



Public Protection Committee

Annual report 2024

Public Protection Committee: Annual report 2024**Copyright information:**

Public Protection Committee: Annual report 2024 is published by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, BACP House, 15 St John's Business Park, Lutterworth, Leicestershire, LE17 4HB.

T: 01455 883300

E: bacp@bacp.co.uk **www.bacp.co.uk**

BACP is the largest professional organisation for counselling and psychotherapy in the UK, is a company limited by guarantee 2175320 in England and Wales, and a registered charity, 298361.

Copyright © 2025 British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.
All rights reserved. BACP and the BACP logo are registered trademarks of BACP.

Design by BACP

Contents

Welcome from the Chair of the Public Protection Committee	4
Introduction	7
Public Protection	8
Professional Standards Authority	8
Entry to the register	9
Supporting the public	10
Enquiries supporting the public	11
Member disclosures	12
Certificate of proficiency	14
CPD audit	15
Overview of 2024	17
Professional conduct procedure	18
Supporting members	21

Welcome from the Chair of the Public Protection Committee

Welcome to the fifth annual report of the *British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy's Public Protection Committee (PPC)*.

I was privileged to take over as Chair of PPC in 2025 but have been a member of the Committee since November 2023. I'd like to start this foreword by thanking my predecessor Marc Leppard for their support of the regulatory functions of BACP whilst Chair of the Committee and for my Committee colleagues who have served as Interim Chair prior to my appointment. I'd also like to pay tribute to the Registrar, and the staff team for their continued hard work. I would also like to thank our other members who served on the Public Protection Committee during 2024, Leon White, Ciaran Doyle, Philip Matthews, and Humza Chaudhry.

BACP takes its public protection responsibilities very seriously, and I'm pleased to be able to report to our members, the public, and other stakeholders on our progress. Transparency and accountability are critical in any membership organisation which provides services to the public, and I hope that this report demonstrates BACP's commitment to both. The report covers the calendar year of 2024 and provides insights, key themes and trends around the steps we've taken to continue to protect the public and ensure our members maintain the highest professional standards of conduct.

In 2024, the *Professional Standards Authority (PSA)* required us to submit information in support of a full renewal assessment of BACP's work. The PSA looks at how we uphold professional standards, including how we carry out our complaints procedure and also our financial status and governance processes. BACP is also subject to an annual check, and then the full renewal assessment takes place at least once every three years.

The PSA released its report

<https://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/organisations-we-oversee/find-a-register/british-association-counselling-psychotherapy> in February 2025, re-accrediting the register with one condition and two recommendations. They also highlighted the positive findings in relation to our website and our work to rectify previous concerns that had been raised by them. The condition is that BACP must provide clear information about the limitations of treatment offered by their registrants. We are committed to making the changes to address this condition and the PSA will make their assessment in our next annual assessment (due later in 2025)

The PSA also recommended that we should ensure that we are consistently and effectively utilising section 2.4 of their Professional Conduct Procedure (Case Manager's Test) to resolve cases that do not meet the threshold for progression and that we should provide the PSA with an update on the work to improve the timeliness of progression of complaints about practitioners.

Key trends and themes from 2024 show that members of the public and our membership continue to value the important services that BACP provides.

- The number of registered members increased by 3,536 during 2024
- In 2024, the *Get help with counselling concerns* service (a helpline for the public with concerns about their therapy) answered 1,770 public queries. Boundary issues, endings and contracting were the main themes.
- 4,170 members passed the *Certificate of Proficiency (CoP)* with 4,410 assessments being submitted.
- BACP successfully audited 791 members. Letters of advice were issued to 8 members in relation to minor breaches of register terms and conditions and 2 members were referred for professional conduct proceedings.
- BACP received 407 complaints with 277 relating to client/therapeutic relationships and 130 from a third party. For context, this is 0.6% of our membership. In 2024 20 cases were heard under the formal disciplinary process. Another 17 were heard under the practice review process. Again, major themes concerned fitness to practice, boundaries and endings. In the interest of transparency and public protection, BACP publishes details of all upheld allegations on our website: <https://www.bacp.co.uk/about-us/protecting-the-public/professional-conduct/notices>
- Our annual membership survey in 2024 found that 63% of members believe we set standards for the profession well, and 66% say we support professional and ethical practice well. Supporting our members in professional and ethical practice and upholding the highest standards within practice remain the focus of much of what BACP does as a professional body.

As we look ahead, during 2025 the Committee will be working closely with the staff team with regard to developments around the Ethical Framework and SCoPEd and their links to our public protection remit.

Our priority remains to continue to uphold the highest public protection standards and to ensure that we fulfil any conditions set by our regulator, the PSA, in relation to our public protection strategy. It is critical that the public have confidence in our upholding professional standards and that the PPC best represents our membership.

Lastly, but most importantly, I would like to thank members of the committee and the staff of BACP for their support and dedication to the work of the PPC during the year.



Dr Paul Taylor
Chair of PPC

Introduction

The Public Protection Committee (PPC) holds delegated authority from the BACP Board of Governors to provide strategic direction and oversight to ensure that BACP effectively safeguards the public by upholding professional standards, ethics, and accountability within the counselling and psychotherapy professions. The PPC is accountable to the BACP Board of Governors and is required to undertake a review of its effectiveness to ensure that it is delivering on its remit. The PPC has a maximum of 8 members – the Chair of the Committee (a lay member who is also a BACP Governor) plus 7 other committee members with at least 3 that are members of BACP. The PPC meets at least four times a year.

Membership Committee Members:

Marc Leppard (former Chair)	(02.11.2023 - 02.11.2024)
Dr Paul Taylor (current Chair)	(30.11.2023 – 06.11.2029)
Leon White	(22.09.2023 – 22.09.2026)
Ciaran Doyle	(22.09.2023 – 22.09.2026)
Philip Matthews	(06.12.2018 – 06.12.2024)
Humza Chaudhry	(17.03.2021 – 17.03.2024)

The committee is supported by a team of specialist BACP staff:

- Dr Philip James** – CEO
- Dr Lisa Morrison** – Director of Professional Standards, Policy & Research
- Emma Hayes** – Registrar
- Rebecca Grace** – Assistant Registrar

The Committee is dedicated to transparency and publishes both its minutes and public protection strategy on the BACP website: Governance of the BACP Register.

You can find out more about how BACP protects the public on our website: [Protecting the Public](#)

Public Protection

Our Register is a public record of counsellors and psychotherapists who meet or exceed our recommended quality standards.

The Register serves several critical functions that benefit the public. It ensures that all registered counsellors and psychotherapists possess the necessary qualifications and training to practise safely, setting and maintaining rigorous standards for education, training, and conduct to ensure high-quality care. It also fosters public confidence, assuring that the counsellors and psychotherapists consulted are competent and trustworthy.

Professional Standards Authority

The Accredited Registers' programme, delivered by the Professional Standards Authority (PSA), provides oversight for health and care roles that are not required to be registered by law. The legislation underpinning their powers to accredit registers is set out within the National Health Service Reform and Health Care Professions Act 2002.


The mission of the Accredited Registers' programme is to help keep people safe when they are receiving therapy from unregulated health and care practitioners. The PSA Quality Mark is only awarded to registers that meet their rigorous standards, enabling a member of the public to choose a practitioner with confidence.

The Professional Standards Authority Standards for Accredited Registers are [available here](#).

BACP was the first psychological therapists' register to be accredited under the Professional Standards Authority's [Accredited Registers Programme](#)

Being accredited demonstrates our commitment to high standards and public protection.

The PSA Accredited Registers' programme only applies within the UK and has no jurisdiction in either British Crown Dependencies or British Overseas Territories.



Entry to the Register

The Registered member category is our main category for practising members. To become registered the practitioner needs to have demonstrated high standards of proficiency, professionalism and ethical practice.

To be eligible for registration the member must have either graduated from a BACP-accredited course or have graduated from a course, which meets our membership entry requirements, and also passed our Certificate of Proficiency assessment.

BACP-accredited courses have met our stringent training, practice, delivery and quality assurance requirements. The students who graduate from these courses are eligible for registration.

The Certificate of Proficiency (CoP) is a standardised assessment of the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to be a safe and effective therapist. The assessment is case study based, and our assessment content is developed by experienced counsellors and psychotherapists. The CoP route is available to those who have completed a training which meets our membership entry requirements (the course must have involved at least one-year full-time or two years' part-time classroom-based tuition and a supervised placement of at least 100 client contact hours which was an integral part of the course).

Whichever route to registration is taken, the members will have evidenced their high standards of proficiency and professionalism before registration is awarded.

Additionally, before registration can be confirmed members are required to agree to the Register terms and conditions, which demonstrate their continued commitment to working professionally and ethically.

The number of registered members increased by 3536 during 2024.

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Registrants	40,067	44,476	48,302	51,981	55,517
Members	55,260	60,707	64,839	68,752	72,346

Supporting the public

We also support the public directly with our *Get help with counselling concerns* service. We offer help and reassurance where enquirers have concerns or questions about their experience of therapy, about how therapy works, and what good practice looks like. We offer the service to all members of the public, whether their concerns are about a BACP member or not.

In 2024, the *Get help with counselling concerns* service answered 1,770 public enquiries, a 27% increase from the previous year.

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Get Help enquiries	1361	1364	1140	1390	1770

The main areas of concern where the member of the public was requesting guidance:

Boundaries	34%
Endings	13%
Other	11%
Contracting	9%
Fitness to Practise	9%
Record Keeping	9%
Confidentiality	7%
Conflicts of Interest	4%
Safeguarding	2%
EDI	1%
Employment Issues	0.5%
Misrepresentation/Lack of Transparency	0.5%

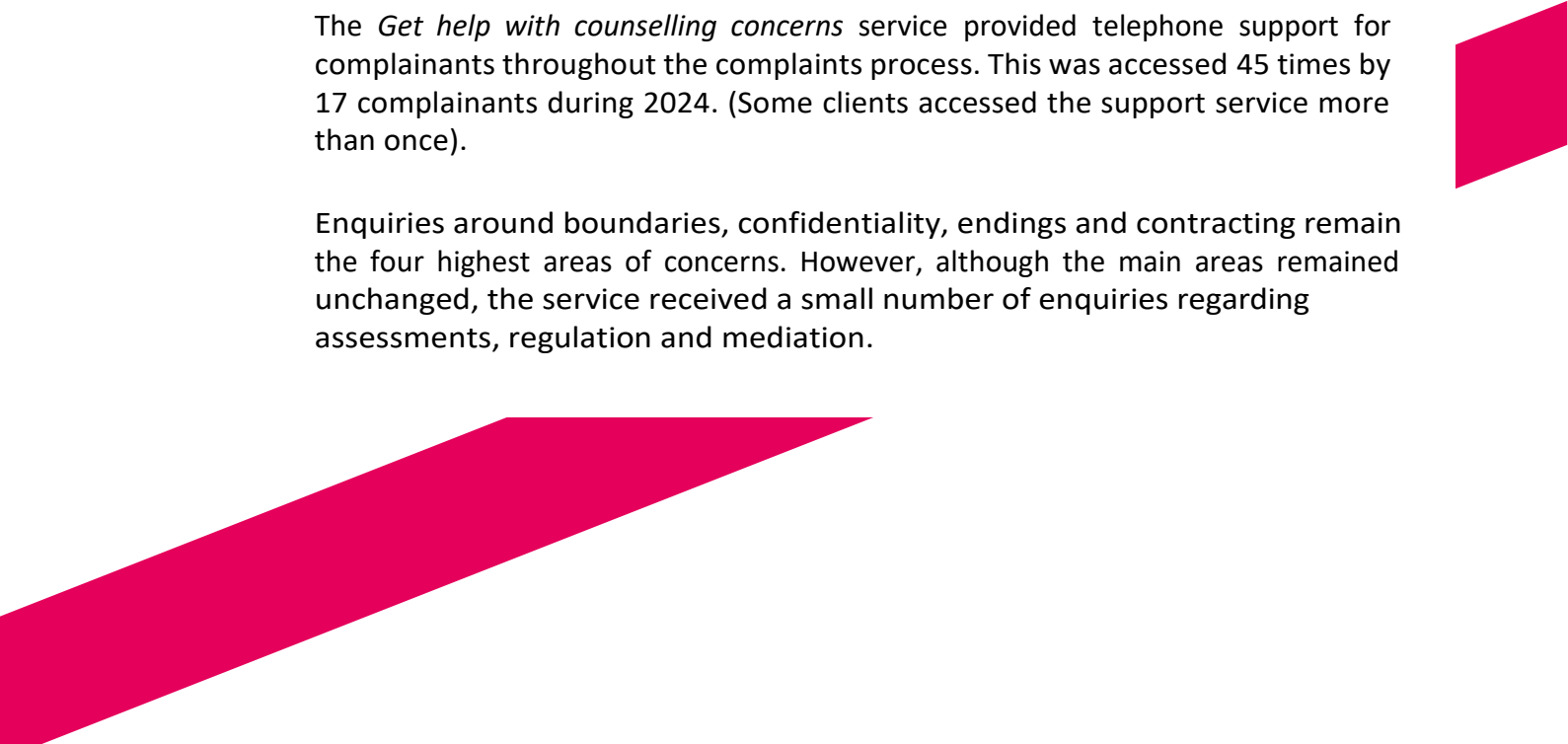
Enquiries supporting the public

We also capture information about whether the enquirer is looking for guidance and/or support or if they are looking for information. In 2024, 56% of the enquiries received involved the person requesting information. Examples of these enquiries are, checking the membership status of a therapist, finding a therapist or a request for information on how to make a complaint. Forty per cent of enquirers were looking for specific guidance reflected in the chart above.

We also offer a support system for complainants in professional conduct cases. This aims to assist complainants during the conduct process including providing someone to accompany complainants to hearings if required. This service is valued by the complainants and was used 12 times in 2024.

The *Get help with counselling concerns* service provided telephone support for complainants throughout the complaints process. This was accessed 45 times by 17 complainants during 2024. (Some clients accessed the support service more than once).

Enquiries around boundaries, confidentiality, endings and contracting remain the four highest areas of concerns. However, although the main areas remained unchanged, the service received a small number of enquiries regarding assessments, regulation and mediation.



Member disclosures

Under Article 12.3 of BACP's Articles of Association, BACP can decline *"any application for membership, registration or admittance to grades of membership"*.

If you apply to become a BACP member, you'll be asked if you have any disclosures to make. Section 4 of the application form asks the following questions:

- Do you have a conviction which is not spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (as amended)?
- Have you ever been struck off, erased, removed, or suspended from membership of any professional body or register on the grounds of professional misconduct?
- Have you ever been refused membership or registration by a professional body or register on the grounds of professional misconduct?
- Have you ever been the subject of any civil claim brought against you, other disciplinary action, investigation, proceeding or enquiry?
- Are you currently or likely to be the subject of any disciplinary action, investigation, proceeding or enquiry?
- Is your fitness to practise impaired for any reason including health or personal circumstances?
- Are there any other factors which could call into question your suitability for membership?

An application for membership may be refused in line with Article 12.3 where the information provided is such that:

- a. If a member of the public was accurately informed of the disclosure and the applicant was admitted to membership it is likely to:
 - bring the reputation of the counselling professions into disrepute, or
 - undermine the public's trust in and/or the reputation of the Association, or
 - undermine public confidence in the Association's regulatory function
- b. There is good reason to believe that the applicant's conduct could have constituted a serious breach of professional standards, having regard to BACP's *Ethical Framework* for the Counselling Professions and/or the Professional Conduct Procedure, had the applicant been a member of BACP at the time it occurred.
- c. There is good reason to believe that, if admitted to membership, the applicant is unlikely to work within professional standards, having regard to BACP's *Ethical Framework* for the Counselling Professions and/or the Professional Conduct Procedure.
- d. There is good reason to believe that, if admitted to membership, the applicant would be a risk to the public.

In 2024, we received 124 new membership applications where applicants made a disclosure, and 4 disclosure updates from members who had previously been granted conditional membership. These applications underwent initial assessment. Following assessment, a total of 12 application disclosures were of a nature that required consideration by an independently constituted Article 12.3 panel.

Of these 12 applications:

- 5 were accepted into membership,
- 3 were not accepted into membership,
- 4 cases are ongoing and will be considered by an Article 12.3 panel in January 2025.

Certificate of Proficiency

The Certificate of Proficiency (CoP) is an assessment that is completed by our Individual members who haven't completed a BACP-accredited course.

In 2024, we arranged 68 assessment sessions for our Individual members with 4,410 assessments being submitted.

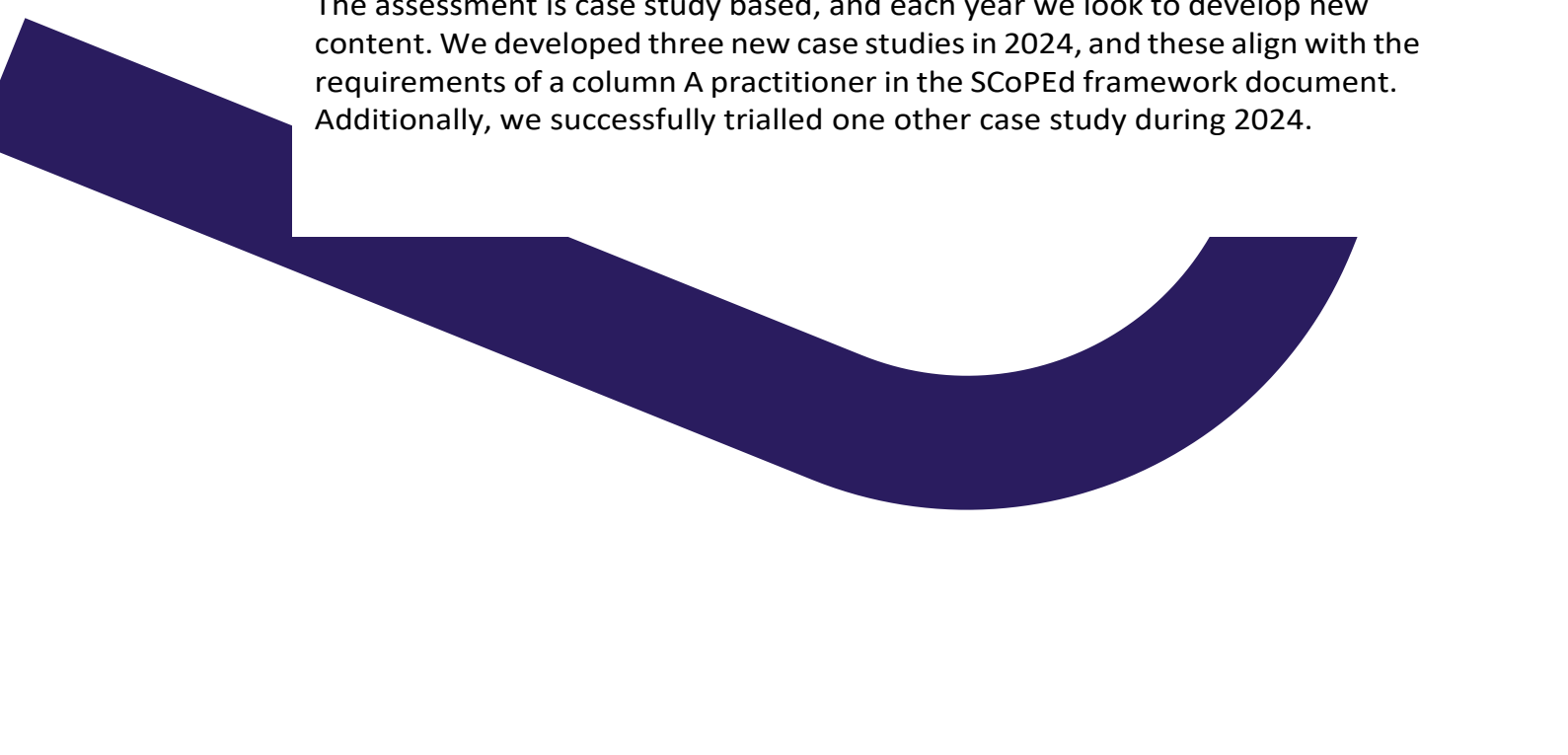
During 2024, 4,170 members passed the CoP, which gave them eligibility for registration.

Members have three attempts to pass the CoP. There are 125 members who failed the CoP during 2024 and are yet to pass the assessment. If a member fails for a 3rd time, their membership is put on hold until they can pass the assessment. Eight members failed the assessment for a 3rd time during 2024.

Additionally, we embed the CoP in the Approved Qualifications as a BACP quality check on the course. We arranged 115 assessment sessions at centres who are delivering the approved practitioner qualification. In 2024, 858 assessments were submitted by learners who were studying on an approved qualification. Of these, 832 candidates passed the CoP. This meant that upon completion of their qualification they were immediately eligible for BACP registration.

In total over 5,000 assessments were submitted in 2024, thus giving the opportunity to become a BACP registered member. A small minority of those eligible (263 members) haven't upgraded their membership to registered yet.

The assessment is case study based, and each year we look to develop new content. We developed three new case studies in 2024, and these align with the requirements of a column A practitioner in the SCoPEd framework document. Additionally, we successfully trialled one other case study during 2024.



CPD audit

Audit process

Summary

Continuing Professional Development (CPD), appropriate supervision, and indemnity insurance cover are values of the BACP *Ethical Framework* and are considered important ways to maintain professional standards. The BACP Register requires registered members to plan and evaluate their CPD, have appropriate levels of supervision, and have adequate, current and ongoing professional indemnity insurance cover.

We monitor compliance through the random audit of registered member records. However, as one of the fundamental aims of the audit is to encourage a genuine engagement with the learning cycle as soon as members go onto the Register, the approach has an emphasis on support and facilitation.

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
No of Audits	740	778	706	739	791

Purpose of audit

Records are audited to encourage and monitor compliance and to gather statistical data and trends.

Nature of audit

Members selected for audit are asked to provide a CPD record, supervision record, and copies of professional indemnity insurance documents covering the audit period.

CPD record

A template is provided by the Register team to encourage registered members to reflect, plan, action and evaluate their CPD in a systematic way. Alternatively, members can use the BACP Learning Centre to record both their CPD plans and activities undertaken. The Register looks to see that the record shows a wide range of topics and activities and has met our CPD standards.

Supervision record

A template is provided by the Register Team that requests the following information:

- Date and duration of session
- Session format i.e. group/one-to-one
- Nature of delivery i.e. face-to-face/telephone/online
- Context of sessions i.e. private practice/agency work
- Three examples of how supervision has impacted their practice.

A random selection of 10% of members selected for audit will go through further assessment. In this process supervisor(s) are contacted via email and asked to complete a supervisor form while reviewing the member's supervision record.

Professional Indemnity Insurance

Evidence of appropriate, current and ongoing indemnity insurance cover is required for audit purposes and members are asked to provide copies of their indemnity insurance certificates. If indemnity insurance is provided by their employer, they are asked to provide a copy of their employer's indemnity insurance certificate and a letter from the employer confirming their employment dates.

Overview of 2024

Members who have been on the Register for over a year are eligible to be audited for continuing professional development (CPD), supervision, and professional indemnity insurance; to check they are meeting the terms and conditions of registration. In each month, we select 1.5% of members who are due for renewal. In 2024, 791 members were asked to take part in the Register audit.

Audit process from January to December 2024:

Audit Month	Passed audit	Cancelled	Expired	Retired	Deferred	Letter of advice sent	Referred to conduct
Jan-24	55	2	9	3	7	0	1
Feb-24	58	3	6	0	6	0	0
Mar-24	59	3	7	3	4	0	0
Apr-24	57	2	0	0	6	1	0
May-24	45	3	7	1	4	2	0
Jun-24	49	2	2	0	4	0	0
Jul-24	46	2	7	1	3	0	0
Aug-24	39	0	4	1	6	1	0
Sep-24	41	1	4	1	5	0	0
Oct-24	64	2	7	1	8	1	1
Nov-24	70	1	4	0	7	1	0
Dec-24	41	1	5	0	2	2	0
	624	22	62	11	62	8	2

Members who moved to the retired category or whose membership had been cancelled or had expired were not required to complete the audit process. However, if these members returned to membership within the following six months, then they were re-called for audit.

Some members who were selected for audit could not complete at that time due to personal circumstances, for instance bereavement, long-term illness or maternity leave. In these cases, their audit was deferred for 12 months, and they will automatically be selected again in 2025.

Of those who were selected for audit in 2024, 8 members were issued with a letter of advice. This process is in place when there is evidence that there may have been a low-impact breach to the register terms and conditions that was minor or technical. Advice is given to avoid the likelihood of repetition and members are recalled for audit within the following three years. In 2024, the letters of advice issued were particularly related to professional indemnity insurance.

Generally, there are high levels of engagement with the audit process and a high standard of submissions received. However, members who did not engage with the audit process following multiple communications by email, telephone and letter, were referred to the Professional Conduct team

Professional Conduct Procedure

The Register holds members accountable to the [Ethical Framework](#) through the [Professional Conduct Procedure \(PCP\)](#). We rely on clients, the public and members to bring poor and unethical practice to our attention so we can take appropriate action, and ultimately protect the public and the reputation of the profession.

Assessment

In 2024, we received 407 complaints, 277 related to a client/therapeutic relationship and 130 from a third party. The proportion of BACP members/registrants who had concerns raised about their conduct remained low at 0.56%

In relation to the Professional Conduct Procedure, if a member accepts there has been a minor or technical breach of professional standards, we may send them a letter with advice on how they can improve their practice. This is known as ‘a letter of advice’ and is not a formal disciplinary action, but it will be kept on the member’s record for three years. If the complaint is accepted but is not suitable for a letter of advice, it will be sent to the Investigation and Assessment Committee (IAC) for assessment.

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
No. of PCP Complaints	191	228	253	315	277
Third Party Complaints	76	24	153	196	130

Investigation and Assessment Committee (IAC) and Hearings

Complaints about more serious issues are sent to the Investigation and Assessment Committee (IAC). This is a panel of three independent people. It can make the following decisions:

- deal with the complaint by means of consensual disposal
- suspend membership through an interim suspension order
- refer the complaint to a disciplinary hearing
- refer the complaint to a practice review hearing
- dismiss the complaint.

In relation to complaints considered under our Professional Conduct Procedure, between 1 January 2024 and 31 December 2024, the IAC considered 127 cases, (this does not include duplicates of a case going to an IAC more than once for further information, consensual disposal requests etc).

Consensual disposal is where the member and BACP come to an agreement to resolve a complaint without going to a Professional Conduct Hearing. This allows complaints to be resolved in a quicker timeframe and avoids the anxiety and inconvenience of attending a hearing. Although there is no formal hearing of the complaint, a consensual disposal agreement is deemed to be a disciplinary decision and will be published in line with BACP's publication policy. If the member breaches the terms of the consensual disposal agreement, this may result in the termination of their membership, which will also be published. 15 complaints were resolved by way of consensual disposal in 2024.

The IAC can refer allegations of serious breaches of professional standards to a disciplinary hearing, heard by a Professional Conduct Panel. If the complaint is upheld, the panel can impose sanctions on the member, including suspending or withdrawing BACP membership. In 2024, 20 cases were heard under the Disciplinary Proceedings Track.

The IAC can refer complaints about the professional service provided by a member to a practice review hearing, heard by a Professional Conduct Panel. These aim to find a resolution acceptable to both the complainant and the member. If poor service is proved, and the parties can't agree, the panel can impose sanctions on the member. However, it can't withdraw or suspend BACP membership. In 2024, 17 cases were heard under the Practice Review Process Track.

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
No. of members sanction PCP	7*	12*	73	70	27
No. of members withdrawn PCP	4	4	7	5	3
No. of members withdrawn – 12.6	1	3	1	1	3
12.6 Panel	3	6	5	1	3

*Impacted by Covid

When allegations are found to be upheld following a hearing or by a consensual disposal, a [notice](#) relating to this matter will be published in our website.

Types of concerns/complaints - themes

Abrupt ending	9%
Boundary issues	16%
Breach of Confidentiality	4%
Breach of Contract	1%
Confidentiality	1%
Conflict of Interest	3%
Contracting	0%
Employment issues	2%
Equality Diversity & Inclusion	3%
Fitness to practice	22%
Legal issue	2%
Misadvertising	1%
Misrepresentation	3%
Notice of dismissal	1%
Notice of investigation	1%
Other	11%
Record keeping	1%
Refund request	1%
Safeguarding	8%
Sexual allegation	2%
Social Media	7%
Student/Tutor	2%
Supervision	1%

Supporting members

We believe that good regulation should be focused on learning and not waiting for things to go wrong. We want to shift the focus of our activity towards prevention – ‘upstream’. This relies on using the data and intelligence held by BACP to identify potential problems and to address them quickly and effectively.

In 2022, we developed a framework for the capture of data across BACP, which aims to provide insight into the areas where members may need more support or guidance and help us to identify areas for development. In 2023, the data collection framework was implemented and now supports the work of the Ethics team and Get Help with counselling concerns team.

Additionally, the framework for data collection is embedded within our professional conduct processes. As a case is closed, information is captured in response to the questions on the data collection framework. Now that this process is established it will begin to provide a further data source and comparison information in due course. This should be fully implemented from 2025.

There are main categories that team members can choose from when deciding on the primary reason for the enquiry – these are:

- Boundaries
- Confidentiality
- Conflicts of interest
- Contracting
- Employment issues/organisational issues
- Endings
- Equality, diversity and inclusion
- Fitness to practise
- Legal
- Misrepresentation/lack of transparency
- Record keeping and access
- Safeguarding
- Supervision
- Technology and therapy
- Other.

For the Ethics team the main categories of enquiry were:

Other	36%
Supervision	14%
Legal	11%
Record keeping and Access	11%

For the Get Help team the main categories of enquiry were:

Boundaries	32%
Endings	12%
Other	12%
Confidentiality	9%