



Registered Charity No: 803743

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT
1 APRIL 2016 TO 31 MARCH 2017

BICA's Mission Statement

To encourage and facilitate its members to provide the highest standards of counselling support to people affected by fertility issues.

BICA has three specific aims:

- To promote the highest standards of counselling for those considering or undergoing infertility investigations and treatment or coping with their aftermath
- To provide a forum for the exchange of ideas, and
- To encourage study and research in the infertility counselling field

BICA is the only professional association for infertility counsellors and counselling in the UK.

ANNUAL REPORT 1 APRIL 2016 TO 31 MARCH 2017

Introduction

An elected Executive Committee is responsible for the administration of BICA. Most elected members have a responsibility for a particular aspect of BICA's work and also contribute to the overall work of BICA. The elected members of the executive committee this year were:

Anne Chien: Chair, Scotland Representative, Journal Sub-committee, Training Group
Tracey Chester: Deputy Chair, Chair of Events Sub-Committee
Sandra Bateman: Honorary Treasurer
Angela Pericleous-Smith: Publications Officer, Membership Secretary, Deputy Chair of BICA Accreditation Board, Training Group
Caroline McLean: Secretary
Gerry McCluskey: Northern Ireland Representative, Training Group and info@bica
Linda Mizen: Welsh Representative
Claude Rennert: HFEA External Advisor

There were no Co-opted members this year.

In addition, the work of BICA was this year also supported by:

Chair of BICA Accreditation Board: Jim Monarch
Journal Editor: Kate Brian
Journal Distribution: Bev Loftus
HFEA External Advisors: Claude Rennert and Sheila Pike
Press Officer: Vicky Parkin
Human Fertility Board BICA Representative: Marilyn Crawshaw
Book Reviews: Francesca Howell

Training Group: Jennie Hunt, Janet Owen, Gerry McCluskey, Suzanne Dark, Deborah Sloan and Angela Pericleous-Smith

Past Executive Committee members who act as an Advisory Network.

A team of BICA accreditation assessors and volunteers who form the BICA Accreditation Board.

A network of Regional BICA Co-coordinators who organize regional networks for members.

The work of the BICA Executive Committee continues to increase as we raise our profile and work more collaboratively with other organisations. We are contributing to the development of various policies and guidelines for BICA and for other organisations. This means that the people mentioned above work voluntarily, giving many hours of their time to help raise the standards in infertility counselling practice and also to help raise the profile of BICA. A huge commitment is shown to maintain these standards and I would like to say many thanks to all of you.

The BICA Executive Committee has been very short of members this year. It meets only four times per year, there is a continuous dialogue between members via e-mail and teleconference, therefore much of the day to day working of BICA is dealt with remotely, in this way. We are constantly reviewing the work of the Executive Committee to ensure it is 'fit for purpose' and making the best use of resources to meet its objectives. In keeping with this aim many of the Executive Committee members have multiple roles.

BICA's constitution allows for nine elected committee members from whom the 3 trustee positions of Chair, Membership Secretary and Treasurer are drawn. Additionally, the Executive Committee can co-opt 3 other members to serve for one year. The Executive Committee currently have 4 elected members. There are 5 elected member and and 3 co-opted positions vacant. Several e-mails have been sent to members asking for support and information has been shared in our journal. Some members have been contacted directly. Vicky Parkin has recently agreed to take on the position of Press Officer and Jill Whittingham has very recently agreed to take on the position of Secretary. Both hope to be nominated at the AGM in May, 2017. If you would like to share your knowledge, experience and skills and are interested in joining the Executive Committee then we would be delighted to hear from members.

The role of Deputy Chair was introduced in May, 2016 and this has resulted in additional support for the Chair and a smoother transition when the person who takes on the role of Chair changes. Tracey Chester stepped down from the role of Chair in May, 2016. We'd like to thank her for all her hard work and dedication to BICA whilst she was in this role. She is presently the Depute Chair and continues to dedicate her time and commitment to the Executive Committee.

Unfortunately, Claude Rennert, Linda Mizen, Caroline McLean and Gerry McCluskey have all stepped down at the beginning of this financial year. All are very much missed on the Executive Committee as they brought a wealth of knowledge and experience and were all excellent and very committed to their roles. Gerry McCluskey has kindly continued to support us on the training group and with info@bica. We thank all of you for all your dedication, commitment and support.

Membership

There was a total of 148 BICA members this year, which equates to an extremely slight decrease in membership from the previous year. Membership consists of 11 overseas members, which sadly sees a decrease in Overseas members from previous years.

Our membership consists of members from the UK, Australia, Germany, Ghana, Ireland, Jersey, Malaysia, Malta and the US. Whilst membership of BICA has remained constant throughout the year, we hope the membership will begin to increase as we continue to be a more recognized and reputable professional organization reflected by the worldwide coverage of our membership.

This past year we have seen two members retire from our specialist counselling profession and BICA is extremely grateful to those and to all our long-standing members, some of whom are not infertility counsellors but have a professional interest in the work of BICA. All membership subscriptions are extremely important for the continual development of BICA's work, as subscriptions are BICA's biggest source of income.

We hope all members will continue to encourage their Multi-Disciplinary Team members and their colleagues to access membership, as BICA is now open to a wider group and it is vital BICA continues to make a healthy membership growth year on year.

There are still a number of members who renew their membership by Standing order and whilst this is a service which we would like to maintain for those who prefer this, the membership secretary would be extremely grateful if annual subscriptions could be updated to the correct amount of £60 as a great deal of time is spent contacting those who have not yet managed to update their subscription.

Categories of membership

Member of BICA

This category of membership is open to any person with an interest in infertility counselling. The individual will be subject to BICA's vetting process.

Accredited Member of BICA (AMBICA)

Members who have achieved BICA Accredited status and meet the criteria for renewal of Accreditation. Members in this category may use the designated letters (AMBICA)

Senior-Accredited Member of BICA (SAMBICA)

Members who have achieved BICA Senior Accredited status and meet the criteria for renewal of Senior Accreditation. Members in this category may use the designated letters (SAMBICA)

Honorary Member of BICA

The Executive Committee have the power from time to time to determine at its sole discretion to grant honorary status to individuals who have given distinguished service to BICA and infertility counselling. This will entitle the bearer to: -

- Entitlement to receive without charge membership on an on-going basis
- Entitlement to receive without charge The Journal of Fertility Counselling
- Entitlement to attend without charge the BICA Annual Conference and AGM

Registered Member for Accreditation of BICA

Members who wish to declare their intention of working towards Accreditation but do not yet meet all of the accreditation criteria.

Please direct any queries or suggestions regarding BICA Membership to membership@bica.net

BICA Accreditation Scheme and Regulation

We are delighted to acknowledge the achievements of all colleagues who have been awarded their AMBICA and SAMBICA this year, whose names are published in the Journal as they achieve their awards.

This past year has seen a significant number of members apply for re-accreditation, as always, for quality assurance purposes, 10% of these applications were subjected to a random audit and we are delighted all successfully re-accredited. Managing the whole re-accreditation process via our website went smoothly and greatly reduced the amount of administration required.

There have been a limited number of applications for AMBICA status and SAMBICA status this year and we are delighted those assessed thus far have been successful.

The Accreditation board held a workshop for members wishing to apply for either AMBICA or SAMBICA before the BICA Annual Conference. This was very well attended, particularly by AMBICAS looking for guidance towards their SAMBICA applications. We hope to receive applications for SAMBICA status from all those whose experience and knowledge provide them with the criteria to apply in order that our database of both Assessors and Mentors continues to grow. Despite the ever-increasing pressure on resources within the NHS we hope this is a way in which colleagues can both raise the profile of infertility counselling and be suitably rewarded for their level of expertise.

Last year the Accreditation board made the decision to allow all BICA members the option of advertising on the "Find a Counsellor" section of the website. This continues to prove popular for those members wishing to apply for accreditation but find themselves short of infertility counselling hours.

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority Regulators continue to support the BICA Accreditation scheme and view it as the gold standard. The Authority continues to develop and work towards transparency of their expectations of infertility counsellors within licensed clinics and more thorough checks are taking place for counsellors demonstrating their accreditation equivalence.

The BICA Accreditation Board has made amendments to the Accreditation Handbook and this will be updated on the new website in June 2017.

The BICA Accreditation board receive a number of queries each year in relation to the accreditation process and difficulties being faced. We would further like to encourage these queries as these allow us to continually review and amend the Accreditation Scheme alongside responding to new issues in the field thus allowing the scheme to develop and grow whilst maintaining leadership in infertility counselling in the world.

Please direct any queries or suggestions regarding BICA's Accreditation Scheme to accreditation@bica.net

Honorary Treasurers Report

Please see separate Receipts and Payments account for the year ended 31st March, 2017.

The Executive committee is very grateful to the BICA Training Group, which has contributed to the BICA funds by running such successful training events.

Publications available on the BICA website

There have been unforeseen circumstances with the website over the past year which has resulted in Publications not always being available to purchase or to download where applicable. This issue will be resolved in the immediate future; however, any orders or queries can be sent to publications@bica.net

Training Group Report

During the past year, the Training Group has delivered five workshops and made training available to the MDTs in licensed centres. We were very pleased to increase our members with Deborah Sloan joining the team.

Activities

- June 2016. The two-day Foundation Course for counsellors working in a fertility setting took place in Manchester, co-facilitated by Suzanne Dark and Angela Pericleous-Smith. Attendance exceeded our expectation with 25 delegates attending. Feedback received was very positive. The course was kindly sponsored by Merck Serono and this enabled BICA to keep fees lower than usual. The training group aim to offer this annually as it facilitates members who are applying for accreditation.
- October 2016. We were delighted to be invited to offer The Foundation Course to 13 members of the Irish Fertility Counsellors Association in Dublin in October 2016 and this was facilitated by Angela Pericleous-Smith and Gerry McCluskey. The course was very well received with positive evaluations obtained. The legislation around infertility is different in the Republic of Ireland, and the counsellors who attended were in the main experienced fertility counsellors, so the positive evaluation is an endorsement of the ongoing relevance and transferability of the course.
- November 2016. A one-day workshop entitled “Infertility, the couple and the relationship counsellor” was designed and delivered to Relate Counsellors in York on 25th November 2016 and co-facilitated by Janet Owen and Angela Pericleous-Smith. 18 delegates attended and feedback was unanimously positive with delegates finding it a useful and informative insight into infertility and the surrounding issues.
- Also in November, we offered a new workshop called ‘Working with Men’. The take-up of 8 delegates was disappointing but, rather than cancel and disappoint those who had booked, it went ahead with Janet Owen as the only trainer. The day went well with great feedback and we were lucky enough to make £50.10.
- March 2017. ‘The Presence of the Absent Child’ was held in London. The focus of the day was the concept of keeping the yet-to-be-conceived child in mind when counselling individuals and couples prior to fertility treatment. The workshop was over-subscribed but some people on the waiting list were accommodated when a bigger conference room was secured. The final participant count was 24 and, despite the challenges of facilitating such a large group, the speakers and activities sparked lively and helpful discussion about welfare of the child and the counsellor’s role in that. The written feedback was very positive and provided helpful thoughts and ideas should the workshop be repeated.

Financial contribution to BICA

The Training Group brought in sponsorship of £1,500 from Merck Serono and contributed a further £2928.00 to BICA in this last financial year.

Future plans

The Foundation Course will be held in Manchester on 9th and 10th June, facilitated by Deborah Sloan and Suzanne Dark and we would particularly encourage new members and those who are seeking accreditation to attend. We are delighted to report that Merck Serono has once again agreed to sponsorship which will help to keep the fees lower and ensure the course goes ahead. We would like to thank them for their generosity.

Jennie Hunt will be providing training to a Relate Group in Bristol in June.

The 'Giving and Managing Bad News' workshop will be delivered to clinics in Northern Ireland in 2018 and to a clinic in Scotland. The Training Team will be happy to make it available to any other clinics who request it.

An autumn 2017 and spring 2018 workshop for members will be announced after the Training Group's next meeting in May.

We will be delighted to hear from BICA members who are interested in joining the Training Group. Please contact Janet Owen: ajowen50@gmail.com or Jennie Hunt: jennie@jenniehunt.co.uk and we can tell you more about it. Trainers need to hold current BICA accreditation and have 5 or more years post-qualifying experience as a counsellor, 3 of which should be specialising in infertility work.

The Journal of Fertility Counselling

The Winter 2016 Journal moved to a predominantly digital copy. Only 25 copies of each edition are now printed, as most members elected to receive an electronic copy. Editions of the journal are e-mailed to all members in a PDF format and will also be made available in the 'Members Area' of the website. This has resulted in significant financial savings for BICA. Members are responsible for ensuring that e-mail addresses are up-dated to ensure they receive both their electronic copy and other information from BICA.

Francesca Howell is now responsible for the journal books reviews. Members can contact BICA to suggest books which may be of interest to our readers or can offer to review books for the journal.

Anthony Ryb regularly has articles published in the journal and has recently joined the journal sub-committee. The editor and members of the journal sub-committee are happy to discuss any thoughts and ideas about potential articles.

There have been a variety of interesting articles in this year's journals, however we are always looking at ways for our members to share their wealth of knowledge and expertise beyond the regional networks. With three editions of the Journal being produced and distributed to all members, it is the ideal medium to disseminate our knowledge. We strongly encourage members to contribute to the Journal of Fertility Counselling as a means to strengthen our connection. The members of the Journal Sub-Committee Group are happy to advise or work with any member who might like help in translating their ideas into print.

Members can therefore make suggestions or can write articles to be printed. Notification of any forth-coming events or other relevant news can be shared. BICA have been asked by researchers to share information about their work with members and in return we have asked the researchers to share their findings with us through articles in the journal.

We remain as ever grateful to Kate Brian for continuing to produce our Journal and also to Bev Loftus and Angela Pericleous-Smith who have arranged the printing and distribution of the Journal. Over the next year, we look forward to working with Francesca Howell and Anthony Ryb.

Please direct any queries or suggestions regarding the Journal of Fertility Counselling to journal@bica.net

Press Officer

Vicky Parkin has recently taken on the role of the Press Officer and the aim for BICA this year will be to expand on and more fully utilise social media such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. The aim being to increase awareness of BICA and foster a better media presence. In doing so BICA will encourage a wider community inevitably leading to more effective communication with both members and non-members alike. Information will be regularly posted and will feature counselling

news, infertility related articles, information on forthcoming training events, data with regard to research and counselling job vacancies. Members are very much

encouraged to 'follow' BICA on these such sites so that they don't miss out on news, events or other opportunities which may be of interest to them. BICA will urge its members to share any material they feel maybe relevant through social media.

The press officer will also respond to any queries that may come from the media which relate to infertility counselling. This should be done quickly and efficiently as this type of request is very time sensitive.

Please direct any queries or suggestions regarding the press officer to pressofficer@bica.net

Info@bica

There have been 219 initial contacts made via info@bica.net between 01.04.16 and 31.03.17. Several of these are promotional type contacts, some from fertility allied organisations, but the majority are not. 106 initial contacts are 'primary purpose' contacts in that they relate to BICA business, several of these will lead to 'conversations' but for the purpose of this report, only the number of initial contacts have been included.

Breakdown of Contacts

BICA Members – 19 contacts were about difficulties with the web-site, booking the Conference, membership-type issues, finance or practice issues.

Public Enquiries – 12 contacts generally looking for a counsellor or other forms of support/advice about a fertility related matter, or information about training.

Allied Organisations – 30 contacts generally providing information, but sometimes seeking information/collaboration e.g. PET, NICE, Universities, FNUK, CCG, DCN, Legal Firms, Clinics; invitation to promote training curriculum, advertising for Infertility Counsellors, requesting leaflets, Conference related enquiries.

Counselling Professionals/Students – 16 contacts about training, placements, how to become a fertility counsellor and membership.

Media Enquiries – 3 contacts requesting help with articles.

Other Professionals – 9 contacts about help with research, support or counselling for patients, requesting information about the conference, promoting fertility related initiatives.

Miscellaneous – the rest of the contacts include e.g. dubious e-mails which are deleted, exchanges between Executive unrelated to above categories, monthly e-

mails or regular e-mails about general counselling training organisations, international Conferences.

The info@bica.net route appears to be adequately well used by non-BICA members as a source of contact with the organisation. Members tend to use the route less often, but this is perhaps to be expected as their enquiries will be more often about training, accreditation or the web-site.

BICA Regional Forums

The BICA Regional Forums are a very important part of what BICA offers to members as they provide an opportunity to network and exchange ideas and resources with colleagues in the profession, as well as providing vital support to both clinic and independent practitioners, who are often geographically remote from other infertility counselling colleagues. Forums, which are usually arranged biannually, have been convened during the year in most regions of the country. Meetings via Skype have also become successful in some regions this year. Summaries of each event can be reported in the Journal for the benefit of all members.

The Executive is extremely grateful to all the Regional Co-ordinators who continue to fulfil this role.

BICA Events

Annual BICA Conference 2016

BICA's 2016 Annual Conference was entitled 'Lifting the Lid on Legal Issues.' It was held on 6th May 2016. This was an interesting day which focused on the legal

complexities within the field of infertility treatment. The conference was well-attended by counsellors and other professionals.

The evaluation of the day was positive with the majority of participants who completed the evaluation forms sharing that they found the day useful and felt it had given them a deeper insight into legal issues and the implications for their counselling practice. Participants enjoyed the opportunity to network and many offered helpful suggestions for future initiatives.

A summary of the day was shared in the Journal of Infertility.

Thank you to the BICA Executive Committee and to all who helped to organise this successful event.

External Events- Fertility shows

This year BICA in collaboration with the British Fertility Society, The Association of Clinical Embryologists, Association of Biomedical Andrologists and The British Andrology Society had a joint UK Professional Fertility Societies stand. The Fertility show was held on 5th and 6th November, 2016 in London and the second event was held on the 25th and 26th March, 2017 in Manchester. Both events were popular with many visitors attending and approaching the stand to ask for information. Many thanks to Tracey Chester and Sandra Bateman for organising these events and to Jill Belcher, Jacqui Feld, Shally Gadhoke and Caroline McLean who gave up their time to volunteer to man the stalls.

BICA is being represented at The Scottish Fertility Options Day on 6th May, 2017. This event has been organised by the Scottish branch of FNUK and Allison Elliott and Francesca Howell are manning the stall for BICA at this event.

Research Projects

BICA was approached by Rachel Hordsworth and Bourne Hall to support a research project they are under-taking which is about clients experiences of fertility treatments.

Naomi Moller, who is studying at the Open University, has invited BICA members to participate in her research project which is about embryo donation.

Petra Nordqvist and Leah Gilman, from the University of Manchester, have also asked for BICA members to participate in their research project about their experiences of working with donors and how donation impacts on everyday lives and relationships of donors and their families.

Information about all of these projects have been shared with BICA members via e-mail and it is available on the BICA website.

Website

Problems were encountered with the previous BICA website, therefore 3 web designers were approached to discuss re-developing the website. All 3 suggested moving from Drupal to Word Press, which was considered more appropriate for our needs. Nic Snow was given the contract, however the problems encountered have been more complicated than expected, which has resulted in significant disruption to the use of the BICA website.

All members have been asked to re-register using new passwords. To date 95 members have done so. Additional support is being offered to those who are experiencing any difficulties with this process.

Documentation is being up-dated and transferred to the new site. There have been problems with payments for membership, accreditation and attendance at the conference or workshops. This has resulted in an additional workload for the executive committee, however these issues are gradually being dealt with and we hope that the new website will soon be fully functional to meet our needs.

The HFEA Inspection Team are aware of the present problems and an arrangement has been made with them that if for inspections, they require information about the counsellor working in a licensed centre, then they can contact us directly.

We apologise for any confusion and problems which have arisen as a result of these unexpected difficulties.

The Executive has continued to make good use of its membership email list throughout the year to circulate regular e-newsletters and to ask for responses to consultations and research surveys that are being undertaken. In the future, it is hoped that communication between the Executive Committee and members will increase.

Members continue to be welcome to ask specific questions and get support with using the website through the website@bica.net email address.

External Links and other Activities

BICA has continued to raise its profile within the infertility field and has made significant advances in increasing awareness of infertility counselling and the importance of ensuring good support and best practice for clients. This has resulted in many requests both formal and informal for BICA members to share their knowledge, skill and experience gained from their unique encounters with people affected by infertility.

It has been another busy year for the Executive Committee of BICA, as we strive to continue to raise the profile of infertility counselling and advocate good emotional support for everyone affected by infertility. BICA's expertise in the psychosocial aspects of infertility has been sought by many infertility related organisations, therefore we have continued to be very active in contributing to debates and consultations throughout the year.

One of the key objectives for the HFEA Strategy plan for 2017-2020, is to provide good support and to improve the emotional experience throughout the client's journey. BICA representation on the HFEA Professional Stakeholder Group ensures that our knowledge and skills are being shared to ensure that best practice is promoted and offered to our client group.

We have also contributed to the development of the new HFEA consent forms for transgender clients and are sharing our knowledge with the HFEA, along with others, to develop guidelines for these clients.

Members of the Executive Committee contributed to the new HFEA website and BICA members were then invited to make comments or suggestions about the content prior to the website being launched.

We have contributed to the Royal College of Nursing Fertility Preservation Project. Guidelines for Fertility Preservation, which have recently been launched on the 8th April, 2017 and an on-going collaboration on the project is planned. BICA also have representation on the BFS Fertility Preservation Group.

We have BICA representation on various groups and with other organisations, these include the HFEA Professional Stakeholder Group, Multiple Birth Stakeholder Group, Licensed Centre Panel Groups, Board to Board Group, PROGAR, Fertility Fairness, ILCO and as previously mentioned the Fertility Preservation Group.

BICA also has representation on the Board to Board meetings. This group meets annually and has representatives from ACE, ABA, BAS, BICA, BFS and Human Fertility Journal, FNG, SING and SRF. The members of this group share ideas for closer collaboration amongst all of these organisations and the aim is to share more information with each other. We are presently identifying a name which will become an umbrella term for the group. We work with each other when organising the Fertility Shows and within the group, we hope to share more information about each of the individual organisations conferences and other important activities and to have links to all the organisations on each of the organisation's websites. Information leaflets will be developed and shared and BFS has suggested that the cost of the Fertility Show next year will be covered by them. This will be reviewed annually. In the future, we aim to support each other more.

BICA is a registered stakeholder with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. As a part of that, BICA Executive members contributed to the NICE Quality Standards Consultation for Fertility Problems Guidelines.

Yuba Bessaoud continues to be the HFEA link for BICA members. He regularly attends Executive Committee meetings, which allows an opportunity to exchange relevant information, queries, thoughts and ideas between BICA and the HFEA. If there are any professional queries relating to practice and HFEA regulations please contact Yuba.Bessaoud@HFEA.GOV.UK

The Executive Committee also recently responded to a Fertility Network UK survey of Patients and Counselling.

During this year, BICA has therefore had representation at the following:

- The British Fertility Society's Executive Committee
- The Editorial Board of Human Fertility
- Donor Conception Network National Meetings
- The National Gamete Donation Trust's Advisory Group
- National Donation Strategy Group
- Fertility Network UK
- The British Association of Social Work's Project Group for Assisted Reproduction (PROGAR)
- The International Infertility Counselling Association
- The HFEA Licensed Centre's Panel
- The HFEA Professional Bodies Group
- The HFEA Annual Conference 2017
- The HFEA Multiple Birth Stakeholder Group
- The Board to Board Meeting
- The RCN Fertility Preservation Group
- The BFS Fertility Preservation Group

In Conclusion

It has been another busy year for BICA promoting the highest standards of infertility counselling and as a result, the demands for BICA's advice and guidance continues to increase. This at times continues to stretch the voluntary Executive Committee Members to their capacity. The challenge ahead is to continue to review BICA's priorities, review our mission statement and prioritise work carried out on behalf of members according to what can be achieved with the volunteers that BICA has and within the funds available.

The Executive Committee is hopeful that BICA will be able to sustain and build upon current levels of membership, so that these important activities can be continued on behalf of all infertility counsellors.

With special thanks to the voluntary members of the Executive Committee, the BICA Training Group and to all other members who have contributed to the writing of this report and to those who have supported BICA.

Thanks also to Osbournes Solicitors, for their generous hospitality and use of their rooms for the Executive Committee meetings.

Anne Chien

Chair of BICA

Any Feedback or Comments?

If you have any feedback or comments on this Report, the activities of BICA or any suggestions or ideas to inform the work that the Executive Committee carries out on your behalf, please email: exec@bica.net