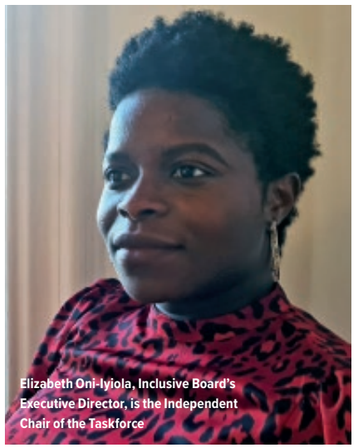
SETTING A PRECEDENT

UKCP'S NEW EQUALITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION TASKFORCE AIMS TO MAKE THE ORGANISATION MORE INCLUSIVE. **RADHIKA HOLMSTRÖM** TALKS TO ITS MEMBERS



Elizabeth Oni-Iyiola, Inclusive Board's Executive Director, is the Independent Chair of the Taskforce

In the wake of the killing of George Floyd in May 2020 and three weeks of international protests that followed, UKCP released a statement expressing solidarity against racial injustice, and acknowledging the pain of Black and other minority ethnic members, colleagues, clients and service users.

'We strive continuously to create as safe and inclusive an environment as we can for all. We are watching and listening and we are committed to fighting against racism and discrimination wherever and however it exists,' UKCP stated. This means using its platform and resources to play a role in overcoming deep-seated systemic challenges, and amplifying its campaign to highlight racial disparities in the experience of mental health services and outcomes.

It means campaigning vigorously for funding for training, breaking down barriers to accessing and completing training, and doing more to reflect the communities that UKCP serves.

Ensuring the operations, governance and culture of both UKCP as an organisation and psychotherapy in the UK more widely is more inclusive for people of colour and other minorities, is a continual journey. With this in mind, in autumn 2020, UKCP's Board of Trustees enlisted the help of Inclusive Boards, a consulting organisation committed to enabling individuals, organisations and sectors to become more diverse.

Inclusive Boards has undertaken the development of an Equality Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce, which will make recommendations to UKCP's Board of Trustees on inclusion within the organisation, advising on future practice from July 2021.

Elizabeth Oni-Iyiola, Inclusive Board's Executive Director, is the Independent Chair of the Taskforce. With a background in business administration and management and having worked with organisations to support the development and implementation of their diversity strategies, she supported the recruitment of 12 members from the world of psychotherapy to join the Taskforce.

CLEAR COMMITMENTS

'The Taskforce has a huge responsibility to put together a Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) Action Plan for UKCP,' she says. 'It has independence in deciding what priorities it will focus on in the development of the plan. This is very important as it means the breadth of what can be tackled is not restrictive, and that is how it should be.'

Oni-Iyiola explains that the action plan will make big, clear commitments to challenge the lack of diversity that exists and to support the people from a different background who are already part of UKCP but do not feel heard and/or psychologically safe in the organisation. 'It will address all these, and we'll also keep challenging ourselves with the questions, "who/what are we missing out on?" and "who have we unintentionally excluded?". UKCP needs to be an organisation that represents the entire UK population.

'The profession has only started scratching the surface of diversity and inclusion, and this piece of work is evidence that this is only the beginning,' she adds. 'Regardless, the beginning must be effective, one that will set the precedence for how the profession will be in the future. This does not mean just talking about diversity and inclusion, but making it a core part of every function of the organisation. There's no point bringing in diversity if the environment that practitioners find themselves in is not inclusive. This is the beginning of a very long journey and it is vital it is not rushed; but no matter how hard the journey is, it needs to start.'

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1. Monica Zenonos

Monica Zenonos is a psychosynthesis psychotherapist, supervisor and trainer with experience in an occupational health trauma service. She worked with refugees and asylum seekers for 17 years before training as a psychotherapist.

'I do feel the wind of change sweeping through UKCP and I am proud to be a part of it. I think perhaps part of the solution is that the membership organisations of UKCP are very diverse and have their own histories, trainings and ways of doing things. This means they are able to come up with a multi-faceted approach that addresses the issues from various angles. I am hopeful that there is a process of change happening within psychotherapy as a whole. A truly diverse psychotherapy profession will be more inclusive and respectful of difference in race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, gender, age and disability and be more aware and able to discuss the intersectional dynamics that play out in their clients' lives and in the therapy room. I believe that the EDI agenda needs to be threaded through every aspect of the training so that it is embedded rather than an add on.'

2. Charles Brown

Charles Brown is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, supervisor and specialist addictions therapist. He teaches at several psychoanalytic training organisations and is a visiting lecturer at East London University. He works in private practice.

'The therapy profession has remained stubbornly isolated from the environment in which it is located. It is a process that will take some time, but it is important to note that this state of affairs has been in existence since Freud – whose observations and interpretations reflect the time and place in which he lived and not the timeless properties that he sought to describe.

'I think that potential new therapists who are Black or brown are wary of the emphasis on the treatment of mind, given the historical mental and psychological abuse perpetrated upon them by the medical profession. The perspective from psychoanalysis has been that we are all the same and theory applies universally. When psychoanalysis was developed it was for a particular group of people. When/if this changes ... then that is what it will look like.

'I would like there to be more incorporation of a wider range of racialised minority psychoanalytic writers on curriculums. More financial support could be given to those who want to train and volunteer/honorary placements abolished. I would like UKCP to set up a lasting instrument that has power to address the issues for which it was created.'

3. Jessie Emilion

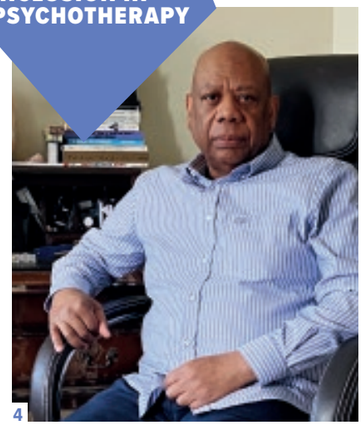
Counsellor, psychotherapist, supervisor and trainer, currently employed as cognitive analytic psychotherapy lead at Southwark IPTT, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, Jessie Emilion has extensive experience of working with refugee communities as a clinician and interpreter since the early 1990s. She is the co-chair of UKCP HIPC EDI committee.

'Personally, as a woman of colour, I can confidently say that issues around equality, diversity and intersectionality are not adequately addressed across the profession. The imbalance of power and privilege should be addressed at the core of our professions and at all levels: Systemic, organisational, training, and clinical practice.

'Access to and support during the psychotherapy training has always been a challenge for trainees from marginalised communities. Issues around shame, stigma and fear still pose a barrier when it comes to access to psychotherapy for the global majority populations. The lack of culturally appropriate interventions that address inherent systemic power and privilege within the work has often resulted in poorer outcomes for our clients. We are caught up in a systemic, cyclical loop between training organisations churning out therapists who are unaware of their own unconscious biases leading to poorer outcomes, disengagement, and avoidance of the psychotherapy services.

'These systemic procedures can only be addressed by true collaboration across training organisations, communities we serve and service providers. As an international trainer I strongly recognise the need for decolonising the literature, therapy models and clinical practice, keeping ethics and clients at centre stage.

'I would welcome the idea of UKCP making a financial commitment to implement the action plan, develop a bursary system for students from marginalised communities and take on the equality, diversity inclusion agenda head on as an ethical issue, rather than a political gesture.'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4. Patrick Hamilton

Registered as a trainee within the College of Outcome Oriented and Hypno-Psychotherapies, Patrick Hamilton has worked with clients referred to the IAPT programme and at a category C prison in London. He also works with sex offenders, their victims and families.

'We need to get the membership involved – all 11,000 of them. If they are involved and have a working understanding of the issues, they can make choices about their personal attitudes and behaviour towards their colleagues and clients. Personal involvement is personal investment.'

Patrick suggests that the membership should be asked to respond to the Taskforce's findings before they are implemented, and once the outcomes are agreed, that membership of UKCP becomes contingent on explicit acceptance of the agreed DEI policies. 'In this way, UKCP will have a complete understanding of attitudes towards proposed changes, and each member will have a full understanding of their individual obligations. At this point some members may choose to leave UKCP, but new members may also choose to join.'

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Public perception of the profession has a knock-on effect for potential clients (quite apart from the cost of private therapy). 'When I worked as a therapist at a men's prison in London, a Black client was very surprised to see me. He told me he'd been expecting a young white woman.' Patrick has also crunched the numbers in his own practice, noting that by far the greatest number of sessions have been with white men and women.

5. Sharon Beirne

A Gestalt psychotherapist and supervisor, Sharon Beirne has worked in a variety of clinical settings within the NHS, such as the drug and alcohol service, adult psychiatric wards, children's mental health units and in a psychotherapy department. She now works in full-time private practice in Liverpool.

'I qualified as a psychotherapist in 2004. I enjoyed many aspects of my training, but I was disheartened by the lack of focus around issues related to diversity and inclusion in my years of training prior to qualification and UKCP registration. I didn't feel equipped, when I completed my initial training, to work effectively in these areas. And I'm not alone in this, many of my colleagues and peers are also expressing that training didn't equip them for working with issues of racism and issues related to cultural differences that service users bring.

'A crucial part of this issue is the way that training is delivered in many training centres, with a very Eurocentric focus. A training curriculum might well include the word "diversity" but this is meaningless, and worse still misleading, if it is not delivered upon. I know, from what has frequently been voiced by people of colour training in psychotherapy, including in the statement that Professor Divine Charura wrote on racial injustice, that there is a high drop-out rate of these trainees.'[1]

Beirne recommends many concrete measures, including rigorous assessment of EDI delivery in training at quinquennial reviews of training centres, by assessors that reflect the diversity of UKCP members. She adds further that we (members of UKCP) could be creative in how we share resources and high-quality EDI training, as part of continuing professional development, particularly for trainers and supervisors.

6. Ben Scanlan

Ben Scanlan is an existential phenomenological psychotherapist in private practice, as well as being an integrative supervisor.

'Making training more accessible and the sense of it leading somewhere feels important. To ask people to spend £50,000 on the possibility of making a living feels like it sways only recruits who have the means, or are convinced it's right for them. The latter is great, but it also misses the potential that it's difficult to know how one will feel being a therapist until one is a therapist.

'Psychotherapy needs to be seen as a career with clear outcomes, and a profession that can be progressive. Training, and indeed therapy, needs to be totally integrated when it comes to equality, diversity and inclusion, but this will take time and is limited by societal change at large.'

7. Anthea Benjamin

A therapist trained in a number of modalities including integrative arts psychotherapy, play therapy and group analysis, Anthea works with a wide range of clients and has developed specialisms in adoption, especially intercountry and transracial, personality disorder, sexual abuse, and racial trauma, among other areas.

'There has been some forward movement to work toward inclusion but as a profession we have skipped some fundamental steps in moving too quickly into "celebrating diversity". The failure to do the painful work of acknowledging and reflecting on structural and institutional racism and other power relations within counselling and psychotherapy trainings has left people ill equipped to address these themes in meaningful depth.

'The ongoing reality of oppressions and structural racism profoundly impact a range of communities and therapists need to have done their own reflective work on addressing power to be skilled to address these society issues in therapy. The issue of racial trauma keeps cropping up for many communities affected by these themes and skilled and culturally- and trauma-informed approaches need to be utilised to support the unpacking of these deep and painful wounds.

'Counselling and psychotherapy continue to be predominantly white, female and cis-gendered professions. This means more work is needed to ensure practitioners are able to work within diverse communities, and ongoing exploration is needed about the existing barriers that replicate the dominance of these groups in the profession.'

What do you think?
Share your thoughts and opinions by emailing:
editor@ukcp.org.uk

References and reading

(1) psychotherapy.org.uk/news/racial-injustice-where-is-the-love/

Meet the members

Equality Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce board members

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1. Sharon Beirne
Gestalt psychotherapist

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2. Anthea Benjamin
integrative arts psychotherapist, adolescent therapeutic counsellor, group analyst and supervisor

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3. Charles Brown
psychoanalytic psychotherapist, supervisor and specialist addictions therapist

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4. Jessie Emilion
cognitive analytic psychotherapist and supervisor

5

5. Patrick Hamilton
UKCP trainee with the College of Outcome Oriented and Hypno-Psychotherapies

6

6. Dr Manshant Rani Kaur
psychoanalytic psychotherapist, supervisor, clinical lead & specialty doctor in psychiatry of addictions

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7. Sarah Niblock
CEO, UKCP

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8. Elizabeth Oni-Iyiola
independent chair and executive director of Inclusive Boards

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9. Martin Pollecoff
psychotherapist, supervisor and chair of UKCP

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10. Ben Scanlan
existential phenomenological psychotherapist and supervisor

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11. Cath White
head of operations and regulation, UKCP

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12. Monica Zenonos
psychosynthesis psychotherapist, supervisor, trainer and EMDR practitioner