

First words



As I write, the country is snug under a blanket of snow and we are obsessed by news reports of Siberian weather fronts streaming in from the continent, together with associated traffic chaos – lightened slightly by footage of the odd car performing an unprompted Torvill and Dean number on an ungritted residential road.

Apparently some nine million people tuned in to the BBC news last night, no doubt oohing and aahing at countrywide reports of this much snow here and that much snow there. As I complain about this national preoccupation with the weather, I realise I am happily colluding with it as I repeatedly inspect my outdoor thermometer with one of those nifty indoor digital readouts that implies it is far too cold to do anything other than repeatedly inspect my outdoor thermometer. It reached -14.5°C last week.

But there always seem to be winners and losers. The winners seem to be the school kids ‘forced’ to stay at home, make snowmen (or is it snowpersons?) and terrorise passersby, already unsteady on their feet, with volleys of crunchy snowballs. The losers are possibly parents who need to take time off to look after their kids. But maybe they are not losers. Perhaps their employers offer progressive flexitime options together with policies that advise on what to do in the advent of adverse weather, allowing those stuck at home to continue to contribute to work. And to those people suffering domestic strife from post-Christmas bickering partners and families, or pending laden credit card statements, then there might be workplace counselling or EAP services available once they do return to work, or as part of a rehabilitation strategy to facilitate a return to work programme.

Comfortingly, we hear of an increasing number of organisations that are listening more closely to the needs of their employees. And wellbeing in the workplace (both ‘mental’ and physical) is getting more widespread recognition at board level. These debilitating weather conditions themselves will test organisations and their ability to support their staff. If they get it right, the employer is likely to be met with a more engaged, committed, satisfied and productive workforce.

I am delighted to welcome back Dr Michael Walton (p8) who writes about harassment as a threat to wellbeing and whether it is generic or as a result of context. It gets you thinking. Many of you will be familiar with Michael through his seminal text (with Michael Carroll) *Handbook of counselling in organisations*.

Thanks also to Fiona Gardner, Steven Coombs and former ACW executive member, Amanda Larcombe (p12), who join

together to write a fascinating article on the value and importance of researching workplace counselling – and which is specifically written for the practitioner. Not only is this a personal perspective from the authors, written in a way that peeks through the sometimes secluded therapeutic world, but it is also hot on the heels of a book they have recently published (reviewed on p26).

In the most recent BACP Workplace e-bulletin, we sent out a call for book reviewers for several publications. The Gardner/Coombs book received by far the most number of offers from budding reviewers. Thanks to all who put themselves forward for this book and the two others featured. Please keep an eye out for future e-bulletins and calls for book reviewers – it is strictly first come, first served.

We also start the New Year with an introduction to the hard-working volunteers who make up the BACP Workplace executive committee (p18). Of course, many of them will need no introduction but we wanted to formally profile the team so you can see who they are, their backgrounds, experiences and skills and how they are contributing to the division.

It is also great to forge links with our Irish counterparts and to welcome Maurice Quinlan (p15) who heads the EAP Institute in Dublin. Maurice is a powerful champion of employee support provision and his events attract delegates from all over the UK and beyond. Here, as a prelude to a seminar on the same theme, he writes about how resilient managers thrive during recessions. This notion is further expanded upon by Gill Thurgood and Karen Crampin (p16) of empowerME² who introduce pressure in the workplace in relation to resilience. Many thanks to Gill and Karen.

And finally, as promised, we have the results of the BACP Workplace membership survey (p2). This generated a fascinating insight into the views and opinions of the members who kindly responded. BACP Workplace will spend time reflecting on the feedback and will endeavour to take action and respond to the results. It really does raise the temperature on what the division can do to better meet the needs of members, the wider workplace counselling community, users, providers and funders.

Speaking of which, my thermometer is now reading a paltry -4.5°C. Tropical.

I hope you enjoy this issue.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rick'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. Below the name is a long, horizontal, slightly wavy line that serves as a flourish or underline.

Rick Hughes, Editor

rick@thecreativewritingservice.co.uk