



## Association of Psychospiritual Practitioners

Codes of Ethics & Practice  
Complaints Procedure  
2008/9

**Contact Information:**

Address: 65a Watford Way, Hendon, London NW4 3AQ

Telephone: 0208 202 4525

Fax: 020 8202 6166

## Contents

Registration	3
<b>Codes of Ethics</b>	
Introduction	3
Professional Responsibility	4
Professional Competence	4
Confidentiality	5
<b>Codes of Practice</b>	
Boundaries Around Work	6
Conflict of Loyalty	6
Issues of Confidentiality	7
The Nature of Psychotherapy	7
Indemnity Insurance	8
Advertising	8
<b>Complaints Procedure</b>	
Introduction	8
Timescale	8
Declaration of Interest	9
Conduct	9
Resignation or Lapsing of Membership	9
Stages of Making a Complaint	9
Preparatory Consultations	9
Suspension and Restoration of Rights of Membership	9
Investigation and Conciliation	10
Outcome	10
Refusal or Failure to Attend	10
Adjudication	10

## **Registration**

On qualification, psychotherapy graduates will be registered as having trained with the Institute. That register is lodged with the United Kingdom Council of Psychotherapy (UKCP). The Institute reserves the right to remove a graduate's name from its Register if Codes of Ethics are not adhered to.

Coaching graduates will be accredited by European Mentoring and Coaching Council

## **Codes of Ethics**

This is applicable to all members of APP, Trainers, Supervisors, Psychotherapist, Therapeutic Counsellors, Coaches or Applied practitioners. In this text practitioner is the generic word used for all members of APP.

### **Introduction**

Embodied in this document are values which are articulated as principles. These are not intended as rules by which to judge ourselves or one another, but guidelines by which we conduct the art and practice of psychotherapy/therapeutic counselling or work as an applied practitioner coach.

Practitioners are responsible for the observation of the principles inherent in this Code of Ethics and use the Code as the basis of good practice rather than a set of minimal requirements. The Code applies to Members of the Association in all their professional roles, in group or individual psychotherapy and as a trainer.

Ethical standards comprise such values as integrity, competence, confidentiality and responsibility. Members of the Association, in assenting to these guidelines, accept responsibility to clients, students, to the Association and to themselves. In addition, the practice of psychosynthesis psychology has ethical implications in personal as well as professional relationships.

Practitioners respect the dignity and worth of human beings, and their ultimate right to self-determination, whilst having regard for the interests of others. They accept a responsibility to encourage and support the self-development of the client within the client's network of relationships.

Practitioners respect their clients as individuals working towards autonomy and thus growing in their ability to make decisions and changes in the light of their own beliefs, values and experience. The client's interest is paramount and where there is a conflict of responsibilities, the practitioner has to use his or her considered judgement.

Members of the Association need to be aware of the shadow aspects of psychospiritual work, in themselves and those who are drawn to this form. The work needs to be grounded in embodiment, and a number of layers of reality needs to be held concurrently.

## **Professional Responsibility**

Practitioners do not misrepresent themselves in terms of their professional qualifications, experience and membership of the Association when undertaking a contract.

Practitioners should recognise the training, practice, differences and experience of other professionals and act with integrity and respect towards them.

Practitioners shall state clearly to the client or student, or where appropriate the legal guardian, the terms, conditions and methods of practice. The practitioner shall endeavour to ensure that these terms, conditions and methods are maintained or say clearly why alterations must be made.

Practitioners undertake to set out clearly and without prejudice a written contract with their client or student before the onset of therapy or training. If this is psychotherapy in private practice, the contract must state clearly the terms of fees charged, the terms of confidentiality, the duration of each session, the methods of payment, any system of induction and review, procedures for cancellation, termination, payment or otherwise for missed sessions and practical arrangements which support the integrity of their work. It must also inform the client/student of the practitioner's membership of APP, the Codes of Ethics and Practice and the address where this can be obtained.

Practitioners are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship and for making the boundaries as explicit as possible to the client.

Engaging in sexual activity with a current client or student, whilst also engaging in a therapeutic relationship is unethical. Engaging in sexual activity with a past client or student is normally inadvisable, is only to be undertaken after a time appropriate to the length and nature of the relationship, and with the knowledge of the practitioner's supervisor.

## **Professional Competence**

Practitioners who are in doubt about their ability to perform competently, should seek appropriate supervision, support or advice. They are also expected to be able to account to clients and colleagues for what they do and why.

Practitioners have a responsibility to monitor the limits of their competence. where those limits are reached, they must refer on to others more able to help. Where practitioners have become, through whatever means, unable to work effectively, they must withdraw from work until such time as they are able to work effectively again. These decisions are taken by the practitioner in consultation with colleagues, supervisors, their personal psychotherapist and/or trainers.

Practitioners should continuously be working to extend the range of their own skills and to become clearer all the time concerning their own limitations. It is part of their professional responsibility to seek information and advice from colleagues and also to refer clients to other therapists if this may be of benefit to them.

Practitioners should from time to time discuss the overall progress of their work with their clients or students. If reasonable progress is not being made in psychotherapy, the practitioner has an obligation to inform the client

accordingly and to suggest termination or a change of therapist, leaving the ultimate decision for this in the hands of the client. The ability to recognise that one is not the right therapist for a particular client is one sign of professional competence.

Should a change of therapist be necessary, they should endeavour to safeguard the client's welfare until such time as referral to another professional has been accepted.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is intrinsic to good practice. Information which is confidential includes not only the identity and personal details of the client, but any data which could lead a third party to infer what is confidential.

Practitioners explore with their clients/students their own and their client's expectations about confidentiality in psychotherapy. They also ascertain what other Agencies are involved with their clients and confer as appropriate with such agencies. Except in extreme circumstances, such conference takes place only with the client's agreement.

Contact by the practitioner with third parties such as relatives and friends of the client/student should happen only with the express knowledge and consent of the client/student. Exceptions may be made in certain circumstances e.g. in the management of clients or students who are considered to be dangerous to themselves or others; or in an emergency.

The practitioner should treat as privileged all the information received from the client/student, whether this is during therapy sessions or during other situations when they might be in communication, unless the client/student specifically agrees that this information is generally communicable.

Practitioners should obtain consent before the publication of any material/gathered from clients. This requirement applies especially to material recorded by electronic means such as audio or video-recording. Where the client or student specifically requests that material should not be used, this must be respected.

Exceptions may be made in certain circumstances, e.g. where a lawsuit may be threatened and the practitioner is required to give details to solicitors or professional insurers. Material about clients held in computer files shall be secure and conform to the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1986 and any subsequent revisions.

Practitioners are advised to keep confidential records secure and to restrict access to their records if they work in Agencies, Clinics or Institutions.

A client's or student's communications must at all times be regarded as confidential and if disclosure is necessary the client or student should normally be informed. The limits of confidentiality should be explained. Clients shall have access to their records as required by current legislation; assessments, letters to referees and summaries of treatment should be available to clients on request. (A practitioner's own notes to themselves and any supervision on them is not required to be accessible to clients.)

Contact by the practitioner should treat as privileged all the information received from the client/student, whether this is during therapy sessions or during other situations when they might be in communication, unless the client/student specifically requests that material should not be used, this must be respected.

## Codes of Practice

This is applicable to all members of APP:

Trainers, Supervisors, Psychotherapist, Therapeutic Counsellors, Coaches or Applied practitioners.

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Code of Ethics. They are guidelines for good practice, not rules. What is important is that each practitioner is consistent and operates from a coherent and thought out position and treats clients, colleagues and students in an ethical, respectful and responsible fashion.

### **Boundaries Around Work**

Practitioners shall observe such professional boundaries that prevent them placing themselves in a position that might compromise their relationship with clients, students, colleagues or other professionals. They are responsible for setting and monitoring these and for making explicit such boundaries to those concerned.

A practitioner should endeavour a safe working space and ensure a secure environment for the providing of therapy. As far as possible personal issues should not affect their work.

If the practitioner is working out of their own home, a suitable work setting needs to be defined for these purposes. Practitioners are advised to have a separate telephone number with an ansaphone for their practice. Clients or students are encouraged not to infringe personal boundaries outside session time.

During and after in depth work or training, discretion should be exercised with regard to social contacts with the client/student. In settings where the nature of the work allows practitioners to mix socially with their clients or students, the practitioners must ensure that such social contacts do not jeopardise the professional relationship and that they behave appropriately.

### **Conflict of Loyalty**

If it emerges during the course of the work that there arises a conflict of loyalties which impinges on the work with a client, it is expected that the practitioner make such a conflict explicit to the client.

Therapists who become aware of a conflict between their obligation to a client and their obligation to an agency or organisation employing them will make explicit the nature of the loyalties and responsibilities involved.

Where the relationship with a client becomes compromised in any way, the therapist has a clear responsibility to ensure that the client is appropriately referred to another professional.

### **Issues of Confidentiality**

Treating with confidence means not revealing any of the information which might result in identification of the client. If the practitioner owes accountability for therapeutic work to agencies or supervisors, the client should be informed that this is the case.

The principle underlying the practice of confidentiality extends to, for example, not discussing clients with involved colleagues in a manner which trivialises the client or the work.

In extreme circumstances where a client could be in danger to others or themselves, the practitioner must inform the client that he or she may break confidence and then take appropriate action.

Where a practitioner wishes to use specific information gained during work with a client in, for example, a lecture or a publication, the client's permission should be sought and, when desired, anonymity given.

Practitioners treat with proper respect colleagues and other professionals and if privileged information comes their way through interaction with their clients, they seek with the client's permission to resolve this directly with their colleagues.

### **The Nature of Therapy**

All information that is shared during the therapy session is coloured by the client's own viewpoint. Therapists need to be aware that they are building images in their own minds about other people who do not have recourse or sight of the information that is being shared. Therapists need therefore to hold others outside of the sanctuary of the session space with due regard and respect.

Transference and counter-transference issues always arise during the process of therapy and in training. Practitioners need to be aware of the immense influence this has, not only on their client's or student's psyche, but also on their own. Provision for ongoing supervision and recourse to feedback from colleagues and other professionals needs to be part of the practitioner's professional life in order to be vigilant to this.

### **Social and Ethical Responsibility**

Psychotherapists, trainers and supervisors have an ethical obligation not to accept privately as clients those who are in relationship with other agencies, organisations or institutions without prior notice or agreement with that agency.

Where the client has been referred to a practitioner, it is normal practice and courtesy to report back in general terms to the referring agent or practitioner, without breaching confidentiality or going into significant detail, regarding the client's subsequent progress.

Similarly, if practitioners refer clients to others, it is their responsibility, as far as possible, to verify the competence and integrity of the person to whom clients are referred. Practitioners should be aware of the possible implications of their work for other people related to the client (e.g. children, parents etc.).

Practitioners should inform themselves of the social, moral and legal expectations of the community in which they work and respect those cultural aspects of their clients, students and colleagues.

Practising under the influence of alcohol or mind-altering drugs is unethical. Practitioners who are undergoing treatment for chemical dependency disorders or who are taking medication which may affect their ability to work should not withhold this information from their colleagues and should withdraw from practising until such time as those professionals with whom they are being treated deem it appropriate.

Psychotherapists are part of a professional community of peers and colleagues where gossip, innuendo, and derogatory comments about other members of the community, or practitioners of another branch of psychotherapy, are inappropriate and to be avoided.

If the practitioner becomes aware of professional malpractice he or she must take appropriate steps with the individual concerned and/or with their professional association.

## **Indemnity Insurance**

Practitioners must take out a professional indemnity insurance to cover themselves in the event of a legal suit and to ensure that they are adequately covered in the event of other claims that might be made against the practitioner of the owners of the premises in which the practitioner works.

## **Advertising**

When announcing their services, practitioners limit information to details of the service they offer, practical details and the relevant qualifications. They do not make evaluative statements as to the quality of their service nor do they make comparisons with other similar services offered by colleagues or competitors.

Practitioners do not display membership or affiliation of the Association or any other organisation in a manner which falsely implies the sponsorship or validation of the organisation.

# **Complaints Procedure**

## **Introduction**

The Association has a complaints procedure which provides a means of resolving, where possible, complaints against members on the Register.

The procedure follows a model whose intent is to provide mediation, conciliation and resolution wherever possible. The Institute or the disputing parties can at any time call on external professionals to mediate on their behalf if they deem it to be necessary.

All Members need to accept and work to the Institute's Code of Ethics and Practice when considering a complaint. The Codes are guidelines to the maintenance of good practice, not a set of rigid rules.

All Members need to agree to follow the course of the complaints process before having recourse to other bodies. This is fully in line with the Code of Ethics and Professional Practice so that the integrity of the Institute, those whose professional lives depend on it and the general public are protected.

A complaint is one which alleges a violation of the Institute's Code of Practice, Code of Ethics, Complaints Procedure or Appeals Procedure. A complaint can be brought by a member of the public, a student following one of its courses or by a Member of the organisation. The Association does not consider complaints by a third party.

The Complaints Procedure is investigative. It begins by seeking clarification and grounds for resolution and may be followed by adjudication and the use of sanctions.

## **Timescale**

A formal complaint should normally be lodged within five years of the event which forms the substance of the complaint. Although it is intended that the procedures should be concluded within six months of the receipt of the formal complaint, it is recognised that in some complex cases it may be necessary to extend the period of investigation, conciliation and/or appeals proceedings beyond this timescale.

Complaints must be made in English with clear reference to specific breaches of the Code.

The Complaints Committee is appointed by the Association's Directors to implement the Complaints Procedure. Complaints will be heard in the United Kingdom only.

The Committee will consist of three people one of whom will be the Chairperson. The composition of the Panel will have regard for the expertise available among Members concerning the substance of the complaint. At least one person on the Panel must be external to the Complainant and/or the practitioner's involvement with the Association. The Chairperson of the Panel must be one of the Directors wherever possible.

#### **Declaration of Interest**

Members of the Complaints Committee have a duty to declare any interests which may cast doubt on their impartiality. The views of the Complainant and the practitioner about whom the complaint is made will be taken into consideration by the Chairperson of the Complaints Committee when deciding whether any persons should be replaced on the Panel.

#### **Conduct**

Those persons taking part in any stages of the Complaints Procedure as outlined below are required to act in a manner that does not breach confidentiality, and not to act in such a way as might prejudice or influence the outcome of any of these stages of the Complaints Procedure. Any breach of this may result in the procedure being halted by the Chairperson of the Complaints Committee.

#### **Resignation or Lapsing of Membership**

The resignation of a Member against whom a complaint is being made before the completion of the Complaints Procedure, without good reason or due notice, shall not necessarily impede or halt the progress of the complaint. However, in such cases, the Chairperson of the Complaints Committee will inform the Chairperson of the UKCP Registration Board and any reapplication for membership by the Member concerned will require the approval of the Governing Board of the UKCP.

#### **Stages of Making a Complaint**

The Complaints Procedure proceeds through five stages, each of which has a separate aim and specific requirements.

#### **Preparatory Consultations**

Anyone wishing to complain may have preliminary and confidential discussions on matters of procedure with an Executive Officer of the Association for this purpose. The aim of such discussions is to give the prospective Complainant information about procedures and to encourage them to attempt to resolve the issue with the practitioner concerned. They should, in any case, be given a copy of the Association's Complaints Procedure.

A formal complaint commences only when the following conditions are satisfied:

- The allegation is about a breach of a specific section of the Code of Ethics, Code of Practice or Appeals Procedure
- The Member about whom the complaints is made is named and was a Member of the Association at the time of the alleged cause for complaint
- A written and signed complaint is received by the Directors of the Association, who will forward copies to the practitioner against whom the complaint is being made

#### **Suspension and Restoration of Rights of Membership**

The Chairperson of the Complaints Committee can, after consultation with the Directors, suspend some or all of the rights to practise with immediate effect, pending investigation.

If the complaint is not upheld, all rights will be immediately restored.

## **Investigation and Conciliation**

### ***Aim***

The aim of this stage of the Complaints Procedure is to produce a record of the areas of agreement and disagreement between the parties involved in the complaint and to make recommendations to the Complaints Committee regarding the possibility of a resolution, the need to progress to Adjudication or the conclusion that there is no basis for the complaint to proceed.

### ***Investigation***

The Chairperson of the Complaints Committee will appoint one or more independent persons (the Conciliators) who are to act impartially to investigate the Complaint. In doing so they may make such enquiries as they deem necessary. They will arrange to meet with the Complainant and the practitioner concerned, either separately or together, as soon as practicable.

### ***Notice of Meeting***

Once a date and venue for the meeting(s) are agreed, the Conciliator(s) will send written details of arrangements for the meeting to the Complainant and the practitioner against whom the complaint is being made.

### ***Outcome***

Following the meeting(s), the Conciliator(s) will write detailing the nature of the investigation and the outcome thereof to the Chairperson of the Complaints Committee. Copies will be sent to the Complainant and the practitioner concerned. The Complaints Committee will consider the Conciliator(s) report and will notify both parties as to whether or not the matter will be taken to adjudication or terminated.

Information will be given to the Complainant about appeals procedures

## **Refusal or Failure to Attend**

### ***By the Complainant***

The refusal or failure of a Complainant to attend meetings with the Conciliator(s) without good reason or due notice, will mean that the complaint is deemed to be withdrawn. The Conciliators will report to the Chairperson or the Complaints Committee who will write to both parties to this effect exonerating the practitioner against whom the complaint was made.

### ***By the Practitioner***

The refusal or failure of the Member against whom the complaint has been made to attend meetings with the Conciliator(s) without good reason or due notice, will mean that the Conciliator(s) are required to inform the Chairperson of the Complaints Committee who, in turn, will recommend to the Directors of the Association the termination of the membership of the Member concerned. The final decision will be made by the Directors. In the event of this recommendation being upheld, the Governing Board of the UKCP will be informed and the Member's name removed from the Register.

## **Adjudication**

### ***Purpose***

Adjudication exists to examine complaints in a formal manner, decide on their validity and determine sanctions as appropriate. Where there are several complaints against the same practitioner whether by the same or different Complainants, they may be heard at the same adjudication meeting.

### ***Representation***

When appearing before the Adjudication Panel the Complainant may be accompanied by a representative to assist in the presentation of the Complainant's case. Likewise the practitioner may be assisted in their presentation by someone who is not a Member of the Association.

### ***Conduct of Meeting***

This is a formal meeting and the Chairperson of the Adjudication Panel is responsible for ensuring that the proceedings are conducted in a manner which shows due regard to the gravity of the situation and to considerations of confidentiality.

### ***Administration***

The Chairperson of the Adjudication Panel is responsible for arranging the Panel Meeting and notifying all participants in writing.

### ***Written Evidence***

Written evidence or submissions must be submitted by the Complainant and the practitioner along with any relevant submissions from witnesses. Submissions must be received by the Complaints Committee not less than fifteen working days prior to the date fixed for the Adjudication Panel meeting. Such evidence will be circulated to Panel Members, and to the Complainant and the Member concerned not less than ten working days prior to the meeting. The Chairperson of the Adjudication Panel may take advice on the written evidence and/or procedural matters from the Institute's solicitor.

### ***New Evidence***

Because of time constraints and the requirement that evidence be submitted and circulated in advance of the Panel meeting, the only new evidence to be admitted on the day will be a short oral or written submission at the discretion of the Panel.

### ***Attendance by Witnesses***

The Adjudication Panel may invite witnesses to attend to speak to, and answer questions about, their written submissions.

### ***Requests for Recess***

- At any time during the meeting the Chairperson may order a recess
- At any time during the meeting either party may ask for a recess in order to consider any issues which may have arisen during the meeting. Such requests will be dealt with at the discretion of the Chairperson

### ***Failure to Attend***

The failure of either the Complainant or the practitioner to attend without good reason or due notice will result in the actions described above.

The Adjudication Panel Meeting

This will normally be conducted according to the following protocols. Both parties will be present while:

- A summary of the Complainant's case is made
- Summary of the case of the Member is made
- The Complainant and/or representative puts questions, through the Chairperson, to the practitioner

- The practitioner puts questions, through the Chairperson, to the Complainant
- Adjudication Panel Members may then seek clarification from the Complainant and/or the Member
- When the Chairperson is satisfied that the Panel has gained all the clarification required, the Chairperson summarises the case and the Panel asks all parties to withdraw

### ***Adjudication***

The Adjudication Panel must decide for or against the Complainant.

### ***Notification of Findings***

The Chairperson of the Adjudication Panel will notify the decision in writing to the parties within ten working days. The Chairperson of the Complaints Committee will notify the Directors of the outcome of the Adjudication and recommend any sanctions to be imposed. The Directors will implement any sanctions.

### ***Sanctions***

Any of the following sanctions may be imposed:

- Requirement to improve/change in a specific way various activities of the practitioner's professional practice under an appointed supervisor for a specific period
- Continued suspension of the practitioner's professional rights as outlined above for a specific period until conditions specified by the Complaints Committee have been satisfied
- Termination of Registration of the Member with UKCP

The UKCP's Registration Board will be informed of any outcome of upheld complaints.

### ***Appeals Procedure***

The Complainant will be informed of the appeals procedure available through United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy.

February 2009