

The Minster Centre General Code of Ethics

This is binding upon all Minster Centre members, whether practitioners, trainers, supervisors or other staff.

1. We respect the dignity, worth and uniqueness of all individuals. We are committed to the promotion and protection of basic human rights, the integrity of the individual and the promotion of human growth, development and welfare. We affirm the self-determination, personal power and self-responsibility of clients and students.
2. We are concerned for the best interests of all clients and students. We make every effort to protect the welfare of those who seek our services. We use our skills and knowledge only for purposes consistent with these values and do not knowingly permit their misuse by others.
3. We respect the privacy of the individual and preserve the confidentiality of any information obtained through our professional practice or research. In general, and subject to the requirements of the law, we take care to prevent the identity of individuals or organisations being revealed deliberately or inadvertently without permission.
4. While demanding for ourselves freedom of inquiry and communication, we accept the responsibility this freedom implies with regard to competence and concern for the best interests of clients, research participants, students, colleagues and society.¹ We recognise the boundaries of our own competence and do not practise outside the limits of our qualifications. We do not pretend knowledge we do not have. We refer clients on to other professionals whenever appropriate
5. We do not practise, condone, facilitate or collude with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, colour, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, marital status, political belief, mental or physical disability or any other preference or personal characteristic, condition or status. We recognise the existence of oppression in various parts of the world and accept the need for special training in dealing with certain groups.
6. We are open on the subjects of our training, qualifications, experience and supervision arrangements. We communicate about these in factual terms without value judgements.
7. Recognising that we are working in a field which is developing and highly active and in which new ideas frequently emerge, we make it our business to keep up to date by monitoring our own knowledge and capabilities; we have an ongoing commitment to develop our personal competencies.
8. We recognise that personal problems of our own may on occasion interfere with our professional effectiveness. We take care on such occasions to seek appropriate professional assistance, supervision, support or advice.

¹ See Minster Centre's Academic Freedom and Values and Free Speech Policy for further guidance on this topic.

Code of Practice for Practitioners

1. Qualifications

Practitioners are required to disclose their qualifications when requested and not claim, or imply, qualifications they do not have.

2. Terms and conditions and methods of practice

Practitioners are required to disclose on request their terms, conditions and, where appropriate, methods of practice at the outset of any therapeutic relationship with a client.

3. Confidentiality

Practitioners are required to preserve confidentiality and to disclose, if requested, the limits of confidentiality and circumstances under which those limits might have to be broken to third parties.

3.1 Exceptional circumstances may arise which give the practitioner good grounds for believing that the client will cause serious physical harm to others or themselves, or have harm caused to him/her. In such circumstances the client's consent to a change in the agreement about confidentiality should be sought whenever possible unless there are also good grounds for believing the client is no longer able to take responsibility for his/her own actions. Whenever possible, the decision to break confidentiality agreed between a practitioner and clients should be made after consultation with a supervisor or an experienced practitioner. Clients are made aware of the legal limits of confidentiality at the outset of the working relationship.

3.2 Practitioners' discussion of clients with professional colleagues should be purposeful and respectful and presented so that the client's identity is protected and details irrelevant to the discussion are omitted or substantially disguised. Confidentiality is maintained in the storage and disposal of records.

4. Professional relationships

Practitioners should consider the client's best interests when making appropriate contact with the client's GP, psychiatric services or other relevant professionals with the client's knowledge. Practitioners do not go beyond the limits of their competence, and refer clients to other professionals as may be appropriate.

5. Relationships with clients and trainees

Practitioners are required to maintain appropriate boundaries with their clients and trainees, and to take care not to exploit them in any way. It is unethical for practitioners to engage in sexual activity with current or past clients and trainees. Practitioners only make contact with third parties such as friends or relatives of the client or trainee with their express knowledge. Every effort is made to avoid dual relationships that could impair professional judgement, increase the risk of exploitation or otherwise confuse the therapeutic or training relationship. Where possible, care is taken to ensure that the client is well prepared for termination of the working relationship.

6. Research

Practitioners are required to clarify with potential research participants the nature, purpose and conditions of any research in which they might become involved and to ensure that written informed and verifiable consent is given before commencement.

All formal research undertaken in Minster's name must be approved by the Research Ethics Committee. Further information about the process involved in seeking approval is available from Angela Cotter, Chair of Research Ethics Committee, & Rory Page, Registrar.

NB. During the third year students will be provided with training and support about the process of submitting a proposal for research. This is to ensure that any research carried out as part of an MA/Adv Dip is attainable and ethical and to demonstrate that BACP Diploma in Counselling students have the skills and knowledge needed to undertake a short piece of research ethically .

7. Client anonymity

The anonymity of clients whose material is used for the purposes of publication, teaching and seminars is of paramount importance. When any form of publication of clinical material is being considered practitioners must obtain consent from clients whenever possible.

8. Practitioner competence

Practitioners are required to maintain their ability to perform competently and to take necessary steps to do so. They should obtain supervision or consultation appropriate to their needs, monitor the limits of their competence and make appropriate referrals where necessary. Practitioners must be in receipt of regular supervision appropriate to their experience, client load and field of work. The practitioner's work environment must be appropriate to the services offered and conducive to the safety and privacy of the client.

9. Indemnity insurance

Practitioners are required to ensure that their professional work is adequately covered by appropriate indemnity insurance.

10. Detrimental behaviour

Practitioners are required to refrain from any behaviour that may be detrimental to the profession, to colleagues, to trainees or to their clients.