



Notes from the Chair

Same, but different



Julie Hughes

The world looks just the same, but it's different in so many ways

Since COVID-19 turned our normality upside down, I've been preoccupied by trying to manage the anxiety being felt by people in organisations – by those contracting our counselling services and by clients – it's been a staggering and sometimes overwhelming task and remaining grounded throughout has been my main focus. My working life Monday to Friday is fast paced, making the jolt into Saturday and Sunday all the more of a shock as, suddenly, I find myself with much more time on my hands than I'm used to.

Staying grounded

Supervision has been more important than ever, and at times, I've found it couldn't come quickly enough as I needed a place to ground myself. I'm grateful to my colleagues on the BACP Workplace Executive Committee who continue to play a key role in supporting me in my role as Chair. It's been a real tonic to see their friendly faces on our Zoom meetings, and their constant professionalism has often lifted my spirits as we plan for the year ahead.

Challenges to come

I don't have much time to spend on the message boards but I've certainly witnessed some passionate conversations on BACP's Facebook page in response to the fallout from COVID-19 and in particular around EAP rates of pay. If you have thoughts on this issue or any other concerns, I'd encourage you to continue to raise them with us, so please do drop me a line. In the midst of so much change, I've been impressed by the response from the BACP staff who have worked tirelessly to address the many issues raised while at the same time trying to adjust to so much that is new and uncharted.

We are working closely with Kris Ambler, BACP's Workforce Lead, on the campaign to

tackle the mental health consequences of COVID-19 and to reaffirm the critical role that counselling and psychotherapy can play in supporting the nation through this pandemic.¹

Looking ahead, I'm aware that there is a lot of anxiety over what will come next. It's likely you too will be hearing the many voices predicting a pending recession which will concern many of us in our personal and professional lives. It's all the more reason why we need to stay connected and to share our experiences so that we can work collectively and collaboratively as far as possible.

Benefits

One of the benefits for me of life during the pandemic has been the upsurge in creativity, connection and compassion that I've witnessed in both clients and organisations. Perhaps you are one of those who have enjoyed a slower pace of life and the chance to discover new resources or skills. If so, I wonder how you have been challenged and what strategies you have used to support your work and your own mental health?

Taking time out

The biggest lesson I've been reminded of, is the need I have to look after myself while still supporting others. After all these years, I'm not sure that I should still need to learn this – but I think, in many ways, COVID-19 keeps reminding us of what really matters. I've adapted many of my usual coping strategies, moving them onto Zoom, and along with many of us, it's become my new venue to go to for socials and quizzes. I've also joined an online gym, taken up golf on the Xbox and discovered a new love of baking. As we head into the summer months, I hope you'll be able to find time to rest and recharge after the immense challenges of recent months.

REFERENCE

¹ bacp.co.uk/covid-19

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Resources

Online journals now freely available

BACP members can now find all seven divisional journals freely available online, giving members access to articles on all aspects of the profession across the sectors. To sign up, simply click on the links from the individual journals and remember to add the free subscription to your account. If you prefer to receive a paper copy and other benefits, you will need to join the division and pay the annual subscription.

Find out more at: bacp.co.uk/bacp-journals

Private practice toolkit

Whether you're seeking support on managing your current practice, looking to develop your business, or thinking about starting out on your own, this toolkit aims to help you on your private practice journey.

More than 30,000 BACP members currently work in private practice in some capacity. In partnership with the BACP Private Practice division, BACP has compiled this toolkit of resources to support you with all aspects of setting up, managing, developing and working in a private practice. The launch of the toolkit has been brought forward to support members during the current crisis.

Find out more at: <https://www.bacp.co.uk/bacp-divisions/bacp-private-practice/>

Training for online counselling

More than 2,500 people have taken part in a free course on online counselling, produced by the Open University in partnership with BACP. The course, 'How to do counselling online: a coronavirus primer', was launched in March and written by Open University academics Naomi Moller and Andreas Vossler, together with BACP, in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Find out more at: open.edu/openlearncreate/course/view.php?id=5039

Toolkit for sustaining mental health post COVID-19

A toolkit has been produced in partnership with ACAS, Mind, Business in the Community (BITC) and CIPD to help employers manage risk and their legal obligations as people return to work following COVID-19. Managers can provide support, with referral to occupational health (OH) professionals when necessary, to help the wellbeing of workers, preventing ill health and facilitating steps to reduce sickness absence, and to control infection risks.

'If we are not thoughtful about a good return, we will create workplaces which are filled with fear, unhappiness and doubt. Companies must realise that COVID-19 is not a great leveller; some groups require more support than others. As responsible businesses, we have to step up and meet this new challenge with our eyes open,' says Amanda Mackenzie OBE, Chief Executive, BITC.

You can access the toolkit at: <https://www.som.org.uk/return-to-work/>

BACP working with the Council for Work and Health



BACP is working closely with the Council for Work and Health (CfWH), which comprises a wide range of organisations delivering health, safety and wellbeing services to the working-age population.

As well as representing BACP at CfWH meetings, Nicola Neath, former BACP Workplace Chair, has stepped into a new role chairing the newly formed subgroup for mental health, while Kris Ambler, BACP's Workforce Lead, is leading a project on mental health first aid (MHFA).

The Mental Health subgroup currently includes members representing the British Psychological Society (BPS), the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the Society of Occupational Medicine (SOM) and NHS Employers, along with Steve Boorman, Chair of the Council for Work

and Health. The group is now exploring the impact of COVID-19 on workplace mental health and working to inform, advise and contribute to a range of materials being produced.

Nicola Neath says: 'It's a privilege to be chairing the Mental Health subgroup at this extraordinary time and it's excellent that BACP is at the table with so many influential organisations supporting employee mental health. While the impact of COVID-19 on mental health at work is understood in some contexts, there is an awareness that we may yet have much to learn about how it will impact people in their work.'



COVID-19 resources for employers

The Mental Health subgroup is curating a collection of the most helpful information and sharing best practice on the mental health impacts of COVID-19. You can access resources on how we can help to support people at work during the pandemic and as we return to the workplace.

Find out more at: <https://www.councilforworkandhealth.org.uk/coronavirus/>