

## UKCP Chair and Trustee Elections 2025 – Questions for written responses

### Sue Parker Hall – chair candidate

1. Should the government introduce statutory regulation, to what extent do you think that it will a) protect the public; b) boost the perception of psychotherapy as a robust discipline; c) lead to more opportunities for psychotherapeutic professionals?

UKCP is actively exploring statutory regulation, with Jon in consultation with the PSA. I have never had a strong opinion about this, seeing both benefits and risks.

On the positive side, regulation could increase public trust in psychotherapy and open up more opportunities in public services and healthcare settings. Title protection would be a significant gain, ensuring only qualified professionals can call themselves psychotherapists, addressing a long-standing concern.

However, there are valid concerns. Would regulation impose a medicalised, standardised model that doesn't reflect psychotherapy's diverse modalities and relational nature? Could it limit practitioner autonomy, forcing therapists into frameworks unsuited to certain approaches or clients?

Regulation doesn't guarantee ethical practice—misconduct occurs in all regulated professions. UKCP already has a strong ethical framework, rigorous training standards, and a functioning complaints system. Would external oversight enhance these protections or simply introduce more cost and bureaucracy, making training less accessible?

There's also the issue of independence. Regulation might protect members from arbitrary or politically motivated sanctions, but it could also subject psychotherapy to shifting government policies.

If elected chair, and statutory regulation is offered, I would ensure careful consideration of the offer and a full member referendum—and I would honour the majority vote. Our future in this regard has to be shaped by us, collectively.

2. How will candidates ensure UKCP has the diversity necessary for good therapy to exist?

UKCP is already a diverse and welcoming community, made up of 10 distinct colleges, each with its own approach, organisational members, and trainees.

But psychotherapy cannot be open to everyone—to maintain quality and integrity, there must be clear entry criteria, academic expectations, and fitness-to-practice assessments. Not everyone can train, not everyone will pass—our profession is built on merit and equality of opportunity, regardless of identity markers.

Let's be realistic—the biggest barrier to entry is cost. The high price of training, combined with the need to take time away from work, family, and personal commitments, makes it inaccessible for many. We must find ways to make training more affordable, possibly extending training over longer periods to allow trainees to earn while they learn. Many OMs now offer stepping-off points—certificates, diplomas, accreditation stages—helping to make training more flexible.

But embedding a political ideology into every aspect of UKCP is not the solution to improving diversity. A current pressing issue that UKCP faces is how to comply with the law on the issue of free speech since the Forstater ruling and the James Esses case; arguably an EDI-BIIDE approach can all too easily appear to be incompatible with our members rights to hold gender critical or race critical views. We simply cannot afford for UKCP to risk repeating the bruising experiences of last year, by facing another unnecessary and potentially crippling legal case against us on this issue. Instead of fostering inclusivity, EDI-BIIDE risks standardising psychotherapy into something unrecognisable. We cannot allow one group to impose its political beliefs on everyone—true diversity means creating a space for all views, whether left-wing, right-wing, or anywhere in between.

That's my position, and I hope you'll support me in protecting psychotherapy as a profession that values rigour, inclusivity, and independence. Let's work together to keep it that way.

3. The board presented the UKCP three-year strategy to members at the end of last year. How do you propose to support the organisation to deliver on that strategy?

I respect much of the spirit of the 'Psychotherapy in a Changing World' strategy for 24-27. It reflects a thorough review of UKCP's role in psychotherapy, and I fully support the multi-dimensional approach of its four pillars—Quality, Membership, Voice, and Organisation—with their clearly defined aims. I also want to acknowledge the significant work led by Pippa and John in shaping this document.

However, my concern lies in how it will be implemented particularly the plan to embed EDI-BIIDE across all four pillars.

Many members may not support the imposition of a political belief system onto what should remain a neutral and legally sound ethical framework. Furthermore, it may not align with the philosophy or practice of all modalities. The proposed EDI-BIIDE format risks deepening division and inequality instead of reducing them.

This is because mandating compliance risks increasing complaints from members, colleges, and training institutions who believe it conflicts with their legally protected beliefs under the Equality Act 2010 and Articles 9 and 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. They may challenge UKCP through legal avenues, exposing the organisation to significant legal and reputational risks.

To prevent this, I propose:

- pausing implementation until legal guidance is sought.
- the seeking of independent legal and insurer advice to assess risks.
- ensuring political neutrality to avoid ideological bias.

Addressing social issues is important, but it must be done in a legally and ethically balanced manner, without coercion or unintended consequences and without distorting psychotherapy in any way. I don't believe the current Board's proposals will achieve this.

4. What would be your strategy for raising the profile of UKCP?

Once we have restored stability and trust, we can focus on raising UKCP's profile as a leading voice in psychotherapy and mental health. This must be a collective effort, working together to increase visibility, credibility, and influence.

We must be more present in the media. UKCP has missed opportunities to speak up for psychotherapy. We should push back against criticism and comment on key government policies affecting mental health. Engaging critically and constructively signals our expertise, shapes public debate, and enhances visibility.

We also need to strengthen our social media presence to reach wider audiences. UKCP's podcast and YouTube channel should be more dynamic and engaging. Regular interviews, expert discussions, and guidance on psychotherapy and key mental health issues would add real value. The 'My Psychotherapy Career' series is a great start—we should build on it with fresh content.

Engaging with mental health influencers and podcasters would further expand UKCP's reach and voice.

But raising our profile isn't just about promotion—it's also about attraction. The best way to showcase UKCP is through the excellence of our psychotherapists. Their impact and expertise are our strongest endorsement. When people see our high standards and the trust we build with clients, they seek us out.

We should also celebrate success. A high-profile event honouring contributions to psychotherapy would generate positive press and engage our professional community.

Finally, UKCP must be visible across private practice, the NHS, and charities, ensuring we lead conversations wherever psychotherapy is discussed.

As spokesperson for the UKCP Board, I will do all I can to lead this effort with the board's support.

By working together, we can ensure UKCP is recognised not just as an accrediting body, but as a trusted leader in psychotherapy and mental health. Let's make that happen.

5. What is your view of SCoPEd and its impact on the psychotherapy profession?

SCoPEd is a commitment we would keep under review.

6. How would you ensure the safety, wellbeing and rights of trans and other gender non-conforming UKCP members and members of the public?

I would rely on our ethical framework, the Equality Act 2010 and any other pertinent legal caselaw.

7. How can training environments (teaching and placement settings) in psychotherapy foster a multi-partisan approach that encourages diverse perspectives, critical thinking, and open exploration without fear of judgement or exclusion while balancing the need for psychological safety and mutual respect?

By developing a robust free speech culture and policy.

8. How would the candidates balance their own views on social and other issues with the pluralistic stance of UKCP?

I don't believe UKCP is pluralistic. They are not currently respecting the views, or allowing the voices of many members. As you know, I don't support embedding EDI-BIIDE into every aspect of our work and many members don't either. If I am elected UKCP will be truly pluralistic with a robust free speech culture and policy. Members are free to their political views and I respect that right. But we can't have one section of our membership imposing their ideology wholesale on another. If voted in, I will have a mandate to give the OM's the choice of how much or how little of this ideology to embed in their trainings so long as that integration is congruent with the UKCP Code of Ethics and Good Practice.

9. What's your strategy for growing the membership and income for UKCP?

Rebuild the trust in UKCP. This could be started by ensuring free, fair and transparent elections for any positions on the board. Keep the quality of our training and standards high; attraction is often better than promotion. I would need to familiarise myself with what is currently being done and probably take expert advice

10. Strategy Pillar 1: 'addressing any identified disparities for those who are being trained, those who complete training and those who access training'. The major disparity lies in the massive personal cost of training, which excludes a lot of people. What kind of action do you envisage to address this disparity?

extending training over longer periods to allow trainees to earn while they learn. Many OMs now offer stepping-off points—certificates, diplomas, accreditation stages—helping to make training more flexible. Seeking talented advice.