

AGM 2025: Supporting statements of candidates

There are four candidates, in alphabetical order by surname.

Dr Simon Hackett

Current role(s):

- Consultant Arts Psychotherapist, Tyne & Wear NHS Foundation Trust
- Senior Clinical Lecturer in Applied Mental Health Research, Newcastle University.
- NIHR Advanced Clinical Academic Fellow (ACAF) HEE/NIHR
- Programme Lead, Mental Health Implementation Network, NIHR Priority Programme.

Supporting statement

I am accepting this nomination due to my commitment to the profession and wish to further contribute to supporting colleagues nationally to develop in their work, practice, and profile.

I have previously served on the BAAT council before 2007, and I now see this as a time when I believe that Art Therapy is facing some unique challenges. I have been an Art Therapist for 25 years, working in the NHS during this time, currently as a consultant. In addition, I hold an academic research position at Newcastle University, and I am active in carrying out research on Art Therapy and supporting others to do this.

I have been supporting Art Therapy Apprentices, including directly supervising them, and enabling posts to be created in the NHS.

I see that we are now facing some important challenges as a profession based upon a quickly changing financial, policy, and shift in the delivery of health and social care. Many of our charities and voluntary organisations providing Art Therapy are facing continued pressures.

Key areas I would like to support BAAT council and colleagues across our profession in are...

1. Supporting workforce development in all areas.
2. Supporting newly qualified and early career Art Therapists in their efforts to gain secure employment.
3. Supporting the development of research that tells a clear story to commissioners and service providers about the value of Art Therapy.
4. Supporting the voices of people with lived experience who have benefited from Art Therapy to share their stories.

Melissa King

Current roles(s)

- Senior lecturer / Programme leader, MA Art Therapy programme, The University of Chester
- External Examiner, University of South Wales, Art Psychotherapy MA

Supporting statement

I am delighted to apply to join the BAAT council and contribute my experience in education, clinical practice, and training to support the profession's growth and development. As Programme Leader for the MA Art Therapy at the University of Chester, and external examiner for the Art psychotherapy MA at the University of South Wales I am committed to ensuring that Art therapy training remains rigorous, innovative, and responsive to the needs of both students and the wider profession.

I have extensive experience in developing lectures and creating modules that ensure students are well-prepared for contemporary clinical practice. This includes integrating new technologies and simulation for role-play, helping students develop their skills in innovative ways. I also work effectively with stakeholders, placement providers, and clinical supervisors, ensuring strong professional links between training and practice. Additionally, I am leading the development of an Art Therapy Archive Museum, in collaboration with students, to preserve and celebrate the profession's history while increasing public engagement with Art therapy.

A key focus of my work is representing the student voice and ensuring their perspectives are included in discussions about the future of the profession. I am passionate about supporting early-career therapists and creating accessible learning pathways that help them transition into practice with confidence.

Beyond education, I have extensive clinical experience in domestic abuse services, bereavement support, adoption services, homelessness charities, and education. I ran my own Art therapy business Insight Voyager LTD, providing therapy, supervision, and training. I and have worked within the BAAT NHSE commission, gaining valuable insight into how art therapy can be better integrated into healthcare. I have been a BAAT training provider, BAAT Northern Art Therapy in Education SIG Coordinator, I have developed CPD opportunities and built professional networks, strengthening support for practitioners at all stages of their careers.

I believe my experience would enable me to make a meaningful contribution to BAAT Council meetings, offering insights into:

- Art therapy education, including curriculum development, student perspectives, and placement provision.
- Emerging technologies in therapy training, particularly the use of VR and role-play simulation.
- Clinical practice challenges and service development, informed by my clinical work and the NHSE commission.
- The preservation and promotion of art therapy's history, supporting initiatives like the Art Therapy Archive Museum.
- Expanding CPD opportunities, drawing from my experience as a training provider and clinical supervisor.

If elected to the Board, I would be committed to ensuring BAAT remains a strong, forward-thinking, and inclusive organisation that supports its members and champions the profession. I would welcome the opportunity to contribute my leadership and experience.

Kate Pestell

Current role(s)

- Head and Clinical Lead for the NHS Lothian Arts Therapies Service

Supporting statement

I have been a fully qualified Art Psychotherapist for over 20 years and during this time I have worked in a variety of settings (schools, prisons, NHS inpatient and outpatient) with various clinical groups. I have also engaged in extensive post qualification training.

In addition to my clinical skills I have also worked for almost 15 years in senior leadership roles for Arts Psychotherapies teams within the NHS. Within my current role that has included expanding an existing Arts Psychotherapies team, contrasting with the national picture, and working through organisational change to establish a structured team that facilitates career development and succession and workforce planning.

In recent years I have realised that for the profession to develop further, and in order to influence at policy level, it is vital I engage more with the Professional Body and that being part of BAAT council would be an appropriate step for me, and hopefully the profession. There would also be direct benefits for Scotland where within my existing job description I could give time to Scotland wide forums such as AHP FS and liaising with Scotland's CAHPO.

Particular areas of interest for me within BAAT would be working towards creating greater clarity in relation to what Art Psychotherapists are, and are not, ways of demonstrating and assessing quality assurance, and aspects of standardisation.

However, my professional interests are in no way restricted to these aspects and would be happy to be assigned tasks too.

I believe my areas of strength are innovation and change management, and with this in mind I have learning to bring from NHS systems which potentially could bring value to change processes within BAAT, as and when required.

Simi Warah

Current role(s):

- Therapy Services Manager (Integrative Psychotherapist / Art Therapist) Priory Hospital, Woking Hospital
- Integrative Psychotherapist / Arts Therapist, Wondrous Place, Private Practice

Supporting statement

I am re-applying for the role of council member as I have a keen interest in participating in the growth and development of art therapy as a profession. I have been on Council since 2023 and feel I have more to contribute to BAAT and the profession as a whole. During my two years I have had the privilege of working alongside the Chair, Chief Executive and other Council Members and have learnt a lot. I have contributed to the organisation of the Annual Conference and voting panel for the awards.

I am British Indian, from a working-class background, and am passionate about ensuring that there is representation from different demographic groups within the profession. I



believe in making art therapy more accessible for people like me, and for me this means contributing to serve others and be a role model. I was pleased to be asked to be involved in the recent HSE Commission Role Models filming project to offer my individual perspective on being an art therapist.

I have 25 years of experience of working in addiction in various health & social care settings (prisons, community services, residential rehabs), including at a management level for much of this time. I trained in art therapy later in my career and I am currently employed as the Therapy Services Manager at a Priory Hospital. As well as overseeing the acute psychiatric and addiction treatment teams, I have ensured I continue to manage a caseload of my own. I have also created a network of art therapists within Priory – for people across the organisation / country to be able to share ideas and offer peer support to each other.

I believe I have many skills that are beneficial in the role of council member; I am used to developing policies and protocols, conducting internal and external quality audits, and consulting / liaising with stakeholders of all different types. I have experience of ensuring that services meet the requirements of external registering bodies. I have a good understanding of current mental health and social policy and am a designated safeguarding lead in my current role. I
the legal framework of mental health services and professional accountability.

I am very happy to put myself forward as council member for another term and hope to continue to be of service to the BAAT members.