



Association for Cognitive Analytic Therapy

Organisational Review

Reviewer: Fran Bristow

Date: March 2025

Table of contents

Executive Summary	3
Background and reason for review	5
The review process	5
Findings of the review	6
Considerations and recommendations	8
Suggested management structure	11
Suggested implementation plan	12
Appendices	
1. Membership of the Review Group	13
2. Documents provided for the review	14
3. Fee comparisons	15
4. Review questions for individual interviews	16

1. Executive Summary

The organisational review was undertaken by an external consultant reporting to the Chair and Board of Trustees.

The report sets out the background and reasons for the review and the review process. The process included meetings with key post holders in the organisation and engagement events open to all members.

It was found that ACAT is at a crossroads. It is suggested that the organisation needs to choose between continuing as it started out, as a friendly and supportive network for therapists providing cognitive analytic therapy, largely supported by volunteers, or to develop into a strategic organisation setting the agenda for CAT within the wider national and international context of talking therapy provision.

It appears from the meetings held that there is an appetite for the organisation to

- Develop a high national and international profile
- Increase the evidence base for working with a range of clients
- Accredit training
- Set and monitor the professional standards for CAT therapists
- Provide a register of accredited members and supervisors for both members of the public looking for a therapist and therapists looking for a supervisor
- Support research into the development of the CAT model.
- Provide CPD events both online and in person for CAT therapists but also for others who may be interested in how CAT could support their work e.g. in Mental Health Crisis services
- Be clear about what the organisation offers to its members.

12 recommendations have been set out to support the organisation to develop

1. The Constitution be reviewed and the membership of the Board of Trustees be changed to include non-CAT members with skills in finance, marketing, IT and organisational development.
2. ACAT should consider focusing on the role of accrediting training programmes and consider stopping, or splitting to a training branch of ACAT, practitioner level and psychotherapy training.
3. ACAT should develop its role as a community of practice supporting CAT therapists and trainees with excellent CPD, developing the regional networks and special interest groups and acting as a link between the regions to spread best practice.
4. The management structure of the organisation set out in the Constitution be changed to clarify the role of the Board as the strategic leadership with a director role set up to report to the Board and provide the operational management and leadership to the Council of Management and paid employees.
5. The committee structure be reviewed and revised to support the change in focus of the organisation.
6. Key roles within the organisation should be paid appointments with an agreed salary, job description and contract of employment. This should include committee chair roles.
7. There is a document clearly showing all policies with review dates and who is responsible for the review

8. The Board receives quarterly reports from each sub-committee including details of any investigations of breaches of policy, complaint investigations and complements received.
9. An annual financial forward plan is developed to support the work of the organisation, with monthly management accounts with clear profit and loss information are produced to monitor implementation of the annual plan.
10. There is a review of fees for members, training events and accreditation of organisations. This review will set out the income available to support the structure and functions of the organisation within the annual plan.
11. A clear 3-5-year strategy is set by the Board as a matter of urgency. The plan should include implementation of the recommendations of the review.
12. An annual business plan is developed to set out the actions required each year for the implementation of the 3–5-year strategy.

A suggestion for a revised management structure to support these changes is set out. An implementation plan is also set out for consideration.

2. Background and reason for the review

ACAT was set up almost 40 years ago to train therapists in cognitive analytic therapy and to support those therapists in their practice. Over the years the twofold purpose of ACAT has developed into:

- i) Educating health professionals and promoting proper standards and good practice in cognitive analytic therapy
- ii) Increasing awareness and understanding of cognitive analytic therapy amongst health professionals, service providers and the public

The organisation has grown organically over the years depending on the goodwill of its members. Members have taken on mostly voluntary roles as trustees and committee members to support and manage the effective functioning of the charity. There is a very small administration team employed by ACAT, managed and supported by the chair of ACAT.

The expansion of CAT practitioner training following the successful bid for NHSE funding has led to four new consortia delivering CAT practitioner programmes. There are also plans for further funding for the supervisor training in SW England.

This expansion has prompted the Trustees and other stakeholders to reflect on and consider whether the existing structures and processes continue to be fit for purpose in the changing context.

The ACAT Board has therefore commissioned an organisational review to help to understand the complexities around structures, roles, governance, finance, supervision and partnerships with other enterprises and businesses that provide CAT.

The review questions whether there are sufficient and satisfactory structures and processes in order to support the work of the organisation and strengthen the organisation as it grows.

3. The review process

A steering group of trustees was set up to agree and oversee the review. A senior CAT consultant was also identified to support the reviewer. (Please see appendix 1 below)

A reviewer external to the organisation was appointed to undertake the review (please see appendix 1 below)

Information was gathered from both internal and external sources.

A range of the organisation's documents were provided to the reviewer (Please see appendix 2 below). The reviewer also considered fees paid to other membership organisations (please see appendix 3 below), information from internet searches, contacts with other membership and training organisations, two member engagement events, a meeting with the administration team as a group and individual meetings with key ACAT members.

The key ACAT members were identified by the steering group. The reviewer met with each individual and covered a range of questions (please see appendix 4 below).

4. Findings

ACAT is at a crossroads. The organisation needs to choose between continuing as it started out, as a friendly and supportive network for therapists providing cognitive analytic therapy, largely supported by volunteers, or to develop into a strategic organisation setting the agenda for CAT within the wider national and international context of talking therapy provision.

From the engagement events and individual meetings with members it would appear that there is an appetite for the organisation to become the strategic leader to

- Develop a high national and international profile
- Increase the evidence base for working with a range of clients
- Accredit training
- Set and monitor the professional standards for CAT therapists
- Provide a register of accredited members and supervisors for both members of the public looking for a therapist and therapists looking for a supervisor
- Support research into the development of the CAT model
- Provide CPD events both online and in person for CAT therapists but also for others who may be interested in how CAT could support their work e.g. in Mental Health Crisis services
- Be clear about what the organisation offers to its members.

There is a lack of capacity to undertake proper governance and strategic planning. Some people are providing an unreasonable and unsustainable amount of time to try and keep on top of issues, but even with this huge dedication to ACAT and the promotion of CAT there are gaps.

There is a conflict of interest between ACATs' charitable purpose of promoting proper standards through the accreditation of training programmes delivered by other organisations and ACAT's charitable purpose of providing education and training. This lack of clarity around the interface between ACAT and organisations that provide CAT training at all levels has led to a breakdown in communication between members so that miscommunications become more likely.

There is a risk of a conflict of interest within the Training Committee, since it is possible that someone with a role in accrediting trainings can also be a provider, or want to become a provider, of training. The Training Committee has worked hard to minimise any conflict between the organisation and those members of the committee who also provide training by asking members to step out of meetings where there is a conflict, however, this relationship has also stifled creativity and made it difficult for new providers to set up programmes which could be accredited by ACAT.

There is no formal requirement for trustees and committee members to register their interests outside of the organisation and no record is kept of any outside interests. This is not good governance and a record of members' interests should be kept.

Some roles within the organisation attract payment. There are three administrative roles with

substantive post holders. The committee chairs receive payment for their roles, however these are paid at an hourly rate and by invoice. There is a lack of clarity about what can be claimed for and the tenure of these roles. This leads to inconsistency across roles and to potential dissatisfaction and conflicts.

The trustee roles are unpaid as required by the Charity Commission. However, some of the Trustees are providing huge amounts of time to the organisation with the Constitution supporting the role of operational manager sitting with the Chair of the Board. The amount of work sitting with trustees leads to a range of problems including potential burnout, a lack of capacity to undertake proper governance and strategic planning, with little incentive for others to become trustees in the future so stifling succession planning. One of the most burning issues is the lack of a strategic plan and a business plan, both of which are required in order to comply with the UKCP Organisation Review due in 2026.

The Chair of the Board operationally manages the Administrators. The Chair rotates every 3 years or so. This has led to poor long-term planning. It also means the Administration Team have a new manager every 3 years with the new Chair often having very different ideas and ways of working from the last.

The change in leadership whilst important for ensuring the organisation does not stagnate can also lead to problems with clarity of goals and continuity of organisational structures. This can lead to some staff being put in a position of responsibility without the authority to make necessary decisions about the strategic overview of the organisation. A recent example being the development of the new website where attention to the organisational requirements of the website were not fully considered until very late in the process.

There is a view that the roles of members of the Council of Management overlap unhelpfully with roles of the Trustees. This again leads to dissatisfaction, misunderstanding and a lack of timely decision making. The Constitution sets out that the Chair of the Board has overall operational management responsibility which may set up this overlap in roles, again this relationship is made more difficult by the different styles of the chairs as they change.

The membership of the Board of Trustees is set out in the Constitution and is mainly composed of CAT therapists. It is stated that there should be two lay trustees. This means that the Board does not benefit from the ideas and support of a range of non-CAT therapists with key skills that could help the organisation in its challenge of developing a 3–5-year strategic plan such as finance, IT, marketing, and organisational development. It also means that there can be a lack of challenge within the organisation which is not good for governance, risk identification and management or for developing the strategic goals.

It was not possible to access detailed management accounts for the review. There were no clear monthly finance reports, no profit and loss accounts available for scrutiny to the Board and no annual financial plan showing the income and expenditure; nor detailed reports showing which activities are loss-making and which activities support other areas of the organisation. It is not possible for the Board of Trustees to make strategic decisions without regular easy to understand financial accounts and formal reports of activity against financial plans at each Board meeting.

A risk register for the organisation was not available to review. There were also no reports of ethical and disciplinary issues or complaints available to the reviewer.

Despite these findings members of the organisation are thoughtful, dedicated to CAT and the majority of those who participated in the review wish for further development and to see CAT gaining ground as an evidence-based, effective treatment for a range of disorders. They also value the role of ACAT as a community of practice and would like to see a development of both regional and national opportunities for training, research, support for referrals for therapy and for supervisors, and the sharing of ideas and development of the CAT model. There is huge support for a review of the Constitution and for an increase in management capacity to support the continued growth of the organisation.

5. Considerations and Recommendations

The Constitution

A review of the Constitution is overdue. The role and structure of the Board, the Council of Management and the Chairs of the Committees need to be clarified to avoid overlaps and to add capacity.

The Board of Trustees, as set out in the Constitution, is mainly composed of CAT. The inclusion of members with different skills such as finance, marketing, IT, and organisational development would assist the Board in its challenge of developing a 3–5-year strategy for the organisation and ensuring the correct checks and balances are in place to develop the organisation and meet the requirements for the OMR next year.

The charitable purposes require revision to move away from the role of both undertaking accreditation of training programmes and their delivery. This would allow the organisation to focus on its strength in standard setting and accreditation of training and allow other organisations to further develop the provision of excellent training programmes.

The charitable purpose of advancing education on the subject of cognitive analytic training could better be achieved through national and international research, networking and short courses to bring CAT to the attention of a wider audience. Also, through the development of the community of practice within ACAT to support CAT therapists with a wider range of CPD, the development of the regional networks and special interest groups and linking across these to spread best practice. ACAT is also best placed to provide advice for people looking for a CAT therapist and for therapists seeking high quality supervision

Committees required and the expectations of roles within those committees and the Council of Management require further clarification. This should also include a review of the job descriptions and consideration of salaried roles for committee chairs and key management and clinical positions.

Recommendation 1

The Constitution be reviewed and the membership of the Board of Trustees be changed to include non-CAT members with skills in finance, marketing, IT and organisational development.

Recommendation 2

ACAT should focus on the role of accrediting training programmes and consider stopping or splitting to a training branch of ACAT practitioner level and psychotherapy training.

Recommendation 3

ACAT should develop its role as a community of practice supporting CAT therapists and trainees with excellent CPD, developing the regional networks and special interest groups and acting as a link between the regions to spread best practice.

Recommendation 4

The management structure of the organisation set out in the Constitution be changed to clarify the role of the Board as the strategic leadership with a director role set up to report to the Board and provide the operational management and leadership to the Council of Management and paid employees.

Recommendation 5

The committee structure be reviewed and revised to support the change in focus of the organisation.

Recommendation 6

Key roles within the organisation should be paid appointments with an agreed salary, job description and contract of employment. This should include committee chair roles.

Governance

All policies and procedures within the organisation require regular review, a mechanism for this needs to be developed alongside a mechanism for upward reporting of any breaches of policy.

The risk register and outcomes of any investigations into breaches of policy and any complements need to be regularly reported through the management committee to the Board.

Recommendation 7

There is a document clearly showing all policies with review dates and who is responsible for the review.

Recommendation 8

The Board receives quarterly reports from each sub-committee including details of any investigations of breaches of policy, complaint investigations and complements received.

Finances

Financial reporting has improved; however, the Board does not receive sufficient reports to allow proper decision making.

Recommendation 9

An annual financial forward plan is developed to support the work of the organisation with monthly management accounts with clear profit and loss information produced to monitor implementation of the annual plan.

Recommendation 10

There is a review of fees for members, training events and accreditation of organisations. This review will set out the income available to support the structure and functions of the organisation within the annual plan.

Developments for the future

There is no business plan or 3–5-year strategy for the development of the organisation. There is no clear plan for a route for the new NHSE trainees to continue to become CAT psychotherapists at the end of their current training.

Recommendation 11

A clear 3–5-year strategy is set by the Board as a matter of urgency. The plan should include implementation of the recommendations of the review.

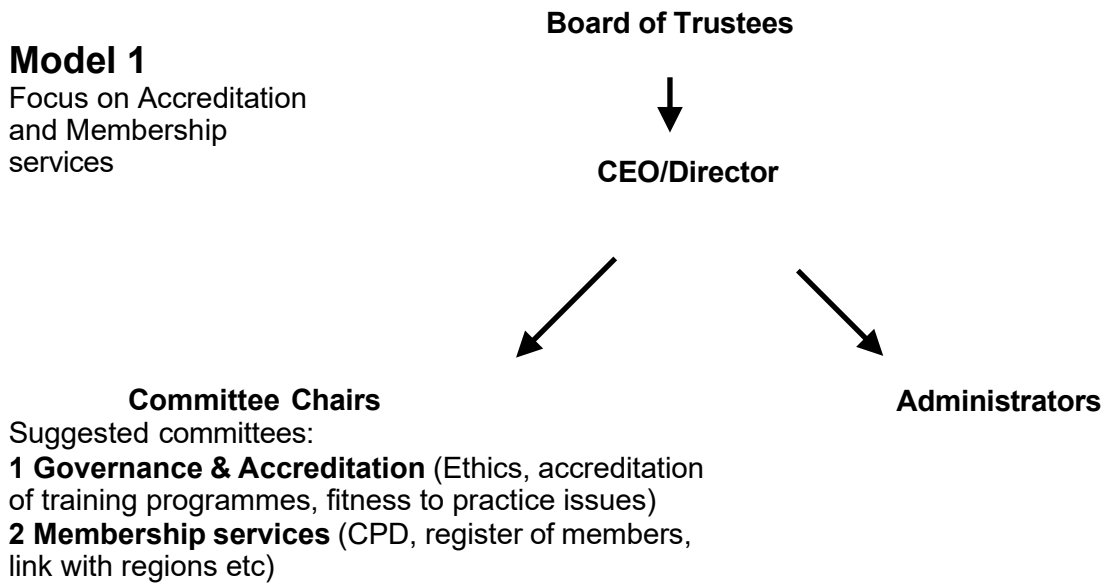
Recommendation 12

An annual business plan is developed to set out the actions required each year for the implementation of the 3–5-year strategy.

6. Suggested Management Structure

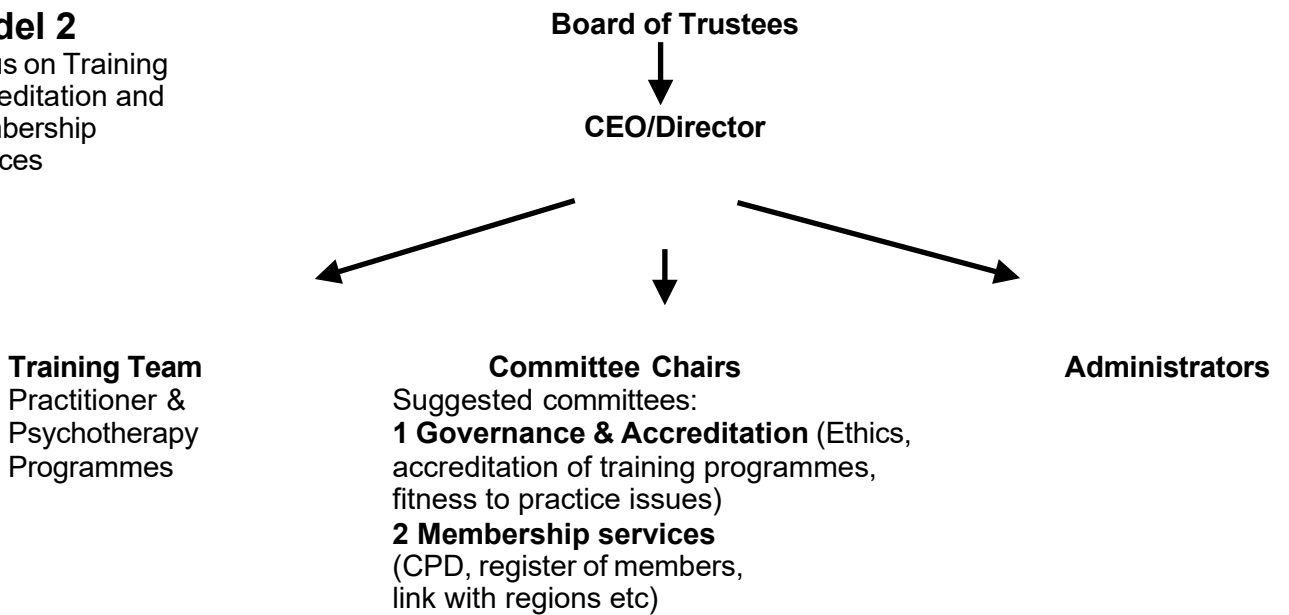
Model 1

Focus on Accreditation and Membership services



Model 2

Focus on Training Accreditation and Membership services



7. Suggested Implementation Plan

	Action	Lead	Date due	Evidence of completion
1	Board meets to decide on recommendations to be implemented	Chair		Minutes of Board meeting
2	Current financial situation available to Trustees	Company Secretary		Minutes of meetings
3	Agreement of employment of Chief Executive/Director	Trustees		Minutes of meeting
4	3–5-year strategy agreed by Board with involvement of the Council of Management	Chair		Minutes of meeting
5	Membership engagement meetings to set out the strategy to members	Trustees		Dates set and attendance records
6	Update of Constitution to reflect agreed changes	CEO/Director		Revised constitution
7	Review of fees and development of annual financial plan	CEO/Director		Minutes of Board meeting
8	Recruitment of new trustees	Chair		New trustees in post
9	New management structure implemented	CEO/Director		New structure chart available on website
10	Recruitment to key roles	CEO/Director		New recruits in post
11	Annual business plan available	CEO/Director		Board meeting minutes
12	Quarterly financial and governance reports available to trustee meetings	CEO/Director		Regular agenda item at Board meetings
13	Document of policies with review dates available	CEO/Director		Presented to the Board
14	Requirements of accredited training clearly set out at introductory, practitioner and psychotherapy levels	Chair of Accreditation Committee		Requirements and accreditation process set out on website
15	Comprehensive CPD programme set up with in-person and online sessions	Chair of Member Services Committee		Available on website Satisfaction surveys and evaluation forms completed by attendees
16	Review of regional and special interest groups undertaken and links set up nationally	CEO/Director		Structures and process available on the website

Appendix 1

Membership of the Review Group

Anne Benson	Trustee
Jessie Emilion	Chair or Trustees
Karen Shannon	Trustee
Tim Sheard	Senior CAT consultant
Hayden Stothard	Vice Chair of Trustees
Simon Vearnals	Lay Trustee
Sue Yabsley	Trustee

Reviewer

Fran Bristow

Fran worked as a General Nurse and Mental Health Nurse within the NHS as a practitioner and later as a manager of mental health services. She retired in 2016 having led the Adult Mental Health Programme within South London and Maudsley NHS Trust. The programme looked at increasing community-based therapies, including a range of talking therapies across South London to support clients to remain well in the community and so require fewer and shorter hospital admissions. From 2019 to 2023 Fran was Interim Clinical Director and then Interim Director of Operations at WPF Therapy, a charity providing training in psychodynamic psychotherapy. The clinic staff included therapists in training who gained their practical experience and supervision within it.

Appendix 2

Documents Provided

Memorandum and Articles of the Association

Subsidiary Rules of the Constitution

Terms of Reference for:

Board of Trustees

Council of Management

Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Exam Board

Training Committee

Business Plan submitted for the UKCP Organisational review 2021

Report following Consultation and Recommendation on ACAT Policies and Procedures

Booklet of papers for the last AGM (July 2024)

Minutes of the last AGM (July 2024)

UKCP Organisational Member Review Report 2021

Job descriptions for:

ACAT Administration Manager

ACAT Administrator and Exam Board Administrator

ACAT Financial and Training Administrator

Notes from the ACAT Trustee Away Day January 2024

Notes from the ACAT Members Engagement event December 2024

Appendix 3

Fee comparisons

ACAT Fee Structure	
Full member CAT Psychotherapist	£165
Full member CAT Practitioner	£110
Life member	Free
Trainee member	£87
Retired member	£32
Non-practicing	£32
Senior non-clinical	£65
Friend	£50

Fee Structures for professional/membership organisations

	UKCP	BACP	BPS	BPF	BPC	FPC
Full Clinical Membership	£302	Accredited £206 Registered £186 Individual. £186	Chartered members £171 Full members £168 New graduate £83. Graduate member £165	£541	Full fee £357 Newly qualified £289. NHS work only £149	Full membership £240 New graduate £120
Student	£25	£90	£33	£95	-	-
Trainee	£75	-	Post-grad student on society qualification course £45	£135	-	Pay what it's worth to you
Teaching & Supervising only	-	-		-	£149	-
Non-Clinical	£261	-	Associate members £51 affiliates £125 E-subscribers £15	-	£149	-
Retired	£73	-		-	Pre-retirement £149	No fee

UKCP	UK Council for Psychotherapy
BACP	British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
BPS	British Psychological Society
BPF	British Psychotherapy Foundation
BPC	British Psychoanalytic Council
FPC	Foundation for Psychotherapy and Counselling

Appendix 4

Review questions for individual meetings

The Charity's charitable purposes ("the Objects") are

1. To protect, promote and maintain health and safety of the community by promoting proper standards in the practice of cognitive analytic therapy.
2. To advance the education of the public in the subject of cognitive analytic therapy including in particular by providing education and training to mental health professionals and members of the general public.

1. What works well.

2. What gets in the way.

3. Where do you see the organisation in 5 years' time.

4. What should ACAT be doing more of to meet your 5-year view (and if you have ideas how or what needs to happen for these changes).

5. What should ACAT stop doing to meet your 5-year view (if so what would the implications/consequences be).

6. How do the committees work and how are decisions made.

7. How are the roles appointed to and are the lines of accountability clear.

8. Do you have a clear idea of the organisation's finances and do you receive sufficient information on them and on the standing financial instructions.

9. What regular information do you receive. Are the governance arrangements within the organisation clear to you.