

Feedback data collected to inform the *Ethical Framework* review

An update on our *Ethical Framework* review

We last updated The *Ethical Framework for Counselling Professions* in 2018. Since then a lot has changed in the world, the counselling profession and in people's lives. New challenges have arisen for our members as a result of fast changes to technology, changes to the demand for services and the delivery of services in the profession. The COVID-19 pandemic has also increased the demand for services and the way they could be delivered.

The current *Ethical Framework* review started in March 2023 with Phase 1, which involved scoping out the project with professional experts. To help inform the review, we compiled data from several departments within BACP and their work with members and members of the public.

The data collected covers the period from 1 January 2018 to 5 April 2023. It allowed us to capture a number of areas which are of concern to members, supervisors, members of the public.

These included:

- boundaries
- confidentiality
- contracting and endings
- equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)
- international working
- online working
- outdoor/ eco therapy
- professional standards
- safeguarding
- supervision
- training and placements
- the use of social media

Some key themes emerged from the analysis of the data including power, technology, EDI, professional standards and training for counselling.

Power

Issues indicated that a number of therapists didn't understand or acknowledge the power imbalance in different situations. These crossed over boundary issues, dual roles and conflict of interest, supervision, line management, use of social media and EDI.

Technology

Advancements in technology have progressed the ability for therapy to be offered to people who wouldn't otherwise have access to it. This included being able to offer therapy online, to offer therapy to clients living abroad and the use of technology within the home or office to manage and store data.

However, these advantages are not without concern and some of the issues raised involved the confidentiality of data collected by 'Smart' devices, the legal and ethical implications of working with clients in different countries and the data usage of online therapy platforms and video platforms e.g. Zoom or MS Teams.

Equality, diversity and inclusion issues (EDI)

Many EDI issues focused a need for greater training and awareness around understanding of neurodiversity specifically autistic spectrum disorder. They also concerned members possibly breaching the Equality Act 2010 by not offering therapy to clients due to inaccessibility issues.

Professional Standards

Many standards issues had also been raised in past *Ethical Framework* reviews including areas of practice such as contracting with clients, supervision, record keeping and they continued to cause problems for members throughout this period.

Training and placements

There's more demand for counselling services in recent years, making it more essential to have training programmes and placements to accommodate the need for member training hours. However, these changes have also meant that some placement providers are not able to offer trainees the highest quality placement experience. Also, training providers have a lot of power and some trainees have found it very difficult to raise their concerns about courses, including non-bacp courses, accredited courses, course tutors and other students.

What does this data tell us?

Collecting this data has allowed us to understand several key themes. And we'll continue to make sure we're consulting with members and the wider public. Consultation will help inform how the current *Ethical Framework* is used and what changes to the framework would help our members, supervisors and members of the public. We recognise that we must also pay attention to the areas that have been raised more recently such as AI, digital technology and International working.

Next steps

There's still a lot of work to do and we'll be giving you opportunities to share your feedback and tell us what you need and how the framework can be more effective for you. If you have any questions about the review or the current framework, you can get in touch with our Ethical Framework team at efnew@bacp.co.uk.