

When I was training, I remember a male placement colleague only half joking that we were all broke even then and, by the time we qualified, none of us would be able to afford to do the job.

I also began to worry that the standard entry process to our profession, often combining high course fees with an unpaid apprenticeship-type scheme and a requirement to pay for personal therapy and supervision on top, would preclude too many good people from considering it. Then, once qualified, the lack of well-paid jobs points many of us to a piecemeal style of working. This suits many, me included, but not all. One group startlingly notable by their absence is men. In this issue, we ask why this work seems to suit women so well, and why there are so few men, especially as practising counsellors. Is it about pay and prospects, stigma, status, and security, or simply a natural leaning to other types of work? This month's news feature makes an interesting and thought-provoking read and we would love to know your thoughts.

Rachel Shattock Dawson
Consultant editor



Editor's note

March being the month of International Women's Day, we thought we'd mark it by asking, half provocatively, 'Is counselling women's work?' The discussions in this month's cover feature and Talking Point make fascinating reading. There's the historical context, but springing from that is a really dynamic collection of views about professional status and gender stereotyping. There is no single answer, of course, but there is, I think, a broad consensus that counselling is a career that appeals to a lot of women for both practical and emotional reasons: the training is accessible, the working hours can be flexible, it can be done from home, and it's something they do well. A lot of women feel called to it vocationally, impelled by their own experience of how helpful it can be and a wish to share the benefits with others who are suffering. As Susan Stephen observes in Talking Point, is the preponderance of women simply because they are more prepared to accept poor pay and insecure employment for the sheer joy and rewards of the work?

The low pay and professional status, poor career prospects and high employment insecurity are, presumably, why few men take it up - that and the perception in society at large that working with emotions is 'women's work'. The status that society accords this kind of work is, of course, outrageously disproportionate to its contribution to the mental wellbeing of us all.

We've had a broad range of responses to our redesign, which has also prompted lively debate on social media. You like it and you don't. We will be taking your feedback on board in future issues.

Catherine Jackson
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