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If you are a Family and Systemic Psychotherapist in private practice you have a professional and ethical responsibility to prepare for the temporary or permanent closure of your practice, should you become ill, subject to an emergency or die. AFSP recommends that its members who work in private practice appoint a therapeutic or professional executor. This will be someone who will manage your practice when you can't. They will notify your clients of the situation and refer elsewhere, if necessary, protect your confidential records and do what they can to deal with any financial matters. It is not usually a good idea to appoint a close friend or family member as a professional executor as there will be a need to act quickly which may be difficult for someone who is close to you. You may wish to consider asking a supervisor or a trusted colleague.

You may wish to consider a message on your telephone answering service which gives information about who to contact if you are consistently unavailable.

A report written by you containing guidance for your therapeutic/professional executor is often referred to as a **professional will**. A more accurate term for this report is an **Expression of Professional Wishes** which will avoid any confusion in the event of your death. It is recommended that this report should be kept in a secure and accessible place preferably alongside your other important documents. The contact details of your therapeutic/professional executor should be given to at least two trusted people who should also know where your report can be found. It may also be worth considering a back-up person who can take over if your therapeutic/professional executor is not available.

The report might usefully contain the following:

- a) Office address, security code(s) and the location of keys
- b) Computer passwords including email accounts
- c) Location of diary/appointment book, client records and computer back-ups
- d) Instructions for contacting your clients and clinical supervisor/supervision peers
- e) Details of other practitioners who will accept referrals for ongoing clients
- f) Contact information for your clinical supervisor/supervision peers
- g) Contact information for AFSP and UKCP
- h) Contact information for those connected with your business such as your accountant, bookkeeper and insurance provider
- i) Details of the executor managing your financial affairs after your death
- j) Location of financial records and guidance on the management of outstanding invoices or payments
- k) Instructions for compensating your therapeutic executor agreed at the time of appointment such as an hourly rate, a flat fee or whether this is to be a voluntary service

AFSP recommends that your Expression of Professional Wishes should be reviewed annually and updated where necessary.



Association for Family &
Systemic Psychotherapy

Expression of Professional Wishes Information Sheet

Please note that in the event of your death the only person who can manage your financial affairs is your legal executor who may be but is not usually your therapeutic/professional executor. The administration of the financial affairs connected with your business will be greatly eased if your therapeutic/professional executor is able to provide the necessary information to your legal executor while protecting any unnecessary information being disclosed.

Your therapeutic/professional executor must be careful when contacting your clients about you so that any emotional or physical vulnerability is not increased. To avoid any potential increase in emotional vulnerability it would be necessary for the news about you to be conveyed in an appropriate way and for details of another therapist to be given to the client. Your therapeutic/professional executor also needs to be aware that clients can potentially face physical and/or emotional harm where there is domestic abuse, and the perpetrator learns from a third party that he/she was seeing a therapist.

UKCP has advised that following a therapist's death the therapeutic/professional executor is responsible for ensuring that any client records are confidentially destroyed as soon as possible. This would be in accordance with the agreement between the therapist and the therapeutic/professional executor taking into account the needs and wishes of the client. It is advised that all therapists in private practice should inform their clients, preferably at the point of contracting, that they have provided for this eventuality.

AFSP and UKCP provide lists of suitably qualified and experienced psychotherapists who accept private referrals in each local area alongside other helpful advice. This information can be helpful to your therapeutic/ professional executor.

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