



BPF Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice

This Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice is designed to uphold the ethos and values of BPF and to permit its members to relate ethically with each other. It is a document of guidance which can also provide the basis for a complaint under BPF's Complaints Procedure.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Ethical standards and values are important in promoting safe and professional counselling and psychotherapy practices and situations. These are important in order that firstly, practitioners deliver a professional level of service that caters for the best interests of participants at any BPF event and secondly, sets ethical standards for all members and participants to expect and adhere to.
- 1.2 The principles set out below direct attention to important ethical responsibilities borne by practitioners. Each principle is described and is followed by examples of good practice that have been developed in response to that principle.
- 1.3 Ethical decisions that are strongly supported by one or more of these principles without any contradiction from others may be regarded as reasonably well founded. However, practitioners will encounter circumstances in which it is impossible to reconcile all the applicable principles and choosing between principles may be required. A decision or course of action does not necessarily become unethical merely because it is contentious or other practitioners would have reached different conclusions in similar circumstances. A practitioner's obligation is to consider all the relevant circumstances with as much care as is reasonably possible and to be appropriately accountable for decisions made.
- 1.4 It is a requirement for all Practitioners, members and participants at any BPF event to abide by its Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice. In any case of breach of the Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice by a practitioner, member or participant the BPF Complaints Procedure can and may be invoked.
- 1.5 The Ethics Committee and the trustees of BPF reserve the right not to be limited by the principles and articles contained in its Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice alone but are free to develop, extend and add to them as circumstances demand in response to any behaviour which is deemed inappropriate, unethical or harmful to others.



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1.6 The term 'participant' refers to any party using, receiving or seeking the services of a practitioner which pertain to counselling by attending a BPF event.

1.7 The term 'Practitioner' includes anyone undertaking the role(s) of counsellor, psychotherapist, trainer, educator, supervisor, researcher, provider of counselling skills and/or a trainer in the above fields or manager of any of these services

1.8 The term 'member' refers to any present member of the BPF organisation.

2. Principles applicable to Practitioners

2.1 Fidelity: honouring the trust placed in the practitioner

Being trustworthy is regarded as fundamental to understanding and resolving ethical issues. Practitioners who adopt this principle: act in accordance with the trust placed in them; regard confidentiality as an obligation arising from the client's trust; restrict any disclosure of confidential information about clients to furthering the purposes for which it was originally disclosed.

2.2 Autonomy: respect for the participant's right to be self-governing

This principle emphasises the importance of a participant's commitment at any BPF event to taking part in counselling or psychotherapy, usually on a voluntary basis. Practitioners who respect the participant's autonomy: ensure accuracy in any advertising or information given in advance of services offered; seek freely given and adequately informed consent; engage in explicit contracting in advance of any commitment by the participant; protect privacy; protect confidentiality; normally make any disclosures of confidential information conditional on the consent of the person concerned; and inform the participant in advance of foreseeable conflicts of interest or as soon as possible after such conflicts become apparent. The principle of autonomy opposes the manipulation of participants against their will, even for beneficial social ends.

2.3 Beneficence: a commitment to promoting the participant's well-being

The principle of beneficence means acting in the best interests of the participant based on professional assessment. It directs attention to working strictly within one's limits of competence and providing services on the basis of adequate training or experience. Ensuring that the participant's best interests are achieved requires systematic monitoring of practice and outcomes by the best available means. It is considered important that research and systematic reflection inform practice. There is an obligation to use regular and on-going supervision to



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enhance the quality of the services provided and to commit to updating practice by continuing professional development. An obligation to act in the best interests of a participant may become paramount when working with participants whose capacity for autonomy is diminished because of immaturity, lack of understanding, extreme distress, serious disturbance or other significant personal constraints.

2.4 Non-maleficence: a commitment to avoiding harm to the participant

Non-maleficence involves: avoiding sexual, financial, emotional or any other form of participant exploitation; avoiding incompetence or malpractice; not providing services when unfit to do so due to illness, personal circumstances or intoxication. The practitioner has an ethical responsibility to strive to mitigate any harm caused to a participant even when the harm is unavoidable or unintended. Practitioners have a personal responsibility to challenge, where appropriate, the incompetence or malpractice of others; and to contribute to any investigation and/or adjudication concerning professional practice which falls below that of a reasonably competent practitioner and/or risks bringing discredit upon the profession and upon BPF.

2.5 Justice: the fair and impartial treatment of all participants and the provision of adequate services

The principle of justice requires being just and fair to all participants and respecting their human rights and dignity. It directs attention to considering conscientiously any legal requirements and obligations, and remaining alert to potential conflicts between legal and ethical obligations. Justice in the distribution of services requires the ability to determine impartially the provision of services for participants and the allocation of services between participants. A commitment to fairness requires the ability to appreciate differences between people and to be committed to equality of opportunity, and avoiding discrimination against people or groups contrary to their legitimate personal or social characteristics. Practitioners have a duty to strive to ensure a fair provision of counselling and psychotherapy services, accessible and appropriate to the needs of participants.

2.6 Self-respect: fostering the practitioner's self-knowledge and care for self

The principle of self-respect means that the practitioner appropriately applies all the above principles as entitlements for self. This includes seeking counselling or therapy and other opportunities for personal development as required. There is an ethical responsibility to use supervision for appropriate personal and professional support and development, and to seek training and other opportunities for continuing professional development. Guarding against financial



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liabilities arising from work undertaken usually requires obtaining appropriate insurance. The principle of self-respect encourages active engagement in life-enhancing activities and relationships that are independent of relationships in counselling or psychotherapy.

3. Personal moral qualities of a Practitioner

3.1 The practitioner's personal moral qualities are of the utmost importance to participants. Many of the personal qualities considered important in the provision of services have an ethical or moral component and are therefore considered as virtues or good personal qualities.

3.2 It is inappropriate to prescribe that all practitioners possess these qualities, since it is fundamental that these personal qualities are deeply rooted in the person concerned and developed out of personal commitment rather than the requirement of an external authority.

3.3 Personal qualities to which counsellors and psychotherapists are strongly encouraged to aspire include:

Empathy: the ability to communicate understanding of another person's experience from that person's perspective.

Sincerity: a personal commitment to consistency between what is professed and what is done.

Integrity: commitment to being moral in dealings with others, personal straightforwardness, honesty and coherence.

Resilience: the capacity to work with the participant's concerns without being personally diminished.

Respect: showing appropriate esteem to others and their understanding of themselves.

Humility: the ability to assess accurately and acknowledge one's own strengths and weaknesses.

Competence: the effective deployment of the skills and knowledge needed to do



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what is required.

Fairness: the consistent application of appropriate criteria to inform decisions and actions.

Wisdom: possession of sound judgement that informs practice.

Courage: the capacity to act in spite of known fears, risks and uncertainty.

4. Practitioner's Professional Responsibilities

4.1 In all aspects of their professional work, practitioners recognise their responsibilities and obligations to colleagues in their own profession and in other professions. Practitioners are expected to ensure that they are appropriately supported via supervision, consultation or coaching, to carry out their responsibilities.

4.2 When practitioners train or supervise others, they are committed to furthering the professional development and encouraging the personal development of these people.

4.3 When a member knows of a possible breach in the BPF Statement of Ethics and/or Code of Practice by another practitioner, they may first informally attempt to resolve the matter by bringing it confidentially to the attention of the other practitioner. If the breach is serious, or an informal solution is not forthcoming, a complaint should be raised by invoking the BPF Complaints Procedure.

4.4 Practitioners must notify the Chair of BPF's Ethics Committee if:

4.4.1 a complaint is upheld against them by a professional body which might have a bearing on their practice as a counsellor, psychotherapist, supervisor, counselling skills user, and/or a trainer in the above fields;

4.4.2 they are convicted of a criminal offence which might have a bearing on their practice as a counsellor, psychotherapist, supervisor, counselling skills user, and/or a trainer in the above fields;

4.4.3 successful civil proceedings are brought against them which might have a bearing on their practice as a counsellor, psychotherapist, supervisor, counselling skills user, and/or a trainer in the above fields.



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- 4.4.4 In any of these cases, or in the case of such notification being deliberately withheld by the practitioner, the trustees of BPF have the right to review the practitioner's membership of BPF.

5. Participants at any BPF event

5.1 Ethical values of participating at a BPF event

- 5.1.1 All participants at BPF events commit to uphold the BPF ethos in terms of its values and principles and to abide by BPF's Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice.
- 5.1.2 The relationship between all participants at any BPF event is governed ethically.
- 5.1.3 It is a relationship which is respectful and valuing of each person based on acceptance, trust and confidentiality and without regard to gender, sexuality, age, religion, culture, race or ethnicity, or any other form or manifestation of discrimination.
- 5.1.4 Participants will have regard to the health and safety of other participants.
- 5.1.5 Participants accept any procedure or decision of BPF relating to its Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice.

5.2 Confidentiality

- 5.2.1 A participant will treat all information provided by other participants as confidential.
- 5.2.2 Any unanticipated communication with a third party must be reported to the other participant, together with the content of the communication, as soon as possible thereafter.

5.3 Exploitation

- 5.3.1 A participant must not exploit other participants, financially, emotionally, sexually or in any other way which does not give attention primarily to the best interests of those participants.
- 5.3.2 Participants must avoid exploiting the trust and dependency of other people with whom they might work.



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5.3.3 A participant's responsibility not to exploit another participant extends beyond the termination of the event.

5.4 Conflict of Interests

5.4.1 Where a potential conflict of interests exists between participants and becomes apparent after the working relationship has commenced, the participants have a duty to acknowledge the conflict of interest to the practitioner and seek an equitable resolution to the situation.