

In September 2012, I saw an announcement on the UKCP LinkedIn group inviting people to set up a psychotherapy club and this idea really appealed to me. I was on a training course and keen to meet more experienced therapists, share ideas, learn from them and be inspired. I responded saying that I was interested in a Norfolk Psychotherapy Club and a fellow counsellor whom I had never met, Liz Jenkins, replied. We had a chat via Skype and agreed we would hold an inaugural meeting and see what happened.

Buzz and energy

We decided to hold our club meetings in Dereham, the geographical heart of Norfolk, and a fab pub, The George Hotel, kindly agreed to let us host the meeting in their conservatory. We got the notices out through UKCP and our own networks. Twelve people came to the first meeting, and everyone agreed that there was an incredible buzz and energy that we would take away with us. I was so excited by the diversity in the room – different modalities, experience, cultures and approaches. Even the introductions were a learning curve!

Liz Jenkins, who launched the club with me, says: 'Being at the start of a new regional 'meet up' and seeing the beginnings of a



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Trish is a coach, coach supervisor and integrative psychotherapeutic counsellor. Over the past 25 years, she has been involved in communications and public relations across the public, private and voluntary sectors, culminating in a director of the board position in one of the largest NHS trusts in the country. Trish retrained as a coach while still in the NHS, helping staff manage significant organisational change and emotional upheaval. Wishing to continue to work at a deeper relational depth, she then qualified as a counsellor and now manages a private practice.

Norfolk Psychotherapy Club

Founders Martin Pollecoff, Liz Jenkins and Trish Turner explain how the Norfolk Psychotherapy Club offers exciting new opportunities for psychotherapists, psychotherapists in training, students and other mental health specialists to network, be creative, have fun, flirt, drink, eat, learn, socialise and supervise. Whether in a pub over drinks, in the kitchen over cooking pots or for a talk in someone's front room, all are welcomed in this creative new space for the psychotherapy community

new group unfold is very exciting. This is a group of people varying in experience who have so much to offer.'

An inclusive approach

As a group, we agreed that the purpose of the club would be to 'share ideas and learn from each other to provide continuous professional development'. We decided that although this would be a UKCP meeting we would be inclusive of others. The meeting is therefore open to anyone 'qualified to diploma level (or working towards it) and is open and happy to share'. We set up our own LinkedIn group with the support of UKCP and invited people to join, find out about meetings and share views.

Reaching capacity

The next meeting, with a topic of 'How do you make a living from being a therapist?',

was a sell-out. Thirty people attended and we nearly reached the point of turning people away as we had reached capacity for the conservatory. I don't think we managed to answer the question about earning a living, but it was great to see so many people from our area and to network and exchange views and ideas. Since then, we have had a meeting on the topic of 'The present state of research in psychotherapy and how it affects us directly' and a further meeting will be held in the autumn on the subject of 'Fear and anxiety from an existential viewpoint.'

Liz says: 'We have so far met three times and a good core group is beginning to become established. I am excited to see how this group takes shape and how it will move forward.' Hermione Brown, a student psychotherapeutic counsellor who has

The primary purpose of the Norfolk Psychotherapy Club is companionship or, to use a nineteenth century word, 'fellowship'.

For the most part, our members work alone. Of course, they see a supervisor or they might even have a peer supervision group, but how often do we get to sit with other therapists and simply chat about our work? UKCP represents over 70 member organisations, so we have members from many tribes, yet we seldom get an opportunity to meet each other – even if they live in the next street.

When we started we made three stipulations:

- 1 The person proposing the club must be a UKCP member
- 2 They could charge up to £10 to cover expenses – snacks, drinks, etc
- 3 The club would be open to anyone who worked as a psychotherapist or counsellor or within mental health, so members of other organisations could be invited




Top tips

- 1 Don't do it on your own. If you can, find a small group of people who will take it in turns to do the admin, bookings etc, as it can be quite time consuming.
- 2 Find a venue big enough (and free or cheap) to deal with growing numbers. Make sure it has a door to ensure confidentiality. Even if you're not discussing clinical matters, others may perceive that you are being indiscreet.
- 3 Be prepared to manage group dynamics. With any group you will get conflict and disagreement, individuals dominating the conversation and shy people who need encouragement. Counsellors and psychotherapists are no different!
- 4 Make good use of the rich vein of knowledge and experience in the group for presentations and topics of discussion.
- 5 Do your marketing. Use the UKCP communications team, LinkedIn groups and email to reach out as far as possible and to keep in touch in between meetings.

been helping to organise the meetings, says: 'It's been great meeting and talking to established counsellors at the events and gaining insight from them.'

Getting organised

It is clear that our current venue is not going to be suitable as our numbers grow, and our discussions have the potential to become more clinical. We are therefore exploring the possibility of hiring a venue and charging a nominal fee to members to attend. One of our group has kindly offered to be treasurer to ensure that all is accounted for correctly. Everyone is keen to meet and we have a different facilitator each time. We now need to find a way to share the burden of the work behind the scenes. 

If you are interested in finding out more about the Norfolk Psychotherapy Club, please contact: Dr Trish Turner: trish@trishturner.co.uk Liz Jenkins: lizz03@hotmail.co.uk