

Association for Solution Focused Hypnotherapy (AfSFH)

Code of Conduct, Performance & Ethics

Doc title:	AfSFH Code of Conduct & Ethics	Doc type:	AFSFH-Policy
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AfsFH Code of Conduct, Performance and Ethics

Purpose and Scope

This Code of Conduct, Performance and Ethics sets out the entitlements of clients in respect to the quality of care they should expect to receive from AfsFH members and identifies for members the standards (although not exhaustive) by which they will be measured in receipt of a complaint. The standards in this Code are applicable to all interactions and communications with clients, including face-to-face communications and those conducted via electronic means (including therapy conducted online).

Introduction

The Code aims to support members in their day-to-day practise and provides guidance on professional, personal, and ethical conduct. Some sections such as advertising, data protection and equality also require members to have an awareness of external legal requirements, which should be adhered to at all times. The AfsFH provides links to further information to support members in understanding legal requirements and obligations and safeguarding of individuals at risk, which can be found in the Members' area of the AfsFH website. Additional guidance on conducting therapy online is also available.

Members should familiarize themselves with the difference between ethical guidance for best practice and legal requirements. Not all actions considered 'unethical' are also 'unlawful' however, members should have an awareness of inappropriate behaviour that could bring the profession of solution focused hypnotherapy and, by association, the AfsFH into disrepute.

All members of the AfsFH are expected to adhere to the standards within this Code in order to promote a standard of care that will support the health and wellbeing of their clients and protect clients from harm.

Code of Conduct Standards (CC-S) summary:

CC-S1. You must always act in the best interests of your clients and service users.

CC-S2. You must maintain high standards of professional competence and practice.

CC-S3. You must maintain high standards of personal conduct.

CC-S4. You must provide relevant information about personal and professional conduct and competence to the AfsFH on request.

CC-S5. You must maintain high ethical standards.

CC-S6. You must be aware of the actions the AfsFH may employ with members who do not meet or who breach the standards of conduct and ethical guidelines laid out in this Code.

Pertinent aspects of each requirement are discussed below.

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CC-S1. You must always act in the best interests of your clients and service users

You are personally responsible for making sure that you promote and protect the best interests of the people you care for at all times and do not do anything, or allow anything to be done, that you have good reason to believe will put the health and/or safety of a client in danger. This includes both your own actions and those of other practitioners and/or health and social care professionals.

- 1.1 **Be aware of your legal duty to promote equality and tackle discrimination** within your services and offer equality in service to all clients. Be sensitive to cultural differences and understand that clients will have different views on what it means to show respect and dignity. Respect the sex, gender identity, age, culture, sexual orientation, social and economic status, lifestyle, political and religious beliefs of your client and do not allow your own beliefs and values to prejudice the treatment and care of your clients.
- 1.2 **Respect the dignity and privacy of the client and service user** at all times and refrain from exploiting relationships with clients for either personal, financial and/or professional gain. This includes appropriate use of any testimonials or reviews from clients (see 5.8). Ensure that your working environment where therapy takes place (whether in-person or online) supports the privacy and dignity of the client and meets their needs.
- 1.3 **Maintain professional boundaries** at all times. Your relationship with a client must remain professional in nature for the duration of their therapy from first contact to final session and in any communication between sessions.
- 1.4 **Identify when there is a need for another person to be present with a client** for the duration of a therapy session, particularly in the case of children under the age of 16 and adults at risk. This should also be in-line with any requirements stipulated by your insurance arrangements.
- 1.5 **When working as part of a team**, the safety of clients must come before any personal and professional loyalties. As soon as you become aware of any situation that puts (or could put) a client at risk, you should discuss the matter with your supervisor or a senior professional colleague.

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CC-S2. Maintain high standards of professional competence and practice

2.1 Keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date:

All Registered members (national and international) are required to:

- complete at least 15 hours of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) per year. Ten of these hours must be directly related to the discipline of Hypnotherapy or Solution Focused practise. The remaining 5 hours can be (but do not have to be) general learning that supports overall development as a practitioner (e.g. training in marketing or business activities);
- complete a CPD log that records the number of hours undertaken and includes a reflection on the activities undertaken and the impact on practice;
- undertake a minimum of 6 hours of relevant supervision per year with a qualified supervisor; and
- provide evidence of completion of supervision and CPD requirements on request as part of regular checks completed by the AfsFH (see the AfsFH Audit policy).

All members must adhere to any further requirements as appropriate to their level of membership of the AfsFH.

2.2 Know the limits of your practice:

You must always:

- Act within the limits of your knowledge, skills, and experience.
- Refer your client on to another professional as soon as it becomes clear that their need/s are beyond the scope of your practice.
- Refrain from 'diagnosing' or labelling any behaviour/condition presented by your client (unless you have been in receipt of appropriate medical training). It is considered 'best practice' to ask about any diagnosed conditions at initial consultation and to understand the difference between client 'self-diagnosis' and a clinical diagnosis.
- Maintain proper and effective communications with clients and other professionals as appropriate throughout the referral process.
- Monitor your health and wellbeing (physical and mental) to reduce risk to clients.
- Seek and act upon the advice of appropriate health professionals in identifying when your health and wellbeing may put clients at risk and in modifying your practise accordingly.
- Notify the AfsFH at the earliest opportunity of any health or wellbeing issue (physical or mental) that could affect your ability to practise.

2.3 Maintain appropriate insurance:

As part of maintaining high professional standards, you must be appropriately insured, either through your workplace, or through private individual arrangements. You will be required to provide details of your insurance upon application and to update your insurance details annually on your member profile.

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2.4 Keep accurate and legible client records, that are attributable to you as the Solution Focused Hypnotherapist and truly represent your interaction with the client, to include:

- written consent to receive Solution Focused Hypnotherapy (parental if under 16);
- information gathering from the Initial Consultation;
- notes on progress (including any information for research programs)
- copies of any correspondence relating to the client e.g. doctor's letters.

2.5 Protect client records and information against loss, damage or use by an unauthorised person. Electronic and paper-based records must be secure and protected against tampering in accordance with UK GDPR, 2018. You must notify clients of the rights with regards to accessing or deletion of their data/records in accordance with UK GDPR, 2018.

2.6 Keep within health and safety guidelines as appropriate to your working environment and give consideration to the appropriateness of the environment in supporting the welfare of your client both in person and online.

2.7 Maintain high ethical standards within your practice, as demonstrated by adherence to the ethical guidelines laid out in this document.

CC-S3. Maintain high standards of personal conduct

3.1 You must avoid any behaviour that may in any way damage or undermine the AfsFH or the reputation of your profession. This includes conduct within your professional practice or, more generally, in your personal life, if your personal conduct affects your ability to practise professionally. You will be required on application to advise of any ongoing or prior convictions and failure to do so may result in the refusal/termination of your membership. Your membership may be at risk if you have been/are prosecuted or convicted for a criminal offence or on suspicion of an offence that involves, for example, at least one of the following behaviours:

- Violence.
- Abuse.
- Sexual misconduct.
- Hate crime.
- Criminal damage.
- Acts of terrorism.
- Anti-social behaviour.
- Acts of neglect or negligent behaviour.
- Drugs misuse (including supplying).
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- Anti-social behaviour.
- Acts of neglect or negligent behaviour.
- Drugs misuse (including supplying).
- Drink-driving.
- Other offences including theft, dishonesty, fraud, or extortion.

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CC-S4. Provide relevant information about personal and professional conduct and competence

4.1 You are required at the earliest opportunity to inform the AfSFH of any relevant information pertaining to your personal and professional conduct or competence (or that of other members) including if you (or others) are:

- Convicted or prosecuted for a criminal offence, or on suspicion of an offence that involves, for example, at least one of the following behaviours:
 - Violence.
 - Abuse.
 - Sexual misconduct.
 - Hate crime.
 - Criminal damage.
 - Acts of terrorism.
 - Anti-social behaviour.
 - Acts of neglect or negligent behaviour.
 - Drugs misuse (including supplying).
 - Drink-driving.
 - Other offences including theft, dishonesty, fraud or extortion.
- Disciplined or suspended or under investigation by another professional or regulatory body e.g. the NCH, CNHC, ASA or ISO.
- Disciplined or suspended or under investigation by an employer, organisation or practice over conduct or competence concerns.

4.2 You are required to provide, on request, any information pertaining to competence requirements appropriate to your membership level, including:

- Evidence of your insurance arrangements.
- Evidence of Supervision, in-line with AfSFH requirements.
- Evidence of CPD, in-line with AfSFH requirements.
- Evidence of any relevant course completion or qualification e.g. HPD, AHD or Supervisor qualification etc.

4.3 You are required to cooperate with any investigation or formal enquiry regarding your own or another's professional conduct and competence (see the AfSFH Standards Enquiry Procedure).

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CC-S5. Maintain high ethical standards

5.1 Gain informed consent from your clients

You must explain to the client what you are proposing to do, your reasons for doing this, and discuss any possible alternatives in a way that is easy for them to follow and understand.

- All clients and prospective clients should provide fully informed signed consent prior to undertaking therapy including the initial consultation. This applies whether therapy is conducted in person with a client or held remotely. If therapy is being conducted online, please see the AfSFH guidelines for 'Conducting SFH Online', available to view and download in the AfSFH Policy Library (<https://afsfh.com/afsfh-policy-library>).
- In order for clients and prospective clients to give fully informed consent, they must be given sufficient information to allow them to make an informed decision including:
 - what the therapy involves (including session duration);
 - any possible risks;
 - any more appropriate alternatives;
 - financial implications of the therapy (including possible/likely number of sessions);
 - their right to ask questions at any time;
 - their right to discontinue the therapy at any time;
 - any involvement in a research program (for which separate consent should be given in accordance with the guidelines stipulated by the research program.);
 - inclusion on any mailing lists used for future communication/special offers etc.
- Client consent must be voluntary, and they should be under no influence or pressure to take part in therapy from the therapist, family, friends, or other practitioners.
- Clients have the right to refuse to be part of any research program.
- Written consent should be provided for a child under the age of 16 by someone with parental responsibility.
- Children over the age of 16 are entitled to consent to their own treatment if they are deemed competent to do so and capable of making a reasonable assessment of the possible implications (including UK GDPR and the content of the contract/terms and conditions of the working relationship) and outcomes of therapy. This is known as Gillick competence. It is the responsibility of the therapist to follow appropriate guidance and information provided, for example by the NSPCC, when assessing Gillick competence.
- Gaining consent should also be in line with any additional requirements stipulated by your professional insurance provider.

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5.2 Safeguard and protect individuals at risk (including children)

- You must find out about local procedures in the area/s where you practise and follow them if you suspect that a child, young person or adult is at risk. (<https://afsfh.com/Safeguarding/>).
- You must hold a current enhanced DBS certificate if you are working with individuals who are at risk (including children).
- You must be aware of best practice when conducting therapy online with individuals at risk (including children). If therapy is being conducted online, please see the Afsfh guidelines for 'Conducting SFH Online', available to view and download in the Afsfh Policy Library (<https://afsfh.com/afsfh-policy-library>).

5.3 You must keep information about clients confidential. This applies to all clients who are capable of giving informed consent (including those over the age of 16)*

- Information given to you by a client must only be used for the purpose for which it was intended.
- All information pertaining to clients must be protected from improper disclosure.
- No information pertaining to clients should be released to anyone who is not entitled to it and entitlement must be checked before release.
- All client information and records, whether paper-based or electronic, must be stored securely.
- Client information should only be used for the continued care of that person OR for purposes where the client has given you specific written consent to use the information.
- Disclosure of client information is only appropriate when specifically requested for legal reasons by those entitled OR if you have good reason to believe that your client, yourself, or others, may be at risk of harm.
- Clients should be made aware of their rights with regards to confidentiality prior to giving consent for therapy.

*Where consent is given by an adult for an individual at risk, both the client and the consenting adult should be made aware of the need for confidentiality and the exceptions to this e.g. if a child should reveal that they are at risk of harm. Boundaries should be clearly established in a contract so that children are informed about what will happen in the event of a disclosure and consenting adults are clear about what can remain confidential.

In addition: It is expected that you will comply with all Data Protection Laws; UK GDPR (2016) and Data Protection Act (2018), in relation to handling and processing personal data.

- You must remain up-to-date with any changes in best practice and legal policy.
- Any complaints made against a member in relation to data protection will be referred to the appropriate agencies for investigation, and the Afsfh will act in accordance with their judgement and procedures.

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- You should take steps to become familiar with the ICO Guidance on Data Breach Management (ico.org.uk) and adhere to its requirements in the event of a breach. Following the principles of candour, you should respond promptly to advise the client of any breach in security or privacy. You should:
 - Work with the client to take immediate action to limit or prevent harm.
 - Notify your Supervisor immediately.
 - Take steps to repair any harm that has been caused.
 - Take steps to prevent a repetition of the breach.

5.4 Respect the right of your client to make their own decisions, even if you think they are contrary to their wellbeing. You may express your concerns and advise but must not put any undue pressure on a client to accept your advice. Exceptions to this would be if the client expresses the possibility of putting themselves or others at risk of physical and/or psychological harm.

5.5 Act with integrity and honesty at all times in relation to clients including:

- making the client aware prior to beginning therapy, of the conditions under which you have the right to refuse help (e.g. if a client’s behaviour was deemed abusive/threatening);
- exercising the right to refuse therapy or continue therapy with a client. In doing so, you must respect the client’s right to a clear justification for refusal and provide information regarding appropriate healthcare professionals.

5.6 Act with integrity and honesty at all times in relation colleagues/other professionals including:

- being respectful of property including, for example, marketing content, social media, website information etc.
- being respectful of intellectual property, for example, information used as part of a CPD/workshop including power point slides, notes etc.
- being aware of and avoiding acts of plagiarism of property or intellectual property.

5.7 Follow the AfsFH guidelines for advertising your practice (this also applies to anyone acting on your behalf) to ensure that advertising is not: false, misleading, unfair, exaggerated or exploitative. You must:

- be aware of what constitutes marketing (including social media);
- adhere to the appropriate use of titles, AfsFH logos and qualifications as per your membership level, and as set out in the AfsFH Professional Registration Policy; and
- not make unjustifiable claims relating to your products or services and all information given must be factual and verifiable.

5.8 Follow the appropriate guidelines for acquisition and use of reviews/testimonials (this also applies to anyone acting on your behalf). You must:

- be aware that reviews/testimonials are considered as advertising if they are edited/re-ordered or copied from the original source and incorporated into your marketing*;
- seek permission to use reviews/testimonials (and hold evidence of permission);

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- not offer incentives for positive reviews.

*Unedited reviews e.g. posted by clients directly to your website or a search engine etc. are likely to be considered ‘organic user generated or editorial content.’ It is acceptable to remove any offensive content. It is acceptable to share a direct link to general ‘organic user generated content’, however, sharing a link to highlight a particular review could be considered as ‘advertising’ and as such could fall under the remit of the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA).

When advertising your work or practice, you (or anyone acting on your behalf) should conform to the Advertising Standards Authority rules on advertising and marketing and be aware of the CAP code. See www.asa.org.uk for further details and support. Any Standards Enquiry raised in respect of advertising may be deemed outside of the remit of the AfsFH and will subsequently be referred to the ASA.

CC-S6. You must be aware of the actions the AfsFH may employ with members who do not meet or who breach the standards of conduct and ethical guidelines laid out in this Code

If a report is received that an AfsFH member is breaching or not meeting standards as outlined in this document, the member will be contacted by the Head of Professional Standards and the Standards Enquiry Procedure will be actioned (see the Standards Enquiry Procedure available at www.afsfh.com).

The Head of Professional Standards will aim to process complaints in a timely and fair manner adhering to the ethos of a Solution Focused Approach. All cases will be considered on an individual basis.

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