

Psychotherapists and Counsellors Professional Liaison Group (PLG)  
19 October 2010

Consultation draft of standards of proficiency

Executive summary and recommendations

**Introduction**

The consultation draft of the standards of proficiency is attached for reference.

**Decision**

This paper is to note. No decision is required.

**Background information**

None

**Resource implications**

None

**Financial implications**

None

**Appendices**

None

**Date of paper**

6 October 2010

## CONSULTATION DRAFT

### Appendix 2: Standards of proficiency for psychotherapists and counsellors - Draft for consultation

#### Key and notes to draft standards

- HPC generic standards are shown in black type.
- Profession-specific standards which apply to both psychotherapists and counsellors are shown in *blue italicised type*, and indicated by 'Psychotherapists & Counsellors' in the left hand column.
- Profession-specific standards which apply to psychotherapists only, or to counsellors only, are shown in *red italicised type*, and indicated by 'Psychotherapists only' or 'Counsellors only' in the left hand column.
- In a small number of places, footnotes give additional information, or indicate alternative wording suggested by the PLG.

Registrant psychotherapists and counsellors must:

	<b>Standard</b>
	<b>Professional autonomy and accountability</b>
<b>1a.1</b>	<p><b>be able to practise within the legal and ethical boundaries of their profession</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understand the need to act in the best interests of service users at all times</li> <li>- understand what is required of them by the Health Professions Council</li> <li>- understand the need to respect, and so far as possible uphold, the rights, dignity, values and autonomy of every service user including their role in the diagnostic and therapeutic process and in maintaining health and wellbeing</li> <li>- be aware of current UK legislation applicable to the work of their profession</li> </ul>
<b>Psychotherapists &amp; Counsellors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>be able to recognise and manage the dynamics of power and authority</i></li> <li>- <i>understand the role of the psychotherapist / counsellor in a range of settings, services and theoretical approaches</i></li> </ul>
<b>1a.2</b>	<b>be able to practise in a non-discriminatory manner</b>
<b>1a.3</b>	<b>understand the importance of and be able to maintain confidentiality</b>
<b>1a.4</b>	<b>understand the importance of and be able to obtain informed consent</b>
<b>1a.5</b>	<b>be able to exercise a professional duty of care</b>
<b>Psychotherapists &amp; Counsellors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>understand their duty of care with regard to the legislation on safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults</i></li> </ul>
<b>1a.6</b>	<p><b>be able to practise as an autonomous professional, exercising their own professional judgement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- be able to assess a situation, determine the nature and severity of the problem and call upon the required knowledge and experience to deal with the problem</li> <li>- be able to initiate resolution of problems and be able to exercise personal initiative</li> <li>- know the limits of their practice and when to seek advice or refer to another professional</li> <li>- recognise that they are personally responsible for and must be able to justify their decisions</li> </ul>

<b>1a.7</b>	<b>recognise the need for effective self-management of workload and resources and be able to practise accordingly</b>
<b>1a.8</b>	<b>understand the obligation to maintain fitness to practise</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understand the need to practise safely and effectively within their scope of practice</li> <li>- understand the need to maintain high standards of personal conduct</li> <li>- understand the importance of maintaining their own health</li> <li>- understand both the need to keep skills and knowledge up to date and the importance of career-long learning</li> </ul>
<b>Psychotherapists &amp; Counsellors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>recognise the obligation to maintain fitness to practise including engagement in their own counselling or psychotherapy based process in a way consistent with their own theoretical approach</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to identify and manage their personal involvement in and contribution to the processes of therapy, including recognising their own distress or disturbance and by being able to develop self-care strategies</i></li> </ul>

CONSULTATION DRAFT

	<b>Professional relationships</b>
<b>1b.1</b>	<p><b>be able to work, where appropriate, in partnership with other professionals, support staff, service users and their relatives and carers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understand the need to build and sustain professional relationships as both an independent practitioner and collaboratively as a member of a team</li> <li>- understand the need to engage service users and carers in planning and evaluating diagnostics, treatments and interventions to meet their needs and goals</li> <li>- be able to make appropriate referrals</li> </ul>
<b>Psychotherapists &amp; Counsellors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>understand the role of the therapist in the broader social and cultural context</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to demonstrate sensitivity to organisational dynamics</i></li> </ul>

CONSULTATION DRAFT

<b>1b.2</b>	<b>be able to contribute effectively to work undertaken as part of a multi-disciplinary team</b>
<b>1b.3</b>	<p><b>be able to demonstrate effective and appropriate skills in communicating information, advice, instruction and professional opinion to colleagues, service users, their relatives and carers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- be able to communicate in English to the standard equivalent to level 7 of the International English Language Testing System, with no element below 6.5<sup>1</sup></li> <li>- understand how communication skills affect the assessment of service users and how the means of communication should be modified to address and take account of factors such as age, physical ability and learning ability</li> <li>- be able to select, move between and use appropriate forms of verbal and non-verbal communication with service users and others</li> <li>- be aware of the characteristics and consequences of non-verbal communication and how this can be affected by culture, age, ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs and socio-economic status</li> <li>- understand the need to provide service users (or people acting on their behalf) with the information necessary to enable them to make informed decisions</li> <li>- understand the need to use an appropriate interpreter to assist service users whose first language is not English, wherever possible</li> <li>- recognise that relationships with service users should be based on mutual respect and trust, and be able to maintain high standards of care even in situations of personal incompatibility</li> </ul>
<b>Psychotherapists &amp; Counsellors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>be able to communicate the nature of their chosen theoretical approach in a way which is consistent with their chosen theoretical approach</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to communicate appropriately and effectively with other professionals about the client and proposed therapeutic work</i></li> </ul>
<b>1b.4</b>	<p><b>understand the need for effective communication throughout the care of the service user</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- recognise the need to use interpersonal skills to encourage the active participation of service users</li> </ul>
<b>Psychotherapists &amp; Counsellors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>be able to build, maintain and end therapeutic relationships with clients</i></li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) tests competence in spoken and written English. Applicants for registration who have qualified outside of the UK, whose first language is not English and who are not nationals of a country within the European Economic Area (EEA), have to provide evidence that they have reached the necessary standard. We accept a number of other tests as equivalent to the IELTS examination. Please visit our website for more information.

	<b>Identification and assessment of health and social care needs</b>
<b>2a.1</b>	<b>be able to gather appropriate information</b>
<b>2a.2</b>	<b>be able to select and use appropriate assessment techniques</b> - be able to undertake and record a thorough, sensitive and detailed assessment, using appropriate techniques and equipment
<b>Psychotherapists &amp; Counsellors</b>	<i>- be able to devise a strategy and conduct and record the assessment process that is consistent with the theoretical approach, setting and client group</i> <i>- be able to observe and record clients' responses and assess the implication for therapeutic work</i>
<b>2a.3</b>	<b>be able to undertake or arrange investigations as appropriate</b>
<b>2a.4</b>	<b>be able to analyse and critically evaluate the information collected</b>
<b>Psychotherapists &amp; Counsellors</b>	<i>- be able to apply a chosen theoretical approach to assess the clients' needs</i> <i>- be able to apply a chosen theoretical approach to assess the suitability of the therapy offered to clients</i> <i>- be able to identify and respond appropriately to areas of potential risk for the client, such as suicide, self injury and possible danger to others</i>

CONSULTATION DRAFT

	<b>Formulation and delivery of plans and strategies for meeting health and social care needs</b>
<b>2b.1</b>	<p><b>be able to use research, reasoning and problem solving skills to determine appropriate actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- recognise the value of research to the critical evaluation of practice</li> <li>- be able to engage in evidence-based practice, evaluate practice systematically, and participate in audit procedures</li> <li>- be aware of a range of research methodologies</li> <li>- be able to demonstrate a logical and systematic approach to problem solving</li> <li>- be able to evaluate research and other evidence to inform their own practice<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>
<b>2b.2</b>	<p><b>be able to draw on appropriate knowledge and skills in order to make professional judgements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- be able to change their practice as needed to take account of new developments</li> <li>- be able to demonstrate a level of skill in the use of information technology appropriate to their practice</li> </ul>
<b>Psychotherapists &amp; Counsellors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>be able to work effectively whilst holding alternative competing explanations in mind</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to recognise when further therapeutic work is inappropriate or unlikely to be helpful</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to use a chosen theoretical approach to formulate appropriate therapeutic responses</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to conceptualise presenting situations within a coherent framework of psychological theory and evidence, incorporating interpersonal, societal, cultural and biological factors</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to reflect on and engage with complex and sometimes contradictory information elicited from the client in order to progress / develop a working understanding of psychological difficulties and their origins</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to make informed judgements on complex issues in the absence of complete information</i></li> </ul>
<b>2b.3</b>	<p><b>be able to formulate specific and appropriate management plans including the setting of timescales</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understand the requirement to adapt practice to meet the needs of different groups distinguished by, for example, physical, psychological, environmental, cultural or socio-economic factors</li> </ul>
<b>2b.4</b>	<p><b>be able to conduct appropriate diagnostic or monitoring procedures, treatment, therapy or other actions safely and skilfully</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understand the need to maintain the safety of both service users and those involved in their care</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> The PLG discussed whether there should be an additional standard for psychotherapists and counsellors about understanding the relevance of different approaches to research, or whether this was already adequately covered by the existing HPC generic standards.

<b>Psychotherapists &amp; Counsellors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>be able to establish an effective, collaborative working relationship with the client</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to make appropriate therapeutic interventions consistent with the chosen theoretical approach</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to facilitate client exploration of experiences, meanings and self-understanding</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to enable and work with expression of client emotion</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to recognise and work with life transitions and developmental crises</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to hold a model of implicit and explicit communications in a therapeutic relationship</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to communicate empathic understanding to clients</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to initiate and manage first and subsequent counselling / psychotherapy sessions by developing rapport and trust</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to work with and manage the psychological aspects of the dynamics and boundaries of time</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to encourage the client to reflect on his or her psychological functioning</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to respect and take into account the client's capacity for self determination</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to work with both the explicit and implicit aspects of the therapeutic relationship</i></li> </ul>
<b>2b.5</b>	<p><b>be able to maintain records appropriately</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- be able to keep accurate, legible records and recognise the need to handle these records and all other information in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols and guidelines</li> <li>- understand the need to use only accepted terminology in making records</li> </ul>

CONSULTATION DRAFT

	<b>Critical evaluation of the impact of, or response to, the registrant's actions</b>
<b>2c.1</b>	<p><b>be able to monitor and review the ongoing effectiveness of planned activity and modify it accordingly</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- be able to gather information, including qualitative and quantitative data, that helps to evaluate the responses of service users to their care</li> <li>- be able to evaluate intervention plans using recognised outcome measures and revise the plans as necessary in conjunction with the service user</li> <li>- recognise the need to monitor and evaluate the quality of practice and the value of contributing to the generation of data for quality assurance and improvement programmes</li> <li>- be able to make reasoned decisions to initiate, continue, modify or cease treatment or the use of techniques or procedures, and record the decisions and reasoning appropriately</li> </ul>
<b>Psychotherapists &amp; Counsellors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>be able to help clients to reflect on their process in therapy</i></li> <li>- <i>understand the need to review and evaluate the therapeutic work in collaboration with the client, consistent with their theoretical approach</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to evaluate the therapeutic work in collaboration with the client, consistent with their theoretical approach</i></li> </ul>
<b>2c.2</b>	<p><b>be able to audit, reflect on and review practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understand the principles of quality control and quality assurance</li> <li>- be aware of the role of audit and review in quality management, including quality control, quality assurance and the use of appropriate outcome measures</li> <li>- be able to maintain an effective audit trail and work towards continual improvement</li> <li>- participate in quality assurance programmes, where appropriate</li> <li>- understand the value of reflection on practice and the need to record the outcome of such reflection</li> <li>- recognise the value of case conferences and other methods of review</li> </ul>
<b>Psychotherapists &amp; Counsellors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>understand the need for and role of supervision</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to make use of supervision, consistent with their theoretical approach</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to critically reflect on the use of self in the therapeutic process and engage in supervision in order to improve practice</i></li> </ul>

	<b>Knowledge, understanding and skills</b>
<b>3a.1</b>	<p><b>know and understand the key concepts of the bodies of knowledge which are relevant to their profession-specific practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understand the structure and function of the human body, relevant to their practice, together with knowledge of health, disease, disorder and dysfunction</li> <li>- be aware of the principles and applications of scientific enquiry, including the evaluation of treatment efficacy and the research process</li> <li>- recognise the role of other professions in health and social care</li> <li>- understand the theoretical basis of, and the variety of approaches to, assessment and intervention</li> </ul>
<b>Psychotherapists &amp; Counsellors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>understand the historical development, theory and philosophy underpinning the theoretical approach or approaches</i></li> <li>- <i>understand the concepts underpinning work with different groups of clients, consistent with the theoretical approach</i></li> <li>- <i>know about other therapeutic approaches and be aware of alternative ways of working</i></li> <li>- <i>understand the importance of considering the impact upon clients of cultural, socio-political and other contexts</i></li> <li>- <i>understand the importance of cultural sensitivity and recognition of diversity</i></li> <li>- <i>understand and be able to evaluate theories and research on the following, consistent with the theoretical approach:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>lifespan development;</i></li> <li>• <i>psychopathology;</i></li> <li>• <i>the therapeutic relationship and therapeutic change; and</i></li> <li>• <i>mind and personality.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>- <i>understand and be able to evaluate social conceptualisations of mental and emotional health</i></li> <li>- <i>be able to recognise severe mental disorder in clients / or - be able to recognise disorder of the mind in clients</i></li> <li>- <i>understand and be able to work with common / general mental health problems / or – understand and be able to work with mild / moderate mental health problems<sup>3</sup></i></li> </ul>
<b>Psychotherapists only</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>understand typical presentations of severe mental disorder</i></li> <li>- <i>understand methods of diagnosis of severe mental disorder appropriate to the theoretical approach and be able to</i></li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> The PLG recommended that the views of stakeholders should be sought during the consultation process on alternative forms of wording for these standards

	<p><i>conduct appropriate diagnostic procedures</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>understand and implement treatment methods to address symptoms and causes of severe mental disorder</i></li> </ul>
<b>Counsellors only</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>understand theories and research on mental health and well-being and obstacles to wellbeing and be able to use these to facilitate client development</i></li> <li>- <i>understand theory and research concerning specific life problems, issues and transitions that commonly lead individuals to seek counselling and be able to use these to inform practice</i></li> </ul>
<b>3a.2</b>	<b>know how professional principles are expressed and translated into action through a number of different approaches to practice, and how to select or modify approaches to meet the needs of an individual, groups or communities</b>
<b>3a.3</b>	<p><b>understand the need to establish and maintain a safe a practice environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- be aware of applicable health and safety legislation, and any relevant safety policies and procedures in force in the workplace, such as incident reporting, and be able to act in accordance with these</li> <li>- be able to work safely, including being able to select appropriate hazard control and risk management, reduction or elimination techniques in a safe manner in accordance with health and safety legislation</li> <li>- be able to select appropriate protective equipment and use it correctly</li> <li>- be able to establish safe environments for practice, which minimise risks to service users, those treating them, and others, including the use of hazard control and particularly infection control</li> </ul>