

**NWRPA Friday Evening Seminars****'Recovery' and Mental Health Care****Dr Andrew Shepherd****Friday 14 October 2016 6.30pm-8.30pm, free to members, £7.50 to non-members**

'Recovery' is now commonly stated as a goal for mental health services. While presented as distinct from notions of clinical 'cure' the precise definition is unclear but is often described as shifting emphasis more to the service user's personal definition. Through considering the historical use of the word 'recovery' and the experiences of those who experience mental distress at the boundary of what is considered to be 'illness' or 'disorder' Andrew Shepherd explores what the implications of adopting this term may be for the provision of mental health care.

**Dr Andrew Shepherd** is higher trainee in forensic psychiatry.

**Writing, Desire and Psychotherapy****Led by Ann Heathcote and Steff Oates****Friday 11 November 2016****Three Words in Therapy****Friday 9 December 2016**

They'll be plenty of time for questions and discussion, and light refreshments are available.

Each of these events represent **2 hours of continuing professional development.**

**Venue:**  
**The Manchester Institute for Psychotherapy**  
**454 Barlow Moor Road**  
**Chorlton,**  
**Manchester M21 0BQ**

A map of our venue and more information about the Association is available on our website at:  
[www.nwrpa.org.uk](http://www.nwrpa.org.uk)

**Three Words in Therapy****Our next 3 Words is in December 2016**

Our speakers in this format have always been well received  
We usually hold these talks twice a year in summer and winter and have three speakers at each seminar

Most speakers are our own members or regular seminar attenders

If you have a burning issue you want to share, or want to take a step in this kind of public speaking, please email [nwrpa2010@ntlworld.com](mailto:nwrpa2010@ntlworld.com) or phone **0161 432 8653** by October 2016

You can speak for around fifteen minutes on any subject of your choice that will be of interest to other counsellors, psychotherapists and trainees

As the format suggests your talk will have a one word title

**If you want a CPD certificate for the NWRPA seminars you attend email Frank Kelley at [nwrpa2010@ntlworld.com](mailto:nwrpa2010@ntlworld.com)**

## NWRPA Friday Evening Seminars

### Meeting the Enemy - Political Polarisation in the Therapy Room

Robin Hobbes

9 September 2016

Robin Hobbes runs Elan Training and Development which he helped found in 1982. He spends his professional life teaching, supervising and practicing psychotherapy and counselling. He is an ethical advisor to the international TA organisation and contributes to an Italian journal.

His invite to speak to us was made around the time of the EU referendum, a time of great political differences, widespread interest and involvement in politics and a time of politicians being more misleading.

Robin offers a lot of supervision and works with the political dimensions of practitioners work with clients and their political discussions in the workplace. He is concerned that there is now less tolerance towards clients expressing political values that therapists do not share, particularly around racism, Racism was a recurring and intense theme in this evening's seminar.

He is a Transactional Analyst with a humanistic integrative approach. He is interested in hermeneutical phenomenology and this approach to knowing about about the experience of being to generate meaning. This includes the phenomenology of politics in the therapy room. He believes that we are social constructs and products of our interactions.

This very well attended seminar was also a product of our interactions. With warmth and skill Robin fostered a spontaneous group discussion in which we addressed his focus of considering the place in the therapeutic conversation of the political values of both the practitioner and client. Robin gave us several vignettes of client work from his supervision which helped focus this discussion.

One of our members grew up in apartheid South Africa and never shared this racism but internalised some of it. She did not fit in in South Africa or fit in in this country. Hence feeling she believes she lives in a third culture. Robin thought that being a therapist is to inhabit a third culture.

Part of the psychodynamic tradition is the therapeutic stance of neutrality which facilitates the emergence of the unconscious. This approach means we sit with projections rather than feeling a need to challenge political values we object to. From this group discussion it seems that we find overt racism one of the more difficult projections to manage. Political engagement may be displacing this detached psychodynamic view with the criticism that this classic neutrality fosters passivity.

Related to this theme of neutrality or challenge was an intense and detailed discussion of whether therapists should act as client's advocates. A particularly heartfelt example was that State austerity means that clients have greater need for support from therapists in benefits claims and appeals at a time when support from organisations like Citizens Advice is often absent.

Therapeutic neutrality here may mean that the client is fighting a therapist's political battle that the therapist may otherwise only join in in their non-working life. Neutrality may also mean that the therapist is engendering clients learned helplessness and failing to empower them. The most intense statement was that therapists can be an agent of the State and part of the terrorism of austerity.

It is a tribute to both Robin and our members that this was such an involving seminar that I made fewer notes than usual. Even a longer summary would not do justice to the richness of this discussion.

Hence my apology for this short summary.

NB one of our members mentioned the view of the Jamaican novelist Marlon James that if you don't live politics, politics will live you. *A Brief History of Seven Killings* (2014) was recommended.

Contact the Association:

Frank Kelley  
Secretary NWRPA  
159 Garners Lane  
Stockport  
SK3 8QW  
(NB this is a mailing address only)

Phone: 0161 432 8653

Email: [nwrpa2010@ntlworld.com](mailto:nwrpa2010@ntlworld.com)

Website: [www.nwrpa.org.uk](http://www.nwrpa.org.uk)