



# SCoPEd

[SCoPEd](#) (Scope of Practice and Education) is a project to set out the training requirements and practice standards for counselling and psychotherapy.

Caroline Jesper and Jens Bakewell of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) answer a range of questions, which we list here, with some of the information they provided.

## ***Why is BACP not seeking government regulation of the profession rather than going down the route of SCoPEd?***

Going back to 2012, statutory regulation was being discussed by the government, with the then Health Professions Council as the regulatory body. However, there were some difficulties reaching consensus on the professional standards.

Following a general election, the idea of statutory regulation (which would always be a decision to be made by Parliament rather than by a profession) was dropped, but BACP had realised that it made sense to prepare for the future possibility of this being raised again.

The Professional Standards Authority's current consultation has highlighted a desire for shared standards with different entry points for professions, together with an 'enhanced regulation model', which ranks professions by risk. The profession of counselling and psychotherapy is seen by the PSA as high risk in this model. SCoPEd again helps us prepare.

***Would it not be better for BACP to align with the European Certificate of Psychotherapy (which is held by around 120,000 psychotherapists across 41 European countries) – or indeed the World Council for Psychotherapy – rather than having SCoPEd?***

Given that different countries have their own legislation governing psychotherapy, it is not as easy as it might seem to work outside one's own territory. But BACP – which already has international recognition – may well link in with these wider initiatives in future. And SCoPEd will help it do so, and help individual BACP members to apply for the European Certificate of Psychotherapy if they so wish.

***What does SCoPEd mean for students, qualified practitioners and accredited members? Might their work so far be wasted?***

The SCoPEd project has been working hard to map existing training and entry points, as well as what happens post-qualification in terms of both continuing professional development (CPD) and experience with clients.

While it is not yet possible to say exactly where individuals will fit within the SCoPEd framework (which is currently in draft form, the next iteration being expected in autumn 2021), the aim is very much for flexibility and for freedom of movement between columns as practitioners gain knowledge, skills and experience – and for no individual's work on professional development being wasted.

There are [case studies](#) on BACP's website that may provide some information on what individuals might expect that the SCoPEd framework will mean for them.

***What is the difference between a counsellor and a psychotherapist?***

These are not the only two titles used in the profession – e.g. there are also ecotherapists. Titles are often used very differently by different people.

While titles were used in an earlier iteration of the SCoPEd framework, they have since been removed. They are likely to go back in at the final stage, but only after all partners have agreed on them.

The SCoPEd columns are not about what you are allowed to do, but simply reflect the minimum standards that training at that level provides. BACP recognises that both CPD and even experience from prior careers can mean we can practise competently in columns that go beyond where we technically ‘sit’.

Again, the framework aims to be versatile, not restrictive, so long as practitioners are working within their competence, as required by the *Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions*.

***Why are clients’ views absent from SCoPEd, and why are poorly qualified therapists allowed to damage clients?***

BACP cares greatly about ensuring that clients receive the best possible service, and are protected from people working as therapists who are not competent to do so ethically – hence its [Ask Kathleen](#) service, which provides confidential guidance and information to members of the public on what to do if they have any concerns about their therapy or therapist. However, BACP has jurisdiction only over its own members.

While SCoPEd is not a client-facing framework (instead focused on core training), it does aim to enable potential clients to make more informed choices about which therapist they work with, but enabling them to understand better the often confusing array of different qualification routes.

Moreover, if SCoPEd does come into existence, the new governance framework will include ‘experts by experience’ to bring in clients’ voices. And the National Psychological Professionals Workforce Group is also looking at service-user and carer involvement, with the goal of producing a good-practice guide on this important topic.

***Will SCoPEd bring more opportunities for paid work for counsellors, especially in an environment where CBT therapists with BABCP [British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies] accreditation appear to be favoured by insurance companies, referral agents and employee assistance programmes (EAPS)?***

SCoPEd will support BACP’s work to advocate for paid work for all registered counsellors, by raising awareness of what they have to offer.

[Counselling Tutor Podcast 158](#) was a special edition in which Rory spoke with Kris Ambler (Workforce Lead) at BACP about how the professional body is seeking to enhance employment for counsellors and psychotherapists.

### ***What advice does BACP have for people considering training in counselling?***

The most important thing is to find the right course for you as an individual. SCoPEd should help clarify the possible routes and options, so supporting this process, e.g. by making it clear that a placement is required (and so helping people not to sign up unwittingly to courses that will not allow them to join a professional body). BACP has generally received positive messages from training providers on SCoPEd.

Key aspects to consider when looking at different counselling training courses are:

- availability of an introduction course to give you a flavour of what to expect before you have to commit to a longer and more expensive one
- in what setting and with what type of clients you think you would like to work
- which modality fits best with your own values
- how much different courses cost, in relation to what can you afford to spend on your training
- geographical availability (since training will likely return to being face-to-face in due course, when COVID-19 allows)
- opportunity to talk to past students for their views, e.g. at an open day.

### ***Will the SCoPEd proposal go ahead if it is not supported by BACP members?***

The most recent [survey of BACP members](#) on SCoPEd showed that 46% of respondents support the overall project, with 31% neutral and 21% against. However, with regard to the current iteration of the SCoPEd proposal, the figures are more equal – with 34% in favour, 31% neutral and 31% against.

Engagement with members is continuing, and BACP is seeking to address members' concerns during the next stage – and feedback continues to be welcomed.

One concern has related to whether SCoPEd will restrict members' work, yet its aim is really the opposite. Another questions whether it's part of a move by BACP to make more money from accreditation – but there is currently a review of the accreditation process that aims to make accreditation more accessible, including financially.

***How will the SCoPEd project address diversity, e.g. for students with learning disabilities? And does it favour those who can afford to pay for more expensive courses?***

This is something that is very much in the awareness of those working on SCoPEd, following feedback from members, and there will be an impact assessment carried out through the SCoPEd Oversight Committee, which includes the CEO of each membership body and has the role of leading on and agreeing strategic decisions in relation to the project.

Ensuring fair access to the profession is critically important for trainees and clients and a key part of BACP's Equality and Diversity Strategy. The challenge is to develop and support pathways that are affordable and realistic opportunities for progression. It is intended that – in time – this will help to significantly change the demographic of therapists at those levels that are currently very unrepresentative and difficult to enter unless you do the 'right' training.

***What do the columns represent in terms of competences?***

You can see the [current framework](#) on BACP's website.

***Where would someone stand in the SCoPEd framework if a person has no formal qualifications but has a wealth experience, e.g. a drug counsellor who has life experiences that lead them to wish to help others?***

This highlights the range of people who may currently use the term 'counsellor' without being qualified as such. SCoPEd will raise awareness of what qualifications a qualified counsellor has. While it will not be illegal to call yourself a counsellor if you aren't qualified in line with SCoPEd, it may become harder to justify your choice to do so.

Thus, other helpers who currently use the title ‘counsellor’ but are not qualified as such may find their (also important) roles being renamed in a way that will help service users make an informed decision on who is best placed to support them.

***Will current students of counselling and psychotherapy and newly qualified practitioners expect to be able to work with both adults and children in both agencies and private practice?***

For adults, yes – so long as their training meets the SCoPEd requirements. However, SCoPEd doesn’t cover working with children – it might be extended to do so in future, but this is not definite currently. The Association of Child Psychotherapists has recently joined the SCoPEd partnership, but only because they work with young adults aged 18–25.

It is recommended that people who wish to work with children and young people consult the [BACP competence framework](#) for this client group.

## **Clarifications and Corrections**

*BACP have issued the following statement clarifying the reference made in this podcast to counselling and psychotherapy being considered high risk by the PSA:*

The PSA has not yet conducted a risk assessment of their accredited professions, and we would like to apologise for the error in communication.

What we intended to convey was that the PSA are publicly committed to taking a risk assessment approach and that looking at the current list of voluntary accredited registers (not statutory regulated), it is quite possible that counselling and psychotherapy would be seen as higher risk when compared to some other occupations.

The PSA's approach to risk assessment for statutory and voluntary registers was published in 2016, and you can read more on their website. You can also read about the SCoPEd project here: <https://www.bacp.co.uk/about-us/advancing-the-profession/scoped/>