

# Enhancements to the current voluntary regulatory system

These enhancements are a set of proposed improvements designed to strengthen public protection, consistency and transparency within the existing Professional Standards Authority (PSA) Voluntary Accredited Register (VAR) regulatory framework for counselling and psychotherapy.

Together, these enhancements outline how UKCP and the wider VAR community can improve the functioning, coherence and accessibility of the voluntary system: by raising expectations for training and professional standards, improving public understanding of registration and complaints routes, strengthening cross-register collaboration and increasing the safeguards available where statutory levers are absent.

While the proposals set out a clear direction for strengthening public protection, some enhancements depend on cooperation from external bodies and therefore fall partly outside UKCP's direct control.

As a collective package, the voluntary enhancements will be used to guide UKCP's ongoing regulatory development, inform cross-sector collaboration and set clearer expectations for safe and ethical practice within a non-statutory environment, supporting practitioners, training providers and the public alike.

## 1. **Shared enforcement register infrastructure**

Develop a strengthened, sector-wide approach across Voluntary Accredited Registers to improve the information sharing about practitioners' fitness to practise and those who have been struck off or assessed as a risk to the public, so individuals cannot move between voluntary registers unnoticed.

## 2. **Entry standards and oversight**

Establish harmonised, transparent minimum entry and training standards across Voluntary Accredited Registers to address concerns about variable quality and its impact on public protection. These standards should embed expectations of anti-oppressive practice, cultural sensitivity and accessibility and set clearer requirements for training providers on suitability, gatekeeping and oversight.

## 3. **Public awareness and communication**

Provide clearer, more accessible guidance to help the public understand titles, accreditation and complaints routes, reducing confusion within the voluntary system. All public-facing information should meet accessible communication standards, including plain English, inclusive examples and alternative formats and clear instructions on how to verify a practitioner's registration

## 4. **Dialogue with insurers**

Encourage insurance providers to better recognise PSA Voluntary Accredited Registers so that insurance norms support safer practice across the voluntary system. This includes working with insurers to strengthen understanding of the benefits of accredited registration and the risks

associated with insuring practitioners who are not on a Voluntary Accredited Register, helping to align insurance expectations with public protection standards.

5. **Removal from register monitoring and follow up**

Enhance UKCP's complaints and enforcement process by carrying out follow-up checks on individuals removed from the register, and, where there is evidence they continue to practise, take appropriate action – including liaison with relevant bodies to safeguard the public.