



Federation of Irish Complementary Therapy Associations

Response to the Forum on the proposed Statutory Regulation for Complementary and Alternative Practitioners.

The Federation of Irish Complementary Therapy Associations welcomes the commitment of the Department of Health and Children and Mr. Michael Martin T.D. to introduce state recognised registration for complementary and alternative practitioners and values the strong and helpful support of the Minister. The Federation also welcomes the consultation process. It is essential to the successful development of a suitable regulatory system that the issues raised at and subsequent to, the introduction of the Discussion Document on June 20th in Dublin be discussed in full with the professions involved. The members of FICTA are committed to reaching a consensus on a workable system of registration for complementary and alternative therapies, in a spirit of co-operation and openness from all sides. The advantages that registration backed by the Department of Health and Children will afford alternative and complementary practice are that:

- The public can be assured that the professional practitioners providing a complementary services are properly qualified and competent.
- The protection it will provide for users of complementary and alternative therapies.
- The good name and reputation of professional practitioners would be protected by the exclusion of unqualified persons and the sanctioning of professional misconduct.

The Federation of Irish Complementary Therapy Associations accepts that the proposal for Statutory Registration for Health and Social Professionals provides a good basis on which to build. While respecting the needs of the Department, the Federation sees that some adjustments need to be made to meet the needs of complementary and alternative professionals.

Our main concerns in the development of the system are:

- The up-holding and protection of the holistic ethos of alternative and complementary practice.
- The funding and survival of the professional associations.
- That the development of and the provision of training, education, assessment and qualification systems remain within the professions.

1. The Proposed Registration System: FICTA feels that the name of the registration the Department proposes to introduce should reflect the professions to be registered and proposes the title:

Registration for Complementary & Alternative Therapy & Medicine Practitioners (CATMP)

- Complementary therapy and medicine can be used in conjunction with and in support of main-stream medical treatment.

2 . Structures of the Registration System: Complementary therapy is a dynamic and growing sector of health care in the broadest sense of that term. Its ability to develop and change must not be stifled by an inflexible regulatory system. The complementary and alternative therapy sector has survived and grown autonomously in the face of formidable odds. This has been made possible by the work of voluntary administration committees and the unpaid service of persons dedicated to promoting the maintenance of good health among users. The Complementary Therapy Associations who make up the membership of FICTA are non-profit making associations and funds acquired by them through fees are used to:

- Develop training and education systems and provide continuous personal and professional development.
- To rent space for the provision of training and pay trainers and educators.
- To publicise their services, circulate news-letters and for net-working.
- They are used to cover the cover administration costs of operating a registration system.

The loss of these funds to a Council would be a body-blow to the smaller associations and may lead to their demise.

- The survival of the Professional Associations is essential to the growth and health of the sector.

FICTA is committed to a consultation process that, in a spirit of mutual respect and co-operation, is conducive to resulting in the establishment of an all inclusive health service that is indeed the best that our collective resources can provide. The Professional Associations must form an integral part of the proposed regulatory system. They convey and maintain the holistic ethos of complementary therapies. Policy-making should remain with-in the Professional Associations to ensure the nurturing and up-holding of the ethos.

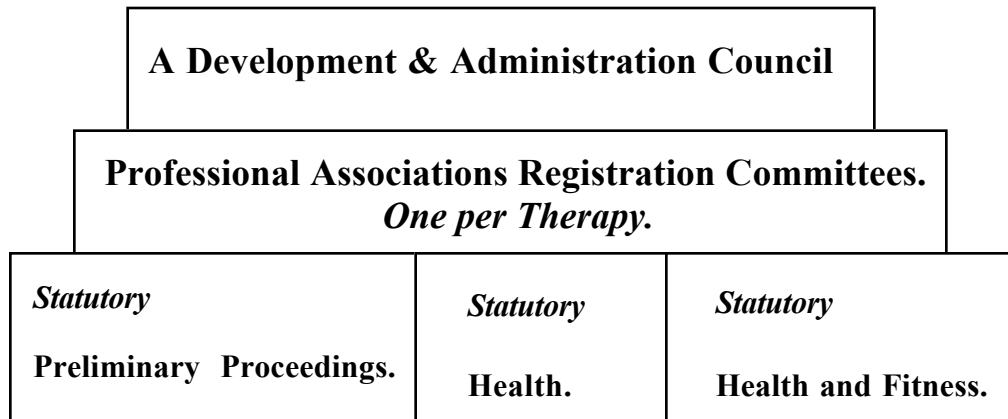
- Without the dynamic input of the Professional Associations, regulation could lead to stagnation and ultimately, be a self-serving system.

Notendom: FICTA is making this submission on the regulation of complementary therapists without the benefit of legal advice. We do not know of the full implications of statutory regulation, nor have we knowledge of what options are available in relation to regulation. Without it we are unable to make informed suggestions or decisions. FICTA has asked the Department of Health and Children for educational input on this matter. We now again, formally request an information seminar on the implications of statutory regulation, and the options available to us.

Q. 1 Can some part of the system be on a statutory basis?

Q. 2 Without statutory regulation, what state support is available to us ?

3. A Proposed Structure: Bear in mind that the discussion document presented at the Forum was based on a system of regulation proposed for Health and Social Professionals who already have a role in the general health system and access to National Education institutions and accreditation, which the complementary and alternative sector does not. Until such time as the complementary and alternative sector has the same access to education and accreditation and to employment in the general medical system in it's own right and on the same basis as all health-care and social professionals FICTA proposes the following regulation structure.



A Development and Administration Council: The members of this Council to consist of:

- An independent Administrator.
- The Department of Health and Children representative.
- Representative of each therapy - to be nominated and elected by the Professional Associations or coalition of associations in the system .
- Member of the public/consumer.
- Member of other bodies i.e. Education, Health.

Lay members of the Council need to have an understanding of the holistic ethos of complementary and alternative therapy and must show themselves to be free of bias and discrimination.

- The mandate and brief of lay members must be open and clear.
- The proposed spending of the Council must be approved by the Professional Associations.
- The Council must be accountable to the Professional Associations for it's activities and

spending.

The election of professional representatives to the Development and Administration Council and the Statutory Committees MUST be the sole remit of the professional bodies for the first and ALL subsequent elections as long as the regulation system is in place.

- FICTA could not agree to any other arrangement.

b. Functions of the Council:

- To act as the intermediary between the Department and the sector.
- Supply administrative support to the Statutory Health and Fitness committees and assist the Professional Associations as and if required.
- Progress the integration of complementary therapy into the general health system.
- Negotiate professional indemnity insurance for registered practitioners.
- Promote investment in the sector.
- Maintain a copy of the register of all practitioners registered with the Professional Associations.
- Maintain a list of Professional Associations/Coalitions and a description of the therapy they offer.

The professional representatives on the Council should be elected from the members of the Professional Associations or coalition of associations. This would create clear lines of communication between the two levels of the system.

- There needs to be open and transparent communication between all levels of the regulatory system.
- The commitment to open and transparent communication is critical to the successful operation of a regulatory system.

Confidentiality must apply to the work of the Statutory Committees and to case histories submitted to the Professional Associations Registration Committees - where required for registration.

c. The Associations and the Council:

Policy-making should remain within the Professional Associations to ensure their autonomy. Together with the Development and Administration Council, the Professional Associations should :

- Develop flexible systems to accredit non-formal, experiential and prior learning.
- Investigate and establish routes for students of complementary and alternative students into main-stream learning modules, where appropriate.
- Promote access to national accreditation and education systems for the complementary sector.
- Promote the development of common ground between professions without compromising autonomy .

Statutory Health and Fitness Committees: FICTA subscribes to the structure of Statutory Fitness and Health Committees as proposed in the Discussion Document. The Federation of Irish Complementary Therapy Associations shares the concerns of the Department of Health and Children and its determination to provide a safe and “ best possible service” to the public.

- Statutory Committees, responsible for matters arising concerning the health of a practitioner or fitness to practice as the result of ‘life-style’ or professional misconduct, would be strongly supported by FICTA.

As the Discussion Document rightly points out, the statutory regulation of fitness to practice ‘offers the teeth’ that voluntary codes of ethics and conduct, however wonderful, do not have. This situation has been of great concern to the sector for a long time. The work of unskilled and unprincipled ‘therapists’ puts the public at risk and undermines the good name of conscientious practitioners and the work the Professional Associations have done in raising standards of training and practice among their members.

Registration of Practitioners: The Professional Associations represent the therapy, are in direct contact with therapists working in the sector and are at the front-line of developments in their field. They are the structures which convey and maintain the ethos of complementary therapies and keep abreast of the changes taking place in their therapies.

a. FICTA proposes that the Professional Association/Coalitions be the Registration Body for its therapy.- one Registrar per Therapy

- That an agreed registration fee be paid to that body.
- That the Professional Associations pay a membership fee to the Development and Administration Council and thereby secure voting/inclusion rights with the council.

b. Registration of practitioners should extend to all users of alternative and complementary treatments.

- Medical doctors, nurses and other health care professionals must register with the relevant Professional Association on the same terms and under the same conditions as apply to all practitioners and adhere to the Code of Ethics and Conduct.
- Practitioners who use more than one therapy in their work must register for each therapy they employ.
- Providers of training and education courses in complementary and alternative therapies in the VEC and other colleges, must be registered with their Professional Association.

4. Multiple Associations and Titles:

i) Where a therapy is represented by more than one association FICTA advises that the associations be encouraged to amalgamate or form a coalition of associations:

- A coalition of associations would elect representatives to serve on the Development

and Administration Council for that therapy and on the Registration Body.

ii) Where a particular therapy is known by different names and represented by a number of associations it would be advisable if such associations would agree among themselves on one TITLE to define the therapy:

- ALL names by which the therapy is known to be the property of the collective associations

iii) Where a new therapy applies for registration the applicant must show that no such therapy already exists and:

- Justify the claim of a “new therapy” to the satisfaction of the Development and Administration Council .

5. Professional Associations: To qualify as the Professional Association representing a therapy the body should have a members association which has:

- A written constitution.
- Stated aims and objectives.
- A clearly stated criteria for membership that is open to all who meet the requirements regardless of where they have been trained.
- Procedures for democratic decision and policy making.
- A definition of the therapy and methods of application employed by the therapy.
- Training schedule and qualification standards.

Training systems and criteria could be defined in the following terms:

- Minimum hours of practical experience
- Minimum hours of training required.
- Signed adherence to Code of Ethics and Conduct.(statutory requirement.)
- Support continuous professional and personal development.

FICTA proposes that the registration requirements for each therapy be reviewed annually with the Development and Administration Council and the relevant Professional Associations. This would help ensure that members of the public are getting the most effective, up to-date service from their therapists and promote the continued development of the profession.

6. Acquired Rights: No definite decision can be made on Acquired Rights, without the findings of legal investigation into this matter. Not with standing that:

- FICTA is strongly opposed to the granting of Acquired Rights and sees the minimum of training as necessary in the interest of public safety and confidence and in the interest of the professions. This remains our position in the absence of a system for formally accrediting prior learning and experience.

A Related Issue: The White Paper on Adult Education - Learning for Life: In its report, the White Paper on Adult Education states that there is wide public interest in complementary and alternative therapies, illustrated by the growth of provision in the area of Adult Education in recent years. In its underlying principles complementary and alternative therapy is :

- Learner- centred, holistic and systemic.

The Government further recognises the contribution made by complementary and alternative therapies in:

- Enriching the lives of many participants in the area.
- Contributing to expanding the concept of health and treatment.
- Its holistic and innovative ways of working with people.

The report recognises the growth of interest in complementary and alternative treatments and its growing significance in the area of Adult and Community Education. Due to this the National Adult Learning Council (when established) will be asked to liaise with the Department of Health and Children and with Practitioners of Complementary and Alternative Therapy to explore the feasibility of developing certification and accreditation processes for programmes in complementary therapies.

- In light of this recommendation, the present practice of the VEC's and third level institutions of providing courses in complementary and alternative therapies is pre-emptive.

The Department of Health and Children has commendably begun the process of developing a system to regulate the complementary sector. The Department has shown that it shares the concerns of FICTA about the quality of service and education of complementary therapy practitioners. The Department is doing so at a time when complementary therapy has NO access to state recognised accreditation systems or FUNDING for training. FICTA recommends that the Department of Health and Children acts now on the recommendation of the White Paper and:

- as a matter of urgency and as a parallel development initiate dialogue with the National Qualification Authority of Ireland and the Professional Associations to explore the feasibility of:
 - Developing adequate structures of training and provide space in existing colleges, suitable to the requirements of complementary and alternative students.
 - Develop suitable processes of accreditation and certification and systems of evaluating prior-learning and experience.
 - Giving student access to state education funds.

