

Introduction

This policy sets out BCPC's position on Dual Relationships and Conflicts of Interest and emphasises those relationships that are to be avoided. This policy should be read in conjunction with the BCPC Code of Practice, the BCPC Statement of Ethical Principles, the UKCP Code of Ethics and Professional Practice and the BACP Ethical Framework.

Dual Relationships and roles arise when a practitioner (therapist/ supervisor/ tutor or examiner) has a relationship with someone that includes more than one role.

BCPC recognises that dual relationships and roles are ethically complex and cannot simply be managed by prescriptive statements but require an ethically reflective stance, a sensitivity to context and maintenance of the highest professional standards.

The intention of this document is to encourage BCPC practitioners (Psychotherapists, Counsellors, Supervisors, Tutors, Examiners) to be cautious and mindful in their decision making about potential dual roles and to be aware of those situations where there may be a conflict of interest.

Dual Relationships within the BCPC professional trainings

At BCPC some dual relationships exist within the professional trainings. Most commonly a course tutor may also be a training supervisor. BCPC believes, in line with its integrative ethos, that such an overlap for students in training can be very supportive and holding during a formative time. These dual relationships are monitored closely within teaching teams.

Dual relationships and roles for BCPC graduate members

BCPC recognises that its members are likely to encounter dual or multiple relationships in their working lives within the counselling and psychotherapy professions. If a dual relationship is unavoidable the BCPC practitioner must be clear to actively manage boundaries and protect confidentiality.

An Ethical Approach to Dual Roles and Relationships

BCPC Members are expected to:

- Think ethically and critically
- Ensure that they are sensitive to context before considering a dual role with an individual
- Be reflective in their process
- Carefully consider the reason for the proposed secondary relationship
- Be cautious and considerate of the potential impact of a dual relationship
- Consider the power dynamic in the relationship, including the potential for harm to the other party. A potential imbalance of power needs constant monitoring.
- Recognise that dual roles are not always possible to avoid, especially in small communities or specialist areas of practice and to understand that an ethical approach lies in an awareness of how overlapping and dual roles are clarified and managed.

Conflicts of Interest

All dual relationships have the potential to lead to a conflict of interest which might in turn cause harm or distress to one or more of the parties involved. Practitioners are required to stop and think before moving from one role to another with someone and to recognise and declare a potential conflict of interest that may have occurred. Concern about dual relationships can be raised in supervision or directly with BCPC.

Role incompatibility – Disallowed Relationships

BCPC, in line with the HIPC Policy Statement on Dual Relationships expects its members to avoid engaging in the following dual roles:

- Therapist / Tutor
- Therapist / Supervisor
- Therapist / Examiner
- Tutor/ Examiner * (*where in the final submission stages of training the student's tutor also acts as examiner – to ensure the integrity of the examination process)

Underpinning Ethical Considerations:

- To protect clients from power imbalances and the potential abuse of power
- To protect the integrity of the therapeutic relationship and ensure clear boundaries
- To prevent role pressure and conflicts arising from dual/ multiple roles
- To preserve the integrity of discrete relationships

- To encourage and support authenticity and appropriate challenge in each part of professional training and practitioners' work as graduates
- To reduce the possibility of relationships becoming confused or enmeshed
- To encourage practitioners to take responsibility for their professional power

Considerations

Before entering into a dual relationship practitioners should reflect upon:

- Whose needs are being met in this relationship, what is the potential impact?
- What do the plain facts indicate?
- Would this dual relationship stand up to scrutiny or a complaint being brought?
- What alternative arrangements could be put in place?
- What supervision and other safeguards have been put in place?

Accountability

BCPC practitioners are required to:

- Keep clear supervision records
- Keep a record of all ethical considerations and boundary decisions
- Ensure a review of decisions made
- Act with candour and integrity

Contracting and Transparency

Where a dual relationship exists BCPC member practitioners must ensure that they:

- Contract clearly to ensure clear boundaries, safe holding and contractual confidentiality
- Consider and agree how any overlap will be managed (e.g. unforeseen encounters)
- Discuss role transition in supervision and ensure supervisory oversight
- Maintain openness, accountability and shared decision making with the client or trainee

Practitioners as tutors and supervisors

- Tutors and supervisors need to bring ethical consideration and an awareness of conflicts of interest when supporting practitioners to make decisions
- All proposed dual roles should be approached carefully and reflectively modelling best practice and ethical consideration
- Consider your power and potential impact in this relationship with your supervisee or tutee

Discussing a concern:

- Concerns around a dual relationship should be brought to supervision.
- Where further guidance is needed, please contact the BCPC Office Manager on officemanager@bcpc.org.uk who will forward to your enquiry to the Director and the relevant Course Leader as appropriate.

Supporting Documents:

[BCPC Complaints and Grievance Procedure](#)

[BCPC Code of Practice](#)

[BCPC Statement of Ethical Principals](#)

[UKCP Code of Ethics and Professional Practice](#)

[BACP Ethical Framework](#)

[UKCP HIPC Policy Statement on Dual Relationships](#)

BCPC Dual Relationships and Conflict of Interest Policy	
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