



Turning Point Institute

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Turning Point Institute submission to the Minister for Health concerning the proposed regulation of counsellors and psychotherapists under the Health and Social Care Professional Act 2005

Introduction

Turning Point Institute (TPI) welcomes the opportunity to make a short submission to Minister Simon Harris TD, Minister for Health, concerning the proposed regulation of counsellors and psychotherapists under the Health and Social Care Professional Act. Turning Point Institute is fully supportive of the proposed regulation of counsellors and psychotherapists and we welcome the establishment of the Board in due course.

The Co-Founder Directors of TPI, Kay Conroy and Mary Paula Walsh, established Turning Point in 1986 to offer humanistic and integrative counselling and psychotherapy services to people seeking one-to-one care, especially for bereavement, trauma and relationship challenges. Then the Training Institute began to offer full educational training courses for people interested in becoming counsellors and psychotherapists in 2001.

Turning Point is dedicated to advancing and developing psychotherapy studies in Ireland, encompassing educational training, clinical practice, research, supervision, and to set a benchmark of excellence commensurate with similar, internationally acclaimed, institutes of psychotherapy. The validation of our four-year level 9 MSc course in Integrative Counselling and Psychotherapy by University College Cork since 2014 has opened up a new phase in the development of Turning Point, and offers new vistas and opportunities for innovative research and educational initiatives and collaborations. TPI is presently in the process of establishing a new 2-year Masters in Integrative Counselling and Psychotherapy Research which will be validated and awarded by UCC.

Submission

Please note that for TPI, as part of the IAHIP, ICP and the EAIP – humanistic integrative psychotherapy modality in psychotherapy clinical practice – there is a very distinct difference between the definitions of ‘counsellor’ and ‘psychotherapist’.

To explain what TPI means by ‘psychotherapist’, please see the following:

At TPI we do not teach one particular model of integration, but rather support our candidates in the process of integration itself. This approach to integration cultivates an ability to communicate through different modalities, and to have an openness and curiosity about the essential elements in any therapeutic process. Cognisant of the socio-political, cultural and historical environment in which we live, the TPI integrative approach proposes an open and fluid framework in which the practitioner-researcher becomes aware of the importance of subjectivity, reflexivity, their own life and experience, and their own worldview; and how that necessarily affects how they interact in the world. Learning how to use oneself creatively and effectively as a psychotherapist in clinical practice is familiar to accredited psychotherapists, and this requires years of practical, experiential and clinical training, as well as personal psychotherapy and group process work, together with in-depth academic education, and ongoing CPD work.

By contract, becoming a ‘counsellor’ is an entirely different and less rigorous process. Counselling typically deals with immediate critical issues in a client’s life such as anxiety, work related stress etc.

Psychotherapy, on the other hand, while dealing with immediate critical issues, also looks at deeper, more long-term issues that are affecting the client’s life, focusing on the influences that shape present distress such as childhood experiences, family relationships, grief and loss etc.

Directors

Kay Conroy, RGN, DIP. Psychosynthesis Psychotherapy (London)
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TPI Answers to Minister's Questions:

TPI wishes to address the specific issues raised by the Minister in the Appendix 1 Department of Health Public Consultation notice as follows:

Whether the professions of counsellor and psychotherapist ought to be subject to State regulation

TPI passionately believe that statutory regulation is essential for the furtherance of our professions. Without regulation, the clients who engage with counselling and psychotherapy services in Ireland have no way of knowing that they are meeting properly educated and clinically trained professionals whenever they meet a 'counsellor' or a 'psychotherapist'. Rarely do people realise the difference between these two terms, which are generally used interchangeably. This needs to change. As noted above, there are distinct differences between the definitions of 'counsellor' and 'psychotherapist'. In TPI we provide a four-year intensive experiential training for people who wish to become psychotherapists: this includes 140 hours of personal therapy, 278 hours of personal and group process work / therapy as well as 298 hours of tutor-directed academic study and rigorous supervision and monitoring across the academic and clinical programme of study. In addition, TPI candidates can contribute significantly to the growing professions of research in psychotherapy in Ireland at an academic level. TPI students have undertaken these Masters level studies since 2001 and TPI is at the forefront of academic research in psychotherapy in Ireland (UCC has validated a new two-year part-time MSc in Integrative Counselling and Psychotherapy Research due to be launched early in 2017. A Doctoral programme in Psychotherapy is also envisaged.)

Ought these professions be regulated under the Health and Social Care Professional Act 2005?

Yes.

Would it be appropriate to regulate one or two professions under one registration board?

These two professions are fundamentally different, so it would not be appropriate to regulate them under one regulation board.. The professional bodies for Psychotherapy Accreditation in Ireland, such as ICP, IAHIP and IACP, have an obligation to clarify the innate difference between these two distinct professions. Therefore TPI recommends that consideration be given to the establishment of two registration boards in this instance, as it is very different to other professions, such as physiotherapist or occupational therapist.

What is the appropriate level of "grand parenting" qualifications to be set for existing practitioners having regard to QQI Awards standards?

The Accrediting bodies will have addressed the appropriate level of 'grand parenting'.

What are the appropriate level of qualifications to be set for future applicants for registration having regard to QI Awards standards?

TPI recommends that 'Counsellor' is Level 8 (or even Level 7) and 'Psychotherapist' is Level 9 of the QQI Awards standards.

What are the titles that ought to be protected for the exclusive use of registrants?

The titles of 'Counsellor' and 'Psychotherapist' should be protected as separate and distinct, for the exclusive use of registrants. TPI cannot over-emphasise the importance for the proper development of the professions of both counselling and psychotherapy in Ireland that the titles of 'Counsellor' and 'Psychotherapist', properly defined, are recognised as entirely different with separate and clear boundaries in terms of the understanding of these terms. This is of primary importance for people who seek these services across Ireland. We must ensure that there is no longer any ambiguity in this regard.

Finally, TPI wishes the Minister and his Department well in this consultation process which is of such immense importance for the people of Ireland as well as for the potential development of these professions throughout the country.

Signed:

Kay Conroy

Programme Director

On behalf of Turning Point Institute Faculty

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