

BACP Service Accreditation Scheme 2003

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Introduction

The Service Accreditation Scheme helps the public, practitioners and funding bodies identify services offering a high standard of counselling and psychotherapy provision. It sets out the benchmarks for professionalism and expected quality standard, and encompasses the whole range of service providers, from small local voluntary groups offering help on specific issues, to major commercial Employee Assistance Programme providers of counselling services. All are united in their commitment to high level provision for service users and staff, and to working within the BACP *Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions*.

The Scheme sets the standard to which all counselling and psychotherapy services can aspire. It will be useful not only to services seeking accreditation, but also as a guide to what constitutes a good service.

The Scheme is open to services that meet the eligibility and operational criteria and agree to be bound by the Scheme's Terms and Conditions. This includes services that are members in their own right, or that are part of an organisational member. In the latter case, the organisational member applies for accreditation and bears ultimate responsibility for that service.

On acceptance, an accredited service will:

- Receive a certificate of accreditation
- Be added to the online Accredited Service Directory
- Have access to the unique Accredited Service logo
- May advertise as providing a BACP Accredited Counselling & Psychotherapy Service

Accreditation is awarded for a five-year period, during which the service is monitored by BACP's quality assurance procedures. At the end of the period the service will need to re-apply to renew its accredited status for a further term.

Part I - Criteria for accreditation of services

Part A: Eligibility Criteria

These criteria *must* be met before an application is accepted for assessment of the operational criteria specified in Part B.

Services making an application for accreditation must:

Criterion 1

Be an organisational member of BACP and subject to its *Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions* and Professional Conduct Procedure. If the service is part of an organisational member, it is the organisational member that will make the application for the accreditation of its counselling and psychotherapy service.

Criterion 2

Provide a counselling or psychotherapy service.

Criterion 3

Include at least three practitioners who undertake counselling/psychotherapy.

Part B: Operational Criteria

Applicants should provide clear, concise and appropriate evidence of meeting all these criteria.

Criterion 4 - Policy

4.1 Aims and Objectives

A statement of aims and objectives, available to all staff and service users, must set out clearly:

- The purpose of the services provided
- The type of counselling/psychotherapy offered
- The ethical framework adhered to
- The limits of confidentiality
- The context and contracting of the work (this includes payment for services, relationships with the host organisation (if relevant) and times of service availability)

4.2 Publicity

All service publicity material and pre-counselling information should comply with the *Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions* and be readily available.

4.3 Staffing

- 4.3.1 A specified person must hold clinical responsibility for the service. They should be a member of an appropriate professional body, subject to its complaints procedure and accredited by or of equivalent standing with it.
- 4.3.2 A training and development policy should exist for all staff.
- 4.3.3 A clear selection procedure for counsellors and psychotherapists should exist
- 4.3.4 Recruitment panels for counsellors and psychotherapists in the service must include at least one qualified, experienced practitioner familiar with the work of the service.

4.4 Equal Opportunities

The service should:

- 4.4.1 Be committed to equality of opportunity for its staff and for users of the service and comply with all relevant legislation. It must demonstrate a non-discriminatory approach to staff and users, irrespective of age, colour, creed, culture, disability, education, ethnicity, gender, information, knowledge, mobility, money, nationality, race, religion, sexual orientation, social class, status, etc.
- 4.4.2 Define its target population and survey users using an equal opportunities questionnaire or similar procedure.
- 4.4.3 Recognise its accessibility limitations and publish a strategy for addressing this.

4.5 Evaluation and feedback

- 4.5.1 All aspects of the service's work should be formally evaluated by users and staff on a regular basis that is at least annually.
- 4.5.2 Evaluation findings should be reviewed and appropriate changes made.
- 4.5.3 Annual feedback should be given to users and other stakeholders.
- 4.5.4 All feedback must maintain users' anonymity.

Criterion 5 - Management and administration

5.1 Service structure

- 5.1.1 There should be clearly defined and effective management and organisational structure, which includes a Head of Service who has knowledge and experience of the counselling field and who has overall responsibility for management of the service.
- 5.1.2 There should be clear lines of accountability/reporting.
- 5.1.3 Formal arrangements for financial accountability should be in place.

5.2 Community liaison

Links with referral resources and specialist services in the community should exist.

5.3 Health and Safety

- 5.3.1 The service must comply with the current Health and Safety at Work Act and other relevant legislation.
- 5.3.2 Practitioners must be given training and best practice guidelines for potential dangerous and violent situations.
- 5.3.3 Specific training and guidelines should be provided for those that undertake home visits.
- 5.3.4 There should be procedures that help all staff identify and deal with clients at risk to themselves or others.
- 5.3.5 Procedures must exist on how to deal with critical incidents such as dangerous or violent behaviour.
- 5.3.6 All counsellors and psychotherapists (both voluntary and salaried) should be covered by Professional Indemnity and Public Liability insurance.

5.4 Administration

- 5.4.1 All records (whether paper or electronic) should be secure and confidential.

- 5.4.2 The service should comply with the current Data Protection Act and other relevant legislation.
- 5.4.3 Appointment systems, if used, must be private and confidential.
- 5.4.4 Ownership of, and access to, service user records should be specified.

5.5 Management

- 5.5.1 All service staff should have the opportunity to meet on a regular basis and to have access to suitable consultation and feedback.
- 5.5.2 Part-time, newly qualified practitioners and trainees must be supported by a permanent member of the counselling and psychotherapy staff, and training in the service systems and procedures must be given.
- 5.5.3 Demand on the service should be monitored and managed.
- 5.5.4 There should be systems to monitor and manage the quality of practitioners work.
- 5.5.5 Staff undertaking a variety of roles must make it clear to service users and colleagues which one they are in at any given time.
- 5.5.6 Grievance and disciplinary procedures must exist for all staff.
- 5.5.7 Formal links should exist for consultation and referral between counselling and psychotherapy staff and medical and psychiatric services.

Criterion 6 - Delivery

6.1 Accommodation

Rooms used for counselling and psychotherapy purposes should be private and free from interruption, furnished appropriately and, when counselling is in process, used exclusively for that purpose.

6.2 Professional conduct

- 6.2.1 The service must be run in accordance with BACP's *Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions*.
- 6.2.2 Where counselling and psychotherapy is not appropriate, or the service does not have the appropriate skills, users must be referred to suitable agencies eg psychiatric services, GP.
- 6.2.3 Counsellors and psychotherapists should monitor and develop their professional work through regular supervision/consultation and continuing professional development (CPD).
- 6.2.4 All secretarial, administration and reception support staff should work in a manner that maintains confidentiality. Reception staff must be experienced and confident in working with those in distress.
- 6.2.5 An appropriate client and customer complaints procedure should be available.

Part II - How to prepare an application

Please complete and submit the prescribed application form. Our [Guide to Applying, Renewing and Maintaining Accreditation](#) is recommended reading.

Please ensure that the submission includes the following:

- A fully completed application form
- A list of all numbered appendices of supporting evidence
- A statement of support for the professionalism of the Service applicant, from a professional external to the organisation providing the Service, but familiar with its work, which is signed, dated and provided on letterhead paper or via email.

It is likely that some pieces of evidence submitted will support more than one criterion. Please ensure only one copy is submitted of each document and cross-reference to as many criteria as pertinent.

It is important the submission provides clear evidence for each criterion.

Part III - The application assessment process

Send one electronic copy of the application and appendices via email, another internet facility or on a memory stick, along with one hardcopy and the application fee, to the Service Accreditation Team at BACP House. Please check the current fee before submitting an application.

The application will be checked for eligibility (Part A), completeness, presentation and payment. The application will be acknowledged by email and detail any points for clarity or address. If these are not answered satisfactorily, the application may be returned with the application fee, minus an administrative charge.

Once checking is complete, the application will be assessed against the Operational Criteria (Part B) by BACP's professional assessors. Points of clarification or additional information may be requested. If requests cannot be met within the specified period, the service will be advised to withdraw the application.

When the assessment is complete, the service will be provided with an Assessment Report. This will be one of the following:

- i. Accreditation is granted - recommendations for improvement and development may be made.
- ii. Accreditation is deferred - the applicant will receive specific feedback on criteria not met in full or in part and granted a set period in which to address and resubmit papers for further assessment.
- iii. Accreditation is not granted - the applicant will receive specific feedback on criteria still not met in full or in part and the application deemed to be unsuccessful.

Services can consider themselves accredited when they receive written confirmation from BACP. Accreditation takes effect from the date stated on the final Assessment Report and confirmatory email. Once accreditation has been granted, the service will receive a BACP Certificate of Accreditation and the Accredited Services logo for use on all related publicity materials. The service will also be added to the online Accredited Services Directory.

Appeals Procedure

Applicants have the right to appeal against the final decision if they feel they have grounds. The grounds for appeal can only be:

- That the published procedure in the Service Accreditation Scheme was not followed, *or*
- That assessment has not been carried out with reference to the published criteria.

An appellant must identify on which of these grounds the appeal is being made. If it is on both grounds, they must be identified separately.

Appeals must be written and lodged with BACP Professional Standards within three months of the date on the notification email, together with the appeal submission fee.

The grounds for the appeal should be clearly and specifically stated with reference to:

- The information provided in the application
- The published criteria
- The reasons for rejection provided in the report

All appeals are assessed by professionals external to the assessment process.

The original application and the grounds for appeal will be considered as part of the procedure and any decision reached will be final. Applicants will be informed in writing of the decision.

Fee Structure

The fees comprise of an application submission fee, an annual monitoring fee and, in the case of an unsuccessful application wishing to challenge the decision, the appeal submission fee. The fees are reviewed in accordance with BACP policy and the current fee schedule is available on the service accreditation webpages of the BACP website.

There is no charge for visits made as part of an original application if BACP decides this is necessary. Services requesting a visit will bear the cost of the visit.

The cost of quality assurance visits where a Service has failed to comply with the requirements for maintenance of accreditation will be met by the Service.

The cost of audit visits will be met by BACP.

Part IV - Maintenance and renewal of accreditation

Accreditation is awarded for a five-year period. The ongoing requirements for maintenance of accreditation are:

- Maintenance of BACP organisational membership
- Compliance with the *Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions*
- Criteria for the Service Accreditation Scheme continue to be met
- Payment of the annual subscription fee
- Compliance with BACP's quality assurance and monitoring procedures

Quality assurance monitoring procedures

BACP has an annual monitoring procedure that requires services to complete and submit an annual monitoring form within the timescales advised. Failure to comply with this, or to maintain accreditation requirements, may result in BACP carrying out a quality assurance visit to the service. The cost of the visit will be borne by the service.

In addition, there is a random sampling of services by means of an audit. In certain circumstances, BACP reserves the right to visit. The cost of the visit will be borne by BACP.

Where a service has breached or failed to comply with the scheme's requirements or where a complaint has been upheld, BACP may withdraw accreditation or impose conditions on its continuation. In circumstances where a complaint has been upheld and the accredited status remains intact, an assessment visit may take place. The cost of the visit will be borne by the service.

All BACP accreditation schemes are subject to internal standardisation exercises and external moderation and verification.

At the end of the five-year period, services will need to submit a new application to renew its accreditation term.

Further Information

For more information, please visit the BACP website at www.bacp.co.uk/accreditation/Service%20Accreditation/

If you have any questions about the Service Accreditation Scheme, please contact bacp@bacp.co.uk or telephone 01455 883300

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