



# Spectrum Therapy

## Code of Ethics and Practice

### Introduction

All practitioners working at Spectrum are required to abide by the Spectrum code of ethics and practice. All trainees and supervisees at Spectrum who are not Spectrum practitioners are required to abide by the following code of ethics and practice. Whilst this code cannot resolve all ethical and practice related issues, it aims to provide a framework for addressing ethical issues and to encourage optimum levels of practice.

### The structure of this code

This code has been divided into two parts. The Code of Ethics outlines the fundamental values of psychotherapy and a number of general principles arising from them. The Code of Practice applies these values and ethical principles to more specific situations, which may arise in the practice of psychotherapy.

### The nature of psychotherapy

The overall aim of psychotherapy is to provide an opportunity for the client to work towards living in a more satisfying and resourceful way. The term 'psychotherapy' includes work with individuals, pairs or groups of people referred to as 'clients'. The objectives of particular psychotherapeutic relationships will vary according to the client's needs. Psychotherapy may be concerned with developmental issues, addressing and resolving specific problems, making decisions, coping with crisis, developing personal insight, awareness and knowledge, working through feelings of inner conflict or improving relationships with others. The psychotherapist's role is to facilitate the client's work in ways which respect the client's values, personal resources and capacity for self-determination, without discrimination on the basis of culture, race, religion, sexual orientation, age, gender or physical ability.

Psychotherapy is a non-exploitative activity. Its basic values are integrity, impartiality, and respect. Trainees and supervisees should take the same degree of care to work ethically whether the psychotherapy is paid or voluntary.

## Code of Ethics

### Qualifications

**A.1** Trainees and supervisees will disclose their professional qualifications when requested, and will not claim, or imply, qualifications that they do not have.

### Terms, conditions and methods of practice

**A.2.1** The terms and conditions on which psychotherapy is being offered should be made clear to clients at the outset of therapy. Subsequent revisions of these terms and conditions should be agreed in advance of any change.

**A.2.2** Negotiation of clear contracts in advance is essential in order to promote equity between the client and therapist.

**A.2.3** Trainees and supervisees should be willing to discuss their methods of practice with clients.

### Confidentiality

**A.3.1** Confidentiality is a means of providing the client with safety and privacy. For this reason, trainees and supervisees are required to preserve confidentiality, and to disclose, if requested, the limits of confidentiality and the circumstances under which it might include specific third parties.

### Professional relationship

**A.4.1** Trainees and supervisees should consider the client's best interest when making appropriate contact with the client's GP, relevant psychiatric services, or other relevant professionals with the client's knowledge.

**A.4.2** Trainees and supervisees at Spectrum should have goodwill towards colleagues, take an active interest in each other's work, and take responsibility for networking with other trainees and supervisees at Spectrum.

### Relationship with clients

**A.5.1** Trainees and supervisees are responsible for working in ways, which promote the client's control over his/her own life, and respect the client's ability to make decisions and change in the light of his/her own beliefs and values.

**A.5.2** Trainees and supervisees are required to maintain appropriate boundaries with their clients and to take care not to exploit their clients, current or past, in any way, financially, sexually, emotionally or physically.

**A.5.3** All reasonable steps should be taken to ensure the safety of the trainees, supervisees and the client during psychotherapy sessions.

### Research

**A.6.1** Trainees and supervisees must clarify with clients the nature, purpose and conditions of any research in which the clients are to be involved, and ensure that informed and verifiable consent is given before commencement.

### Publication

**A.7.1** Trainees and supervisees are required to safeguard the welfare and anonymity of clients when any form of publication of clinical material is being considered and to obtain their consent whenever possible.

### Practitioner competence

**A.8.1** Trainees and supervisees shall take all reasonable steps to monitor and develop their own competence and to work within the limits of that competence.

**A.8.2** It is a breach of the ethical requirement for trainees and supervisees to practice without regular professional supervision. All trainees and supervisees at Spectrum must be in regular supervision with a member of Spectrum staff.

### Psychotherapy and the law

**A.9.1** Psychotherapists must work within the law.

### Indemnity insurance

**A.10.1** All trainees and supervisees not working at Spectrum are required to ensure that their professional work is adequately covered by appropriate indemnity insurance.

### Detrimental behaviour

**A.11.1** Trainees and supervisees will refrain from any behaviour that may be detrimental to the profession of psychotherapy or to colleagues.

## Code of Practice

### Qualifications

**B.1.1** Any publicity material and all written and oral information should reflect accurately the nature of the service on offer, and the training, qualifications and relevant experience of the trainee or supervisee.

**B.1.2** Trainees and supervisees should not display an affiliation with an organisation in a manner which falsely implies the sponsorship or verification of that organisation, or their accreditation by that organisation.

### Terms, conditions and methods of practice

**B.2.1** Trainees and supervisees are responsible for communicating the terms on which psychotherapy is being offered, and their expectations of clients regarding fees, cancelled appointments and any other significant matters at the outset of therapy. Subsequent revisions of these terms should be agreed in advance of any change.

**B.2.2** It is the client's choice whether or not to participate in therapy. Reasonable steps should be taken in the course of the psychotherapeutic relationship to ensure that the client is given an opportunity to review the terms on which psychotherapy is being offered and the methods of psychotherapy being used.

**B.2.3** The decision to terminate the therapeutic relationship is generally reached by mutual agreement. If trainees and supervisees have a policy of requiring a minimum number of sessions with a client after the decision to end therapy is reached; this should be made clear to the client at the beginning of therapy.

**B.2.4** If a trainee or supervisee reaches their own decision that a particular therapeutic relationship (individual or group) must be terminated, they will not implement this without first discussing the matter with their supervisor.

### Confidentiality

**B.3.1** Trainees and supervisees treat as confidential personal information about clients, whether obtained directly or indirectly or by inference. Such information includes name, address, biographical details, and other descriptions of the client's life and circumstances which might result in identification of the client.

**B.3.2** Trainees and supervisees should take all reasonable steps to communicate clearly the extent of the confidentiality they are offering to clients. This should normally be made clear in the pre-psychotherapy information or initial contracting.

**B.3.3** If trainees and supervisees include consultations with colleagues and others within the confidential relationship, this should be stated to the client at the beginning of therapy.

**B.3.4** If records of psychotherapy sessions are kept, clients should be made aware of this. At the client's request information should be given about access to these records, their availability to other people, and the degree of security with which they are kept.

**B.3.5** The Spectrum office keeps a confidential computer-based record of the names and addresses of participants, together with what group(s) they have attended.

**B.3.6** Any written communications between trainees and supervisees not working at Spectrum concerning money and clients are to either be handed over personally, or left for the person concerned in a sealed envelope. Any such written material will be treated as confidential and disposed of safely and discreetly.

**B.3.7** Trainees and supervisees should work within the current agreement with their client about confidentiality. Any agreement between the psychotherapist and client about confidentiality may be reviewed and changed by joint negotiations.

**B.3.8** Agreements about confidentiality continue after the client's death unless there are overriding legal or ethical considerations.

**B.3.9** Exceptional circumstances may arise which give the trainees or supervisees good grounds for believing that the client will cause serious physical harm to others or themselves, or have harm caused to themselves. In such circumstances the client's consent to a change in the agreement about confidentiality should be sought whenever possible unless there are also good grounds for believing the client is no longer able to take responsibility for his/her own actions. Whenever possible, the decision to break confidentiality agreed between a trainee or supervisee and client should be made only after consultation with a professional supervisor or experienced psychotherapist.

**B.3.10** Any breaking of confidentiality should be minimised both by restricting the information conveyed to that which is pertinent to the immediate situation and to those persons who can provide the help required by the client.

The ethical considerations involve balancing between acting in the best interest of the client and in ways which enable clients to resume taking responsibility for their actions, a very high priority for psychotherapists, and the psychotherapist's responsibilities to the wider community.

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**B.3.11** Psychotherapists hold different views about whether or not a client expressing serious suicidal intentions forms sufficient grounds for breaking confidentiality. Trainees and supervisees should consider their own views and practice and communicate them to clients and any significant others where appropriate.

**B.3.12** Any discussion between the trainees and supervisees and others regarding their work and clients should be purposeful and not trivializing.

See also [Appendix A: Confidentiality in the Legal Process](#)

### Professional relationship

**B.4.1** Trainees and supervisees have a responsibility to establish with clients what other therapeutic or helping relationships are current.

**B.4.2** Trainees and supervisees should be aware of their own limitations. It is an indication of the competence of psychotherapists when they recognise their inability to counsel a client or clients and in such circumstances make appropriate referrals.

**B.4.3** Trainees and supervisees should avoid unnecessary conflicts of interest and are expected to make explicit to the client any relevant conflicts of interest.

**B.4.4** Trainees and supervisees should accept their part in exploring and resolving conflicts of interest between themselves and their agencies, especially where this has implications for the client.

**B.4.5** Trainees and supervisees should be accountable for their services to colleagues, to Spectrum and to their relevant professional organisations. The means of achieving this should be consistent with respecting the needs of the client outlined in B.3, B.4.3, and B.5.3.

**B.4.6** Trainees and supervisees are encouraged to increase their colleagues' understanding of the psychotherapist's role. No colleague or significant member of the caring professions should be led to believe that a service is being offered by the psychotherapist which is not, as this may deprive the client of the offer of such a service from elsewhere.

### Relationship with clients

**B.5.1** Trainees and supervisees should take all reasonable steps to ensure that the client suffers neither physical nor psychological harm during psychotherapy.

**B.5.2** Trainees and supervisees should also take all reasonable steps to ensure their own physical safety while working with clients.

**B.5.3** Clients should be offered privacy for psychotherapy sessions. The client should not be observed by anyone other than their psychotherapist without having given his/her informed consent. This also applies to audio/video taping of psychotherapy sessions.

**B.5.4** Trainees and supervisees do not normally act on behalf of their clients. If they do, it will be only at the express request of the client, or else in the exceptional circumstances detailed in B.3.9, B.3.10 and B.3.11.

**B.5.5** Trainees and supervisees are responsible for setting and monitoring boundaries between the psychotherapy relationship and any other kind of relationship, and making this explicit to the client.

**B.5.6** No trainee or supervisee is to have sexual relationships with their own past or present clients whether individual or from a group.

### Research

**B.6.1** The use of personally identifiable material gained from clients or by the observation of psychotherapy sessions should be used only after the client has given consent, usually in writing, and care has been taken to ensure that consent was given freely.

**B.6.2** Trainees and supervisees conducting research should use their data accurately and restrict their con

### Publication

**B.7.1** Special care is required when writing about specific psychotherapy situations for case studies, reports or publication. It is important that the author either has the client's informed consent, and/or effectively disguises the client's identity.

### Practitioner competence

**B.8.1** Trainees and supervisees must have received adequate basic training before commencing work with clients, and must maintain on-going professional development.

**B.8.2** Six months prior to working with clients, trainees enter professional supervision at Spectrum. Professional supervision refers to a formal arrangement which enables psychotherapists to discuss their psychotherapy work

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regularly with one or more people who have an understanding of psychotherapy and professional supervision. Its purpose is to ensure the efficacy of the psychotherapist-client relationship. It is a confidential relationship. Peer supervision, is encouraged and is not an alternative to professional supervision.

**B.8.3** The volume of supervision should be in proportion to the volume of psychotherapy work undertaken and the experience of the psychotherapist.

**B.8.4** Trainees and supervisees should monitor actively the limitations of their own competence through professional supervision and by seeking the views of their clients and other psychotherapists. Psychotherapists should work within their own limits, as defined by their training.

**B.8.5** Trainees and supervisees have a responsibility to themselves and their clients to maintain their own effectiveness, resilience and ability to help clients. They are expected to monitor their own personal functioning and to seek help and/or withdraw from psychotherapy, whether temporarily or permanently, when their personal resources are sufficiently depleted to require this.

**B.8.6** Trainees and supervisees should not work with clients when their functioning is impaired due to personal or emotional difficulties, illness, disability, alcohol, drugs or for any other cause.

**B.8.7** No trainee or supervisee at Spectrum shall engage in any form of substance abuse.

### Psychotherapy and the law

**B.9.1** Trainees and supervisees should take all reasonable steps to be aware of current law affecting the work of the psychotherapist. A psychotherapist's ignorance of the law is no defence against legal liability or penalty including inciting or "counseling", which has a specific legal sense, the commission of offences by clients.

### Indemnity insurance

**B.10.1** Trainees and supervisees who are practicing must be adequately covered by appropriate professional indemnity insurance. It is the responsibility of each individual to organise their own insurance.

See also [Appendix A: Confidentiality in the Legal Process](#)

### Detrimental behaviour

**B.11.1** Trainees and supervisees should not conduct themselves in their psychotherapy-related activities in ways which undermine public confidence in either their role as psychotherapist or in the work of other psychotherapists.

**B.11.2** trainees and supervisees become concerned about another Spectrum trainee or supervisee upholding the code of ethics and practice, they are expected to communicate their perceptions to the person concerned.

**B.11.3** If a trainee or supervisee suspects misconduct or detrimental behaviour by another Spectrum therapist which cannot be resolved or remedied after discussion with the therapist concerned, they should inform a Spectrum staff member, doing so without breaches of confidentiality other than those necessary for investigating the complaint. The staff member will then raise the matter for the Spectrum staff to consider.

**B.11.4** Trainees and supervisees are required to inform Spectrum if any complaint is upheld against them in any professional organisation of which they are a member, if they are convicted of any notifiable criminal offence or if successful civil proceedings are brought against them in relation to their work as psychotherapists.

### Resolving conflicts between ethical priorities

**B.12.1** Trainees and supervisees will, from time to time, find themselves caught between conflicting ethical principles. In these circumstances, they are urged to consider the particular situation in which they find themselves and to discuss the situation with their psychotherapeutic supervisor and/or other experienced psychotherapists. Even after conscientious consideration of the salient issues, some ethical dilemmas cannot be resolved easily or wholly satisfactorily.

## Appendix A: Confidentiality in the legal process

**A.1** Generally speaking, there is no legal duty to give information spontaneously or on request until instructed to do so by a court. Refusal to answer police questions is not an offence, although lying could be. In general terms, the only circumstances in which the police can require an answer about a client, and when refusal to answer would be an offence, relate to the prevention of terrorism.

It is good practice to ask police personnel to clarify their legal right to an answer before refusing to give one.

**A.2** Withholding information about a crime that one knows has been committed or is about to be committed is not an offence, save exceptionally. Anyone hearing of terrorist activities should immediately take legal advice.

**A.3** There is no legal obligation to answer a solicitor's inquiry or to make a statement for the purpose of legal proceedings, unless ordered to do so by a court.

**A.4** There is no legal obligation to attend court at the request of parties involved in a case, or at the request of their lawyers, until a witness summons or subpoena is issued to require attendance to answer questions or produce documents.

**A.5** Once in the witness box, there is a duty to answer questions when instructed to do so by the court. Refusal to answer could be punished as contempt of court unless there are legal grounds for not doing so. (It has been held that communications between the therapist and client during an attempt at 'reconciliation' in matrimonial cases are privileged and thus do not require disclosure unless the client waives this privilege. This does not seem to apply to other kinds of cases).

**A.6** The police have powers to seize confidential files if they have obtained a warrant from a circuit judge. Obstructing the police from taking them in these circumstances may be an offence.

**A.7** Trainees and supervisees should seek legal advice and/or contact a relevant professional organisation if they are in any doubt about their legal rights and obligations, before acting in ways which conflict with their agreement with clients who are directly affected.

## Appendix B: Computer-based records

**B.1** Trainees and supervisees should be aware that computer-based records are subject to statutory regulations under the Data Protection Act 1984.

From time to time the government introduces changes in the regulations concerning the client's right of access to his/her own records. Current regulations have implications for psychotherapists working in social service and health care settings.