



Good Therapy

COSRT Code of Ethics and Practice 2019

Good Therapy

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The duties of a COSRT Member

Service users (individuals receiving psychotherapy and/or counselling from a COSRT Member) must be able to trust therapists with their wellbeing. To justify trust, you must show respect and that your practice meets the expected standards. You must also ensure your conduct outside professional practice reflects these standards.

Knowledge, skills and performance

- Make the care of your service user your first concern.
- Provide a good standard of practice and care.
- Keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date.
- Recognise and work within the limits of your competence.

Safety and quality

- Take prompt action if you think that service user safety, dignity or comfort is being compromised.
- Protect and promote the health of service users and the public.

Communication, partnership and teamwork

- Treat service users as individuals and respect their dignity.
- Treat service users politely and considerately.
- Respect service users' right to confidentiality.
- Work in partnership with service users.
- Listen to, and respond to, their concerns and preferences.
- Give service users the information they want or need in a way they can understand.
- Respect service users' right to reach decisions with you about their therapy and care.
- Support service users in caring for themselves to improve their health.
- Work with colleagues in the ways that best serve service users' interests.

Maintaining trust

- Be honest and open and act with integrity.
- Never discriminate unfairly against service users or colleagues.
- Never abuse trust in you or the public's trust in the profession.

You are personally accountable for your professional practice and must always be prepared to justify your decisions and actions.

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Good therapy in action

1. People need good therapists. Good therapists make the care of their service users their first concern: they are competent, keep their knowledge and skills up to date, establish and maintain good relationships with service users and colleagues, are honest and trustworthy, and act with integrity and within the law.
2. Good therapists work in partnership with service users and respect their rights to privacy and dignity. They treat each service user as an individual. They do their best to ensure service users receive good therapy that will support them to live as well as possible, whatever their situation.
3. “Good Therapy – COSRT Code of Ethics and Practice” describes what is expected of all COSRT Members (except Associate Members). It is your responsibility to be familiar with Good Therapy.
4. You must use your judgement in applying the principles to the various situations you will face as a therapist, whether you practice, whatever field of therapy you work in, and whether or not you routinely see service users. You must be prepared to explain and justify your decisions and actions.
5. In Good Therapy we use the terms ‘you must’ and ‘you should’ in the following ways:
 - ‘You must’ is used for an overriding duty or principle.
 - ‘You should’ is used when we are providing an explanation of how you will meet the overriding duty.
 - ‘You should’ is also used where the duty or principle will not apply in all situations or circumstances, or where there are factors outside your control that affect whether or how you can follow the guidance.

Underlying principles

6. Five fundamental ethical principles underpin and inform this Code of Ethics, inspiring COSRT and its Members towards excellence always. COSRT recognises that ethical decision making is contextual. A framework of principles is suitable to allow consideration of the context of the situation and practitioner involved. The fundamental principles of this code are:

Working towards the good of service users and doing no harm (Beneficence and Non-maleficence)

7. Practitioners must hold the welfare of service users central to their work and commit to avoiding harm.

Being trustworthy and responsible (Fidelity)

8. Practitioners should work to establish trust with all. Therefore, you should not only honour the trust placed in you by service users, but also act in a respectful, professional and ethical manner as a representative of your profession.

Respect for the dignity and rights of the service user (Autonomy)

9. Service users have the right to self-determination and to be shown dignity and respect for making their own lawful decisions.

Justice

10. Practitioners should be aware their own judgements are informed by experience and need to take precautions to provide a service unrestricted by prejudice and limitations of experience. This also means showing respect for diversity without prejudice to colour, race, belief, gender, sexuality, social context, and mental and physical abilities.

Integrity and self-responsibility

11. Practitioners work to be as honest, truthful and accurate as possible. You are also responsible for looking after your own needs and health. So, you must only commit to a practice that you can offer being aware of your own expertise, training, health and wellbeing and let the service user know if anything changes.

Section 1: Knowledge, skills and performance

Develop and maintain your professional performance

12. You must be competent in all aspects of your work, including management and research.
13. You must keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date.
14. You must regularly take part in activities that develop your competence and performance.
15. You must comply with COSRT's Continuing Professional Development requirements.
16. You should be willing to find and take part in structured support opportunities offered by your employer or contracting body (for example, mentoring). You should do this when you join an organisation and whenever your role changes significantly throughout your career.
17. You must be familiar with guidelines and developments that affect your work.
18. You must keep up to date with and follow the law, our guidance and other regulations relevant to your work.
19. You must take steps to monitor and improve the quality of your work.

Apply knowledge, experience and evidence to practice

20. You must recognise and work within the limits of your competence.
 - a. You must have the necessary knowledge of the English language to provide a good standard of practice and care in the UK.
21. You must provide a good standard of practice and care. If you assess, diagnose or treat service users, you must:
 - a. adequately assess the service user's conditions, taking account of their history (including the symptoms and psychological, spiritual, social and cultural factors), their views and values
 - b. promptly provide or arrange suitable advice, investigations or therapy where necessary
 - c. refer a service user to another practitioner when this serves the service user's needs.
22. In providing therapy you must:
 - a. propose therapies only when you have adequate knowledge of the service user's health and are satisfied that the therapy serves the service user's needs
 - b. provide effective therapies based on the best available evidence
 - c. avoid using, advocating or supporting any therapy without a clear and robust evidence base related to its outcomes and impacts
 - d. take all possible steps to alleviate pain and distress
 - e. consult colleagues where appropriate
 - f. respect the service user's right to seek a second opinion

- g. check that the therapy you provide for each service user is compatible with any other therapies or treatments the service user is receiving.
23. You must not use, support or advocate Conversion Therapy.
 24. You should not provide, or actively help service users procure sexual surrogacy or bodywork involving touch.
 25. You should only perform a physical examination if you have the proper medical qualifications, have written consent, and there is a medical requirement.
 26. You must have proper, evidenced training and a current Full Disclosure DBS certificate to work with people under the age of majority or classified as persons with special needs or vulnerabilities.
 27. You must obtain the written consent of an appropriate adult (i.e. parent, legal guardian or registered medical practitioner) except for those who are Gillick competent, before conducting therapy with people under the age of or classified as persons with special needs or vulnerabilities.

Maintain professional boundaries

28. You must not provide therapy to intimate partners, relatives, close friends, or associates.
29. You must not use your position of trust to cross boundaries appropriate to the therapeutic relationship. This includes but is not limited to having sexual relationships with or behaving sexually towards clients, supervisors/ees or trainees; or exploiting them emotionally, financially or in any other way whatsoever.
30. You must not use your professional standing to initiate sexualised behaviour in any context.
31. You must not touch the client in any way that may be open to misinterpretation.
32. You should avoid dual relationships with service users (current and past), supervisors/ees or trainees and others you work with in your role as a therapist.
33. You should not engage in sexualised, sexual or intentionally sexually stimulating contact and/or behaviour with anyone you are providing or have provided therapy to.
34. You must inform your supervisor at the earliest opportunity if any relationship other than the clinical relationship occurs or develops between either you and a service user, or members of your respective immediate families.
35. You must arrange, if such a dual relationship occurs, to cease accepting fees, work towards terminating the clinical relationship in an appropriate manner and arranging a considered referral to another suitable practitioner at the earliest opportunity.

Record and manage your work clearly and accurately

36. You must agree a contract with the service user before starting therapy. This should:
 - a. be written and signed by both parties
 - b. establish the rights and responsibilities of both parties in their working relationship
 - c. outline aims of therapy when and how and when therapy will end.
 - d. Where the organisation is responsible for the contract, you must ensure the service user understands the conditions under which the therapy will be delivered.
37. You should obtain written service user consent before using explicit material in therapy.
38. Documents you make (including clinical records) to formally record your work must be clear, accurate and legible. You should make records at the same time as the events you are recording or as soon as possible afterwards.
39. You must keep records that contain personal information about service users, colleagues or others securely, and in line with any data protection law requirements.
40. Clinical records should include:
 - a. relevant clinical findings
 - b. the decisions made and actions agreed, who is making decisions and agreeing actions
 - c. the information given to service users
 - d. who is making the record and when.
41. You must appoint a Professional Executor to ensure appropriate care of Clients if you end practice without planning.

Section 2: Safety and Quality

Contribute to and comply with systems to protect service users

42. You must put in place and take part in systems of quality assurance and quality improvement to promote service user safety. This includes:
 - a. taking part in regular reviews and audits of your work and that of your team, responding constructively to the outcomes, taking steps to address any problems and carrying out further training where necessary
 - b. regularly reflecting on your standards of practice and the therapy you provide
 - c. reviewing service user feedback where available.
43. To help keep service users safe you must:
 - a. contribute to confidential inquiries
 - b. contribute to adverse event recognition
 - c. respond to requests from organisations monitoring professional standards.
44. When providing information for these purposes you should still respect service users' confidentiality.
45. You must make sure you have adequate insurance or indemnity cover so your service users will not be disadvantaged if they make a claim about the clinical care you have provided in the UK.

Respond to risks to safety

46. You must promote and encourage a culture that allows people to raise concerns openly and safely.
47. You must take prompt action if you think that service user safety, dignity or comfort is or may be seriously compromised.
48. If a service user is not receiving services or care that meet their needs, you must immediately tell someone who is able to act straight away.
49. If service users are at risk because of inadequate premises, equipment or other resources, policies or systems, you should put the matter right if that is possible. You must raise your concern in line with your workplace policy. You should also record the steps you have taken.
50. If you have concerns that a colleague may not be fit to practise and may be putting service users at risk, you must ask for advice from a colleague, another relevant body or us. If you are still concerned you must report this to COSRT or the appropriate body and make a record of the steps you have taken.

51. Whether or not you have vulnerable adults or children and young people as service users, you should consider their needs and welfare and offer them help if you think their rights have been abused or denied.

Risks posed by your health

52. If you know or suspect that you have a serious condition that you could pass on to service users, or if your judgement or performance could be affected by a condition or its therapy, you must consult a suitably qualified professional. You must follow their advice about any changes to your practice they consider necessary. You must not rely on your own assessment of the risk to service users.
53. If required by an organisation, setting or conditions deemed necessary for safe practice, you should be immunised against common serious communicable diseases (unless otherwise contraindicated).
54. You should be registered with a general practitioner outside your family.

Raising concerns

55. You should feel comfortable approaching COSRT as a whistle-blower if:
- a. you have concerns over a current or former employer
 - b. (in some instances) you have concerns over somewhere you have or had a contractual arrangement to work or provide services
 - c. you fear you might suffer a detriment, or evidence will be destroyed if you raise it locally; or
 - d. you have raised the concern previously and no action was taken
 - e. the concern is about either membership, accreditation medical annual licensing (including 5-year re-accreditation), education, or standards of professionalism and fitness to practice.

Section 3: Communication, partnership and teamwork

Communicate effectively

- 56. You must listen to service users, take account of their views, and respond honestly to their questions.
- 57. You must give service users the information they want or need to know in a way they can understand.
- 58. You should make sure that arrangements are made, wherever possible, to meet service users' language and communication needs.
- 59. You must be considerate to those close to the service user and be sensitive and responsive in giving them information and support e.g. signposting a third party on to their own therapist if they asked to see the same therapist as their partner

Working collaboratively with colleagues

- 60. You must work collaboratively with colleagues, respecting their skills and contributions.
- 61. You must treat colleagues fairly and with respect.
- 62. You must be aware of how your behaviour may influence others within and outside the team.

Teaching, training, supporting and assessing

- 63. You must make sure that all staff you manage have appropriate supervision.
- 64. You must access an experienced, qualified supervisor for appropriate personal and professional support and development.
- 65. You must ensure your supervisor has experience of and training in working with young people, or people with special needs or vulnerabilities if you work with those groups.
- 66. You must ensure you are fit to practice when you return to work after any career break, in agreement with your supervisor.
- 67. You must make apparent to the public, the level of your qualifications and whether you are in training, and this must be clearly stated on the COSRT website and personal websites.
- 68. You must be honest and objective when writing references, and when appraising or assessing the performance of colleagues, including locums and students. References must include all information relevant to your colleagues' competence, performance and conduct.

69. You must support colleagues who have problems with their performance or health. But you must always put service user safety first.

Establish and maintain partnerships

70. You must be polite and considerate.
71. You must treat everyone as individuals and respect their dignity and privacy.
72. You must treat everyone fairly and with respect whatever their life choices and beliefs.
73. You must work in partnership with service users, sharing with them the information they will need to make decisions about their therapy, including:
- a. their condition, its likely progression and the options for therapy, including associated risks and uncertainties
 - b. the progress of their therapy, and your role and responsibilities
 - c. any other information service users need if they are asked to agree to be involved in teaching or research.
74. You must treat information about service users as confidential.
75. You should support service users in caring for themselves to empower them to improve and maintain their wellbeing. This may, for example, include:
- a. advising service users on the effects of their life choices and lifestyle on their health and well-being
 - b. supporting service users to make lifestyle changes where appropriate.

Section 4: Maintaining Trust

Treat service users and colleagues fairly and without discrimination

76. You must not express your personal beliefs (including political, religious and moral beliefs) to service users in ways that exploit their vulnerability or are likely to cause them distress.
77. You must be open and honest with service users if things go wrong. If a service user under your care has suffered harm or distress, you should:
 - a. put matters right (if that is possible)
 - b. offer an apology
 - c. explain fully and promptly what has happened
78. The therapy you provide or arrange must be based on the assessment you and your service user make of their needs and priorities, and on your judgement about the likely effectiveness of the therapy options. You must not refuse or delay therapy because you believe that a service user's actions or lifestyle have contributed to their condition.
79. You must not deny therapy to service users because their medical condition may put you at risk. If a service user poses a risk to your health or safety, you should take all available steps to minimise the risk before providing therapy or attempt to assist in sourcing suitable alternative arrangements for providing therapy.
80. You must not unfairly discriminate against service users or colleagues by allowing your personal views to affect your professional relationships or the therapy you provide or arrange.
81. You should challenge colleagues if their behaviour does not comply with this guidance and inform COSRT or the appropriate body, if the behaviour amounts to abuse or denial of a service user's or colleague's rights.
82. You must consider and respond to the needs of disabled service users and should make reasonable adjustments to your practice so they can receive care to meet their needs.
83. You must respond promptly, fully and honestly to complaints and apologise when appropriate. You must not allow a service user's complaint to adversely affect the care or therapy you provide or arrange.
84. You should end a therapeutic relationship with a service user:
 - d. in a planned manner with clear communication between you and the service user on outcomes and next steps
 - e. when the breakdown of trust between you and the service user means you cannot provide good therapy to the service user.

Act with honesty and integrity

85. You must make sure that your conduct justifies your service users' trust in you and the public's trust in the profession.
86. You must always be honest about your experience, qualifications and current role.
87. You must only display valid qualifications and certificates issued in respect of relevant training courses and events or certificates of registration, validation or accreditation as issued or awarded by relevant professional bodies.
88. You must refrain from advertising any pending accreditation, approval or membership grade until such accreditation or membership is granted.
89. You must take steps to guard against medical misdirection (intentional and unintentional) to ensure no service user might be led to believe that you are licensed medical practitioner in the UK when you are not. This should include:
 - f. avoiding any improper, unjustified or potentially confusing use of words commonly associated with medical roles in job titles
 - g. avoiding any improper, unjustified or potentially confusing use of words commonly associated with medical roles in biographies
 - h. providing clear information to support/justify the use of unprotected words such as Consultant when used outside reference to licensed medical practice.
90. You must ensure that any academic or professional qualification cannot be confused by service users with medical qualification unless the practitioner possesses such qualifications.
91. You must only use the titles Doctor or Professor in relation to your therapy work if:
 - i. the Doctorate is in a subject directly relevant to therapy and is from a UK Chartered University or equivalent foreign institution
 - j. the title Professor is held by a Chair/visiting professor/emeritus professor linked to a Chartered UK University or equivalent foreign institution, and the title is related to a subject directly relevant to therapy.

Communicating information

92. You should only conduct online therapy if you have relevant training and supervision.
93. You must be honest and trustworthy in all your communication with service users and colleagues. This means you must make clear the limits of your knowledge and make reasonable checks to make sure any information you give is accurate.
94. You must ensure that methods of communication are monitored where a client is a child or young person.

95. When communicating publicly, including speaking to or writing in the media, you must maintain service user confidentiality. You should remember when using social media that communications intended for friends or family may become more widely available.
96. When advertising your services, you must make sure the information you publish is factual and can be checked and does not exploit service users' vulnerability or lack of medical knowledge.
97. You must ensure that all advertising complies with relevant COSRT guidance and the British Code of Advertising Practice, in accord with the British Advertising Standards Authority and to make available all such literature to COSRT on request.
98. You must be honest and trustworthy when writing reports, and when completing or signing forms, reports and other documents. You must make sure that any documents you write, or sign are not false or misleading.
 - k. You must take reasonable steps to check the information is correct.
 - l. You must not deliberately leave out relevant information.
99. You must not advertise as a psychosexual therapist or sexual and relationship therapist until you have obtained relevant formal qualifications.
100. You must not represent COSRT Membership as a professional qualification in any advertising or promotional material.
101. You must not use the COSRT logo on your website unless your Membership Category expressly allows it. You must seek approval from COSRT to use the logo in any other way including communications materials, email signatures.
102. You should follow COSRT Testimonial Guidelines when using testimonials about your activities.

Openness and legal or disciplinary proceedings

103. You must be honest and trustworthy when giving evidence to conduct procedures, courts or tribunals. You must make sure that any evidence you give or documents you write, or sign are not false or misleading.
104. You must take reasonable steps to check the information is correct.
105. You must not deliberately leave out relevant information.
106. You must make clear the limits of your competence and knowledge when giving evidence or acting as a witness.
107. You must tell us without delay (within 14 days) if, anywhere in the world:
 - m. you have accepted a caution from the police or been criticised by an official inquiry
 - n. you have been charged with or found guilty of a criminal offence

- o. another professional body has instigated any proceedings or made any finding against you as a result of fitness to practise, complaints or conduct procedures.
108. If you are suspended or removed by an organisation from a post, or have restrictions placed on your practice or any professional membership, you must inform COSRT (within 14 days) and any other organisations you carry out work for and any service users you see independently.

Honesty in financial dealings

109. You must be honest in financial and commercial dealings with service users, employers, insurers and other organisations or individuals.
110. You must not allow any interests you have to affect the way you prescribe for, treat, refer or commission services for service users.
111. If you are faced with a conflict of interest, you must be open about the conflict, declaring your interest formally, and you should be prepared to exclude yourself from decision making.
112. You must not ask for or accept – from service users, colleagues or others – any inducement, gift or hospitality that may affect or be seen to affect the way you prescribe for, treat or refer service users or commission services for service users. You must not offer these inducements.

Research and publications

113. You must ensure that any research involving service users or other participants conforms to the World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki 1964 www.wma.net/en/30publications/10policies/b3/ as modified by the 59th WMA General Assembly, Seoul, Korea, October 2008, or such other declaration or modification which may be adopted from time to time.
114. You must use research methods that comply with the COSRT Code of Ethics and Practice and they must not affect service users or other participants adversely.
115. You must ensure that the dissemination of research in any format, which includes clinical material, safeguards the welfare and anonymity of service users.