

ACP Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics

Changes to the Code to better incorporate key principles of diversity, inclusion and equality into the practice of Child and Adolescent Psychotherapists

The Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics (the Code) establishes the standards expected of all members of the ACP, both in terms of their clinical practice and their interaction with the public, particularly the families they work with but also with colleagues and other members of the profession. The Code underpins all aspect of the work of Child and Adolescent Psychotherapists and all members must adhere to it. Complaints against members are considered in relation to whether there has been a breach of the Code.

The **Rules of the ACP** include a commitment:

To ensure that child and adolescent psychoanalytic psychotherapy meets the needs of a diverse population and that child and adolescent psychoanalytic psychotherapy is an equal opportunity profession.

This is further developed in the **ACP's Statement on Diversity**

In order to ensure that the practice of ACP members is aligned to these principles the Code has recently been reviewed and updated though discussions with the Diversity and Equality Working Group, the Ethical Practice Group and the Professional Standards Committee. It has also been considered by our legal advisor for dealing with complaints. The revised Code was approved by the ACP Board at its July 2022 meeting and is now available on the ACP website **here**.

Key principles of diversity, inclusion and equality, which should be fundamental to our practice, are now more central and integrated within the framework of the Code. Throughout their practice, and whenever interacting with prospective patients, colleagues and other members of the profession, ACP members are expected to:

- understand how discrimination, prejudice and bias operate (including unconscious bias);
- constructively reflect on their own actions and assumptions;
- actively avoid and challenge unlawful discrimination based on the legally protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race (including ethnic origin), religion or other protected belief, sex and sexual orientation;
- actively avoid and challenge unlawful harassment and victimisation;
- make any adjustments that are legally required to avoid disadvantages that relate to disability and positively consider what further steps should be taken to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people with different protected characteristics; and
- take action to address unfair discrimination, prejudice and bias based on other individual characteristics, such as culture or socio-economic status.

It is important that members understand their obligations in respect of these changes so that we can continue to regulate our own conduct and also support those we supervise or manage to do so. The Code is specific about the legal obligations Members should adhere to, including those stated in the Equality Act 2010, in relation to discrimination, victimisation and harassment and making adjustments that are legally required.

Members are advised to familiarise themselves with the new or revised wording in the following sections of the Code:

General Principles

1.4 – sets out the expectations on Members related to discrimination, prejudice and bias in all aspects of their work.

1.5 – sets out that Members should promote fair access to psychotherapy and not allow patients' characteristics to influence decisions unless legally justified.

Responsible practice

2.6 – confirms the default principle of neutrality in therapy and that Members must not pressurise or coerce patients in relation to decisions about their sexuality or gender.

Conduct that might cause serious damage to the standing of the profession

7.2.3. – includes unlawful discrimination, harassing or victimising patients and colleagues as an example of unacceptable behaviour that might cause serious damage to the standing of the profession.

7.3.2. – confirms the requirement on members to notify the ACP if they become aware of another Member who appears to have engaged in conduct that might cause serious damage to the standing of the profession.

Please make yourself and your supervisees aware of the changes to the Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics to ensure that ACP Child and Adolescent Psychotherapists uphold these standards as a way to protect the public, the families we work with, the profession and the ACP.

Jo Goldsmith, Chair of the Ethical Practice Group
Kate Robertson, Chair of the Association of Child Psychotherapists
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