

Professor Sir Brian Jarman OBE PhD FRCP FRCGP
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Dear Professor Jarman,

We are writing to you as Chair of the Trustees about our concerns about the Anna Freud Centre and, in particular, the appointment of a new Director. We respectfully ask you to table this letter at the next meeting of the Trustees for discussion, or, if there is no Trustees' meeting before the interviews for the post of Director, to contact the Trustees about this letter and perhaps send them a copy.

Concerns about the advertisement for a new Director

We noticed that the advertisement for the post of Director appeared just before the start of the summer break, and that the closing date for applications is September 12th. The Trustees may not be aware that people in the psychoanalytic profession take a long summer break, which often lasts from late July to early September. The post was advertised in the July Bulletin of the British Psychoanalytical Society but the e-mail notice to members of the International Psychoanalytical Association was not sent until 2nd August. The timing of the advertisement is most unfortunate, and may well preclude analysts, especially those from abroad, from being able to consider applying for the post.

Concerns about recent changes at the Anna Freud Centre

1. During the past few years, many of us have been increasingly concerned about the erosion of the Centre's unique position within the field of child and adolescent psychoanalysis. Anna Freud herself established the Centre primarily to train psychoanalytic 'child experts'. As you know, it was originally called the Hampstead Child Therapy Course and Clinic, a name which emphasises the primacy of the training, as well as the intimate connection between the training and the clinical work of the Centre.
2. In Britain there are six child and adolescent psychoanalytic psychotherapy training schools (four of them in London) accredited by the Association of Child Psychotherapists (ACP). Of these, only the training at the Anna Freud Centre offers a specifically Anna Freudian developmental training. In the recent past, candidates who applied to train as child psychotherapists at the Anna Freud Centre did so because it's main theoretical viewpoint was the Anna Freudian developmental one (based on the detailed observation of normative development in order to understand where and how any particular child went off track and developed emotional disturbance), because it offered the most rigorous and intensive training, and because it provided the most structured and detailed understanding of assessment and diagnostic processes.
3. In recent years we have been concerned that some of these unique features of the Centre as an Anna Freudian training and clinical institution have become eroded:
 - a) One example of this concerns the assessment of patients referred to the Centre. In the recent past every young patient referred to the Centre for help was given a full diagnostic assessment, including the presentation of a Diagnostic Profile for discussion at a meeting for all Centre staff and trainees. Since senior members of staff frequently presented Diagnostic Profiles at these meetings, the junior staff and the trainees were able to develop their understanding about child development as well as about diagnostic and assessment procedures by learning from the expertise of the senior clinician. We understand that the practice nowadays is that not every referred patient is given a full diagnostic assessment, and only very rarely will a senior staff member present a Diagnostic Profile at a Centre meeting. It is the clinical trainees who tend to present the few Diagnostic Profiles that are prepared, and they have to do this without having much experience of learning from the presentation of Profiles by senior members of staff. Furthermore Diagnostic Meetings are held much less frequently than they were. This undoubtedly affects the quality of the training as well as the continuing professional development of staff.

b) We deeply regret the closure of the Nursery School. The Nursery School enabled trainees to have the experience of observing the normative development of nursery-aged children on the premises and of participating in the Nursery School meetings where the progress and development of each child was discussed in detail by the Centre's psychoanalytically-informed teachers and senior staff. Without these unique experiences, the clinical trainees have fewer opportunities to develop informed understanding of child development (both normative and pathological), and the impact of family, peers and other environmental factors on the child. For those clinical trainees who do not obtain NHS training posts, the closure of the Nursery School might make it harder for them to find under-5 aged children for intensive training cases. In addition, the Nursery School was a model for the application of psychoanalytic understanding to the emotional needs of children in a therapeutic environment. Several other nursery schools were established (especially in the United States) following this model, and many articles about the development of young children have come out of such ventures. It is extremely sad that the original model on which these are based has been closed. Its closure limits the possibilities of important psychoanalytically-informed research into and publication about the development and emotional needs of young children.

c) The Clinical Study Groups, in which trainees worked with trained and senior child analysts on a regular basis, have all but disappeared and with them the many contributions which have enriched the psychoanalytic literature in the past. Thus, the possibilities for valuable *clinical* research is reduced.

d) Very significantly, we are worried about the erosion of psychoanalysis itself both in terms of the frequency with which clinical trainees work with their intensive cases (down from five to four times a week as a course requirement), as well as the frequency of the trainee's personal analysis (this can now be four instead of five times a week). Akin to this is the fact that because the Centre holds meetings and course events on Wednesdays, many trainees are not able to see patients on this day. Thus, their 'analytic' experience of working intensively with patients is now in two two-day blocks (Monday and Tuesday, then Thursday and Friday). This is not a good way to learn about the analytic process, and instead offers more of an experience of psychotherapy rather than psychoanalysis.

These are just four examples of recent changes at the Centre which, we feel, have an adverse affect not only on the clinical training but also on the Centre's clinical practice. We assume that financial considerations have been responsible for some of these losses, but we are concerned that the priorities have become lost. We are not in a position to know details of the financial status of the Centre, but we think it is likely that funding has gone into certain aspects of the Centre's activities at the expense of the core activities of training and clinical practice.

Concerns about the appointment of a new Director

1. What we believe the Anna Freud Centre needs is a Director who respects and wishes to uphold the legacy of Anna Freud and her work by recognising the central importance of the child psychoanalytic psychotherapy training and by being fully committed to promoting child analysis from the developmental perspective, including the emphasis on detailed assessment using the Diagnostic Profile. The recent changes (some of which are outlined above) would need to be thought about very carefully, in order to consider reinstating lost priorities. What the Centre does not need is someone who would betray its traditions by moving further away from the centrality and rigour of the full clinical training and the developmental perspective and in a non-clinical direction. Although research is vitally important, it is not of primary importance, and it is out of the training and the clinical work that research should follow. Clinical research on which the Centre's reputation as an investigating body was based, already seriously weakened, would be lost altogether if the new Director neglected to uphold and promote the clinical training and child analytic work of the Centre.

2. Anna Freud's dedication to the rigorous training of child psychoanalytic clinicians and to the developmental perspective are well-known. It is also well-known that she was anxious about the future of the Centre after her death. She often spoke of her fears to her colleagues and they are recorded in the biography of Anna Freud written by Elisabeth Young-Bruehl. We are concerned that these very fears are already being realised, and that the threats to the future of the Centre would increase if the wrong person were to be appointed as its new Director. Our major concern at this point, therefore, is that changes such as

those outlined above, though serious in our view, are small in comparison to our anxieties about the appointment of a new Director.

4. We appreciate that in the normal course of events we (as previous members of staff, graduates or friends of the Anna Freud Centre) would not be in a position to influence the Trustees in the choice of a new Director. We assume that the staff of the Anna Freud Centre would be fully consulted about their views about potential candidates. However, we feel so gravely concerned about the future of the Anna Freud Centre that we feel we must draw the attention of the Trustees to our anxieties about one person who plans to apply for the post of Director, namely Professor Peter Fonagy. Internationally known as being at the forefront of research and well-known in the psychoanalytic community, Peter Fonagy has many strengths. However, his philosophical outlook and views about child analysis are not in accordance with those of the Anna Freud tradition and would not, in our view, promote the best interests of the Anna Freud Centre. For example, at the AGM of the Contemporary Freudian Group of the British Psychoanalytical Society on July 10th, Peter Fonagy publicly questioned the work of Anna Freud, describing it as simplistic and “boring”. He wondered whether anybody bothered to read her writings any more, and several members who were present at the meeting felt that he was contemptuous of her theories.

If Professor Fonagy does indeed apply for the post of Director, it was very unwise, and in this respect of questionable judgement, to make denigrating remarks about Anna Freud’s work. It also makes one question why he would want to run the very organisation where Anna Freud’s theoretical and clinical ideas are appropriately disseminated and promoted, unless he plans radically to change its character. At the worst, it suggests that he will not in any way enhance the international reputation and functioning of the Centre either in terms of its highly-valued and specifically Anna Freudian child psychoanalytic psychotherapy training, or in terms of its clinical practice and expertise based on the developmental approach. In fact, we would go so far as to say that in his hands the identity and future of the Anna Freud Centre as an internationally renowned establishment dedicated to the Anna Freudian developmental perspective on child analysis would be destroyed.

Peter Fonagy clearly stated at the AGM that he does not think of himself as an Anna Freudian, and he even suggested that the Contemporary Freudians in the British Psychoanalytical Society should join the Kleinian group because they have won the argument. Anna Freud would be devastated, as indeed we are, that a potential Director of the Centre that bears her name could think of joining forces with a group that holds such diametrically different theoretical and clinical views. This would pose an extremely serious threat to the future of child analysis in the Anna Freudian tradition. The erosion of the Centre’s psychoanalytic training and clinical aims referred to above would escalate and the entire spirit and ethos of the Centre’s traditions would be lost.

5. We certainly wish to support the Centre and see it thrive (indeed, many of us support the Centre financially), but we fear that the goodwill and support of many people will be lost if concerns such as we have outlined are not given serious attention. We regret the need to write of our concerns in such forceful terms and at such length. However, we hope that you and the Trustees will appreciate that we do so out of heart-felt concern, gratitude, loyalty and affection for the Centre and for the legacy of Anna Freud’s sensitive, humane and rigorous commitment to understanding the complexities of psychological development and her dedication to child analysis.

We would ask you to consider:

1. extending the date for submission of applications for the post of Director to allow more time for suitable applicants to consider seriously applying for the post,
2. inviting nominations for membership of the Board of Trustees from the staff and clinical trainees at the Anna Freud Centre for at least one (but preferably two) staff members who have graduated from the Centre. Ideally, these additional members of the Board will have graduated from the full clinical training (rather than from the child analysis training for qualified adult analysts), as they will be most familiar with the traditions of the Centre and the training established by Anna Freud and her co-workers,

3. circulating a request to all Anna Freud Centre graduates, previous staff members and regular participants at the Colloquium for their ideas about how best to maintain and develop further the Anna Freudian perspectives on child development, on child analysis and on psychoanalytic psychotherapy training, clinical practice and research in the current climate of change. Perhaps a questionnaire would be a useful tool for gathering ideas?

Respectfully yours,

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