Communities of practice student AGM motion

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[FEMALE RESPONDENT]

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Narrator: Hello and welcome to our AGM Motions and Resolutions Update podcast. We'll explore the progress and development of some key BACP projects that came about as a result of motions and resolutions and made it through to the voting phase at last year's AGM.

**Hi, my name is Grace Gardner, and I am Head of Member Services here at BACP, and today I'm joined by Tina Tanner, who is our Communities of Practice Lead. We're here to talk to you today about the work that's been taking place as an outcome from a membership motion that was submitted at the 2020 AGM. The motion reads, 'The BACP should create a student forum which will actively support student members in sharing their views and engaging with the development of BACP's policies and procedures.' Our commitment to this motion is to facilitate a dedicated community of practice for students in a wider online platform. We will support the community in its setup and development by providing access to the community via Tina, who is our Communities of Practice Lead. I just want to tell you a little bit about communities of practice, and then we will move onto, we've got about six questions for Tina to answer just around the development of the platform and how you, as members, can help us with that and be involved.**

**Communities of practice are a group of people, or a group of members who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and they want to learn how to do it better as they interact. It has an identity defined by a sharing domain of interest which is most valued in a collective competence and learning from one another within the community. It's peer-to-peer support and community member learning. The relationship that a member builds, then allows them to learn from each other, and it's usually facilitated through social engagement. It's the development of shared practices that serves to involve knowledge creation, social interaction, identity building and competence of members. We really feel like the BACP membership can see this as a benefit and as a value, and so can BACP, as an organisation, gives us that. It gives us that functionality and it gives us that platform to engage with you as our members.**

**Now, I'm just going to move on to a couple of questions to Tina. I'm going to give her a bit of a grilling about the platform and about the work that we are undertaking at the moment. Tina's been with us since June and has already done a lot of work, and especially in relation to developing the platform and how we can focus on the student forum and the student membership. First question for you, Tina. How would we introduce a student community of practice?**

Hello everyone, and thank you for that, Grace. Just to pick up a little point on what you said in terms of the work that's already been done. I'd just like to say that, in terms of the scoping and the choosing of the providers, we've gone through a really robust process and the selection of the provider is due any time soon. It's a really exciting time, but to go back to your question, how would we introduce the student communities of practice? Well, working with an identified student member who's agreed to set up and help the student community grow, we would discuss the practical side of setting up the community and the communities of practice. This would be things like selecting the main text content through to who to invite to the community and how it will be moderated, what types of files can be uploaded, etc. It's a really close, supportive, collaborative approach that I would take and make sure that the community is set up correctly and that it's supported in administrating to it. I hope that kind of answers your question, Grace?

**Yes, it definitely does. It's good to know that right from the get-go, we've got members already involved in this kind of process and so brilliant. Thank you. How do you perceive the community of practice platform will be developed into a thriving exchange of knowledge base?**

Thank you, Grace. The platform will be free. It's a free member benefit and only for members, and it will provide BACP members with the space to network, share best practice and expertise, and participate in discussion and learning from other members. It will also give members a place to engage directly with BACP, to influence workstreams and to contribute to key areas of focus for the association. Once established, the platform will allow members to be responsive to topics or interests within the profession and to communicate directly and to network with other members working in the same or different disciplines. It really is that safe space, Grace, for members to come together and share their knowledge.

**I think it's really important as well, to have a two-way communication from an association to their membership, and then for the membership back into the association, as well as peer-to-peer, as we have such a vast and such a variety of members that having that interaction is really, really crucial for the organisation's development and proof, so thank you Tina, that's brilliant. Okay, so question number three, what should members expect to see when they come to communities of practice website, and how will they get access to it? We're getting into a bit more of the technical side, shall we say?**

Yes, absolutely. Okay, so working with the communities of practice volunteers' group one. We've been selecting textual content, attributes statements and persona for the platform. This is a similar process for all other groups, we're looking for seven volunteer groups in total. They will be helping us working closely with the development of the functionality across all different objectives. I'm hoping that people listening in to today's podcast will feel inspired to get in touch and find out a little bit more about it and see whether there's a fit there for them to get involved with the project too. Other member volunteers will be working on how to moderate the communities, whether its member-led or jointly moderated with BACP. Our member volunteers in November will be testing the platform to see if they can break it. I truly do mean break it. I know it sounds so ridiculous, but in software testing, it really is about doing everything you can to make the system fall over so that it ensures that it's a robust place when it goes live and not, you know, we don't get too many instants where anything falls over or breaks.

We really are looking for people, if you're one of those that gets the product home and throws away the instructions and gives it go, I'm really after you in my November volunteers' groups to come along and just give it a go Login, post stuff, create communities, upload files really to see whether you can break the system. We're also working really closely with the quality and diversity and inclusion for accessibility to the platform for members. We really hold this value as a priority in building and using of the communities of practice platform. We really want to make sure that it does include every single denomination of every single member. It really does represent members and members as a profile. Once you are in the communities of practice platform, you'll be able to search for communities that you might like to join, and you'll be able to request a community to be set up through the communities of practice lead if you don't find what you're looking for.

I will be creating training materials and I will be collaborating and working really closely with members who request communities. A community could be, as we've mentioned previously, students. There could be a community for supervisors. We've had suggestions as well for communities in neurodiversity, rural practitioners; I think there's about 15 so far, Grace, that we've had in terms of suggestions. If you do have a suggestion for a community at the end of this podcast, we will tell you how to get in touch and join me on this project. Also, once you're in the communities of practice platform, you'll find that there's a help tab where you can watch the videos that I just mentioned and read about techniques for posting topics in the community, for example. We'll also have a dedicated tab at the top of the homepage called accessibility, which will give you options such as read-aloud, magnifying the text and much more.

Members having access to other members directly is really what this communities of practice is about. It's about you being able to network directly. I know we do have events that we run, and these are helping and massively have facilitated networking to a degree during COVID. We know that the events are looking to move towards a hybrid in the New Year. What the communities of practice is really for, Grace, is those coffee conversations when you're at those network meetings so that you can speak directly with a member. Yes, sharing those coffee conversations, you might've attended a meeting and it might be virtually, and afterwards you're kind of left hanging, thinking the meeting was fantastic, the information was awesome, but I really wanted to chat through with my other member peers. Maybe about topics or issues that you're facing. This is what the communities of practice platform really is for. How do you get onto the communities of practice platform?

Well, you'll access the communities of practice platform through logging into the BACP website and using a dropdown menu to click on the communities of practice link. A simple process that will be clear to follow. I just want to mention also within the communities of practice platform, you will be able to upload files such as word documents and PDFs and maybe videos and blogs and podcasts so that you can share all of that knowledge base with your members. Grace, I do have a question for you, if that's okay?

**Yes.**

I understand there used to be a student forum, historically. Can you tell me more about this, please?

**Yes, definitely, and it's true. We did, we had one probably about, it was about seven years ago, and it was set up, and for the first few months, it was quite engaging. It was quite a lively discussion board, more than probably a full singing-and-dancing forum. What happened is the engagement dropped off. I think the fact that it sat under the BACP umbrella was great and it gave the opportunity for students to engage, but the students that we did have on the platform moved on with their career and they moved on from being a student, and therefore, that kind of turnover of students left the platform having quite low periods. I think because it was a platform that was ran exclusively by the members and didn't really have a BACP lead, it was quite a lot for one member to facilitate. Therefore, what we're trying to do with this one is, well, we've got you in place, obviously, Tina to facilitate the whole of the platform, but also to keep that engagement level up.**

**It means that as members are engaged potentially in the student part of the platform. They can then progress onto a different community as their career progresses. It's not that the platform wasn't needed. It's just we've kind of developed it and moved on. As with technology has done over the past seven years as well, we're actually in a space now where we can select, and we are in the process of selecting, a provider that is dedicated to community and is able to deal with that turnover and has a little bit more functionality. That's what happened historically. Something else I just want to touch on, what you said earlier about you come out of the end of an event and then you're kind of left hanging with what do I do now? We definitely had that with moving the student conference and the student event from earlier on this year. It took place in February, but once it was over, where did the students go to discuss what they had learnt or discussed what had happened during the conference or what they picked up or whether they were able to have talks with peers that had gone through the same sort of experiences.**

**Hopefully, this platform, and definitely the student forum, will be able to give us that space over to members, because that's something that we know is needed through this motion, but also off the back of the student event. Yes, it should really provide that space for members to have that engagement post an event, or if they are looking for that peer-to-peer support, not directly in their local service or in their class group, but definitely with other BACP members.**

Well, it's fantastic. Thanks, Grace.

**That's okay. It just gives you a bit of context. We've spoken about the platform. We've spoken about what we are hoping to do and what our trajectory is and our vision for the next few months. You have touched on it earlier on, which was about how to get involved. This is the key question that I'm going to ask you Tina is, how can members get involved in this now?**

I am so glad you've asked that question, Grace. Getting involved is really simple. If you haven't seen any of the bulletins that have gone out about the information, there is information on the ACP website, but also, if you would like to get involved with the project, you can email communities@BACP.co.uk, or if you'd like to just get in touch with volunteers and go straight to application, then please send your email to volunteers@BACP.co.uk. Just a quick note, I've spoken to Tracy, who looks after our volunteers, and she's confirmed if you've already completed an application form, you won't need to do so again. You're already a volunteer and are able to just come straight to us in the project. Touching on something you said about the students, having spoken to the divisions and the journals individually, I've met with most of the divisions. I think the children's and young families practice is my last division to speak with. They've all been really keen to get involved with this project.

One of the key things around the students is just remember that once you've finished your study, if you're not sure about where you want to practice, or you'd like some further information. Communities of practice will be the place to come and have a look and have that discussion with the other communities and other members and ask them what their take on particular areas of practice that they're working in. It's a really good sounding board just to take your learning, or perhaps you're exploring into a career, just that little step further. How can members get involved? We're looking for communities of practice volunteers over the next six months to assist us in developing a BACP member engagement platform that's beneficial, and most importantly, fit for purpose. There will be seven communities of practice volunteers' groups in total, and you can choose a group you'd like to volunteer in. These groups will operate in phases from August until June next year and would include supporting decision making about how the platform is moderated, testing the platform.

Referring back to try and breaking it, supporting the live launch of the platform, but also supporting the refinement of the platform's functionality and scoping for future development. That's really key, some information there, Grace, that I just wanted to take some time to talk about. The platform itself, the functionality of the platform can be as robust and encompassing as we need it to be. To make sure that the platform is relevant, and the functionality really is robust and all-encompassing, we really do want to get as much member engagement and collaboration. One of the key points, when I came to the project and Grace and I first sat down with our discussion, was to make sure that members were collaborated, were consulted, when it comes to the communities of practice platform. It's really all about you as a member and making sure that this communities of practice platform does what you need it to do, how you need it to do it.

Hence why we're looking for those volunteers. On completion of your time as a volunteer, we'll ask you to consider continuing to work with us, perhaps becoming a champion of the communities of practice platform with other members, you don't need any special skills to be a volunteer. All you need is to be a member of BACP. We ask that you attend a one-hour meeting once a week for a calendar month. There is no renumeration for this, but reasonable expenses incurred will be reimbursed. That's simply through the form that you filled in when you first volunteered. You can request that information again or help and support with anything that I've just discussed. Just those details, again, if you would like to get in touch. The email address is communities@BACP.co.uk. If you would like to apply straightforward to the volunteers' process, please email volunteers@BACP.co.uk. Grace, just one final thing that I wanted to share with the members is some feedback that I've had from the first member group, which I have to say they've been fantastic.

They really, truly have helped to scope the look in the feel and the functionality of the platform. They've worked so hard and upon reflecting after their volunteering time each week, they've come back with some amazing ideas which we've incorporated into the functionality of the platform. The first feedback comment was two weeks after we'd just started meeting. The comment is, 'It's reassuring the commitment to the platform. We've had great discussions and clear process on what you need from us.' The other volunteer that I've been working with, her feedback was, 'Really looking forward to next week now.' It's an exciting time, and I do hope that anybody who is interested will get in touch, and if you just want to have a chat with me to discuss it further and find out some more information, please do. There's also the role description that's available on the BACP website, so please do, if you are interested, get in touch. Thank you.

**Thank you, Tina; and Tina will be attending our Staying Connected events, so we've got two Staying Connected events that are taking place online, one in September and one in October, and Tina will be hosting a breakout space just for a discussion space to come and talk about the development of the platform and our vision. Even if you just want to come and ask some questions and find out a little bit more about it, but Tina will be available, so please do get in touch. Thank you very much for listening to us. I hope that it has fired you all up and you're all quite excited about this development. Our commitment to this platform is 100 per cent. With Tina at the helm, she has already done a lot of work over the last two months. Yes, it's an exciting time. From us, I just want to say thank you very much to Tina for spending some time with me today, and it's just a nice, friendly goodbye, and we hope to see you soon.**

Narrator: Thank you for listening to our AGM Motions and Resolutions Update podcast. We hope you've enjoyed listening to find out more about the AGM taking place this year. Please visit BACP.co.uk/AGM-2021.

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