

Code of Practice for Practitioners

1. **Qualifications** - Practitioners are required to provide a clear and honest statement of qualifications in advertising and disclose their qualifications when requested and not claim, or imply, qualifications they do not have. Practitioners should not make any claims they cannot demonstrate to be true including testimonials from clients. Practitioners who do not yet hold a counselling or psychotherapy qualification should disclose they are still in training.

2. **Terms and Conditions and Methods of Practice** - Practitioners are required to make clear information readily available regarding their terms, conditions, complaints processes and, where appropriate, methods or practice at the outset of any therapeutic relationship with a client. You should be clear you have the client's consent to the specifics of the service you offer at the outset of therapy. Where possible, care should be taken to ensure that the client is well prepared for termination of the working relationship.
 - i. Practitioners should not mislead a client about the type or nature of the psychotherapy practiced or mislead a client about their experience or qualifications.

3. **Confidentiality** - Practitioners are required to preserve confidentiality and make clear how confidential material will be handled in line with General Data Protection Regulations. This information will include information on the legal and ethical limits of confidentiality and circumstances under which confidential information might be disclosed to a third party.
 - i. Practitioners should consider obtaining legal, ethical advice and support in relation to providing information for judicial or administrative proceedings as to the potential impact this could have on confidentiality, even when the client has given consent (for further information and support see UKCP/BACP website or contact your member organisation).

- ii. Should exceptional circumstances arise giving the practitioner grounds for breaking confidentiality the client should be informed unless there are grounds for believing this would endanger the client or others. Whenever possible, the decision to break confidentiality should be made only after consultation with a supervisor or an experienced practitioner.
 - iii. 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.
 - iv. Practitioners must ensure confidentiality is maintained, at all times, in the storage and disposal of records.
4. **Professional Relationships** - Practitioners should consider the client's best interest when making appropriate contact with the client's GP, psychiatric services or other relevant professionals. Practitioners should 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.
- i. Be aware of the power imbalance between the practitioner and the client and avoid dual or multiple relationships that may impact adversely on the client. If a dual or multiple relationship is unavoidable, to take responsibility for clarifying and managing boundaries and protecting confidentiality.
 - ii. Exercise all reasonable care before entering into a personal or business relationship with former clients taking into account the time that has elapsed since the end of the therapeutic relationship. Should such a relationship prove to be detrimental to the former client, you may be called to answer an allegation of misusing your former position.
 - iii. Decline any gifts, favours, money or hospitality that might be interpreted as exploitative.

- iv. Recognise that your behaviour outside your professional life may have an impact on your relationship with clients and take responsibility for critically examining these potential negative or positive effects to the benefit of the client.
6. **Case Studies & Publications** - Practitioners are required to clarify with clients the nature, purpose and conditions of any publication in which the clients are to be involved and to ensure that written and verifiable consent is given before commencement. This includes situations where a client or former client might recognise themselves in case material despite the change of names and circumstances.
- i. When any form of publication or clinical material is being considered for publication, teaching or seminars practitioners must act in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations.
 - ii. Ensure any communication in which you take part, when using social media, is carried out consistent with this code.
7. **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 should be in receipt of regular supervision appropriate to their experience, client load and field of work and in line with their membership body (e.g. BACP/UKCP). The practitioner's work environment should be appropriate to the services offered and conducive to the safety and privacy of the client.
- i. Practitioners should not work with clients if unable to do so for physical, mental health reasons or when impaired by the effects of drugs, alcohol or medication.
 - ii. Practitioners should have arrangements in place for informing clients, and where appropriate providing them with support, in the event of your illness or death. This is frequently referred to as a 'Professional Will'.

- iii. Practitioners should actively consider issues of diversity and equalities as these affect all aspects of your work and acknowledge the need for a continuing process of self-enquiry and professional development.
 - iv. Practitioners should not allow prejudice about a client's sex, age, colour, race, disability, communication skills, sexuality, lifestyle, religious, cultural or political beliefs, social economic or immigration status to adversely affect the way you relate to them. They should also avoid behaviour that can be perceived as abusive or detrimental to any client or colleague based on these factors.
 - v. Practitioners should ensure they are familiar with and understand their membership bodies' published policies and guidance in relation to Safeguarding (children and vulnerable adults) matters and on the memorandum of understanding regarding conversion therapy (see UKCP & BACP ethical guidance).
8. **Indemnity Insurance** - Practitioners are required to ensure that their professional work is adequately covered by appropriate indemnity insurance or by an employer's indemnity arrangements.
9. **Professional Behaviour** – Practitioners should maintain an awareness of, and comply with, all legal and professional obligations and the policies of your membership body.
- i. Practitioners are required to take appropriate action with regard to the behaviour of a colleague which may be detrimental to the profession, to colleagues, to trainees or to their clients. Where a practitioner is concerned that a colleague's conduct may be unprofessional the practitioner should normally speak of the concern to the individual concerned. If a satisfactory response is not received or the concern continues the matter should then be reported to any appropriate senior colleague of that practitioner, to that person's professional Ethics Committee or employer. Practitioners who have any such suspicions of serious professional misconduct should initiate the complaints procedure of the relevant member organisation. It is desirable to inform the colleague of the intent to report and of any action taken.

- 10. Complaints Upheld and Convictions** - Practitioners are required to inform the Chair of the Minster Centre Ethics and Complaints Committee if any complaint is upheld against them in another professional organisation or if they are convicted of any criminal offence, in receipt of a conditional discharge for an offence, have accepted a Police caution or if civil proceedings are brought against them. Appropriate action will then be taken in relation to the impact on their work as practitioners.

Further information on UKCP & BACP ethical guidance can be found at the link below:

<https://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/registers-standards/standards-guidance-and-policies/>
& www.bacp.co.uk/ethical_framework.