

Looking Back!

Chair's Annual Review of the work of UKAGP, 2020-2021

Dear Community

It is with great pleasure that I share my reflections on UKAGP over the past year, and point to some exciting developments that are in process. On the one hand, this has been a year of disappointment, as planned opportunities for contact and dialogue (e.g. UKAGP Organising Committee Residential, EAGT General Board) and events (UKAGP, EAGT and Gestalt Research Conferences) have either happened online, or been postponed until 2022.

On the other hand I have been so heartened by our community's commitment to come together for contact and dialogue online, to provide training and CPD programmes online, and of course, to see clients and supervisees online. Such changes have involved a significant amount of dedication and work to ensure that the quality and excitement of the Gestalt growth experience is sustained.

In 2020 I reported our intention to build a stronger Organising Committee, supported by an equally strong network of motivated and committed volunteers, so that we can work together to respond more promptly and efficiently to issues emerging from conference and other challenges as they arise. We have worked hard to sustain this momentum, to find ways of staying connected to you, and to support dialogue and connection between all our members.

I am particularly excited about the following developments:

- Our newsletter has evolved into an enlivening and engaging mode of communication with you. Thanks to Piotr's reach to colleagues in other Gestalt organisations, our contributors have represented and connected us to colleagues and events across the globe in a deeply personal and stimulating way. It is the interconnectedness of the personal and political that first drew me to Gestalt, and it is this potent mix that underpins our newsletter.
- The personal-political dimension also underpinned our online community day and AGM in June 2020. Sixty-four people attended a half day of free CPD ably facilitated by Di Hodgson, and our Community Meeting and AGM followed on seamlessly from the morning's small group discussions. The probing and rich contributions from the community gave us a clear steer towards our Autumn Conference on the theme of 'Speaking Out', facilitated by Gaie Houston, Toni Gilligan and Di Hodgson. This, in turn, supported us to reconsider how we might organise our Annual Meeting on July 18th to enable more opportunities for shared reflection and dialogue. We were also clear about the direction you wanted us to take when identifying the theme for this

years' conference, 'Healing Dialogues' which took place in London on 18th September, 2021. Sixty people attended in person. It was an engaging and appropriately challenging day. It became abundantly clear that there is much more work to do to develop our capacity for inclusive practice via healing dialogues.

- As an OC we have begun to clarify and expand the benefits of UKAGP membership. Some of these are detailed below.
- We have sought to enhance communication within and across the organisation in the following ways:

We introduced Gaggle as a way of connecting all members (trainees, associates, full and joint EAGT members) with the aim of supporting information sharing and dialogue. More than 90 UKAGP members have joined Gaggle to date, and there is a regular flow of dialogue on a range of issues. We hope this will develop over time. Marc Williams offered to set up a special interest group for everyone interested in group facilitation. This group has now met twice and I am very grateful to Marc for his initiative and drive to make this happen. This is a great example of how you as members can contribute to our community.

We have established a Gestalt Leaders Group. This group is made up of the leaders of Training Institutes and is a forum for sharing ideas and challenges, and also discussing practical issues, such as trends in recruitment. We are taking a field emergent approach to this process and currently building trust between us. We have agreed on a schedule of monthly meetings for the coming year.

We are mindful that trainees represent a significant proportion of our membership. Liz Smears, our Trainee Officer has reached out in different ways to build a community of trainees across institutes. Unfortunately, the process has been more challenging than expected. We look forward to hearing suggestions from those present at the Annual Meeting not only as to the need and viability of such a group, but also how to move this forward and make it happen.

We are also keen to support the development of a community of trainers across institutes. Adam Kincel as Training Officer has begun to liaise with Gestalt trainers and hopes to develop this further over the coming year.

- As promised at the 2020 Annual Meeting, we have organised a seminar series to connect us as a national community. We were delighted that Malcolm Parlett offered to facilitate the inaugural seminar on the 21st July, 2021.

Adam Kinzel kindly offered to facilitate our second seminar, as part of our Annual meeting on Sunday 26th September.

- Charlotte Hegley, Social Media Officer, regularly posts on Twitter and LinkedIn. We are now developing our Facebook presence. We would really like more of our community to be represented in our posts.
- I have been active in the National Stakeholder's Campaign Group, representing Gestalt as one of a number of modalities that do not meet the current criteria for NICE validation as an effective treatment for anxiety and depression. We have gained support from UKCP and a number of MPs who wrote to challenge NICE and support our campaign for a wider range of research methodologies to be validated.

We are arguing for clients' voices, experiences and evaluations to be taken into account as valuable practice-based evidence of efficacy. We are but one of several modalities that can neither afford nor ethically comply with the process of Randomised Controlled Trials, the so-called 'Gold Standard' research and the basis of NICE decision-making at present.

Mindful of the increased prevalence of anxiety and depression, we are now creatively thinking of ways we can take this campaign out for wider discussion and engagement with the media and general public.

- Last year, Christine Stevens and I submitted a research proposal to EAGT to support the development of a Practice-Research Network, and thereby add to the practice-based evidence base for Gestalt. Unfortunately, we were not successful.
- Christine Stevens has recently given up her role as research officer. I will continue to work on ways to support and grow our collective capacity to write Gestalt case studies for publication. I am currently working on a paper for the EAGT Research Conference in Hamburg in September 2022.

As a committee we have specific roles which need to be filled, e.g. conference and publicity, but we tend to discuss and finalise specific roles post conference, once we are clear about the relationship between the skills and interests of members of the Organising Committee on the one hand, and where the wider community wants us to focus our energies, on the other. I look forward to our dialogue on Sunday, 26th September 2021.

Warm wishes to you all,

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