

## Code of Ethics

### Scope of this code

The scope of this Code is to give ethical guidance on the counsellor-client relationship.

If you are a member of the public wishing to make a complaint regarding one of our members, a Society officer can speak with you and offer assistance in understanding this code and our complaints procedures.

The Society has a duty to ensure that any client of a Society member making a complaint is treated fairly and that all procedures are properly explained.

### Fundamental Principles

The fundamental ethical principles of the counsellor-client relationship are that the counsellor shall:

- Approach their work in the spirit of a vocation
- Honour the subjectivity of the counselling experience
- Honour the client's subjectivity, views, beliefs, ideas, goals
- Respect commonly understood boundaries, and
- Be able to undertake a rigorous self-examination on their work and practice

### Delivery of Service

All Practitioners undertake to:

1. Provide service to clients solely in those areas in which they are competent to do so and for which they carry relevant professional indemnity insurance.
2. Have a fully developed, professional awareness of diversity and specifically not permit considerations of religion, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age, disability, politics or social standing to adversely influence client treatment.
3. Disclose full details of all relevant memberships, training, experience, qualifications and appropriate avenues of complaint to clients upon request and only use those qualifications and memberships to which they have proof of entitlement.
4. Explain fully to clients in advance of any treatment: the fee levels, precise terms of payment and any charges which might be imposed for non-attendance or cancelled appointments and wherever relevant, confidentiality issues. Use clear and transparent contracts which do not use unreasonable terms or restrict the statutory rights of their clients.
5. Present all services and products in an unambiguous manner (to include any limitations and realistic outcomes of treatment) and ensure that the client retains complete control over the decision to purchase such services or products. Apply the Code of Advertising Practice, CAP Code, ASA Good Practice guidance, and Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations where relevant to their advertising and promotion.
6. Have easy to understand procedures for resolving client complaints.

### Client Welfare

All Practitioners undertake to:

1. Work in ways that will promote client autonomy and well-being and that maintain respect and dignity for the client.
2. Remain aware of their own limitations and wherever appropriate, be prepared to refer a client to another practitioner or medical adviser who might be expected to offer suitable treatment.

3. Ensure that wherever a client is seeking assistance for the relief of physical symptoms, that unless having already done so, the client be advised to contact a registered medical practitioner. N.B. Practitioners should not attempt to diagnose physical symptoms unless they have undergone relevant medical training in diagnostics.
4. Accept that any client referred to them by a registered medical practitioner (or other relevant agency) which remains the clinical responsibility of the medical practitioner (or agency) may delineate a responsibility to agree to keep that medical practitioner (or agency) suitably informed of the client's progress. ("Suitably" in this context means that, unless the client has given permission for the release of such information, feedback should take the form of general comments as to progress rather than the provision of specific details). Practitioners should also be prepared to share information necessary for the continuing treatment of clients by other healthcare professionals, where there is an overlap or hand-on of care and where suitable issues of confidentiality have been delineated.
5. Ensure that their workplace and all facilities offered to both clients and their companions will be in every respect suitable and appropriate for the service provided. These shall include any consulting room used for the purpose of consultation and/or conducting therapy with any client, along with any reception or waiting areas associated with such rooms.
6. Take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of the client and any person who may be accompanying them.
7. Refrain from using their position of trust and confidence to:
  - a. Cross the commonly understood professional boundaries appropriate to the counsellor/client relationship or exploit the client emotionally, sexually, financially or in any other way whatsoever. Should any relationship (i.e. other than for the professional relationship between client and therapist) develop between either counsellor and client or members of their respective immediate families, the therapist must immediately cease to accept fees, terminate the counselling relationship in an appropriate manner and refer the client to another suitable therapist at the very earliest opportunity. N.B. Clarification on dilemmas experienced by therapists in respect of the foregoing should be sought from their supervisor.
  - b. Touch the client in any way that may be open to misinterpretation. N.B. Before using any touch as a component of counselling, both an explanation should be given and permission received.
8. Not accept any inappropriate gifts, gratuities or favours from a client.
9. Never protract treatment unnecessarily and to terminate treatment at the earliest moment consistent with the good care of the client.

### **Confidentiality, Maintenance of Records and Recording of Sessions**

All Practitioners undertake to:

1. Maintain strict confidentiality within the client/counsellor relationship, always provided that such confidentiality is neither inconsistent with the therapist's own safety or the safety of the client, the client's family members or other members of the public nor in contravention of any legal action (i.e. criminal, coroner or civil court cases where a court order is made demanding disclosure) or legal requirement (e.g. Children's Acts).
2. Ensure that client notes and records be kept secure and confidential and that the use of computer records remains within the terms of the Data Protection Act. N.B. Manual records should be locked away when not in use and those held on computer should be password coded.
3. Recognise that the maintenance of case notes should include personal details, history, diagnosis, a programme of sessions (as agreed between counsellor and client), session progress notes and a copy of any contract.
4. Obtain written permission from the client (or if appropriate, the client's parent/s or legal guardian/s) before either recording client sessions, discussing undisguised cases with any person whatsoever, or publishing cases (whether disguised or not) via any medium.

("Recording" in this context means any method other than the usual taking of written case notes. "Undisguised" in this context means cases in which material has not been sufficiently altered in order to offer reasonable anonymity to all relevant parties) With particular reference to the use of CCTV or similar equipment, all clients must be fully informed when such equipment is in operation and as above, written permission must be obtained prior to the commencement of any client session.

5. Advise the client that disguised cases may sometimes be utilised for the purposes of either their own supervision or the supervision and/or training of other therapists and refrain from using such material should the respective client indicate a preference that it should not be used for these purposes.

### **General Conduct**

All Practitioners undertake to:

1. Conduct themselves at all times in accord with their professional status and in such a way as neither undermines public confidence in the process or profession of counselling nor brings it into disrepute.
2. Never publicly criticise, malign or professionally obstruct another member of the profession, unless criticising a colleague via a properly constituted complaints procedure.
3. Respect the status of all other medical/healthcare professionals and the boundaries of their professional remit.

### **Relationship with the Society**

All Practitioners undertake to:

1. Notify the Society, in writing, of any change in practise name, contact address, telephone number or e-mail address, at the earliest convenient moment.
2. Inform the Society, in writing, of any alteration in circumstance which would affect either their position or ability as practitioners.
3. 26. Inform the Society, in writing, of:
  - a. Any complaint (of which they are aware) made against them
  - b. Any disciplinary action taken against them by any professional body
  - c. (i) any criminal offence for which they have been arrested, ensuring that the Society is updated as the progress of the case (ii) any criminal convictions
4. Make available all relevant information requested as a result of investigation by any complaints process of which the Society is a signatory or in which it participates, without hindrance (whether implied or actual) or unreasonable delay and comply fully with all requirements inherent within any other Complaints and Disciplinary Procedure to which they subscribe.

### **Advertising, Display of Credentials and Use of Specific Titles**

All Practitioners undertake to:

1. Ensure that all advertising, no matter in what form or medium it is placed, represents a truthful, honest and accurate picture of themselves, their skill-base, qualifications and facilities and that any claims for the successful outcome of treatments (in whatever format) shall be based upon verifiable, fully documented evidence.
2. Ensure that all advertising shall comply with the British Code of Advertising Practice, in accord with the British Advertising Standards Authority and to make available all such literature to the Society on request.
3. Display only valid qualifications and certificates issued in respect of relevant training courses and events or certificates of registration, validation or accreditation as issued or awarded by relevant professional bodies.
4. Make no claim that they hold specific qualifications unless such claim can be fully substantiated and if using the title "Dr", explain its provenance taking due care to ensure that no client is misled by the title to assume that it is a medical qualification if this is not the case.

## **Treatment of Minors and Those Classified as Persons With Special Needs or Vulnerabilities**

All Practitioners undertake to:

1. Obtain the written consent of an appropriate adult (i.e. parent, legal guardian or registered medical practitioner) before conducting treatment with clients who are either under the age of majority or are classified as persons with special needs or vulnerabilities. It is further advisable that the therapist should hold a current Full Disclosure CRB certificate if they wish to work with minors.

## **Supervision and Continuing Professional Development**

Practitioners are expected to maintain or improve their level of skills and professional competence in an appropriate manner commensurate with their vocations. This could include:

- a. Meetings with a colleague (or colleagues) to discuss, in confidence, ongoing cases and issues arising from them and to work through any personal matters that might affect their own position or ability as practising therapists. Such arrangements can take a variety of forms, the most usual of which are either personal One to One Supervision or participation within a Peer Support Group
- b. Undertaking continuing training, either formally, by attendance at relevant courses, workshops and seminars or informally, by relevant reading and Internet research
- c. The utilisation of appropriate audit tools, e.g. client feedback forms, care aims forms etc.
- d. Maintaining an awareness of research and developments
- e. Suitable personal growth and development, including seeking counselling where appropriate

## **Research Ethics**

For all practical purposes, a “research subject” should be considered synonymous with a “client” and consequently, all relevant Clauses within the general Code of Ethics remain applicable.

Of extra importance is the need on the part of the researcher to:

1. Accept that all participation by research subjects must be on a completely voluntary basis and that no “pressure” of any type should be exerted in order to secure participation. (Payments must not be such an inducement that they would encourage the taking of risk beyond that taken in the normal course of the participant’s everyday life).
2. Ensure that proper consent has been obtained prior to the commencement of any research project. This is especially so in the case of minors or persons with special needs. N.B. This does not apply where general research of a purely statistical nature is carried out. In longitudinal research, consent may need to be obtained at repeated intervals.
3. Understand that initial consent does not negate a participant’s right to withdraw at any stage of the research and further, that this must be made clear to the participant at the outset.
4. Maintain complete openness and honesty with regard to both the purpose and nature of the research being conducted.
5. Consider any potential adverse consequences to the research subject as a result of any intended research project.
6. Accept that if, during research, a participant exhibits or presents with a condition they seem unaware of, then the researcher has a duty to inform the subject that they believe their continued participation may jeopardise their future well-being.
7. Provide, where relevant, for the ongoing care of participants with regard to any adverse effects that might arise as a consequence of and within a reasonable time period after, their involvement within any research project.
8. Understand and act upon the principle that the privacy and psychological well-being of the individual subject is always more important than the research itself.

## **Training Ethics**

Practitioners undertake to:

1. Ensure that any training they offer meets commonly accepted standards.
2. Clearly communicate whether the training on offer is designed to be at practitioner level or whether it is insufficient to qualify a student to practice.
3. Clearly and honestly communicate any accreditation or approval given to their training courses to their students or potential students.
4. Refrain from advertising any accreditation or organisational membership as pending until such membership is actually granted.
5. Deliver only a course which is entirely their own intellectual property (unless under specific written licence from the copyright holder), at all times refraining from plagiarism.
6. Not participate directly or indirectly (e.g. as a course tutor, marker, promoter, manager, interviewer etc) in any training which does not meet all the above Training Ethics criteria.