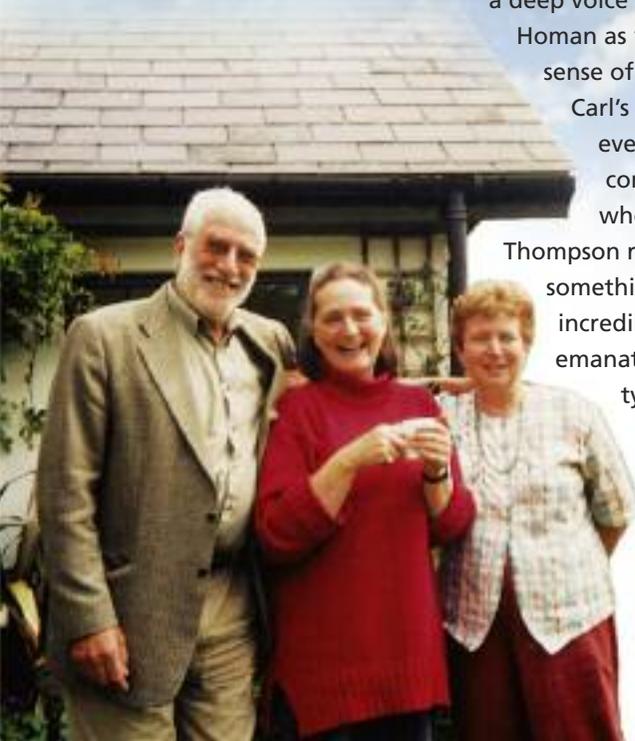
1936 – 2004

Carl Berkeley was one of the founding members of the Irish Association for Counselling. From the early 1980s until the year of his death, he played a pivotal role in the organisation, as the first Press Officer to Odette Thompson's Chairperson, as the 'midwife and parent' of the Association's quarterly journal, *Éisteach*, and as international representative for Ireland and Acting Vice President at the early meetings of the European Association for Counselling. With his delight in discovering fresh perspectives, his passionate belief in best practice and his insistence on the highest standards of integrity for the IAC and its members, Carl's stature as a trainer, supervisor and practitioner of Carl Rogers' Person-Centred Approach grew with every year of his involvement in the field of counselling and psychotherapy.

As well as his professional accomplishments, it seems that Carl's personality and presence never failed to make an impact on all who met him. Odette Thompson remembers him as a 'tall, handsome and charming man'; Chris Murphy as 'bearded, with a deep voice and a lovely personality'; Celia Homan as 'larger than life, with a great sense of humour'. Above all, it was Carl's unique ability to connect with everyone he met and his deep compassion for others that those who knew him recall. Odette

Thompson remembers him reading something she had written about the incredible warmth which seemed to emanate from him at all times – with typical humour, he countered by remarking at a workshop he was facilitating at the time: **'Apparently no-one needs central heating when I'm around!'**

Carl with Sarah McLoughlin and Ursula O'Farrell





Carl Berkeley was a multi-faceted man, with a zest for life and rare ability for constant reinvention. He was born in 1936 in Prestwich, Manchester to Jewish parents who had come to the UK from Romania after the First World War. On leaving school, he initially worked in the clothing business, but decided on a change of direction at the age of 32, when he embarked on a four-year course in Psychology at Brunel University in London. During the early 70s, he travelled the world, taking the opportunity to train in counselling skills in California and attend various workshops facilitated by Carl Rogers. In 1976, he followed his heart to Dublin, the city which he would adopt as his home for the rest of his life.

As Ursula O'Farrell wrote of him in a moving tribute after his death: 'Carl inhabited a wider world than our counselling circles.' Carl clearly had many other interests which he was determined to follow in parallel with his work. As he devoted more and more time to a private counselling practice and his involvement in the IAC/IACP, he still found the time to pursue a long-standing interest in journalism and, at the age of 58, signed up for an MA in Journalism at Dublin City University. He presented an RTÉ radio series on Jewish music. He continued to be an avid traveller, making trips to the Far East as well as Lapland and Sweden.

As well as the seminal role he played as part of the IAC/IACP, Carl was one of the founder members of CAIRDE (now known as AIDS West). This organisation, which offers support to those diagnosed with HIV and AIDS and their families, was set up in 1987. It was a ground-breaking initiative at a time when misunderstanding of this terrible illness was the norm. Carl was a trailblazer in other aspects of his work also,

Open letter to the Minister of Health.

Dear Sir,

It is with deep concern that we of The Irish Association for Counselling have noted the little counselling facilities that are available to people who have been tested positive to the AIDS anti-bodies test. We consider it of ultimate importance that every testing agency in the country should have a trained counsellor in attendance, both for pre-test counselling and post-test counselling, not only for the individuals concerned, but also for the concerned families and friends. It has come to our notice, that people being tested positive are left with no advice or counselling on how to behave in society, both to protect their own health, and to protect the health of others. We believe that this lack of counselling amounts to irresponsibility on the part of the Minister for Health, as without information advice and counselling being given, the risk of the spread of the virus is manifoldly increased.

Signed on behalf of
The Irish Association for Counselling,
(Signature)

offering counselling in such areas as gay sexuality, identity and relationships in the 1970s and 80s, when such issues were still largely unexplored and indeed unacknowledged in Ireland.

In 2005/6 the Carl Berkeley Memorial Award was set up to honour those who have made an outstanding contribution to the development of counselling and psychotherapy in Ireland.

The Award aims to honour a person who may meet some, or all, of the following criteria:

A member who makes an outstanding service contribution to the professions of counselling and psychotherapy, or to the counselling and psychotherapy community.

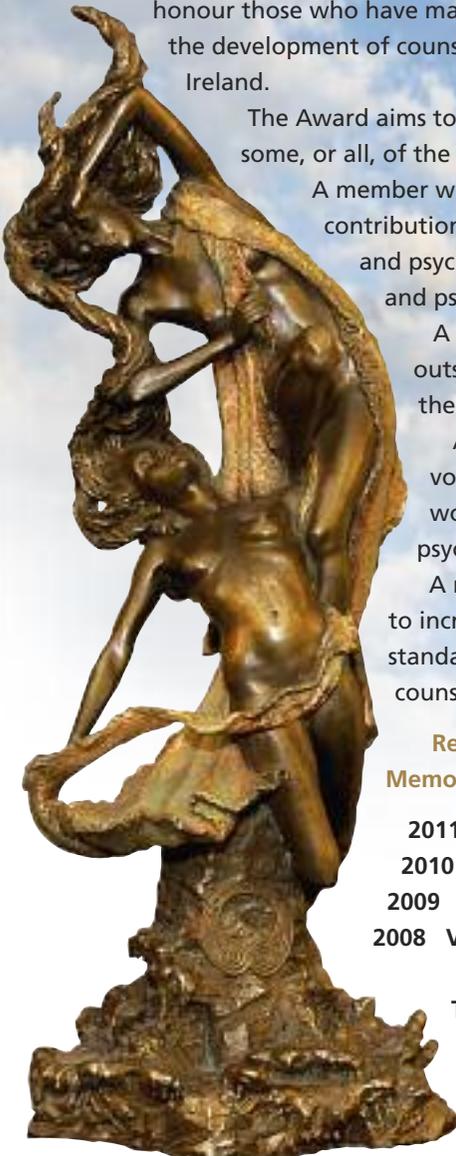
A member who has made outstanding practice contributions to the profession.

A member who gives significant voluntary time to IACP committee work and/or general counselling and psychotherapy advocacy.

A member who makes contributions to increasing standards, or awareness of standards, in the professions of counselling and psychotherapy.

Recipients of the Carl Berkeley Memorial Award:

- 2011 Ursula O'Farrell**
- 2010 Eoin Stephens**
- 2009 Margaret Watchorn**
- 2008 Vincent Humpheries**
- 2007 Denise O'Dowd, Director of The Family Life Centre, Boyle**
- 2006 Liam McCarthy**





1992–2001 **2** The second decade

Europe

In 1992, the imminent advent of the European single market was a major preoccupation for those working in the sector of counselling in Ireland, as indeed it was for professionals in all areas of activity. As we have seen, the IAC was keen not only to embrace any associated changes and developments, but also to be proactively involved in the forging of new policies and alliances in the European context.

Jeux Sans Frontières

The difficulties of implementing uniformity between member states in the sector of counselling and psychotherapy were all too obvious to anyone acquainted with the workings of the existing systems in each of these countries.

The Dutch and German status quo strictly limited the practice of accredited psychotherapy to psychiatrists and some psychologists – a ‘core profession model’ which many psychotherapists in Ireland and the UK felt to be in direct contradiction to Freud’s belief in lay analysis. Similarly, in Italy at the time, there was government legislation in place restricting the use of psychotherapy to areas defined by and limited to those practicing medicine. In Greece and Spain too, they were, as Carl Berkeley confirmed in a contemporaneous report, ‘still trying to wrestle this area from the medical profession’. In another report, Ursula O’Farrell noted that the direct Spanish translation of the term ‘counselling services’ generated the rather dubious expression ‘sanitary procedures’! This reflected the reality that in Spain, equivalent services within a therapeutic framework did not actually exist – or at least were not acknowledged as such.



The fact was that the British and Irish tradition of counselling in a broader sense was in many ways unique in the European context. This was highlighted by Helen Davis, then a director of the Minster Centre Psychotherapy Institute in London, in an interview which appeared in the Spring 1992 issue of *Inside Out*: ‘In Europe they do not have a basic counselling profession. In Britain they do, and it is a very old one. [H]ere it is considered a good basis for entering training to psychotherapy and is in fact the best basis for entering training...’

Against this backdrop, in May 1992 several IAC representatives attended a seminar in London given by Emmy Van Deurzen-Smith, the then Dean of the School of Psychotherapy in Regents College, and the European representative of the UK Standing Conference for Psychotherapy (UK SCP).

Ms Van Deurzen-Smith’s perspective on the challenges of standardising the sector posed by European unity struck a chord with the IAC delegates, as well as with a number of their UK colleagues in the BAC. Many agreed with her final analysis of the situation: ‘I personally believe that the occasion of European unity is an opportunity for the increasingly confused field of psychology, counselling and psychotherapy to find a common language. The time is ripe to find a sensible way to establish the various overlapping territories in ways that will provide professionals with greater clarity and distinctiveness of their position, and that will give the public a much-improved access to the resources that are now elusive and ill-defined.’ Like the UK SCP and the BAC, the IAC was inclined to regard this need to clarify the distinctions between the different strands of practice as an opportunity to define and finally gain proper public and legislative recognition for the ‘new profession’ of counselling/psychotherapy in their own countries, as well as in other member states. This in turn, they envisaged, could open up fresh opportunities and possibilities for practitioners within the European context.

As a direct result of participation in the UK SCP seminar, the IAC identified three key short-term objectives, which were summed up as follows: ‘to encourage dialogue between all groups with a common interest in counselling and therapy; to liaise with



the British Association for Counselling on mutual strategies; and to plan and implement contacts within Europe.'

A European Association for Counselling

In September 1992, Ursula O'Farrell attended the BAC Standing Conference for Europe, at which the IAC pledged their firm support for the BAC's proposed initiative to form a European Association for Counselling.

Consequently, in December of that year, Carl Berkeley and Patricia Kennedy travelled to Montecatini in Italy for a weekend conference focusing on the proposal of founding a European Association. Twenty-eight people took part, representing eight different countries: Britain, Italy, Belgium, Greece, Holland, Poland, France and of course Ireland. As well as the proposition at hand, the conference was dominated by the now familiar debate on the distinctions – or lack thereof – between the practice areas of counselling and psychotherapy.

By the end of the weekend, it was unanimously agreed that the initiative should go ahead, under the name of the European Association for Counselling. BAC generously offered secretarial back-up for future meetings of a small committee of interested parties from the various countries, as well as some funding for associated travel expenses until each member country could secure financing of their own.

The IAC delegates came away from the conference uplifted and encouraged, and with some sense of pride too at the realisation that in Ireland, as in Britain, the profession was, in some important





senses, far ahead of other participating countries. As Carl Berkeley noted: ‘It was interesting to note how far Britain and Ireland are in advance of other countries in the whole field of counselling.

We are the only two countries with a national counselling association ...’

While some foresaw that the ‘counselling versus psychotherapy’ dialectic – brought under the microscope as a consequence of the single market and also the pressing need to achieve statutory regulation for the sector at a national level – might expose divisions in the camp of Irish practitioners, others were quick to appreciate that there were a number of very real benefits to be gained from being part of the wider context of Europe. These included the many enriching alliances for the IAC which arose out of contact with European colleagues, and the general broadening of perspective which came about as a result of the need to consider and find common ground in the different approaches of other countries.

Hans Hoxter

One alliance which was greatly valued by some of the IAC’s key members was that with Hans Hoxter, the then President of the IRTAC and founder member of the BAC, and the man widely credited with establishing the profession of counselling in Great Britain.

Patricia Kennedy, who met with Hoxter at various European conferences, remembers how greatly impressed she was not only by the breadth of his knowledge in counselling-related matters, but also his keen interest in all things cultural: she was delighted to discover that he was a great fan of Joyce and Yeats. Both Patricia and Celia Homan also remember Hoxter’s great charisma as a public speaker and his wonderfully compelling delivery – which no doubt go some way to explaining the huge successes he had in lobbying for the profession with the great and the good. An obituary in *The Independent* in 2003 noted: ‘Hoxter’s two main gifts were his belief that he could go and see anyone, however important their public position, and his ability to raise money from



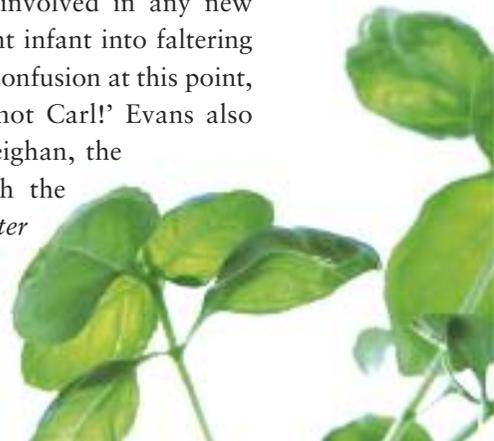


otherwise hard-headed organisations. He ... even persuaded the Department of Education to second civil servants to his grand project – the founding of counselling in Britain... He had an amazing capacity to make people listen – including busy therapists like Melanie Klein and Donald Winnicott, who backed him [completely] ...’

The IAC *Newsletter* of December 1992 published a piece by Hoxter which explored the boundaries of the role of the counsellor with impressive clarity and incisiveness, and concluded: ‘The counsellor functions in a broad spectrum verging upon psychotherapy at one boundary and upon advice-giving at the other, and may also enrich the skills of others in the caring professions. In all cases, receptivity to the individual’s thoughts and feelings is required. This is enlarged by the counsellor’s ability to extend his or her own self-understanding, and by willingness to learn from the client.’

A New Editorial Board

Internally, things were progressing in leaps and bounds for the IAC. The June 1992 issue of the *Newsletter* announced the formation of a new Editorial Board for the publication, which comprised Ian Evans, Mairead Kavanagh, Patricia Kennedy, Chris Murphy and of course Carl Berkeley. All were delighted that, even after so many years of service and the production – almost singlehandedly – of twenty issues of the *Newsletter*, its founder was keen to remain involved. Ian Evans’s editorial paid tribute to Carl’s contribution thus far with the kind of humour which, it seems, Carl himself would have enjoyed: ‘There would be no *Newsletter*, were it not for the dogged persistence of Carl Berkeley... It is only fitting that he be involved in any new developments that might lead this truculent infant into faltering adolescence. Just in case there may be any confusion at this point, I am talking about the *Newsletter*, and not Carl!’ Evans also acknowledged the hard work of Lucie Feighan, the then IAC Administrator, in helping with the production and distribution of the *Newsletter* to members.





With professional printing now being funded by the Association, changes for the *Newsletter* would include a ‘new look’ format with a sturdier cover and cleaner layout, and the decision to devote each issue to a designated theme. As regards editorial responsibilities, a system of rotation was to be introduced, whereby a different editor would take charge of the compilation and production of each issue.

An Cathaoirleach

A lively debate at the end of the AGM of 28 February 1992 – which had attracted over 80 delegates – generated another interesting change in the configuration of the organisation, which, although seemingly minor, perhaps spoke volumes about its progressive ethos. Some female members noted their dissatisfaction with the use of the term ‘Chairperson’ or ‘Chairman’ to refer to the leader of the Executive Committee. The latter title was felt to be rather sexist, and the former a bit contrived. Alan O’Dwyer remembers that it was one of the male participants at the meeting – Conn Mac Cinngha, an Eircom social worker and an Irish language enthusiast – who came up with a proposed solution. Conn’s suggestion – that the gender-neutral Irish term ‘Cathaoirleach’ might be an acceptable compromise – was met with approval by the majority present, and was adopted henceforth.

New Criteria for Accreditation

Meanwhile, essential work on standards, training and accreditation was continuing apace. In December 1992 the Association published the newly-drafted Criteria for Accreditation, which took into account recent changes and developments in the field. The new criteria would come into effect on 1 January 1993.

Accredited membership was now only available to those who had been IAC Associate Members for at least one year, and had completed training of over one year (if on a full-time basis) or two years (if on a part-time basis), including a minimum of 50 hours of client work under supervision, as well as 400 supervised hours of client work after training.

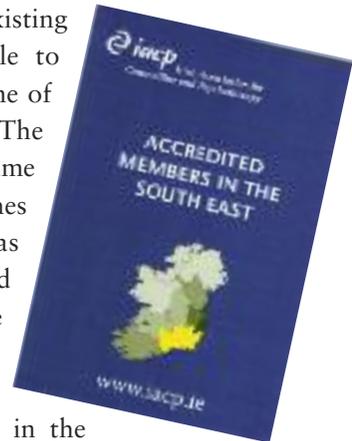
The ‘grandfather’ clause was still in operation, but applicable only to those with at least 10 years’ counselling experience, with a minimum of 150 hours per year, and who



were able to submit a current supervisor's report covering at least their most recent twelve months of counselling practice. All applicants were also required to show 'serious commitment' to ongoing professional and personal development, which would be demonstrable by 'regular participation in further training courses, support, study, personal therapy and by attending workshops on aspects of counselling theory and practice on a regular basis'.

In parallel, the Course Recognition Group was continuing to work diligently 'setting and maintaining standards in training in Ireland to keep the IAC in line with our European counterparts', while in the autumn months of 1992, the Association ran its first Supervisor Training Course. The course, which had a strictly limited number of places, was open to counsellors and therapists interested in exploring the area of supervision: the aim was to recruit participants who would have a 'reasonably uniform training background'.

By the end of 1992, a new regional branch, the Western Branch, which now encompassed a smaller, pre-existing group in Galway, was up and running, and able to announce an ambitious and wide-ranging programme of events and workshops for the coming months. The formation of a Cork branch was announced in the same year. With the Dublin and Waterford branches continuing to flourish as well, the Association was clearly broadening its sphere of influence and establishing important hubs of activity throughout the island. By the end of 1992, with over 650 Associate Members, of which 250 were fully accredited, the IAC was more than ever a force to be reckoned in the counselling field.



A Change of Status

A year of important internal developments for the IAC culminated in an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) on 21 November 1992. The main item on the agenda was the proposal that the legal status of the Association should be changed to that of a limited company: 'The Irish Association for Counselling Limited'. The



rationale behind the proposed change was to accord to the Association the necessary legal entity status to enable full participation in the new European Community, as well as the required legal framework from which charitable status could be applied for. Under the terms defined by the Revenue, as an organisation ‘involved in the advancement of education’, the IAC would be eligible for such status. Operating as a charitable concern henceforth would mean exemption from certain taxes and allow for fundraising activity which, it was now recognised, would be necessary for the continued growth of the Association.

The EGM was well-attended by IAC members. Ursula O’Farrell, as Cathaoirleach, presided over the proceedings; also in attendance were the National Executive Committee, IAC Administrator, Lucie Feighan and solicitor James Clancy. In accordance with legal precedents, the change of status required the Memorandum, Articles of Association and Bye-Laws to be read, discussed and voted, once any desired amendments had been noted. Energetic debate on a number of points meant that the meeting ran longer than expected, and that the discussion of another key point on the Agenda – a proposed name change for the Association, to include the term ‘therapy’ or psychotherapy’ – would have to be postponed to another day.

Genesis of the European Association for Counselling

1993 saw further progress for the IAC and indeed for the field in general on a number of fronts. In June, Carl Berkeley attended a meeting in Brussels, at which the statutes of the fledgling European Association for Counselling were signed and ratified, signifying that the organisation was now a registered legal entity under European law. The official launch of the new Association was being planned for a weekend in November of that year, also in Brussels.

Until a working committee could be voted in officially at the November launch, an interim policy executive had been elected, with Carl Berkeley nominated as Vice President to Anne Marie





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Bouvey's President. In his later account to the IAC, Carl highlighted the proposed benefits of membership of the new Association as including: 'certification; future European accreditation as well as information and possible opportunities to work in other EU countries; European contacts and the exchange of ideas; involvement in international research; back-up of national recognition; future professional liability insurance schemes'. Carl's report on the new developments concluded with some sense of the excitement he clearly felt himself: 'Now is your opportunity to become part of Europe!'

Matters of supervision remained a key focus throughout that year. In April 1993, Margaret Watchorn facilitated a workshop in Dublin, entitled, 'How to Get the Most out of Supervision'. This was followed in late Autumn by an intensive Training Course in Supervision over a number of dates. Led once more by Margaret, as well as Aine McCarthy, the course was open to IAC Accredited Members with a minimum of 450 hours of supervised counselling over at least three years of working experience, and who were currently in supervision themselves.

Move to Blackrock

In October, the IAC would move once more to larger premises – this time to Blackrock in County Dublin. Meanwhile, as Patricia Kennedy noted in the Autumn editorial, feedback on the new format of the *Newsletter* had been 'congratulatory'. With the departure of Ian Evans from the Editorial Board, two new members had been elected: Sheila Gannon and Eoin Stephens.

The Kilkenny Case

Foreshadowing an issue which was to become a very significant theme for reflection and debate in the talking therapies sector over the next few years, an important Letter to the Editor was published in the Summer 1993 edition of the *Newsletter*. The letter, written by Mairead Kavanagh, raised the difficult and complex questions around the issue of how a therapist should handle the

Margaret Watchorn





disclosure by a client of abuse, and of sexual abuse in particular. As Mairead explained, this issue and an awareness of the dangers of complacency or an inadequate response on a practitioner's part, had been brought to the forefront of her mind by a speaker at a recent IAC Open Day – Helen Reddy, 'the Garda in the Kilkenny case'.

The Kilkenny Incest Investigation, whose findings were published in 1993, was of course the first major child abuse inquiry in Ireland. The investigation had examined the circumstances surrounding the continued physical and sexual abuse by a father of his daughter over a thirteen-year period, during which concerns about the family had been made known to a number of child protection professionals. The case had received major coverage in the media, and is generally regarded as having been the catalyst for the widespread overhaul and expansion of child protection services in Ireland. The fears expressed in Mairead Kavanagh's letter, shared of course by so many working in the field, were that victims of abuse were being let down by the very people whose job it was protect them: 'We are an abusive society, and even non-involvement is involvement.' The letter concluded with a call for action on the part of IAC members: 'I would like to invite people interested in forming a task force which might look at putting together some "guidelines" on how to handle disclosure to contact me at the IAC office and perhaps begin to look at our children's civil rights.' This issue would become a key preoccupation for the IAC in the years which followed.

A New Name for the Association

In 1994, a change of name was proposed for the Association – from the Irish Association for Counselling to the Irish Association for Counselling and Therapy (IACT). After much discussion and a ballot vote which had involved all Accredited Members towards the end of 1993, the new name was approved and adopted.

As Patricia Kennedy would explain in an retrospective article some years later, the word 'counselling' in the original name of the Association was intended, after the tradition set by Carl Rogers,



to be an inclusive term which adequately encompassed the very diverse range of activities and approaches of all practitioners engaged in the ‘talking therapies’ – while at the same time taking into account the sensibilities of a public as yet unfamiliar with this emerging profession: ‘[The term counselling] was seen as less threatening to the general public than other possible titles derived from or based upon what had become an exclusive, expensive medical model ...’

But by 1993, as the counselling/psychotherapy debate became more heated and in a sense, more political, those in the Association could see that a name change was important, as again Patricia Kennedy’s article explained: ‘It became apparent that other professional bodies working in the field, disingenuously or otherwise, were choosing to attribute to the title “counsellor” a very limited field of expertise, carrying little training and hence narrowing the window of practice ...’ Clearly an organisation whose members had devoted so much time and energy to the establishing of exacting standards in training and practice for the profession and whose emphasis had always been on inclusion and the broader view, could not allow itself and its members to be categorised in such a restrictive way.

At the time however, some members felt that the new name had not gone far enough. In a Letter to the Editor in the Autumn 1994 issue of the *Newsletter*, Norman Warden of Knocknacarra in Galway expressed his view that the term ‘therapy’ was not sufficiently specific:

‘Therapy is too general in its use and does not include the obvious, essential part – the mind – as psychotherapy does. Psychotherapy would cover the counselling, therapy and wide experience members have, and have a more accurate meaning for the public too ...’

This was an issue to be revisited in the years to come – but for the time being, the preference of the majority of Accredited Members, as reflected in the ballot, had been put into effect.



Public Information Day

1994

The IACT Information Day on 6 February 1994 was particularly successful, attracting over 700 members of the public and more than 60 participants from the key organisations and agencies. An IACT report of the event would confirm: ‘It would be safe to say that almost all of the forms of counselling and therapy were represented, as well as organisations which offer a variety of services in the field of counselling and support.’

An innovative move – to present a series of seminars at the Information Day on topics such as Accreditation, Bereavement Counselling and Sexual Abuse – was very well received by all. With Senator David Norris as the keynote speaker, the occasion as a whole generated much media interest, as Patricia Kennedy confirmed: ‘Members of the Executive Committee of the IACT acted as spokespersons on four different local radio stations, as well as 10 minutes of prime time on RTÉ1, grasping the opportunity to clarify the aims, goals and methods of counselling and therapy in Ireland ...’



A Bad Press

Securing as much positive coverage for the Association and indeed for counselling and therapy as a profession was particularly crucial at this stage, as the mid-90s were characterised by a number of very high-profile attacks in the media against practitioners and the field as a whole.

In Dublin, the journalist and author Joe O’Connor had, in July 1994, written a stinging critique of psychotherapists in the *Sunday Tribune*, which had attracted a lot of public attention and dismayed many in the field. Ursula O’Farrell countered the article’s allegations in a strong letter of response on behalf of the members of the IACT.

Elsewhere, the same trend was in evidence. The English novelist Fay Weldon had just published a novel, *Affliction*, based on the recent breakdown of her own marriage when, according to Weldon, her husband Ron had left her abruptly after being told



by his therapist that his star signs were incompatible with those of his wife. In an interview for *The Irish Times* with journalist Anne Dempsey, the novelist had confided that writing the book had given her ‘a savage pleasure’, and agreed that since its publication she had become a focus for ‘angst against the profession’. Weldon felt so strongly about the issue that she was to be one of the key speakers in a public debate in London’s Westminster Central Hall (hosted by *The Times* and, interestingly enough, Dillons book store), proposing the motion ‘The Curse of Therapy’. Opposing the motion at the event, which took place in February 1994, was to be Professor Anthony Clare, then Medical Director of St Patrick’s Hospital in Dublin. According to Weldon, she was anticipating the occasion with some trepidation: ‘All those therapists will come and boo and hiss. Actually, they won’t of course, they’ll “understand my anger”, or say I am in denial and need therapy. And I shall go mad!’

While it is easy to see the comic potential in Weldon’s approach (and admire the skills of her publisher’s marketing department!), the consequences of such bad press for the profession were serious and possibly very damaging.

In an address at an EAC/BAC conference in June 1994, Brian Thorne, the then Director of Student Counselling at the University of East Anglia and co-founder of the Norwich Centre for Personal and Professional Development, noted: ‘In Great Britain there has, in the last few months, been an unprecedented attack in the media on counsellors and psychotherapists in general, who are accused of incompetence, malpractice, woolly-mindedness, destructiveness, of being the enemies of marriage and family life, of claiming a pseudo-expertise in order to make money out of vulnerable and defenceless people ... In the United States, successful litigation by a third party against a therapist has sent shivers down the spines of the whole professional therapeutic community ...’

The case Thorne was referring to was the 1994 lawsuit brought against two therapists in California by Gary Ramona, a father who claimed that therapists had implanted false memories of childhood sexual abuse in his daughter. The jury ultimately found in favour of Ramona, awarding him \$500,000 in damages. And several years later, in 1996, a Minnesota jury awarded David and Lisa



Carlson \$2.5 million after the longest psychiatric malpractice trial in U.S. history, in which the Carlsons sued Lisa Carlson's therapist, charging that she used hypnosis, drugs, coercion and pressure to implant false memories.

It was clear that the need for unity as a profession and the vigilant safeguarding of standards of training and practice – all of course key tenets of the IACT's *raison-d'être* anyway – were more important and more pressing than ever.

The issue of the treatment of sexual abuse and the need for the clear delineation of a related code of conduct for therapeutic practitioners was therefore very high on the agenda at the time for all professional associations and indeed individual counsellors and therapists. The IACT *Newsletters* of 1994 reflect this, with articles on the counselling of children and adolescents, the development of child-centred services, and a recently introduced 'Professional Issues' column focusing on the subject of sexual abuse. (The 'Professional Issues' segment in the publication had been suggested by the Editorial Board that year, in response to the large volume of requests for practice guidelines in specific areas which the IAC's new administrator, Felicity Dickson, was fielding at the time).

A 'Most Ambitious' Project

November 1995 saw, in the words of Ed Boyne, the then Cathaoirleach, the 'most ambitious project undertaken by the IACT to date', in terms of the hosting of a major international event in the field.

The event in question was the second AGM of the recently formed European Association for Counselling (EAC), and, with over 130 delegates from all over Europe and beyond (including the USA, Brazil and The Philippines), and 20 workshops held over the two days, it was a huge feat of coordination on the part of the IACT Organising Committee (Patricia Kennedy, Barbara Keeling, Ed Boyne, Karen McCarthy, and newly appointed administrator Grace O'Donnell), and all the rest of the office staff, which by this time included Patricia Kelly and Jackie O'Donovan. The Association had also appointed a conference advisory group to consult on the academic programme for the event. This group



consisted of representatives from the IACT, the Psychological Society of Ireland, the Irish Association of Social Workers, the Irish Association of Alcohol and Addiction Counsellors, and the Institute of Guidance Counsellors.

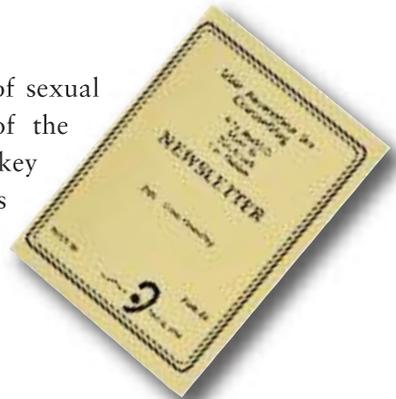
A key focus for the event would be highlighting the need for all elements of the profession to pull together at a national level in order to achieve progress on the standardising of criteria for training and accreditation, and the development of a uniform, mutually agreed European Code of Ethics and Practice. As ever, the IACT was intent on adopting an inclusive approach to all of these issues, and encompassing as many different schools of practice and types of practitioners as possible.

In this context, one of the workshops at the conference would have particular resonance in terms of future developments. This event was entitled 'Accreditation/Registration and the Development of a Broadly Based "Talking Cure" Profession in Europe' and was presented by Alan Frankland of the BAC, who concluded: 'Just as it was [is] appropriate to seek to operate across national boundaries to create a European dimension for the development of a profession, so it was [is] appropriate to operate across apparent divisions of specialism/approach within the profession of the "talking cures"...' It was a proposition which would be revisited some years later, at the instigation of the IACT, in a very positive way.

The event was also the occasion for the IACT to launch its first *National Register of Accredited Members*. Elsa Bell, the Chair of the UK Register Committee and former chairperson of the BAC, spoke at the launch to congratulate the Association on all their hard work in producing the *Register*.

Counselling and Legal Issues

As with the complex issue of the reporting of sexual abuse, the legal and ethical implications of the counsellor's and psychotherapist's work were key areas of concern for the Association and its members throughout 1995. An IACT Spring Conference with the theme 'Counselling and





Legal Issues' attracted almost 90 delegates, as the areas of Privilege and Confidentiality, The Court and Notes, The Client and Notes, Abuse, and Insurance were looked at in turn by experienced presenters and experts Roísín Connolly, Denis Cusack, Helen Aufochs and Philip O'Dwyer. In April, Ronny Swain, long-standing IACT member and Director of Studies in Guidance and Counselling at the Department of Applied Psychology at University College Cork, gave a seminar for the Cork Branch on 'Ethics and the Law'. Such was the success and popularity of the session that Ronny would be asked to deliver it for several other regional branches during that year.

'Joe Kay'

The Spring issue of the *Newsletter* was dedicated entirely to the difficult and complex subject of suicide – one of the constant themes of focus for most practitioners of course. The exploration of this subject was highlighted with particular poignancy in this instance by the recent, much-publicised case of 'Joe Kay'. Noel O'Neill – who, when signing himself into a Dublin bed & breakfast far from his home, had adopted the name 'Joe Kay' in deference to the lonely fictional hero of Kafka's *The Trial* – had tragically committed suicide on 24 December 1994. The case had held the public's attention for months, as Garda were unable to identify Noel's body and took the unprecedented step of publishing a photo of the dead man's face in the media, in the hope that someone would come forward. Eventually members of the O'Neill family, who had not heard from Noel for many months, were able to contact police and identify his body.

The Journal of the IACT

In terms of internal developments, Ed Boyne was pleased to announce in his 1995 AGM address that membership of the IACT had continued to increase substantially. Total membership now stood at 1234 members, of which 930 held Associate Membership – which represented an impressive 50 per cent increase over the previous two years. There were now 282 Accredited Members and 22 Organisational Members. Meanwhile, a sub-committee was



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working on accreditation standards for supervisors, the Complaints Procedure was being updated and the Association was in the process of negotiating a Professional Indemnity Scheme for Counsellors. It had been decided that a new-look IACT *Newsletter* should be renamed *The Journal of the IACT*, and it was also reported with some pride that the Journal was now being read 'on both the West and the East coasts of the USA', as well as being distributed for sale in local retail outlets in order to reach a readership within the general public.

BAC Reciprocity

Undoubtedly the biggest development for 1996 was the establishment of reciprocity between the IACT and the BAC. This was of course a significant landmark event for the Association, not only for that year, but in the wider context of its history. In many senses, it marked the official recognition of the close relationship and the spirit of cooperation and mutual support which had existed between the two bodies for a number of years – since the inception of the IAC, in fact, in 1981, when Odette Thompson first approached the BAC to ask for their help. As the bigger, more long-standing organisation with greater financial resources and manpower, it is true that for much of the time it had been the BAC who had done the larger part of the giving, consistently offering their generous assistance and sharing the fruits of their experience with their younger Irish counterpart. But by 1996, as the IACT had grown in numbers and confidence, the relationship was becoming more and more one of equals with every year.

The reciprocity agreement signified more, however, than just the formalising of existing links. A key feature of the new arrangement was that each organisation undertook to recognise the other's criteria for recognition, meaning that an accredited member of one would automatically be considered as such by the other. This represented an important benefit to members of both associations. Firstly in a very immediate sense, because it would enable freedom of professional movement between the two countries – i.e. an Irish therapist could move to Britain, or a British therapist to Ireland, in the knowledge that their qualifications and

staff profile

Jackie O'Donovan

Jackie O'Donovan is the longest-serving member of staff at the IACP, having joined the organisation in September 1992. She is currently Supervision Committee Secretary, providing administrative and organisational back-up for the Supervision Committee and coordinating all aspects of the Association's supervisory process and related activities.

Jackie first joined the IACP under the auspices of the FÁS scheme: she remembers how at that time 'everybody did everything', and that she spent time on reception, helping to type up and produce the *Newsletter*, and dealing with accounts and general administration. She recalls how small the offices at Blackrock were, and that the telephone system was 'a blue phone and a white phone': one for incoming and one for outgoing calls. Living in Stillorgan, County Dublin, Jackie is a keen golfer and walker. She has three sons and two grandchildren.



accreditation would be valid, and therefore dispensing with the need to retrain or reapply for accreditation. Then there was the additional, more general benefit that recognition by not one, but two professional bodies in the field, would add to a practitioner's credibility and standing in the eyes of clients, agencies and other organisations.

Éisteach

The IACT's growing stature as a professional organisation was reflected by further changes to the *Journal* in November 1996. The first of these was a new title – *Éisteach: A Quarterly Journal of Counselling and Therapy*. As Annie Kilmartin's Editorial in the first issue with the new format explained, the Irish name had been chosen because its nuances – **'heedful; attentive; responsive'** – resonated very much with the aims and purpose of the Association. To complement its new name, the journal's format was changed as well – to a larger, A4 size with a colour cover, higher-quality paper and a more sophisticated design. Contributors to the first issue of *Éisteach* acknowledged Annie Kilmartin's drive and creative thinking in bringing about the new design.

Course Recognition

1996 saw a fresh impetus on the important issue of Course Recognition, as the hard work and tenacity of the Course Recognition Committee over the past years finally came to fruition, with the presentation of a set of key Guidelines to the Criteria for Course Recognition. Sheila Kiloran-Gannon, on behalf of the Association,



acknowledged the sterling efforts of this dedicated committee, as well as the many difficulties inherent in their task: ‘The process [of recognition of courses and defining of criteria] is necessarily slow and time-consuming ... It’s by nature a difficult area in which to tread. This of course is not surprising when one considers the variety of approaches and philosophies that the counselling field enfolds ... Gratitude is owed to the members of the Committee who give their time so generously ...’ Two courses had already been granted recognition and, Sheila confirmed, a number of others were close to approval.

Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse

In 1996, in the aftermath of the Kilkenny Incest Case, the issue of the mandatory reporting of child abuse by concerned parties – including of course counsellors and psychotherapists – came to the fore again. The *Kilkenny Incest Investigation Report*, which in 1993 had been presented to the then Minister for Health, Mr Brendan Howlin TD, prompted the 1996 publication of a *Discussion Document on Mandatory Reporting* by the Department of Health. Subsequently, on 16 September 1996, the Department hosted a conference on ‘The Reporting of Child Abuse’ in the Grand Hotel, Malahide. The IACT was one of a number of concerned agencies and organisations who were invited to participate. In attendance were Patricia Kennedy and several others, who had formed an IACT sub-committee to work on the formulation of the Association’s position on the various proposals and observations in the *Discussion Document*.

Out of these consultations with the IACT group and various other concerned parties and agencies, the Department of Health and Children would publish, in 1997, a further paper setting forth a series of proposed initiatives relating to the rights of children. This report – *Putting Children First: Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Children* – stopped short of the introduction of mandatory reporting, because it was deemed that it ‘would not be in the best interests of children and would not improve our child





care services'. The paper was however to be subject to a further evaluation process by as many concerned groups and parties as possible. Regarding the central issue, the document summed up the government's position as follows: 'Should the evaluation demonstrate that mandatory reporting would be in the best interests of children, or that a statutory basis is needed to ensure inter-agency cooperation, the necessary legislation will be introduced.'

It was of course a highly complex and problematic issue, which clearly required the weighing up of many important factors, and an exploration of the fine balance between considerations of the client's right to confidentiality and choice, and the crucially important issue of child protection. Ultimately, after much discussion and consultation with those within the organisation and with external agencies, the IACT sub-committee responded in 1998 with a paper which broadly concluded: 'The IACT is firm in its belief that the safety of children is paramount in all circumstances and supports mandatory reporting *in limited circumstances*.' At the time it seemed that the majority consensus of concerned agencies and bodies was against the unilateral introduction of such mandatory reporting. The issue would of course be revisited in the new Millennium.





1992–2001

1997

Office Matters

1997 saw a number of internal changes for the IACT. Two key staff roles were upgraded that year to take better account of the sort of responsibilities and commitment that they entailed. Daria Park, whose original job title was Administrator, was made Chief Executive Officer; Karen McCarthy's position of Projects Manager was upgraded to that of Development Manager. There were now ten members of staff in the office including Daria and Karen: Michelle Cantwell was Membership Officer; Linda Connolly, Receptionist; Deirdre Keeley, Administrative Assistant; Ann Kelly, Receptionist; Patricia Kelly, Desktop Publishing Officer; Jackie O'Donovan, Bookkeeper; and Mary Jane Trimble, Publicity Officer.

With 863 Associate Members and 309 Accredited Members, the volume of administrative and other work was increasing all the time. Even with a staff of ten, each person in the office was working to capacity. In summer 1997, the Association invested in a new computer network for the office – this, it was hoped, would allow for increased efficiency in the running of the organisation and enable future development. The office in Cumberland Street was closed for the month of July so that the installation could be made (a reminder of how much more cumbersome IT systems were at the time – it would be difficult to envisage a company closing for a month now in order to install a new network!).

In this era before the widespread use of the internet, the telephone referral service which the IACT had offered for a number of years was becoming busier and busier. The *Notice Board* insert of the Summer 1997 issue of *Éisteach* noted that in the previous 12 months, the service – manned by Ann Kelly and Linda Connolly and other staff members as necessary – had handled over 1000 requests from the public, asking to be referred to a counsellor. As well as fielding the calls, which often, as Ann Kelly recalls, required patience and





sensitivity on the part of the receptionists, there was the associated administrative work to be managed. Details of each call had to be carefully logged in a hard copy filing system, to ensure, for one thing, that all members were, in as far as possible, getting their fair share of referrals from the Association.

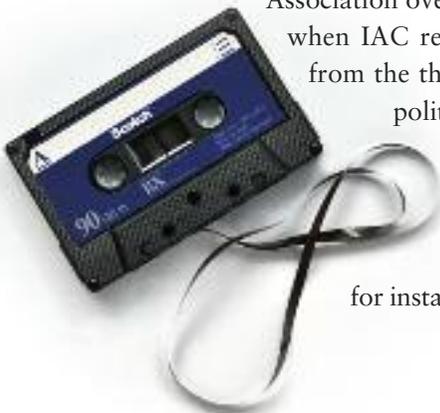
Yet in spite of a growing membership, the concerted hard work of the staff, and of course the entirely voluntary efforts of all the dedicated members of the IACT committees in producing an ever more varied and resourceful programme of workshops and other events, the fact was that the Association was not as yet self-sufficient, as Cathaoirleach Ed Boyne made clear at the 1997 AGM. It was only the continuing grant aid from FÁS (the National Training and Employment Authority) that made it possible for IACT to continue to employ so many staff, albeit on a part-time basis in the main. Even though membership numbers had continued to rise steadily in recent years, making the Association the largest of its kind in Ireland, what was now needed, according to the Executive Committee, was a substantial increase in membership in the near future in order to generate the funds to become self-sufficient. The challenge for the coming years had clearly been set.

1998

Statutory Regulation

Since its inception, one of the key aims of the early IAC had been to achieve government recognition of and statutory regulation for the sector of counselling and psychotherapy as part of the national healthcare services.

A number of approaches to government had been made by the Association over the years. The first of these had been in 1986, when IAC representatives secured a meeting with officials from the then Department of Health. Although they were politely received and put their case convincingly at the said meeting, no further initiatives were taken by the Department as a consequence of this encounter. The pressure was kept up by the IAC in the years which followed. In 1991, for instance, June Quinn-Berger had written to Taoiseach





Charlie Haughey, again putting a strong case for the regulation of ‘non-medical psychological disciplines’. The Taoiseach’s response of 24 January 1991 had not been encouraging:

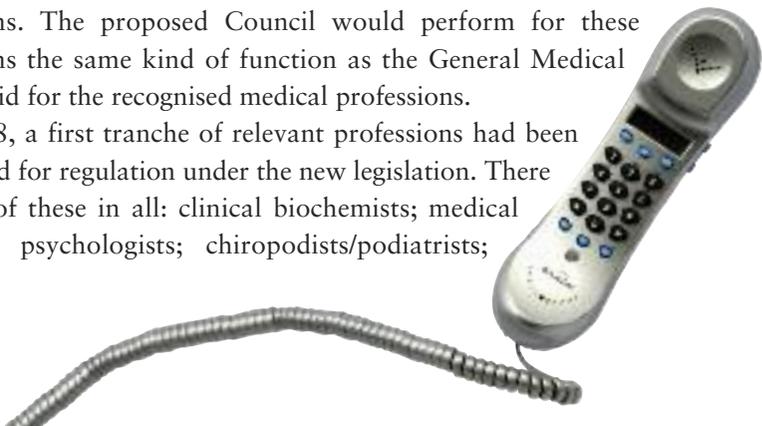
‘Having regard to the fact that existing regulatory systems in the health area operate on the premise that members of the profession concerned are employed in the public health service, it would be a major departure to extend regulations to professions which only operate in the private sector and it is not considered that this would be warranted.’

Between then and 1998, a number of other approaches of the same kind were made, but again, without any degree of success or even a sense of progress in the right direction.

As we have seen, the advent of the European Union highlighted once more the pressing need for the regulation of the profession from a legislative standpoint, but yet again, various initiatives by the IACT proved fruitless.

In 1998, knowledge that the then Department of Health and Children was in the consultative process for the formulation of a new, highly relevant piece of legislation, provided fresh impetus for renewed efforts on the part of the Association. A Statutory Regulation Sub-Committee was to provide a focus and structure for these endeavours. The statute in question – which would ultimately be formalised in 2004 as the Health and Social Care Professionals Bill – was proposing to secure government regulation for a number of healthcare-related professions. This would be achieved, it was being suggested, chiefly through the establishment of a Health and Social Care Council which would protect the interests of the public by exacting high standards of professional conduct, training and competence among registrants of the said professions. The proposed Council would perform for these professions the same kind of function as the General Medical Council did for the recognised medical professions.

In 1998, a first tranche of relevant professions had been preselected for regulation under the new legislation. There were 12 of these in all: clinical biochemists; medical scientists; psychologists; chiropodists/podiatrists;





dieticians; orthoptists; physiotherapists; radiographers; speech and language therapists; occupational therapists; social care workers; and social workers. Counselling and psychotherapy were therefore not on the list of these ‘first-tranche professions’, but since in 1998, a consultative process was underway which involved all groups having a possible stake in any future legislation, it was felt that there could still be time to make representations to have the sector included in the first tranche of professions after all. There was talk of a second tranche which would be considered for inclusion at a future point, but clearly it would be preferable to achieve regulation sooner rather than later.

Yet again however, despite the concerted efforts of the IACT and other key groups in the field, there was no immediate progress to be made. The Department’s response at the time was that to include the Association and all the other groups working in the area of mental health in the consultations would be unwieldy and ultimately unworkable. Once more, the fight would have to be postponed to another more opportune time.

This conviction – that counselling and psychotherapy should be recognised as a matter of urgency as part and parcel of the range of health and social care services in Ireland – was clearly a central preoccupation of the IACT towards the end of the 1990s. The Winter 1998 issue of *Éisteach* was entirely devoted to the exploration of the whole issue of the medical model and the place of counselling/psychotherapy within it, or alongside it. An Editorial by Sheila Killoran-Gannon pinpointed one of the key difficulties in achieving a greater rapprochement between the two areas: ‘Counselling is a young profession. In this country, it has just about begun to establish itself ... The medical profession is a long and well-established institution with well-defined rules and culture. It relies heavily on diagnosis. The patient expects the doctor to *know*, to recognise what is wrong, how to put it right and how to fix it. This traditional model is quite opposite to the counselling one...’



'Forging Links'

On 7 November 1998, the IACT held an innovative conference aimed at strengthening links between all members, and particularly between regional branches. One of the key events of the conference was an 'Inter-Branch Networking Forum', which was attended by representatives from the already well-established branches of Dublin, Cork and the South East, along with individual members from Sligo, Belfast, Omagh and Derry – where for the time being no regional groups existed. The Forum was well-received and it was mooted that this should be a regular event to allow greater communication between different parts of the country.

The regional branches were recognised as having paramount importance for the development of the Association, as Natalie Scales, Administrator at the time, highlighted in a *Notice Board* editorial: 'The Regional Committees are a vital part of IACT. They can be in touch with local services, such as the Health Boards, and can get feedback from local members, finding out their needs and concerns. It is also a great way to network and pool the services that the particular area has to offer.'

Proposals for the Way Forward

As the new Millennium dawned, the battle for statutory regulation was being taken up once more by the IACT. The next steps had been taken in the consultative process by the Department of Health and Children around the setting up of a statutory registration system for certain health and social care professionals, with the publication in 2000 of the *Proposals for the Way Forward* document. The IACT Statutory Regulation Sub-Committee seized the moment to approach the Department once more, and a meeting with the then Minister for Health and Children, Micheál Martin TD, was secured in September of that year. At this meeting, members of the Committee were able to put a compelling case for the regulation of counselling and psychotherapy, as well as to stress the importance of including the profession in the first tranche of activities to be registered. The signs that Minister Martin was receptive to the Association's standpoint were promising, and he

2000



agreed to launch the greatly expanded *Directory of IACT Accredited Counsellors and Therapists*, which was due for publication the following month.

While ultimately the Minister was unable to attend the launch because of pressure on his diary, he designated the then Minister of State, Mary Hanafin TD, to go in his stead. In her opening address, the Minister of State was quick to acknowledge the vital contribution to the field which the IACT's *Directory* represented: '[It] represents a valuable asset to the Health Services, bringing together as it does a list of accredited counsellors and therapists, available for referral in a wide variety of locations, who subscribe to the IACT's Code of Ethics and Practice, and who are subject to the IACT's Complaints Procedure. It facilitates the choice for the client, while assuring a high standard of service...' She also recognised the value of the work of the Association in general: 'It is highly encouraging to see the IACT take a leading role in providing professional guidance to its members and the users of the service ... The larger constituency of health service consumers stand to gain in the longer term from this continual pursuit of excellence in the field of counselling and therapy ...'

Minister Hanafin's speech concluded with what appeared to be an auspicious assurance in terms of the issue of statutory regulation. Although she indicated that counsellors were not to be included in the first wave of regulated professions, she did state that there would be room for inclusion at a slightly later stage, through an application to a proposed Registration Board, once this was in place: 'It is envisaged that counsellors could become a registered profession by this means.' If not promising an immediate result, it seemed that the Minister's words augured well for the future.





Directory of IACT Accredited Counsellors and Therapists: Millennium Edition

Whatever progress had been made in terms of regulation, it was a given that the publishing of the new *Directory* represented another landmark moment for the IACT. In the words of Minister Hanafin:

'This marks an important step in the development of the role of the Association and I am sure that the efforts of those involved are appreciated by all members.'

With almost 450 entries, the *Directory* had been a huge undertaking for the team at the office, particularly for Patricia Kelly, Jackie O'Donovan, Geraldine Haskins, Ann Kelly, Sandra Dunster and Deirdre Browne, and Administrator Natalie Scales. As well as being offered to all IACT members for a nominal fee, the publication would also be made available to members of the medical, law and teaching professions, Health Boards, Gardaí, social workers, other key counselling and therapy organisations, and of course members of the public. A mailshot to over 1000 members of the medical profession received a very encouraging response and within 18 months, as contemporary minutes recorded, a total of 1300 copies had been sold to external organisations and agencies. It was decided that the *Directory* should be reissued every 18 months, in order to keep the information and contact details of Accredited Members as current as possible.

Northern Ireland Branch

Internally, there were some exciting developments for the Association too. The Summer 2000 *Notice Board* heralded the formation of a Northern Ireland branch, whose newly elected Regional Committee were able to attend the AGM in Dublin at which Alan Jamieson of the BAC was the keynote speaker. Later in the year, the Northern Ireland branch held their own inaugural AGM, with Ursula O'Farrell and Cathaoirleach Patricia Kennedy in attendance. By this time, the new committee had already sketched out an ambitious plan of forthcoming workshops for



which preparations were continuing apace. Meanwhile, a newly elected Committee for the Cork Branch, at which attendance had been noticeably flagging in recent years, was breathing new life into their programme of regional events and activities, and attracting larger numbers of participants all the time. Under the auspices of new Chairman, Joe Heffernan, they also organised their own launch of the newly published IACT *Directory*, which they cleverly combined with their Christmas celebrations at Jury's Hotel, and at which Brian Crowley MEP was the key speaker.

EAC Conference: 'Aspects of the Shadow'

The climax of an eventful Millennium year was the hosting by the IACT of the EAC annual conference. Once more, this was a huge feat of organisation and coordination on the part of all of the staff, headed by the very competent Natalie Scales, and of course many IACT members who, as ever, gave generously of their time. With an intriguing theme – 'Illuminating the Shadow: In from the Margins' – the focus of the conference was to 'look at aspects of the shadow within ourselves, our country, Europe and beyond'. Over the two days in question, there were thought-provoking addresses from Patrick McKeon, Lord John Alderdice, Minister Hanafin and John Lonergan, the then governor of Mountjoy Prison, as well as an intensive and ambitious series of 20 workshops.



Course Recognition Guidelines

2001 saw the publication of the newly formulated *Guidelines for Courses Seeking Recognition*, the result of many hours of careful deliberation on the part of the Course Recognition Committee, championed by Eileen Boyle, Kathleen Dillon, Yvonne Jacobson, Anne Kavanagh, Barbara Keeling, Jill Stevens and Margaret Watchorn. The new booklet, available from the IACT office for a fee of IR£5, was aimed at training providers of all types in the field who were keen to obtain the Association's stamp of approval for courses already in existence, or which they were in the process of putting together. Being able to consult the new criteria – which would come into effect in 2002 – would also clearly be invaluable for those intending to apply for training in counselling and psychotherapy.

2001

'Private Lines'

Meanwhile, the members of the *Éisteach* Editorial Board were continuing to experiment with new formulas and formats for the journal. The most recent editorial innovation was the inclusion of a new column entitled 'Private Lines'. A little in the vein of *Vanity Fair's* famous 'Proust Questionnaire', the idea was to feature profiles of members in an interview format which focused on their lives beyond the immediate boundaries of their work. Alan O'Dwyer, the then Cathaoirleach, valiantly offered to be the first member to be profiled. The next 'guinea pig' would be Jean Prior, a counsellor and supervisor working in private practice and agency supervision, who shared her belief in the power of dreams and revealed her long-held wish to be able to 'fluently speak Gaelic, my native tongue', as well as the fact that she had 'first learned listening skills as a hairdresser in David Marshall's'.

Although these first 'Private Lines' features made for lively and diverting reading, unfortunately, as Carl Berkeley mused in later years, the new column was short-lived: 'It never got off the ground ... It didn't work, because people were not prepared to reveal themselves: I think therapists are not necessarily very open people!'

Fortunately however, *Éisteach* was continuing to thrive, and

automatic subscription to its quarterly editions was (and is to this day) regarded by members as one of very important benefits of belonging to the Association. By this time, the magazine was also becoming a source of revenue for the organisation, through its increasingly popular function as an advertising forum for a varied range of agencies and individual therapists. Although, as Carl Berkeley was happy to concede, this was not something which was even considered at the publication's inception, it was a very welcome bonus.



Conclusion

The 1990s had been a decade of many challenges for the IACT, dominated by efforts to embrace European integration, address the difficult issue of the mandatory reporting of abuse, negotiate the counselling/psychotherapy debate and progress the key objective of legislative recognition for the profession. A backlash in the media against the talking therapies had required a strong, unified stance among practitioners. The Association had supported



its members in all of these and many other matters, while continuing to pursue with tenacity and rigour the ongoing amelioration of professional standards of training, ethical conduct, supervision and accreditation. Despite all the difficulties inherent in establishing any new field of professional activity, after two decades the IACT was a vibrant, forward-looking organisation which was growing in membership, stature and confidence all the time.



Patricia Kennedy accepts the 2011 Carl Berkeley Award on behalf of Ursula O'Farrell from Michael Chambers and Ray Henry.



Media Coverage

Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

Warning about unqualified counsellors operating in the West

CONSUMER groups are warning about the number of unqualified and poorly trained counsellors operating in the West of Ireland.

The Chairperson of the Western Health of the IACP Association, Dr. Catherine O'Connell, says that such a warning is needed to ensure that people do not suffer a serious mental health problem as a result of unqualified counselling.



HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

Ensure your therapist is qualified, say IACP



Use only qualified counsellors, anxiety sufferers in north-east advised

AT RISK



Kate O'Neilly

WHAT'S ON

When drinking causes more than just a hangover

WELL

Just what effect does alcohol have on your mental health?

Don't let your counsellor 'talk' you into a bad decision

It's important to know when to say 'no' to your counsellor. Here's how to spot the signs.



Be sure your therapy is safe

Depressive rumination and apathy: what happens without qualifications?

Therapists 'need more regulation'



Check counsellor qualifications advise IACP

We Can All Feel Stuck from Time to Time

Therapists 'need more regulation'



FG TD calls for counselling courses to be regulated

Five Govt mental health spokesmen warn of 'dangerous' eight-week training course



Warning: Unqualified psychotherapists and counsellors practising in the West



DID I REALLY DO THAT? HOW TO AVOID THAT MORNING AFTER THE NIGHT BEFORE FEELING



Irish Independent

Irish Examiner

London Leader

IrishMedicalNews



2002–2011 **3** The third decade

A Part of the Community

The year 2002 began with some auspicious developments for the IACT, as announced in *Éisteach's* Spring *Notice Board*. The most important of these was the news that the Association had been asked to participate in a new initiative by The Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) to establish a national network of counsellors and psychotherapists who could be called upon to join area teams of healthcare professionals tasked with serving the patients of local GPs. This meant a substantial number of new practice opportunities for IACT Accredited Members. But the new initiative was a positive development in a broader sense too, as a sign that a hoped-for rapprochement between the remit of medical practitioners and that of counsellors and psychotherapists was beginning to happen in important ways.

Elsewhere, in a more local context, the Association had been invited by the Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Drugs Task Force to help set up a bank of counsellors specialising in adolescent issues, who could work in coordination with Garda Liaison Officers in the area. The Task Force had received funding towards a programme which would enable Liaison Officers to refer teenage first offenders for counselling. Again, this opportunity for practitioners to work in conjunction with other state agencies was another encouraging indication that the talking therapies were increasingly being seen as an integral part of the social healthcare network and the community scene.

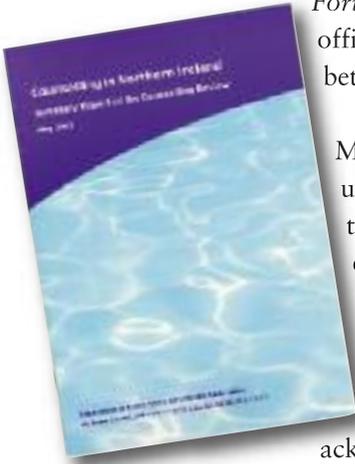
In terms of proper government recognition of this fact however, progress was still painfully slow, despite the continuing commitment and determination of the IACT's Statutory Regulation Committee.



Statutory Regulation

2002

In 2001, pressure on the relevant government departments had been steadily kept up by the Association through a series of initiatives. At the beginning of that year, the Statutory Regulation Committee had presented Minister Martin with the IACT's detailed response to the proposals in the document, *The Way Forward*. There had been two further meetings with officials from the Department of Health and Children between May and October 2001.



In January 2002, MEP Brian Crowley wrote to the Minister on the IACT's behalf, reiterating the need for urgent statutory regulation and recommending that the talking therapies should be included in the first tranche of professions to be subject to legislation. Unfortunately, in May 2002, official notification was received that this was not to happen. One final plea for inclusion was put forward to the Minister, in a meeting in August of that year. Even though it was

acknowledged that the Association was one of the most appropriately structured professional bodies in the field at the time in terms of regulation, the official line remained unchanged: there was no room at present for counselling and psychotherapy in the new legislation.

A Second Change of Name: IACT becomes IACP

In spite of the continued frustrations being met with regarding Statutory Regulation, the Association was pressing ahead in the interim with everything else that could possibly be done to prepare the way. Having carefully considered the recommendations set out in the *Proposals for the Way Forward* document, it was felt by the Executive Committee that the time had come for another name change for the Association. As Patricia Kennedy explained in a retrospective report on the issue:

'It became apparent that the word "therapy" in the title IACT was unhelpfully unclear and non-specific ... The IACT became "The Irish Association for Counselling





2002-2011

2003

and Psychotherapy” (IACP). Rather than run the risk of being misunderstood, the Association moved to protect the professional practice of its members.’

The change of name was the subject for debate at an EGM in June 2002, and was proposed, discussed and voted in by an overwhelming majority of the large numbers of members in attendance.

Consolidation

2003 was an important year of consolidation for the IACP. Membership figures in all categories were continuing to increase steadily, with a total of 920 Accredited Members, 1522 Associate Members and over 50 Accredited Supervisor Members. Such growth in membership however meant an ever-increasing administrative workload. Liz Gannon had been taken on as PA to Coordinator Yvonne Curtin in October 2002, and this had certainly helped to ease the organisational side of things. But other areas of operation were still suffering from the lack of manpower. The volume of phone calls coming into the office, for example, had doubled on the previous twelve months – yet the number of staff manning reception had stayed the same. Workload difficulties were compounded by the fact that three of the short-term FÁS Community Employment Scheme contracts for current IACP staff were about to end, with a fourth contract due to run out early in 2004. While Patricia Hughes would be taken under a new FÁS initiative towards the end of 2003, in the interim, the Association’s Coordinator, Yvonne Curtin had had to take on temporary staff, particularly to handle the crucial area of telephone cover and ensure the smooth continuation of the telephone referral system for the public. An increase in membership fees was reluctantly proposed as the only means to begin to make up some of the financial shortfall resulting from the winding down of the FÁS funding.

In spite of these financial strictures, the ever-resourceful office management team were able to invest in a new telephone system and upgrade the Association’s existing website.



Research

Finance for other aspects of the Association's activity was sorely lacking also. The IACP had achieved so much in its first two decades, thanks in very large part to the unstintingly generous spirit of those members who had given so much of their time and energy to the various committees. Yet there was an awareness that there was still much to be done, particularly in one area which was so far relatively underdeveloped – that of research.

Patricia Kennedy summed this up eloquently in an *Éisteach* Editorial of the time:

'One could say that a profession has finally come of age when its cohort of accredited practitioners is employed not only in private practice and in the context of national institutions, but when its practice is backed up by a vibrant research base. Shortage of funding and a lack of access to the sources of research grants have hindered earlier attempts to meet the third criterion ... The department heads of institutions who are looking for evidence of the efficacy and effectiveness of counselling and psychotherapy must open their purse strings and facilitate those who are qualified to do so to engage in providing these answers!'

New Code of Ethics

In spite of these restrictions, the IACP was continuing to make strides in the right direction in a number of important areas. In March 2003, the Association's new Code of Ethics and Practice was ratified by the National Executive Committee. The new Code was the fruit of several years of relentless and meticulous work on the part of the IACP Ethics Committee, headed by Ronny Swain and championed also by James McCabe. Ronny Swain had been the convenor of the Committee since 1999. It was largely at his instigation that the new Code incorporated a mandatory formal decision-making procedure, thus requiring members to make explicit, formalised judgments about ethical issues.



Two Steps Forward ...

Meanwhile, regarding the issue of the Irish government's recognition of the sector and the IACP as its biggest representative body, it seemed that it was a case of one step forward, two steps back. In the latter months of 2003, the IACP, along with BACP, was commissioned by the NI Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to produce two documents on counselling and psychotherapy services in the North: one for the general public, and one for agencies and bodies employing counsellors. The initiative arose out of a government-funded Review of Counselling in Northern Ireland.

Yet in terms of regulation, uptake by the government continued to be disappointingly slow. Members of the Association were dismayed to learn in August 2003 that a Mental Health Review Body recently formed by Minister Tim O'Malley (which would ultimately be known as the Department of Health and Children's Expert Group on Mental Health Policy) was not to include a representative from the IACP. Disappointingly again, requests for inclusion fell on deaf ears, it seemed, as Patricia Kennedy confirmed: 'We reminded [the Minister] that IACP had been asking for regulation of the talking therapies since 1986 ... It was puzzling that a Mental Health Review Body could be set up without the inclusion of a large accrediting body such as IACP. The Minister declined to expand the committee beyond the numbers already involved.'

Carl Berkeley

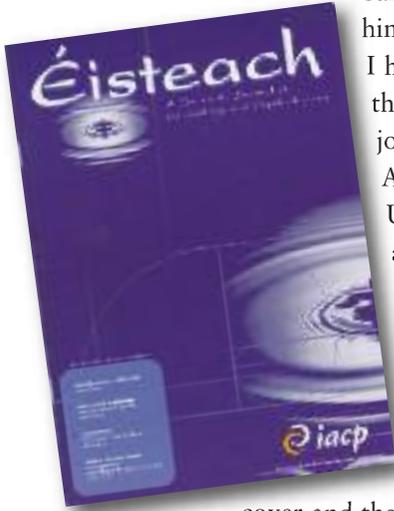
In 2004, the Association was devastated by the loss of Carl Berkeley, who passed away after a short illness in July of that year. Many members shared a sense that Carl's death, at the relatively young age of 69, was premature and untimely, particularly for a man whose tremendous energy and zest for life had always made him appear far younger than his years. A commemoration service was held for Carl in October of that year, and rich and heartfelt tributes were paid to a man who had made an outstanding contribution to the IACP from its very beginnings.



2004



It was all the more poignant that 2004 was the anniversary year of *Éisteach*, one of the most important and abiding elements of Carl's contribution to the Association, and which he himself regarded as 'one of the most worthwhile things I have ever done in my life'. To mark the 20 years of the publication, Carl had given an interview to journalist and in later years, IACP Accredited Member, Anne Dempsey, just five days before his death. As Ursula O'Farrell noted, Carl's insistence in going ahead with the interview from his hospital bed was emblematic of his steadfast commitment to the Association over so many years.



To celebrate its anniversary year, and now more importantly still, in recognition of Carl, *Éisteach* had once more been updated, with a fresh design which included the use of four-colour both on the cover and the inner pages. It was a vibrant new look which aptly reflected the energy and enthusiasm of the Editorial Board, the many contributors and the office production team, and of which its founder would no doubt have been proud.

2005

Symposium on the Psychological Therapies

One of the most significant events of 2005 was undoubtedly a 'Symposium on the Regulation of the Psychological Therapies', which was held in the Camden Court Hotel on Thursday, 10 November. This 'exploratory symposium' was an initiative of the IACP, championed by new Cathaoirleach, Claire Missen and Dr Réamonn Ó Donnchadha of the Association's Statutory Regulation Committee. In many ways, this was a landmark occasion which brought together delegates from all of the most important independent professional bodies presiding over counselling and psychotherapy in Ireland. In later years, the Symposium would be seen as the starting point of a new spirit of cooperation and collaboration between all of the disparate organisations. It marked the beginning of a process which would continue over a number of months and which would ultimately see some kind of consensus being reached by the groups in terms



of the common goal of achieving Statutory Regulation for the sector.

The Symposium was opened and addressed by the then Minister of State for Health and Children, Mr Tim O'Malley. In attendance were two representatives from each of the following organisations: IAAC, NAPCP, ACCORD, MRCS, APPI, IACC, IAHIP, IICH, PSI, Student Counsellors, ICP and IACP. The theme of the Symposium was of course that of Statutory Regulation, in the context of the Health and Social Care Professionals' Bill 2005, which, as it transpired, was due for ratification in the Dáil that very day. (In fact, the Minister was forced to leave the event earlier than originally planned, so that he could be present for the Dáil proceedings!) Although as we have seen, the profession of the talking therapies was not included in those to be subject to the new legislation, in his address, the Minister reminded those present that Section 4 of the Bill provided for the inclusion of further professional categories. Advising that in his view, the field was currently too disparate and complex for an external body to make sense of it (!), he urged all those represented at the meeting to engage with each other as quickly as possible in order to agree upon a common strategy and format which would facilitate a submission for statutory regulation under the new Bill. He recommended bearing in mind the specific criteria set out in the Bill for new sectors for inclusion, namely: the degree of risk to the health or welfare of the public from incompetent, unethical or





impaired practice; the extent to which the profession had a defined scope of practice and applied a distinct body of knowledge; and the extent to which the profession had established itself, including whether there was at least one professional body representing a significant proportion of the profession's practitioners.



Once the Minister had left for the Dáil, the discussion among those assembled began in earnest. Although long-standing differences of opinion between some of the groups were no secret – particularly in terms of the counselling/psychotherapy debate – many were delighted to witness important progress finally being made that day. Claire Missen recalls a sense of excitement and indeed elation at seeing the different representatives engaging with each other in a very positive way and with a sense of common purpose at last.

Whether this new spirit of cooperation had been catalysed by the Minister's rallying cry, the novelty of all being together in one room, or the sense of urgency arising from a feeling that something might now finally be achieved in the short-term in relation to a long-held goal – by the end of the day, a consensus had been reached. All agreed that the preparation of a common submission to government was now a priority and something which should be driven forward in the months ahead by a designated working party. These were exciting times indeed.

Continuing Professional Development: A Pilot Scheme

The year was an eventful one too in terms of internal changes and policy developments. The issue of Continuous Personal Development (CPD) came to the fore, with the findings of a Working Group – appointed in 2004 and headed by Damian Davy – being presented at the 2005 AGM. The Group in question had formulated a CPD framework for Accredited and Associate Members, which in essence represented the formalising and structuring of a principle which had been implicitly at work among the Association's members and actively encouraged by the IAC since its very early days. The first Code of Ethics of the early IAC



had included a clause relating to the individual practitioner's responsibility to upgrade and update their skills and knowledge on an ongoing basis: 'Counsellors are required to seek ways of increasing their professional development and growth.' The commitment to professional development had always been an integral condition of the accreditation process and was highlighted as a key priority for the Association and its members from the very beginning in an increasingly ambitious and wide-ranging programme of workshops and seminars on a national level.

At the 2005 AGM, it was proposed that a pilot scheme relating to CPD, which incorporated a system of credits, would be implemented nationally among Accredited and Associate Members, to be assessed as to its viability after one year in operation. Participants would be required to log 'directed and self-directed' activities from May 2005 and May 2006, and at the end of the period, the logs would be presented in order for credits to be awarded.

While the majority of IACP members acknowledged the importance of the principle of Continuous Professional Development, there were some who expressed concerns that such a systematic approach might introduce too much bureaucracy into an area which by its nature was often organic and not always quantifiable.

The End of the Grandparent Clause

Similar fears were felt by some regarding another key policy change in 2005 – the winding up of the 'grandparent clause' relating to the IACT's accreditation system. Some regretted the decision to curtail this principle, which had been in operation since 1986, when the first accreditation system was put in place. Ursula O'Farrell summed up these concerns, while acknowledging the rationale behind the change, in a letter in Summer 2005: 'Change and increasing standards, both at home and in Europe, is a sign of a vibrant organisation, but we need to keep in mind both professional demands and the human face of the Association ... The letter of the law appears to be taking over from the spirit and the concern appears to be more with the rule rather than with the



actual ability of the supervisor to supervise, [or practitioner to practise].’

As with any organisation in any field of activity, the reality was that, as the IACP continued to grow in membership and professionalism, in a sector which was heading, albeit slowly, towards statutory status, the tension between the need to adapt and necessarily become larger and more impersonal, and the desire to stay true to the spirit of its beginnings, was inevitable. As it continued to grow, the IACP would endeavour to keep the balance between holding on to the best aspects of its origins, the necessity to adapt with the times and the drive to proactively seek development. Hence a key part of the Association’s strategy would continue to foster the active involvement of as many of its members as possible in all of its activities – through participation at AGMs, the contribution of articles and letters to *Éisteach*, and attendance at conferences, training and networking events. With a spirit of inclusion at its core, the IACP has tried never to shy away from differences of opinion or echoes of dissent among its members.

A Supervision Working Group

Another new initiative within the Association in 2005 was the formation of a Working Group tasked with exploring the development of guidelines and criteria relating to IACP recognition of Supervision Training Courses. The need for such research had arisen out of an awareness of the growing number of Supervision Courses which were being offered by various training organisations. The Supervision Working Group were calling for consultations with as many individuals and agencies as possible offering training in the field: their plan was to have a draft document ready for submission to the IACP Supervision Committee by Spring 2006.

Carl Berkeley Award

2005 also saw the setting up of the Carl Berkeley Memorial Award. In her Cathaoirleach’s address to members that winter, Claire Missen gave some details about the proposed award:

'We believe that it is important that [Carl's] contribution to IACP be recognised and remembered. So we are planning to establish the Carl Berkeley Award for a significant contribution to the developing of the counselling and psychotherapy profession... Nominees can be, but do not have to be, a member of IACP.'

Nominee submissions for the first year of the award were invited without delay, and it was proposed that the presentation of the first Award would be made at a dinner on the eve of the AGM of Spring 2006.

Midland Branch

In 2005 came exciting news, with the founding of a new Midland Branch of the IACP: the inaugural meeting was held on 26 January in the Grand Hotel in Moate. An initiative driven by Ray Henry, the group would embrace the counties of Laois, Offaly, Longford and Westmeath. The first meeting of the new Branch passed off very successfully with, in Yvonne Curtin's words, 'a brilliant turnout of people from the surrounding counties', and the first Midland Regional Committee was voted in.

Professional Services Manager

By the end of a very active year on many fronts, there were some interesting proposals for the coming months. Among these was the decision to explore Claire Missen's idea, mooted during a 'Vision Day' in September 2005, to create a new staff role in the organisation – that of a 'Professional Services Manager'. It was envisaged that such a person could represent the interests of the members in presenting IACP policies to the public, liaise between the Association's various committees and connect with relevant government departments as necessary. The ideal candidate, Claire proposed, would have specific professional experience as a practitioner in the field of counselling and psychotherapy. This

2005



Claire Missen, Cathaoirleach, presenting the first Carl Berkeley Award to Liam McCarthy in 2006



reflected a conviction shared by many members that the IACP staff team would be considerably enhanced by someone with ‘hands-on’ knowledge of the typical situations they faced at work.

Meanwhile, Sandra Matthews had been taken on as a valuable addition to the reception staff. Otherwise, however, and most pressing of all, was the need to search for new premises, as the office staff were finding it more and more difficult to operate in the very limited space available at Cumberland Street.

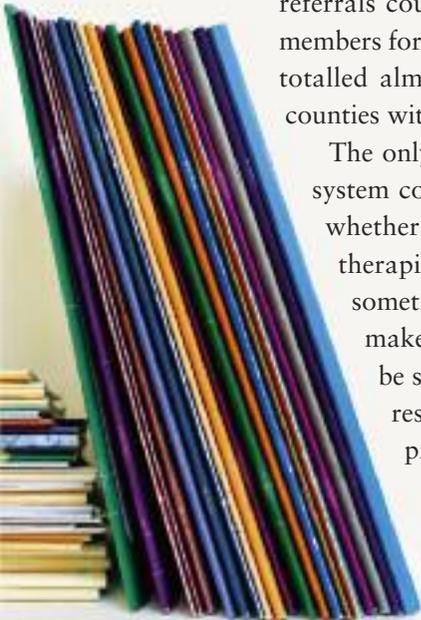
2006

Electronic Referral Database

While the search for more spacious office premises was taking longer than first anticipated, much had been achieved on the administrative front, with the installation and implementation of an enhanced electronic database to store data on the Association’s members, which would enable greater levels of efficiency and accountability, particularly in terms of the crucial activity of referrals.

As Yvonne Curtin – recently promoted to Chief Executive – explained in a letter to members at the time, the new set-up would allow more detailed and reliable records to be kept on the number and nature of referrals, and also incorporate an automatic rotation system which would ensure that all members had an equal chance of receiving their fair share of referrals. The new system also meant that reports on statistics regarding the number and nature of referrals could be produced at any time. Figures published for members for April to May 2006 revealed that referrals that month totalled almost 700, with Dublin, Kildare and Galway as the counties with the highest numbers.

The only element of the referral process which of course no system could guarantee was the rate of follow-through – i.e. whether callers actually got in contact with the referred therapist on every occasion. As Pat Hughes remarked, sometimes it might take a caller all of their courage to even make the call to the IACP office in the first place. It might be some considerable time before they could gather their resolve sufficiently again to contact the recommended practitioner directly.





2002-2011

Meanwhile, the Association was pleased to announce – in April 2006 – the formation of another regional group: the North East Branch. Cathaoirleach Claire Missen, Yvonne Curtin and Ray Henry, now Treasurer, attended the group’s inaugural meeting in Cavan, where a first committee was voted in under the leadership of Miriam Divilly, who had been largely responsible for driving the new initiative.

Membership figures continued to rise, as ever: as of Autumn 2006, there were 1221 Accredited Members, 1511 Associate Members and 71 Accredited Supervisor Members. The AGM had been very well attended, and, at a dinner the evening before, Liam McCarthy had been named and celebrated as the first recipient of the Carl Berkeley Award.

Regulation of the Psychological Therapies

The Working Group which had been formed as a result of 2005’s landmark Symposium on the Regulation of the Psychological Therapies had continued to meet on a regular basis to work on their agreed brief – the formulation of a proposal for submission to government which would facilitate the inclusion of the profession within the framework of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act of 2005. By June 2007, the group had met twelve times in total, while at other meetings, sub-groups had also been progressing specific aspects of the submission. This involved, among other things, liaising with government staff within the Department of Health and Children, a process which had been ably managed by Frank Scott-Lennon.

Considerable progress had been made, and a sense of greater unity of purpose than ever before existed between the 22 disparate organisations now represented within the working group. It was certainly a milestone moment when all of the involved parties agreed to opt for the general term of ‘psychological therapists’ to denote everyone involved in the field. The term clearly encompassed the activities of counselling and psychotherapy under one umbrella – something which would make a submission to government under the Bill far more compelling than an insistence in making a distinction between the two.

2007



In a broader sense, the new term of reference could also be regarded as an important step towards a long-hoped for consensus within a hitherto fragmented profession. Under the Bill, the Registration Board for any adopted profession would have the power to establish categories between practitioners according to their approach and methods of working – and so, if it was deemed necessary, a distinction between professional areas of counselling and psychotherapy could still be preserved at a later stage – which most likely was of reassurance to those who still insisted that the difference be made.

Once agreement had been finally reached within the groups on a set of other sub-issues – such as baseline academic or experiential requirements for registered practitioners, and the details of any grandparenting arrangements to be proposed – a submission could be prepared and approved by all, before being sent to Minister Mary Harney at the Department of Health and Children. And then, it was hoped, the elusive goal of statutory registration would finally be in sight. Buoyed up by this new era of cooperation – in which the Executives of each of the organisations in the working group had *unanimously* backed the proposal of the new term ‘psychological therapist’ – it must have seemed to many that anything was possible!

Professional Services Manager



The most important internal development of 2007 was the creation of the new post of Professional Services Manager. Shane Kelly was appointed to the position in the Spring of that year. Shane came to the job with extensive therapeutic training and experience as a therapist in private practice. Coupled with his business experience, Shane’s skills would be ideal for presenting IACP policies to the public, liaising between the various committees and connecting with relevant government departments to raise awareness of the benefits of counselling and psychotherapy. Looking back on her time as Cathaoirleach, Claire Missen would later say that she regarded the initiative to create this post and indeed the



appointment of Shane as the biggest achievement during her term in office.

CPD

Within the Association, the issue of Continuing Professional Development was once more an area of intense focus. In Summer 2007, the CPD Sub-Committee, chaired by Jane Joyce, were inviting input and feedback from as many members as possible in relation to the framework which had been piloted nationwide the previous year. In a letter in *Éisteach* to all members, Jane set out the current objective of the Sub-Committee in refining the framework, as well as the central aims of a formalised structure of CPD, these being ‘to promote the ethos of personal responsibility; the ethos of professional governance; the ethos of lifelong learning; and the practice of professional regulation’.



Move to Bray

In Autumn 2007, IACP operations were finally moved to new premises in Bray (where the Association is still based at present), much to the relief of all of the staff, who had been struggling to manage for months in a very cramped space. The new offices are spacious, largely open-plan and have plenty of natural light, as well as ample free parking facilities at close hand. With the move, the opportunity was taken to further upgrade the telephone and IT systems. The IACP website was also given another makeover. The importance of an effective web presence was becoming increasingly evident at a time when more and more households were online and access to broadband internet was becoming the norm. Statistics relating to traffic on the website in the ten months from October 2006 to July 2007 showed a total of almost 1.5 million hits during that period.



Psychological Therapies Forum

2008

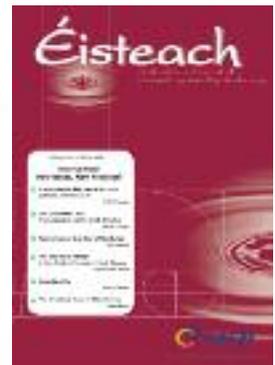
Just a few months later, the sterling efforts of the IACP over so many years, and those of the other bodies involved in the Psychological Therapies Forum, might at last be paying off. After a total of 15 meetings between November 2005 and April 2008, as well as many interim meetings on associated matters, and an investment of €150,000, the Forum had completed its *Report on Recommendations for the Regulation of the Psychological Therapies*.

On the afternoon of 23 September 2008, the Forum representatives were able to present this report to the Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children.

Continuing Professional Development

In parallel to the progress achieved regarding Statutory Regulation, important steps forward were being made within the IACP. At the AGM of March 2008, the new CPD framework which been proposed, piloted and further refined by the CPD Sub-Committee, was approved, along with an official start date for the scheme of April 2009, when all accredited members would begin to fill in their annual CPD logs.

While providing a formalised, structured approach which would enable practitioners to have an effective means of keeping tabs on their progress, the new framework was not intended to be overly prescriptive or inflexible. There would still be room for 'innovative and creative modes of CPD', as long as these could be backed up





by a sound rationale. A balance between academic and practical elements was also something individual practitioners would be encouraged to take into account. In relation to the goal of Statutory Regulation and maintaining the standards of the profession and its practitioners, with the advent of formalised CPD for its members, the Association had shown itself once more to be ready to embrace progress and change.

A National Director

The biggest development for this year was undoubtedly the creation of a new role at an executive level of the IACP – that of National Director – and the appointment of Naoise Kelly to the post, in February 2009. Naoise’s appointment would in many senses mark the beginning of a new chapter for the organisation. While membership numbers had continued to rise year on year and, as we have seen, much progress had been made on a number of crucial fronts, there had been a feeling for some time that a complete overhaul of systems and structures was needed in order to ensure that the organisation would be equipped to deal with the challenges of the increasing professionalisation of the field and, it was hoped, the imminent advent of statutory regulation – as well as with the needs of a membership now approaching some 3,500 practitioners.

With a degree in Psychology, a diploma in Management and a strong background of fifteen years’ professional experience in the voluntary sector at managerial level, Naoise Kelly, it was agreed, would be the right person to carry the Association forward into a new phase of growth and development.

As National Director, Naoise’s first undertaking was to propose a complete review of all aspects of the organisation, including the key areas of governance, membership services, standards and policies, the statutory regulation process, finances, staffing, administration and PR. The findings and conclusions of this wide-ranging process of evaluation, which would aim to elicit as much input from as many members as possible at every stage, would be taken into account for the next step, which would be the formulation of a strategic plan for the IACP, to identify long- and



short-term goals over the next four years. It was the first time in its history that the Association would have such a specific, clearly defined strategic direction relating to ‘what we do and how we do it’. In early 2009, a Strategic Planning Committee was set up in order to coordinate all aspects of the review and work towards producing a draft Plan. In addition to Naoise Kelly, the Committee members were: Margaret Chambers, Ray Henry, Geraldine Hallahan, Bernie Hackett, Seamus Sheedy, Margaret Watchorn, and Shane Kelly.

In mid-2009, in order to engage the membership as much as possible in the process of formulating the Strategic Plan, a number of initiatives were proposed. One of most important of these was the IACP Membership Questionnaire, which was sent out to all categories of members.

Detailed and wide-ranging, but accessible and straightforward, the Questionnaire aimed to gather feedback from members on all aspects of the Association’s services and functioning. Questions focused on such areas as the website and web-based services, IACP administrative processes and their effectiveness, governance structures, professional accreditation procedures, research initiatives, the public profile of the Association, IACP publications and the crucial aspect of services to the public. Members’ input on



HSE conference. LEFT TO RIGHT: Seamus Sheedy (IACP Leas Cathaoirleach), Ray Henry (IACP Cathaoirleach), Jenny Culhane (IACP Training Course Assessment Officer), Shane Kelly (IACP Professional Services Manager), and Naoise Kelly (IACP National Director)



all of these issues would be essential in helping to inform strategy and policy aimed at improving IACP services and overall functioning.

Another important objective of the Questionnaire was to gain a better sense of the profile, typical or otherwise, of IACP members and their work. Hence, there was also a section inviting input on the biggest challenges being faced by individuals in their day-to-day work and in their career in a more general sense. As well as this crucial survey of members and their views, individuals were strongly encouraged to contribute their ideas and feedback via the Members' Section of the IACP website and also by contacting the office directly.

In parallel to this information-gathering, extensive consultations were ongoing over a number of months with IACP Regional and Sub-Committees, in order to seek their input with regard to their specific regions and areas of specialist focus.

As well as the formulation of the Strategic Plan, the Association's priorities, as new Cathaoirleach Margaret Chambers highlighted in her acceptance speech, remained firmly focused on 'continued commitment to excellence in the area of Professional Accreditation Standards ... Member Services and Statutory Regulation'.



Margaret Chambers

New Website

Autumn 2009 saw the launch of the Association's new, revamped website. The site featured for the first time a full listing of the most recent *Directory of IACP Accredited Counsellors, Psychotherapists and Supervisors*. The accessible and easy-to-navigate design of the online Directory would allow members of the public to find accredited practitioners by search categories of county, specialism and name as necessary. IACP members looking for an Accredited Supervisor would be able to use the Directory in a similar fashion. Other new features of the site included a Members' Area incorporating a Members' Forum, which would allow networking and the exchange of views and support for those comfortable with the online medium, as well as a News and Information page and a Download area, where key documents



such as Accreditation and Course Recognition Criteria and the Code of Ethics could be accessed directly.

The investment in an enhanced online presence was of course very timely at this point, given the increasingly important role of the internet in all aspects of activity, both personal and professional, in a local and global context. In addition to this – as a fascinating article by Andy Osborn, which appeared in the Spring 2009 edition of *Éisteach*, highlighted – the nature of the online medium is such as to be particularly compatible with the concerns and circumstances of those seeking help in the area of mental health. The unfortunate yet undeniable social stigma, which even now continues to be associated with mental health difficulties, is a major factor which explains why those seeking such help tend to find the online environment – with its potential for anonymity and privacy – less challenging than the steps traditionally required when seeking practical help in this area.

Even as early as 2003, according to Osborn's article, a major international research study (Powell, McCarthy & Eysenbach) suggested that: 'Forty-nine per cent of people using the internet for mental health problems had not previously sought formal support from health services.' A later report in 2006 found that one of the





largest groups of ‘online help-seekers’ was those experiencing problems with depression. The very nature of depression as such, characterised in so many cases by a tendency towards isolation, means that seeking help online, in one’s own home and without having to engage with the outside world or interact, is the least threatening option for the sufferer.

New additions to the IACP office team

The beginning of 2010 saw the further strengthening of the IACP office team, with two new appointments: that of Justyn Pride as Office Manager and Jenny Culhane in the newly created role of Training Course Assessment Officer. It was envisaged that these new members of the team would greatly enhance the operational efficiency of the Association in their respective areas.

With substantial previous operations management experience and a self-avowed passion for Information Technology, Justyn Pride’s profile was felt to be very compatible with his new role at IACP, where he would be central in ensuring the rapid development and updating of the organisation’s administrative systems and procedures. His first major undertaking would be to overhaul the Association’s archaic filing system. Justyn’s next objective would be to implement the changeover to a new electronic database.

As Training Course Assessment Officer, Jenny Culhane’s role would entail working closely with the Course Recognition Committee in assessing and monitoring all courses seeking or having IACP Approval. With a strong academic and HR background, Jenny’s proven organisational and communication skills were deemed to be ideal for the newly-created post.

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Office Service Improvements



Geraldine Hallahan,
Company Secretary 2008-10

In conjunction with these very positive staff developments, various service improvements relating to the functioning of the office were introduced throughout 2010. One of the most important of these was the installation of a new telephone system, whereby each member of staff would have a direct dial extension number, so that members could contact the appropriate person without having to first go through the main reception number. An added benefit of the new arrangement would of course be the freeing up of critical ‘referral handling’ time for the reception staff. A further change introduced at this time was the opening of the main reception line over the lunchtime period – which again would create greater availability of referral and help services for the public.

Membership Questionnaire

In the meantime, the responses and feedback from the Membership Questionnaire had been carefully processed and analysed by the Strategic Planning Committee under the auspices of the National Director. It was decided to share the conclusions and results of this evaluation with IACP members in the form of two accessible and visually appealing Supplements. The Supplements were distributed to members in two phases, with a few months’ interval in between. While the focus of the first was quantitative in presentation, consisting of a mainly statistical analysis of members’ ratings and their evaluations of the different aspects of the IACP’s services, the second Supplement had a more qualitative feel, offering an interpretative approach to members’ responses and including some samples of the actual comments and suggestions received.

Both Supplements made for interesting reading and were very well received by the membership in general. What was clear, once again, was that the Association had shown itself to be open and receptive to all feedback that members were willing to offer – negative as well as positive. Especially in terms of the sample comments from members which were directly quoted in the second



2002-2011

Supplement, it could not be said that the IACP was trying to sweep anything under the carpet. For example, to the question – ‘What changes/improvements would you like to see in IACP’s administration?’ – the following sample answers were recorded: ‘That is for management to decide – you will never please therapists – a silly question’; ‘More courtesy towards callers’; ‘I have always had warmth and courtesy at all times from members of this team’; ‘Shorter response time, or at least a courtesy contact to inform you that your communication is being processed’. Regarding the issue of research as a potential growth area, similarly disparate sample responses were given, e.g.: ‘Enough research – don’t know what IACP is trying to prove’; ‘Research on different types of counselling – effectiveness of same’!



Publication of the IACP’s Strategic Plan

By Spring 2010, and as a result of many months of work by the Strategic Planning Committee, outside agencies and the IACP staff, Naoise Kelly was able to present the finalised Strategic Plan to the membership.

Entitled *IACP – Into the Future*, the plan laid out a framework for the Association’s evolution over the next four years. As well as defining the IACP’s medium- to long-term goals and its vision for future development, the plan set out in very concrete and tangible terms how each goal would be achieved, year by year, and by whom.

As Naoise’s associated report to members reiterated, ‘The Strategic Plan expresses the Association’s continued commitment to ensuring IACP maintains standards of excellence in its work. It strongly reflects the input and feedback from contributions of members, voluntary committees, staff and other stakeholders, and



includes a comprehensive review of how we operate in each area. The Strategic Planning Committee carefully considered the Association's mission, vision and values and main goal areas (governance, professional services, member services, resources and public relations) when looking to describe the overall purpose of the Association, present a view of the future we are working towards and define the underlying principles that guide our work.'

With a highly competent, dynamic and forward-looking administration and management team now in place, and its first ever Strategic Plan defining a comprehensive set of ambitious yet concrete objectives for the future, it was indeed, as the National Director's report concluded, 'an exciting and interesting time of growth at IACP'. A record attendance of 350 members at that year's AGM in March, presided over by new Cathaoirleach Ray Henry, surely reflected a new phase of purpose, vibrancy and engagement in the narrative of the IACP.

Recession Survey

While progress was continuing apace within the Association, circumstances in the wider context of Irish society had become increasingly bleak for many, as the country struggled in the grip of the disastrous global recession which had first hit Europe towards the end of 2008. The IACP's first electronic survey, emailed to members in July 2010, addressed the issue of 'Counselling/Psychotherapy and the Recession'. Focusing specifically on the effects of the recession on both clients and practitioners, the survey received an excellent response, with over 380 members returning completed online forms within a week of the stipulated deadline.

Unsurprisingly, an overwhelming 80 per cent of respondents revealed that the downturn was having a negative impact on the mental health of their clients. Beyond this, the economic climate was directly affecting the ability of clients to commit to the full term of their treatment – many were simply abandoning therapy because of the associated financial





outlay. Correspondingly, practitioners themselves were experiencing many negative effects, as reflected in the Comments section of the survey, e.g.:

'Anxiety and depression are now presenting in my clinic because of loss of earnings, fear of loss of earnings, negative equity in the family home. These issues, together with the lack of support for those who are experiencing difficulties, contribute to ongoing stress and anxiety [on my part].'

Statutory Regulation: A Breakthrough Moment

Clearly in such difficult times, it was more important than ever that the talking therapies become a truly integral and far more accessible part of the country's healthcare services. In the light of this and in terms of the very many years of tenacious work on the part of the IACP, a momentous development in November 2010 was all the more welcome. This transpired at the Association's Public Information Day, which was held at the Round Room of the Mansion House, when Dan Neville TD, Fine Gael Spokesperson on Mental Health, gave the definitive assurance in his opening address that he would be introducing a Private Members' Bill to add Counselling and Psychotherapy to the Health Professions' Regulations Act 2005. To say that this news was music to the ears of all of those present was of course an understatement! As the first major shift at party political level towards regulating the professions, after so much work by so many people within IACP, this was indeed – finally – a key step towards the realisation of a long-held dream.



2011

Thirty Years of the IACP

By the beginning of 2011, the effective implementation of the Strategic Plan was well underway, and a number of the short-term objectives identified for the first twelve months had already been realised. As Naoise Kelly highlighted in a letter to members in the *Notice Board* of Spring 2011, the key areas of focus for this anniversary year on the IACP include the ongoing campaign to raise the Association's public profile, the enhancement of internal



structures and systems, and a close review of finances – as well as further consolidation of the improvements achieved in 2010, particularly in relation to Member Services. True to the spirit of the Plan as originally envisaged, members are given regular updates on ongoing progress in all areas in very accessible and tangible terms.

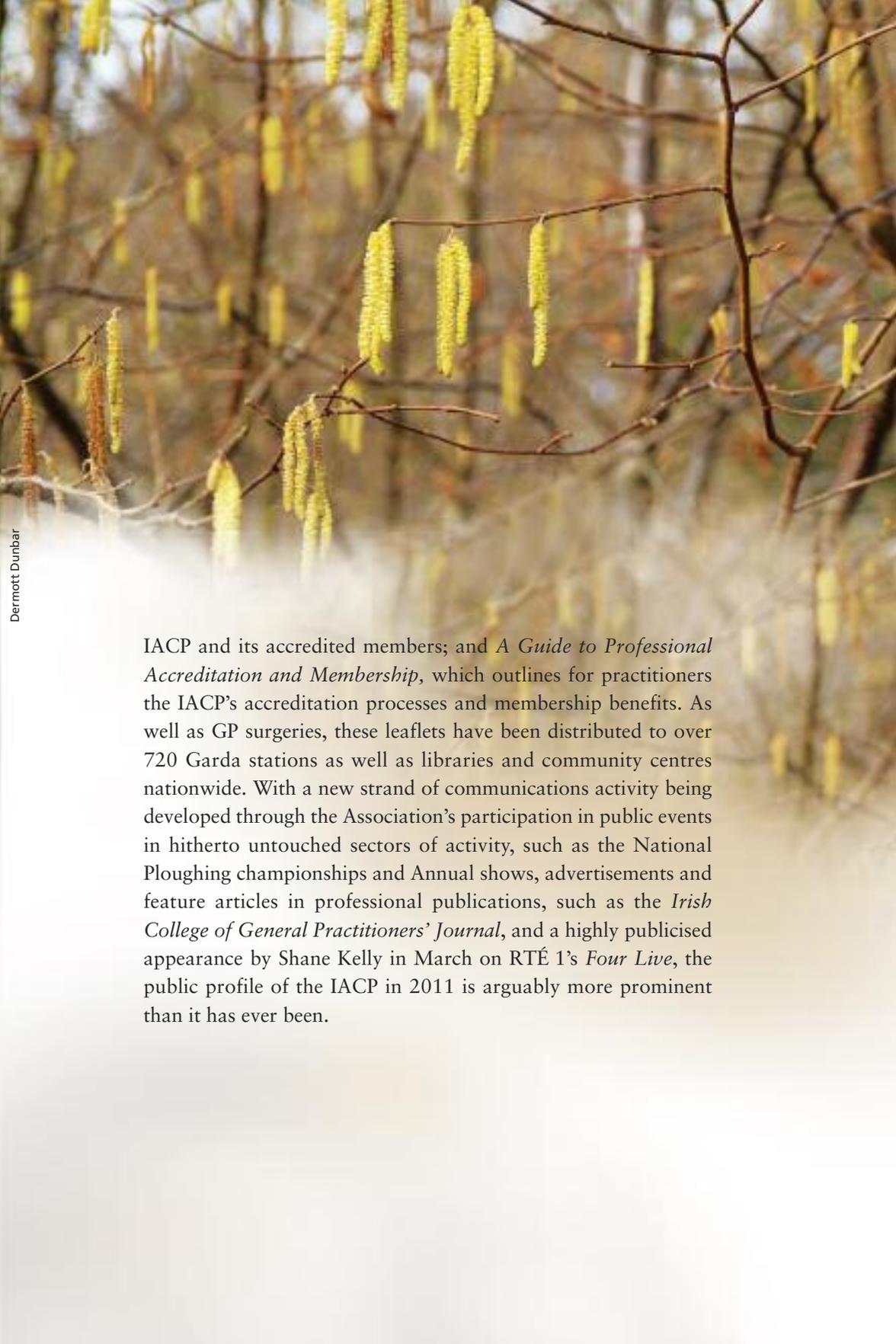
In terms of increasing the public profile of the Association, the broad objective identified in the Strategic Plan has been, in the words of the National Director, to work towards a situation whereby ‘the IACP would become synonymous in the minds of the public with [the practice of] counselling and psychotherapy’. As with other key areas of focus, a concrete strategy by which this could be achieved had been carefully outlined and budgeted for in the detail of the Plan. One of Ireland’s longest running public relations companies, Carr Communications, was engaged by the Association to assist with this crucial work.

Encouraging results from early communications’ initiatives are already in evidence. An appreciable level of media interest has been generated from a series of targeted IACP press releases in 2011. Focussing mainly on the importance of therapist qualifications and experience, these sparked a significant press response, in the form of radio interviews and press articles, which in turn have generated a number of direct enquiries to the IACP from members of the public. The regional committees have proved invaluable in this regard, by being able to provide local information, human interest stories and points of contact for the regional press all over the country.

With the integration of some regional groups, the Association currently comprises six regional branches in total.

In March 2011, Martin Ryan joined the IACP staff, with responsibility for Accounts and the coordination of various ongoing projects. The office staff now stands at a total of five full-time and six part-time members.

At the beginning of 2011, the Association published two very accessible new leaflets: *Talk to us – A Guide to Counselling & Psychotherapy*, aimed at the general public, and explaining the processes of counselling and psychotherapy and the work of the



IACP and its accredited members; and *A Guide to Professional Accreditation and Membership*, which outlines for practitioners the IACP's accreditation processes and membership benefits. As well as GP surgeries, these leaflets have been distributed to over 720 Garda stations as well as libraries and community centres nationwide. With a new strand of communications activity being developed through the Association's participation in public events in hitherto untouched sectors of activity, such as the National Ploughing championships and Annual shows, advertisements and feature articles in professional publications, such as the *Irish College of General Practitioners' Journal*, and a highly publicised appearance by Shane Kelly in March on RTÉ 1's *Four Live*, the public profile of the IACP in 2011 is arguably more prominent than it has ever been.



Left to right: Naoise Kelly, National Director and the Executive Committee 2011: Padraig O'Morain, Eileen Finegan, Bernie Hackett, Ray Henry (Cathaoirleach), Keith Brennan (Company Secretary), Pauline Irving (Treasurer), Michael Chambers, Marianne Gurnee, Seamus Sheedy (Leas Cathaoirleach)
Individual photos: Marie Tonkin and Bernadette Darcy





IACP Staff, Autumn 2011:
Left to right Top: Jackie O Donovan, Shane Kelly, Jenny Culhane, Naoise Kelly, Liz Gannon, Deirdre Browne, Justyn Pride
Left to right bottom; Geraldine Haskins; Sandra Matthews, Pat Hughes
Missing: Martin Ryan

celebrating **30** years



Naoise Kelly,
National Director

Into the future

The picture of the tree on the cover of this book is a fitting symbol of the IACP's growth over the past 30 years. The roots established during the Association's early years have continued to grow and strengthen with each decade, the branches spreading and multiplying as the Association has diversified in its

work and scope. The stories and the events charted in these pages capture the many impressive developments in the Association's history so far, for which tremendous credit is due to those involved. Of all that has been accomplished to date, it is undoubtedly the fact that many thousands of clients have benefited richly from the work of IACP therapists and the Association itself which represents the greatest achievement.

The IACP's next challenge is to build on all of these successes by continuing to strive for improved standards of counselling and psychotherapy practice in Ireland. As the largest association in the country, we are well placed to continue leading the way in the profession's development. We may not know what the next 20 or 30 years hold, but we can do our best to anticipate the developments in the social, cultural, economic and political landscape that will be decisive to our functioning. It will be how the IACP engages and responds to these changes and new challenges that will ultimately define our future.

Public interest in and awareness of mental health, therapy and personal development continue to grow rapidly. As an Association, we will continue to inform the public and professionals about the processes and practice of therapy. As society changes, we may find that, for clients, new and previously unknown issues will emerge, including problems and difficulties that we have not yet even considered. The same can be said for therapeutic theories, techniques and services, where no doubt innovations and new



practices will be developed, as other aspects of our environment continue to evolve.

Rapid advancements in technology may well bring the biggest changes to the counselling and psychotherapy landscape. Vast amounts of information and countless services are already available to therapists and clients on the internet. Internationally, online therapy and training services are increasingly being used. In line with all of this, the IACP recognises the importance of increasing its utilisation of technology's benefits to achieve the Association's goals.

In tandem with counselling and psychotherapy's general expansion, commercialism – in its many forms – is now squarely part of the equation for many involved in the field. While acknowledging the positive influence this can have on the profession, the IACP continues to be firmly committed to protecting the public and therapists from the detrimental practices of those who put profit before the needs of clients and the profession.

The IACP has more to gain and learn from cooperation with international partners. As we know, the Association was formed by following the example of our closest partner and professional ally, the BACP. Operating on a scale 10 times larger than we do, the BACP continue to show us what great developmental possibilities are achievable. We can also learn much from the very long, but ultimately successful, regulatory process that each individual state in the US has been through. Our membership of such international bodies as the IAC and EAC helps us to keep abreast with best practice in other countries and enables us to share information on the work we are doing. These are all key considerations, given that in the future it is likely that national governments will give more weight to decisions made by European and International institutions.

The IACP's future engagement in research will also be crucial to our success. The public and media are hungry for formalised, evidence-based information on counselling and psychotherapy. Our Association needs to address the current shortage of research in this area. The IACP's work in facilitating primary research in



Ireland and in explaining therapeutic processes to the public will be of great benefit to the profession in the broadest sense. Research from other related disciplines in the area of mental health will also help the profession, and breakthroughs in psychiatry, psychology, social work and other healthcare professions will increasingly be integrated with new findings in counselling and psychotherapy.

The IACP's aim of securing Statutory Regulation in this country is intended to bring about clearer counselling and psychotherapy structures, better public protection, more accessible information on the profession and the possibility of legal redress against impostors. Regulation will not solve every problem we face, but it will greatly improve the rights and entitlements of clients. Within the regulatory process, stakeholder partnership will become more highly valued and remaining inter- and intra-professional rivalries must be reduced.

I'm very optimistic about a bright future for our Association and the profession. We have the structures in place to meet our remit of supporting members, providing protection for the public and developing standards. Through our substantial network of 3,500 members, we can continue to consult widely and plan proactively for the IACP's future. Here's to the next 30 years!

NAOISE KELLY
OCTOBER 2011





IACP Mission Statement

IACP identifies, develops and maintains professional standards of excellence in counselling and psychotherapy through education, training and accreditation. In promoting best practice and the professional development of its members, IACP holds at its core the protection of the public.

IACP Vision Statement

A future where people who are in need of care and support can achieve greater wellbeing through the use of regulated professional counselling and psychotherapy services. Our vision is one where counselling and psychotherapy are an integral part of healthcare provision.

IACP Core Values

The underlying values which guide our work are as follows:

- Integrity
- Respect and inclusivity
- Valuing the individual
- Professional and ethical

IACP Cathaoirligh

Odette Thompson 1981–1991
Ursula O’Farrell 1991–1995
Edward Boyne 1995–1998
Patricia Kennedy 1998–2001
Alan O’Dwyer 2001–2003
Dr Damian Davy 2003–2005
Claire Missen 2005–2007
Gillford D’Souza 2007–2009
Margaret Chambers 2009–2010
Ray Henry 2010–present

2011–2012 Executive Committee

Ray Henry – Cathaoirleach
Seamus Sheedy – Leas Cathaoirleach
Keith Brennan – Company Secretary
Pauline Irving – Treasurer
Bernie Hackett
Marie Tonkin
Padraig O’ Morain
Michael Chambers
Eileen Finegan
Bernadette Darcy
Marianne Gurnee

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Disclaimer: Every effort has been made to ensure that all of the information included in this account is as factual and accurate as possible, based on the records available.

