



Matrix College Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

Guidance for the use of this document

The purpose of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct is to make clear the ethical principles which inform our practice, together with the personal qualities and standards of conduct expected of all Matrix members.

All members of Matrix are required to abide by this Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.

Matrix members are:

- Student members
- Graduate members
- UKCP Registered Matrix members
- Tutors and staff

ii. Student members are advised to read this Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct in conjunction with the Matrix Student Handbook and the extensive guidance provided on the Matrix VLE (Moodle) – which includes Info Sheets and Policy Documents.

iii. All members (especially students in placement, and graduates) are advised to familiarise themselves with the Codes of other professional bodies to which they may belong, such as BACP or UKCP.

iv. This Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct will be used as a reference when the Matrix Ethics Committee is considering a complaint made against a member. It may also be referred to during the course of other Matrix procedures, such as Fitness to Practice or Fitness to Study.

v. The term 'Practitioner' in this document applies to all members of Matrix, including students, trainee practitioners (i.e. students who are working with clients in placement), graduate members (working towards Registration), UKCP Registered members and Matrix tutors and staff.

vi. This document is intended to be congruent with the Code of Ethics (2019) of UKCP, since Matrix is an Organisational Member of UKCP. The General Ethical Principles and Personal Moral Qualities outlined in sections A and B are drawn with acknowledgement from BACP (2018).

This document comprises 4 sections:

A - GENERAL ETHICAL PRINCIPLES which guide our practice and decision-making.

B - PERSONAL MORAL QUALITIES which we will all aspire to.

C - GENERAL ETHICAL REQUIREMENTS which all Matrix members must abide by.

D - ETHICAL REQUIREMENTS applying specifically to **STUDENTS, TUTORS and SUPERVISORS**.

SECTION A – GENERAL ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

The following principles, based on the values of Matrix and the profession, guide our practice. They should be ‘woven in’ to all of our decision-making with regard to client work and can serve as reference-points whenever we are called upon to make clinical and/or ethical choices.

Beneficence: promoting the client’s wellbeing; acting in client’s best interests.

Non-maleficence: avoiding harm to the client.

Trustworthiness: honouring the trust placed in the practitioner.

Autonomy: respect for the client’s right to make their own choices.

Justice: fair, impartial treatment of all clients.

Self-respect: fostering the practitioner’s self-knowledge, integrity and care for self.

These general principles act as a guide for our practice but they also translate into certain specific requirements for all practitioners (see Sections C and D).

SECTION B – PERSONAL MORAL QUALITIES

The following qualities, based on the values of Matrix and the profession, serve as a representation of an ethical practitioner. They give an outline of what an ethical practitioner might look like, based on the concept of ‘virtue ethics’ from moral philosophy.

All Matrix members are strongly encouraged to aspire to these qualities. In doing so, they will be supporting good relationships with peers, clients, colleagues, and the wider community.

Honesty: being open and providing useful, appropriate information.

Care: being responsible, competent, attentive (and account for personal self care).

Courage: the capacity to act in spite of known fears, risks and uncertainty.

Diligence: the conscientious use of skills and knowledge. To take personal responsibility for one’s actions.

Fairness: impartial and principled in decisions and actions; promoting equality of opportunity.

Humility: the ability to assess accurately and acknowledge one’s own strengths and weaknesses.

Identity: sense of self in relationship to others that forms the basis of responsibility

Resilience: the capacity to work with the client’s concerns without being personally diminished.

Respect: Each human being is of value and worth. Show appropriate regard and value for people and their understanding of themselves.

Sincerity: a personal consistency between what is professed and what is done.

Wisdom: possession of sound judgement that informs practice, which includes seeking advice from the appropriate people when necessary.

Integrity: being moral in dealings with others; personal straightforwardness, honesty, coherence, i.e. authenticity.

SECTION C - GENERAL ETHICAL REQUIREMENTS

1. Practitioners must act in the best interests of clients.

1.1 Practitioners commit to respecting the best interest of the client; this includes respecting their dignity and worth as human beings. It includes facilitating the clients' autonomy and self-development. It includes honouring the trust placed in the practitioner, avoiding harm to the client, and treating all clients fairly and impartially.

1.2 Practitioners acknowledge the dynamics of power and trust in their relationships with all clients and undertake to actively avoid exploitation of any client/former client. This will include but not be limited to:

- a) Practitioners will not enter into sexual relationships with any of their clients. They will not behave in a sexual manner towards any client, even after the counselling has ended.
- b) Practitioners will not enter into sexual relationships with, or behave sexually towards, anyone they know to be closely connected to a client.
- c) Practitioners will not enter into any arrangements with clients whereby they will benefit financially or materially, apart from the agreement for payment contained within the working contract.
- d) Practitioners will not encourage or solicit gifts from clients or former clients.
- e) Recognising that they often work with vulnerable people, practitioners will actively avoid the exploitation of clients for their own emotional gain.

2. Professionalism

2.1. Dual/multiple relationships and conflict of interest - Practitioners must avoid entering into dual and multiple relationships, which risk confusion for an existing client relationship. For example, having a social or business relationship with a client is a 'dual relationship'. Practitioners must also avoid accepting as a client someone who is closely connected to an existing client. In circumstances where dual/multiple relationships may be unavoidable, for example, in small communities or rural areas, practitioners are responsible for clarifying and managing boundaries with the client(s) concerned and for protecting client confidentiality. Practitioners should review any such arrangements at regular intervals.

2.2. Relationships with former clients - Practitioners must exercise reasonable care before entering into a personal or business relationship with a former client, carefully accounting for important aspects of the former relationship, such as the duration and nature of the work. When a potential relationship with a former client is one of choice, practitioners are expected to carefully examine their own motives. Practitioners must be aware that if such a relationship proves ultimately to be detrimental to the former client, they may be held accountable.

2.3 Practitioners acknowledge that, in essence, the responsibilities assumed in working with clients continue after the ending of the relationship. This means that after the counselling has ended, practitioners must still be mindful of the ongoing bond between former client and therapist; taking care not to act in a way that might cause harm to that bond.

2.4 Should anything in the work with a client go significantly wrong, the practitioner should promptly inform the client concerned, take action to remedy the situation and limit harm, whether or not the client was aware of it, and offer an apology when appropriate.

3. Communication and Consent

3.1 Practitioners will ensure that clients give informed consent to the work that is offered, including the nature of the work as it relates to the needs of the client. Practitioners will offer a clear explanation at the outset of the counselling of the work proposed and its implications, what to expect, the risks involved, as well as possible alternatives. Where appropriate, an explanation of the modality and methods of working will be offered.

3.2 Practitioners will explain to a client or prospective client their 'business contract' which will usually be in writing. This may include terms, fees and conditions etc. There will be clear information available to respond to other related questions, such as the likely length of counselling, methods of practice, expectations of the client, as well as arrangements for termination of counselling.

3.3. Practitioners will not mislead clients or potential clients about their services. This means that clear information must be given about:

- a) the type or nature of counselling practiced;
- b) the qualifications of the practitioner, including their status as a trainee where appropriate;
- c) their registration and/or membership of relevant professional bodies.

d) Practitioners will not make false or misleading statements about their qualifications, experience, status, or their relationship to Matrix and/or its staff.

3.4 Practitioners will make clear to clients which Code(s) of Ethics and Professional Conduct they subscribe to. This may be stated in their written contract, or publicly visible on their website or other advertising. Clients will be made aware of processes that are available should they wish to make a complaint about the counselling.

3.5 Practitioners will ensure that any advertising of their services, including directory listings and websites as well as traditional media, will contain accurate and responsible information that is not exaggerated or misleading. Practitioners will not make unsubstantiated or poorly supported claims in any advertising.

3.6 Testimonials will not be sought from clients or used in advertising material (including websites and directory listings).

3.7 Before commencing any research in which clients are involved, practitioners must obtain the client's verifiable and informed consent. This will include clarifying the nature, purpose, and conditions of the research. It will also include offering information on how the clients' identities and privacy will be protected. It is expected that researchers will have consulted with senior practitioners, supervisors, and relevant ethics bodies before proceeding.

3.8 Before publishing any clinical material at all, in written or digital form (this may include, but not be limited to- traditional books, online publications, podcasts, and social media activity of various kinds) practitioners must carefully and diligently take steps to protect the

welfare and best interests of clients. Practitioners will ensure they obtain informed consent from all clients for any clinical material proposed for publication. Anonymity and privacy are of paramount importance. If a client is able to identify themselves in published clinical material, even after the use of pseudonyms and other techniques for anonymising the work, their confidentiality may be compromised. Practitioners are strongly advised to consult with senior colleagues including relevant ethical bodies before proceeding.

4. Record-keeping and Confidentiality

4.1 Practitioners commit to respecting, protecting and preserving client confidentiality.

4.2 Practitioners will be clear with clients about the limits of confidentiality; for instance, in situations where legislation requires reporting, such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and in situations where the safety of the client or others is at risk.

4.3 In circumstances where it is considered necessary to break confidentiality practitioners commit to informing the client concerned beforehand, when ethically appropriate and legally permitted, and to giving careful consideration to how to manage such situations, including the continued support of the client concerned. It is expected that practitioners will have sought the advice of their supervisor in making this decision.

4.4 In circumstances where the client is involved in judicial or legal proceedings, practitioners will prioritise the protection of confidential information. Practitioners will seek legal and ethical advice, in order to determine first whether they are required by law to provide such information. Should practitioners decide that information may be disclosed, they will ensure that only the necessary and sufficient information is provided. Practitioners will seek legal and ethical advice on the information provided, and which will give due consideration to the effect of such disclosures on the client.

4.5 Practitioners will inform clients that they discuss their work with supervisors. The client's identity will remain confidential.

4.6 Practitioners are responsible for keeping records appropriate to the type of counselling they offer to clients. If working in an organisation or placement, they will ensure that their record-keeping is congruent with the requirements thereof. Records should be written in a clear and legible way. Practitioners will be aware that clients may have a right to access these records.

4.7 Practitioners are responsible for keeping identifiable confidential records under secure conditions. This includes appropriate security for written or other physical materials, and appropriate security and/or encryption for digital materials. When disposing of confidential material, they will ensure disposal in a secure manner to prevent unauthorised access. If working in an organisation or placement, practitioners will ensure that they store and dispose of confidential material in accordance with the requirements.

4.8 Practitioners will only discuss client information in appropriate professional settings.

5. Professional Skills, Knowledge and Experience

5.1 Qualified practitioners are expected to commit themselves to ongoing supervision and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activity. These must be maintained at a level that satisfies the requirements of Matrix policies, for Supervision and CPD.

5.2 Practitioners have a responsibility to maintain their effectiveness, and capacity to work with clients. If their effectiveness becomes impaired for any reason, including health and personal circumstances, they should seek the advice of their supervisor, experienced colleagues or line manager and, if necessary, withdraw from practice until their fitness to practice is sufficiently restored.

5.3 Practitioners will not work with clients if they deem their therapeutic effectiveness will be impaired by them being affected by alcohol, drugs, or medication.

5.4 Practitioners are required to work with only clients who fall within their range of competence. They will only offer forms of counselling in which they have had adequate training or experience. If in doubt, practitioners are expected to take advice from their supervisor(s). Practitioners must be prepared to refer clients on to another professional where appropriate.

5.5 Practitioners will ensure that they give careful consideration to the ending of a therapeutic relationship, making arrangements in good time as far as possible, and with due care for the client. Where the practitioner is unable to continue in practice, they will ensure that clients are informed and (where possible) alternative practitioners are identified.

5.6 Practitioners will ensure that they have clinical practice 'executor' arrangements in place, so that appropriate action can be taken if they become suddenly unavailable or in the event of their death. These arrangements, with a named person, will include steps to notify clients of a practitioner's death or illness. It may give suggestions as to how clients might be supported to deal with such a situation. Alternative or 'locum' practitioners may be identified. The arrangements will include a reminder for the executor to take steps to safeguard the confidential information of clients (see 4.7).

6. Social Responsibility

6.1 The practice of counselling and/or psychotherapy is an activity involving the acceptance of professional responsibilities towards clients, colleagues, the wider community and society as a whole.

6.2 Ethical standards comprise such values as integrity, respect and impartiality. Anti-discriminatory practice underpins these basic values of counselling. Practitioners acknowledge the value and dignity of all humanity, regardless of such differences as gender, race, age, culture, class, sexuality, lifestyle, religion, immigration status and disability.

6.3 Practitioners will not allow prejudice based on factors identified in (6.2) to adversely affect their treatment. They will avoid behaviour that may be perceived as abusive or detrimental to clients or colleagues, based on these factors.

6.4 Practitioners will consider issues of diversity and equality in all aspects of their work. It is expected that they will engage in a continuous process of self-reflection on these issues and seek CPD/further education/training where appropriate.

7. Trust and Confidence

7.1 Practitioners agree to act in a way that upholds the reputation of the counselling & therapy professions. They agree to act in a way that promotes public trust and confidence in counselling & psychotherapy professionals. This may include life outside the professional role.

7.2 Practitioners will be aware of, and comply with, all legal and professional obligations which apply to their practice. This will include Matrix policies and procedures.

7.3 In using electronic communications (which may include email, instant messaging, and social media) practitioners will ensure that they are acting in accordance with this Code.

7.4 All practitioners will recognise their responsibilities concerning the rights of vulnerable adults, and their obligations in terms of safeguarding children. Guidance from UKCP and/or other professional bodies will be followed. Similarly practitioners acknowledge, and will seek to understand, current legislation on post-adoption issues. Where they have doubt about the appropriateness of working with somebody who has been adopted, practitioners will seek professional guidance.

7.5 Practitioners will be aware of and follow other guidance and policies of Matrix, UKCP and other bodies as applicable to their practice.

8. Exploitation and Harmful/Unethical Practice by Other Practitioners

8.1 Practitioners accept they share a responsibility to protect all clients from exploitation and harmful practice. This means that we all have a responsibility to challenge colleagues/other practitioners when appropriate, in order to uphold high ethical standards in our professional community. Practitioners are advised to seek supervisory and ethical advice, in order to support them with this important but potentially sensitive task.

8.2 Adequate and appropriate professional indemnity insurance is required for all counselling work. Practitioners will ensure that they have cover in place, or that their employer/agency has cover which includes them. This cover should remain in place for a period of at least 5 years after a practitioner has ceased to work, in order to provide retrospective protection.

8.3 Practitioners will co-operate with any legal investigation into their practice, and with any ethical complaints procedure that involves them (as a respondent or a witness).

8.4 If a practitioner is charged with a criminal offence, is convicted of an offence, receives a conditional discharge or police caution, they will inform Matrix.

8.5 Similarly, practitioners will inform Matrix if they are subject to a disciplinary procedure or practice restriction with any relevant professional organisation (for example, BACP, UKCP, HCPC etc) or an employer/agency.

SECTION D – ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS applying specifically to Matrix STUDENTS, TUTORS and SUPERVISORS

1. Specific Ethical Requirements: STUDENTS

1.1 All Matrix students will abide by the general principles and requirements of this document (sections A, B and C).

1.2 Students are required to work with only clients who fall within their range of competence.

The training only qualifies students to work with adults, 18 years old and over. Students will not work with any client who is aged under 18.

1.3 All information shared between clients and practitioner is confidential within professional boundaries, such as supervision and training. Information can usually only be disclosed outside this with the client's consent. There may be times, for a student, that issues around individual client work needs to be shared with a Matrix tutor, who also has a professional code of conduct to follow.

1.4 Students must gain explicit permission from a client in order to write about them in academic work. If a client does not agree then the work with them cannot be written about. The consent form for this is on Moodle (some placements may have their own). Students writing about their client work in Matrix assignments will ensure that material is effectively anonymised.

1.5 It is an ethical requirement that all students inform their clients they are currently in counselling training; students can describe themselves as a 'student counsellor' or 'trainee counsellor'. 'Student' status does not end until the award of BSc (Hons). UKCP 'trainee' status remains until the award of Full Registration as a Psychotherapeutic Counsellor. Students are required to disclose their qualifications when requested and must not make any false claim or misleading statements concerning their experience, qualifications or relationship to Matrix or their supervisor(s) and tutor(s).

1.6 No Matrix student can work in private practice until they have passed their BSc viva successfully with no added sanctions. This will be before the Middlesex University endorsement at the Assessment Board. The only exception to this will be when a student enters Year 3, via RPL, having already achieved BACP accreditation.

1.7 All students have a role to play in identifying students and peers who may be vulnerable to radicalisation. Any concerns should be reported to the Prevent Lead at Matrix, Fiona Paul.

1.8 All students have a role to play in reporting inappropriate or abusive behaviour within the student body. This includes within training groups. Reports of behaviour that is inappropriate or abusive should be made to Programme Leads or the Principal. When a report is made, it should be noted that the information will be held confidentially amongst the tutor team, on a 'need-to-know' basis. If a complaint results in conduct proceedings, the identity of the person(s) making the report may not necessarily be protected. (Please also see the Matrix Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy).

1.9 All students are required to maintain the confidentiality of their training group. This applies in particular to the interactions in Group Process, but also includes other material and discussions during the training. Students must recognise the importance of respecting the privacy and confidentiality of their peers.

2. Specific Ethical Requirements: TUTORS

2.1 All Matrix tutors, whether or not they are Matrix members, will abide by the general principles and requirements of this document (sections A, B and C).

2.2 All tutors are expected to conduct themselves in their training activities and associated responsibilities in ways which do not undermine public confidence in their role as tutors, the work of other tutors, Matrix College, and associated bodies such as Middlesex University.

2.3 Tutors are required to exercise their professional judgement and discretion when dealing with Matrix students for whom they do not have direct responsibility. This will include, for example, students who are present at a training weekend/unit but are not part of the tutor's class.

2.4 Tutors are reminded that the training status of students/trainees continues until graduation and/or formal withdrawal from the course. It continues through any consolidation years that the student may take.

2.5 Tutors are responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate boundaries between themselves and students, so that working relationships are not confused with other relationships.

2.6 Tutors must not accept as clients students with whom they are actively involved in a training role. Former students must not be accepted as clients until a period of time has elapsed for reflection. Consultation with a supervisor is strongly advised where this is being considered.

2.7 Tutors must not exploit students financially, sexually, emotionally, or in any other way. Sexual relationships with students are unethical and are prohibited.

2.8 Tutors are expected to engage with Continuing Professional Development activity according to the requirements of Matrix and UKCP. They are also expected to continuously monitor and evaluate the limits of their professional competence.

2.9 Tutors will be responsible for monitoring their fitness to teach; to maintain their effectiveness, resilience, and capacity to work competently with students. In situations where their personal circumstances, health, or personal functioning are challenging, they will be expected to seek help from the Operations Team and their supervisor. They may need to withdraw temporarily from teaching activity or may be asked to withdraw by Matrix.

2.10 Tutors will be responsible for negotiating the necessary confidentiality agreements with any training group they teach. Tutors will be aware of Matrix policy regarding confidentiality within the staff team and may remind students of this if/when appropriate.

2.11 Tutors undertake to act appropriately and in a timely manner if a situation arises where a student's confidentiality needs to be broken. They will usually discuss this with the student and explain why this course of action needs to be taken, but if there are serious concerns of safety, tutors may decide to report directly to Matrix without consultation.

2.12 Tutors will ensure that, when talking about clinical practice, the anonymity and privacy of clients/supervisees/any other third party is protected.

2.13 Tutors are required to report to Matrix any current investigation or sanction brought against them by another professional body or organisation.

2.14 A breach of the Matrix Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct may constitute a breach of the Tutor Agreement or Programme Lead Agreement.

3. Specific Ethical Requirements: SUPERVISORS

3.1 All Matrix supervisors, whether or not they are Matrix members, will abide by the general principles and requirements of this document (sections A, B and C).

3.2 All supervisors are expected to conduct themselves in their training activities and associated responsibilities in ways which do not undermine public confidence in: their role as supervisors, the work of other supervisors, Matrix College, and associated bodies such as Middlesex University.

3.3 Supervisors are reminded that the training status of students/trainees continues until graduation and/or formal withdrawal from the course. It continues through any consolidation years that the student may take.

3.4 Supervisors are responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate boundaries between themselves and supervisees, so that working relationships are not confused with other relationships.

3.5 Supervisors must not exploit supervisees financially, sexually, emotionally, or in any other way. Sexual relationships with supervisees are unethical.

3.6 Supervisors are expected to engage with Continuing Professional Development activity according to the requirements of Matrix (or their OM) and UKCP. They are also expected to continuously monitor and evaluate the limits of their professional competence.

3.7 Supervisors will be responsible for monitoring their fitness to supervise; to maintain their effectiveness, resilience, and capacity to work competently with trainees. In situations where their personal circumstances, health, or personal functioning are challenging, they will be expected to seek help and advice their supervisor. Where appropriate – in situations where the supervisor's fitness to supervise may be impaired – it is expected that the supervisor will withdraw from practice (temporarily or permanently). Support should ideally be made available to supervisees, in finding a 'locum' supervisor or long-term alternative.

3.8 Supervisors of trainees on placement are reminded of their obligations to Matrix under the Placement Agreement, with regard to reporting concerns about the supervisee.

3.9 Supervisors must receive supervision of their supervision practice, with an appropriately qualified supervisor.

3.10 Supervisors are required to report to Matrix any current investigation or sanction brought against them by another professional body or organisation.