

Taoiseach backs regulation of counselling and psychotherapy

The Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP) has welcomed the imminent amendment of the current Health and Social Care Professionals Bill 2005 to include the regulation of counselling and psychotherapy in Ireland. According to a nationwide study undertaken by Behaviour & Attitudes for the IACP, eight out of ten (79%) Irish people think that you need a qualification to practise as a psychotherapist. In fact, until now there has been no state regulation in the area and anyone could set up and start treating patients.

Mr Naoise Kelly, National Director of the IACP, recognises the importance of the amendment:

“The IACP has been increasingly worried that lack of regulation is putting clients at risk and potentially giving the professions of counselling and psychotherapy a bad name. This amendment is a very important development. State regulation of the professions will protect the public and maintain the highest possible standards of care. There is nothing to prevent someone doing a three-week course in counselling or psychotherapy and hanging a sign outside their door. An individual is not qualified to deal with sensitive and potentially complex issues after such a course.”

Mr Dan Neville TD, President for the Irish Association of Suicidology, has been campaigning for these changes over the last number of years.

“I have been pushing for psychotherapists and counsellors to be included on the list of designated professions under the new legislation. It is critical that the situation is addressed in the new Health and Social Care Professionals Bill, to avoid vulnerable people being put at risk by unqualified counsellors or psychotherapists who are not properly trained. IACP research shows that most Irish people presume a qualification is required to practice as a psychotherapist. But this has not been the case. The Taoiseach has confirmed to me that the Health and Social Care Professionals (Amendment) Bill will be published and introduced by the Government in the near future”, said Mr Neville.

In the absence of state regulation the IACP has set professional standards and regulated its members for the past 30 years. The Association represents more than 3,500 members nationwide.

“Members of the public may not be aware of the levels of qualification required to be an IACP accredited counsellor or psychotherapist. On average, it takes 5 to 6 years to achieve accreditation as an IACP registered counsellor or psychotherapist. Our accredited members must also fulfill further requirements, including ongoing professional development, to maintain their accreditation”, said Mr Kelly.

The IACP provides an online directory of qualified & accredited counsellors and psychotherapists covering every county in Ireland at www.iacp.ie.

ENDS

About IACP:

Established in 1981, the 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. Representing both the interests of clients and practitioners (over 3,500 nationwide), IACP provides a telephone referral helpline, an information service; and an online counsellor / psychotherapist / supervisor directory. IACP is a registered Charity (CHY 6615).

More information is available from the IACP website: www.iacp.ie.