

FHCP update

As we enter 2005, I find myself reflecting on the achievements of FHCP in 2004. Perhaps the single most important event has been the adoption of job profiles for counsellors as part of the NHS Agenda for Change. It has really put counsellors on the healthcare map.

Through BACP, we have secured a dedicated resource in NHS Campaign Manager, Louise Robinson, whose role complements that of Lead Healthcare Advisor John Eatock. This has meant that we've been able to forge strategic alliances with organisations such as the National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE), the NHS Executive, the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, the All Wales Primary Care Network for Mental Health, the Scottish Executive, and the Northern Ireland Counselling Forum. We are now consulted on all major NHS guidance documents dealing with mental health issues.

Membership of FHCP increased steadily in 2004, which hopefully means we are doing something right! Our annual conference was yet again oversubscribed, and the feedback has been very positive.

Developments in promoting counselling in healthcare in Scotland have been very interesting, particularly since provision has hitherto been very patchy in comparison with that in England and Wales, with many counsellors losing their jobs with the advent of the local healthcare cooperatives. Here again, we are at last developing a voice that is being heard by the major policy makers. In parallel, we have begun Scottish NHS counselling services stakeholders groups for counsellors and managers.

All the above is to be celebrated, but I must also highlight challenges facing us organisationally as well as individually. A major deficiency for our profession is the lack of a robust research base to back us up. While randomised controlled trials are beyond the resources of most counsellors, practice-based evidence is not, and I must encourage you to consider how you can engage in this. Further, while we develop collaborative working relationships with other healthcare professionals, we must not lose sight of the unique contribution that we offer clients. It is all too easy to buy into the quick fixes that society seems to want. Finally, on behalf of the FHCP executive, I invite you to contact me (shane.buckeridge@bacp.co.uk) if you are interested in being involved in any aspect of FHCP.

Shane Buckeridge
FHCP Chair