

# History

A brief history of PSMF, PSRF, PRG and AIP In the early part of 1977 the then General Secretary of the Standing Conference for the Advancement of Counselling asked Mary Godden to set up a division for marriage counsellors within the soon-to-be-launched British Association for Counselling. Mary, however, wanted a division that consisted of more than marriage counsellors.

There were nine people at the first meeting who came from NMGC, the Catholic Marriage Advisory Council (now named Catholic Marriage Care Ltd.). The group also included a student counsellor, a family counsellor, a counsellor/doctor from the Institute of Psychosexual Medicine and a clergyman.

The newly formed division wanted to offer a forum for discussion, exploration of issues and possibly training to further knowledge of counselling people with relationship, personal or sexual issues. They wanted to interest the marriage counsellors who at that time were probably the largest group of counsellors in the country. They were also determined to encourage the membership of gay counsellors, those who worked with members of sexual minorities and those who worked with single people who wanted help with personal or relationship difficulties. They also wanted to include those who worked with families.

The British Association for Counselling was inaugurated on 19th November 1977 and on that same day the inaugural day of the provisionally entitled Personal-Sexual-Marital-Family Division was announced. The actual inauguration took place on the 4th March 1978 at Bedford College (now Regents College) attended by 150 people who came from varied backgrounds, as did the steering group. As well as marriage counsellors (NMGC and CMC) there were clergymen, Samaritans, psychotherapists, pregnancy advisors, occupational health workers, family planning workers, student counsellors, youth workers, counsellors of people with disabilities, counsellors from gay groups, community counselling agencies, the National Schizophrenia Fellowship, the Beaumont Trust, Family Centres, doctors and many more.

In the first few years the division worked hard to produce a Code of Ethics, for at that time BAC itself did not have one. They shared some first ideas for accrediting counsellors and they started a divisional newsletter. They tried many ways of interesting members-one of the quarterly Executive Committee meetings each year was open to any member of the division who wished to come-and they ran a number of workshops.

The division grew and flourished. By the end of the 1980s it was working very hard with Rugby on writing the Code of Ethics.

In 1992 it was decided that in the name of Personal Marital Sexual and Relationship, the word 'marital' was too confining, so it was changed to 'relationship'. At the same time, a new logo was launched (the 'faces' that continued to be used by the division for many years). Also in 1992 as a way of helping to support the small and fairly newly-formed RACE division, PSRF undertook to underwrite the printing and mailing costs of the RACE magazine for two years, and for that time all our members received the RACE journal in addition to the PSRF journal.

By 1995 NVQs were being developed and the committee was represented in the NVQ discussion and formulation process. Both in the newsletter and in the choice of topics for the annual training days, PSRF took its brief very seriously. The journal was themed to look at areas of work such as disability, working with children, gender dysphoria and the training days covered topics such as the family, working with children, sex in the counselling process, love and hate in the counselling process and so on. There was-and still is-a deep commitment to make the division relevant, topical and very user friendly.

In 1997 significant changes in the charity laws meant that we had to write new terms of reference and, at the same time we took the decision to change our name. Personal Relationship and

Groupwork (PRG) became our new name. Following a period of turbulence and an aborted attempt to change the name to Therapists in Private Practice, the division became involved in the process of bringing the divisions into the main body of BACP in a positive and seamless way and has lobbied-successfully-for greater communication among divisions and also between divisions and Rugby. As a result, a much clearer definition of our purpose and way forward has resulted in the current rebranding to The Association for Independent Practitioners (AIP), for that, after all, is what we are all about.

There is great awareness of the need for regional provision of training and AIP have a commitment to make training available and affordable to the widest possible group of members.

AIP actively encourages networking among its members, acknowledging that the role of the independent practitioner is often a lonely and isolated experience. Your executive team welcomes suggestions, criticisms and contact of all kinds. The team has a commitment to excellence, inclusion and development.

Compiled from the Archives, with input from Mary Godden, Sue Santi Ireson, Justine Oldfield Rowell and Margaret Akmakjian-Pitz