Editorial

Gary Winship

Looking forward to 2023

We have two important news items. Firstly, what follows is guest editorial introduction by Dr Peter Cockersell, FRSA, Chief Executive of the Community Housing and Therapy Charity. In his guest editorial, Peter tells us about the new and exciting Elly Janzen’s awards and the generous total prize fund of £7,000 which will be proportionally awarded to the best three essays submitted to the Elly Janzen essay competition, and also an award for the best research proposal.

The second news item is that I am pleased to announce is that Dr Jenelle Clarke will be taking over as Editor-in-Chief of this journal. Jenelle is a lecturer in sociology of health and social care at the University of Kent. Her TC story began when she was part of Christ Church Deal Therapeutic Community for several years, and she did her master’s research on women’s narratives of therapeutic change, completing in 2011. She then did her PhD at the University of Nottingham and was supervised by Professor Nick Manning. Her research was a narrative ethnography that focused on two TCs for individuals with a diagnosis of personality disorder. She completed her PhD in 2015. Since then Jenelle has been teaching research methods at the University of Nottingham and the University of Birmingham, and most recently at the University of Kent. She has written and co-authored several publications and book chapters based upon her TC research and research on health-care improvement initiatives. Jenelle has also been an Associate Editor for the Mental Health Review journal, another Emerald journal, for eight years. So Jenelle brings a wealth of understanding of editing, commissioning and a good working knowledge of “Scholar One” (the system for receiving, reviewing, revising and publishing papers).

I will be stepping into the role of consulting editor and I am keen to see through a period of transition. It has been a tough few years, pandemics and war, and research has suffered, and fewer colleagues have been submitting papers to the journal. It has been my job to keep the journal afloat, but I do want to pay particular thanks to Keith Warren and Richard Shuker who have been part of the buoyancy. I believe there are some very good signs for the journal in 2023. I am looking forward to continuing to work with colleagues at the Cassel on their forthcoming special centenary edition, and also with Peter Cockersell and the International Democratic TCs special edition later this year. And at the Annual UK TCTC conference there was renewed energy, a post-pandemic lift, a new generation of colleagues finding belief in TC ideas that I hope they will write about. And I know that there are some important pieces of TC research on the horizon, including doctoral research. It will be great to see these all finding their way to publication in the journal. Finally, I look forward to supporting the extended reach of the journal’s network and its impact internationally. The European Federation of Therapeutic Communities (EFTC) lost one its great leaders in Rowdy Yates who was for so many years integral to the TC journal editorial board. We have a vacancy on the core editorial board for an EFTC member representative. And likewise we want to deepen our engagement with colleagues from North America (the World Federation of Therapeutic Communities), our colleagues in Australia (The Australasian therapeutic Communities Association) and the growing number of new TC association around the world. I wish Jenelle every success in her Editor-in-Chief role.
Introducing the Elly Jansen Award  Peter Cockersell

It is not very often that a brand new Award comes along, and probably even less common that there is a new Award for original research or articles about therapeutic communities and what goes on in them. So it is with great pleasure that I would like to introduce the Elly Jansen Award.

But perhaps not all of you will be familiar with who Elly Jansen is, so first of all I’d like to say something about her.

Elly was born in Holland in 1929, the sixth of nine children. She was 10 when the Nazis occupied Holland, and 15 when they left. In 1944 her home was for a while on the front line between the Allies and the Nazis and was bombed by both; she remembers escaping to a safe place with some of her siblings by crawling miles through a live battlefield while mentally praying for God to keep them safe, an experience which affected her profoundly and gave her a deep belief in God. After the war she studied psychology, trained as a nurse and worked with disturbed children.

In 1955, she went to England to train as a missionary, but after a while found that “my ideology was changing as I realised that it was less important – and possibly quite wrong – to try to change people’s beliefs about God than to try and support people’s struggles in human relations”. She realised that help was needed for those newly discharged from psychiatric hospitals to adjust to day-to-day living and decided to apply this insight there.

In 1959, she used the £100 she had set aside for her theological studies and instead rented a house in Richmond for 10 weeks at £9 a week (yes, you could do that in 1959!), and she put up a notice in the local psychiatric hospital inviting people being discharged to come and stay. She had to wait six weeks before the first applicant appeared, and feared that she had made a mistake, but then one man came, and he encouraged some others, and the house became Elly’s first therapeutic community. There has never been a shortage of people experiencing severe mental distress and needing therapeutic communities since.

Its success led Elly to establish the Richmond Fellowship, through which she promoted the re-integration of psychiatric patients into mainstream society. The Richmond Fellowship grew under her leadership to include over 50 houses in Britain in the just over 20 years she was Director. Elly also started the Richmond Fellowship International and opened another approximately 50 therapeutic communities scattered throughout the world, including Australia, New Zealand, Austria, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and the USA.

Her work brought her into contact with influential people at the top of society, from politics to the Church, and Princess Alexandra was one of the patrons of the Richmond Fellowship. Elly was awarded an OBE in 1980 for services to people in mental distress. Her publications include The Therapeutic Community: Outside the Hospital and Towards a Whole Society.

In “The Therapeutic Community” she states the philosophy behind her approach to therapeutic communities: “It began with few preconceived ideas apart from the firm belief that people’s behaviour makes sense, and that the clue to the reconciliation and integration of the ‘sick’ individual with society lies neither in the authentication of extreme ‘sickness’ nor in identification with ‘sane’ society and its demands, but in establishing contact with and between the two” (Jansen, 1980, p. 380). The aim, she said, was “working toward the eventual independence of each member and his integration into society” (p. 381).

There must have been something in the zeitgeist in the late 1950s and early 1960s as it seems to me that Elly Jansen created her community in 1959 with her own vision of the principles that Rapoport was at the same time identifying as being central to therapeutic
communities and published: “democracy, reality confrontation, permissiveness, and communality” (Rapoport, 1960).

**Democracy:** Elly believed in lay staff, and staff and residents doing everything in the community together – she lived in the first community herself, alongside her residents, and decisions about the life of the community were made by the group. They had, she said, to find a *modus vivendi* together. However, she also recognised that in reality it was necessary to “drop the idea of a totally egalitarian community” as there had to be – indeed always would be because of group dynamics – leadership. Part of this reality confrontation was the realisation that she had to abandon “the amateur position”, and that there had to be staff, in which case better that they were skilled and knowledgeable, as well as empathetic and “authentic”: this led to her passion for training and research.

**Reality confrontation:** She believed in, and championed in her writings, the importance of “challenge” in therapeutic communities. She wrote that “there must be a very careful balance maintained between accepting people (and helping them to accept themselves) without imposing a lot of conformity or repression; and on the other hand, providing a challenge to people to behave in as mature a way as possible” because “stretching them...is useful, provided that people are also given the support to be able to cope with the challenge” (Jansen, 1980, p. 117). She applied this to staff as well as residents.

**Permissiveness:** Elly believed that “it is only when people have been accepted as they are that they can begin to acquire the strength to overcome their mental illness”. This seems to me a profound insight and deeply important in therapeutic work, but in the world of mental health, especially when working with people with diagnoses of psychotic disorders or personality disorders, it seems to be often overlooked or even opposed in the desire to control risk and to control/manage behaviours.

**Communality:** People ate together, worked together, shopped together and talked together in her communities; they did the work together, and they had fun together as well: everyone was expected to contribute and play their part in the life of the community in a genuine way, i.e. because they wanted to do it for each other because that is how a community works. The idea was, I think, to foster a genuine sense of belongingness. RD Laing said “She brought love” into mental healthcare and in conversation she told me about a community that had had to close, and the commissioning authority wanted to do it quickly and to immediately move the current residents on to wherever there was a space; “but we couldn’t do that”, she said, “because we loved them”.

After Elly “retired” she continued to work directly or as a consultant in therapeutic communities for people experiencing mental health problems, and among the charities she founded after parting ways with the Richmond Fellowship was the “Fellowship Foundation” which shortly afterwards, in 1994, was renamed and reincorporated as Community Housing and Therapy (CHT).

CHT has provided therapeutic communities for people in severe mental distress, most with diagnoses of psychotic or personality disorders, ever since, and currently has seven communities across London and Sussex. As the result of a very generous gift from Elly, CHT now owns Richmond House, the building where Elly first started what became the Richmond Fellowship. One side of the building is now CHT’s training centre and the other side is once again a therapeutic community, currently home to seven residents, over 60 years after Elly started her first community there.

I first met Elly about five years ago and we have met regularly ever since, and have shared many conversations about therapeutic communities then and now, and her involvement in them, often over lunch and a glass of wine. She still cares passionately about therapeutic communities and about research, and about making the work of therapeutic communities more widely known. Now in her 90s, she is not able to take this forward herself any more, but it
was her idea to create an Award for original research and articles on therapeutic communities; I suggested it bear her name and she agreed; and so the Elly Jansen Award was born. She has generously donated a sum to enable the Award, and the CHT Board of Trustees agreed that CHT would administer it.

However, it did not seem right that CHT should administer the actual awarding of the Award so we have established a Committee to oversee the process and to make the recommendations for the Award. The Committee is composed of a number of people who have been committed and active in the world of therapeutic communities and relational practice here and across the world: there are members from the UK, Italy, India, Japan and the USA, psychotherapists, academics, social workers and experts by experience, men and women, younger Committee members and not-so-young-any-more members too.

The first Awards will be made this year, 2023, in June; and there will be a conference in the first week of September, hosted by CHT, where the winners will present their work. The call for submissions opens on Friday 10th February, and is accessible through a dedicated page on the CHT website at www.cht.org.uk. The closing date for research abstracts and full article submissions will be Monday 10th April. All the instructions for what is required from authors are there on the website so I will just give a brief outline here.

There will be two types of Award, one for original articles and one for original research proposals.

The Award for original articles will consist of a First Prize of £1,000, and two runners-up prizes of £500 each. Articles should be original, about therapeutic communities or aspects of therapeutic community work, or the application of therapeutic community principles or processes in other relational work, and in the field of mental health. They will be expected to be between 4,000–7,000 words, with full referencing. The articles can concern work with young people or adults, can be practice or research-based or contribute new theoretical perspectives based in practice; however, relevance to practice is important: Elly was always very focused on the practical as well as the inspirational. Winning articles will be published in the International Journal of Therapeutic Communities; some of the best other entrants’ work may also be published, at the journal editors’ discretion.

The Award for original research will consist of up to £5,000 of funding to support the research work. Research proposals should be costed and explain their proposed methodology and describe what learning or development they will bring to the practice of therapeutic communities or relational work in mental health. There will be a two-part process for research proposals: an initial proposal, essentially an abstract, of around 500–1,000 words due in by the deadline of 10th April; these will then be sifted and those that the Committee shortlists will be asked to produce a full submission by 2nd June.

The Committee welcomes submissions from all over the world, in the spirit within which Elly herself travelled the world spreading the practice of therapeutic communities; however, abstracts will have to be in English, and the final publishable articles and research will also be in English. We will offer assistance to authors whose articles or proposals are shortlisted but for whom this is a challenge.

As mentioned above, details of both Awards and how to create and submit entries are on a dedicated page on the CHT website at www.cht.org.uk.

I will end with some more words from Elly’s writings, this time talking about the international conferences that she initiated whilst at the Richmond Fellowship: “The purpose…was to enable those engaged in the work to extend their knowledge of developments and methods, and also to identify the particular contribution which the therapeutic community is able to make, in order to promote its full-scale development as part of mental health services” (Jansen, 1980, p. 10).
I think this could apply equally to her ambition in funding the Elly Jansen Award, over 40 years later: the Committee looks forward to receiving your submissions. We hope that the Elly Jansen Award will become an internationally recognised mark of excellence in research and writing on therapeutic communities and associated practice.

References