

APP's response to BPC's Statement on Homosexuality, PP NOW, 2020

A Public Apology to our LGBT+ Communities from the Chair on Behalf of the Association for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in the NHS

We welcome the BPC Statement on Homosexuality as a commitment to our taking a further, important step forwards, continuing the process begun in 2011. Then, the BPC issued a Position Statement that said "*The British Psychoanalytic Council does not accept that a homosexual orientation is evidence of disturbance of the mind or in development*". That statement made clear the BPC's opposition to discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Today, as the APP embarks on a new phase in its own history by becoming an accrediting organisation as an MI within the BPC, we wish to signal our support for this through our own Public Apology to our LGBT+ Communities.

Freud was clear that homosexuality was not an illness, and we recognise this also as an incredibly progressive attitude for his time. The more progressive elements within psychoanalysis have continued to advocate this position. We should not underestimate the courage of pioneers within psychoanalysis in the early 20th C., and allies such as intellectuals in the Bloomsbury group in Britain, who opposed regressive and dangerous ideas of the time. Within medical opinion, for example, degeneracy theory held sway. That first generation who established psychoanalysis on the intellectual map had a bold and more inclusive vision for a humanity less trammelled by such repressive ideologies. They were well-deserving of society's gratitude for their stance.

However, in the course of the middle decades of the 20th C., in which psychoanalysis sought to establish itself also as a medical discipline, there were some in the psychoanalytic community who advocated a different position. We know that medical psychoanalysts in America played a significant role ensuring homosexuality was included in the psychiatric diagnostic nomenclature, and in opposing its removal in the 1970s. In the UK too, we know that during the public policy debates around decriminalising homosexuality in the 1960s, there were some medical psychoanalysts and psychoanalytic psychotherapists who argued publicly that same sex desire was unnatural, a perversion, and a marker for psychopathology. This was harmful and wrong.

We agree with the BPC that this stigmatising of same sex desire and non-conforming gender expression within our own discipline has been damaging. Regrettably, it is the case that the LGBT+ communities have suffered in common as a result of undertaking harmful psychoanalytic therapies. Our psychoanalytic institutions have represented and treated their sexuality and gender as evidence of a disorder, and encouraged them to mistrust their own feelings. As a consequence of these pathologizing practices, gay men and lesbian women, and bisexual and trans men and women, were denied opportunity to train in psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy. This has been painful and hurtful for all the LGBT+ individuals concerned.

All of this, as the BPC Statement acknowledges, has been the case in the past. But it has also resulted in an enduring legacy of institutionalised prejudice within the culture of psychoanalysis in Britain and internationally. We are only now beginning fully to appreciate the extent of the loss involved. The BPC envisages that historically we could have welcomed a far more inclusive and diverse range of contributions to the professional life of many of our psychoanalytic organisations. As we embark on

becoming one of those accrediting organisations, therefore, we accept that we have much work to do now to begin to rebuild trust, credibility and respect for our discipline with the public, and with our LGBT+ communities. We will make a start by sharing our contemporary psychoanalytic theorising and practice through our Journal, which is very different today, and by encouraging further contributions towards the de-pathologizing of homosexuality and diverse gender sensibilities from our members and more widely.

Together, with the BPC and our fellow MIs, we intend for our Apology to mark a watershed by which we can commit to rebuild our profession free from homophobia and transphobia.

On the occasion of the BPC Statement on Homosexuality, as a commitment to the future progress of our discipline, on behalf of APP as an incoming BPC MI, therefore, we:

1. Hereby also express our profound regret that it has taken so long to put aside outdated heteronormative psychoanalytic theories and practices from our past, and for more appropriate, progressive theories and practice about gender and sexuality to become adopted within curriculums, through ongoing supervision, and given proper recognition and support across our profession.
2. Hereby also express our profound regret that in the past there have been LGBT+ men and women who have been deprived of an opportunity to train or advance professionally within our training and membership institutions, and that we have excluded LGBT+ individuals from feeling fully welcome and supported to take up their places within our professional and scientific communities.

In recognising through APP's Apology that there have been these deeply problematic episodes of institutionalised injustice in our own history, we wish to make it clear that from this point on we, together with the BPC and its other Member Institutions, on behalf of the communities of psychoanalytic practice that we represent:

1. Hereby pledge to ensure that throughout our own organisation, and through the professional work of all our Registrants, we will adhere to the highest standards of non-discriminatory, non-stigmatising ethical practice with regard to supporting the flourishing of diverse fulfilling and creative expressions of gender and sexual identities and relationships.
2. Hereby pledge to ensure that we will help to provide access to training and continuing professional advancement and leadership opportunities for LGBT+ individuals, and to begin to put in place the structures needed for us to monitor and improve our diversity, so we can demonstrate progress towards becoming a more inclusive, representative, thriving psychoanalytic organisation in the 21st C.

Jeremy Clarke CBE, Chair, Association for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy

October 2020