



Purpose

This policy is intended to sit alongside those policies of members' employing organisation or their own private practice policy and serves to re-enforce the position in regard to dual relationships. It is not intended to support any consequential action of a member's employer in regard to a breach of policy. However, it serves to state the position of AFSP should a breach be identified and the allegation is upheld.

Policy

Dual relationships are those in which the psychotherapist is acting in at least one other role besides their professional one with a client or student. For example, being both tutor and therapist to a student, or a therapist having a relationship with a client or student. Such relationships raise serious questions of conflict of interest, power imbalance, harassment and issues concerning trust and confidence. For this reason, the Association for Family and Systemic Psychotherapy (AFSP) requires that with regard to all aspects of psychotherapy practice, including training contexts, dual relationships are prohibited.

In certain circumstances, e.g., visiting trainers running a group where their client is attending; or dual relationships between committee members and clients, these will require a level of mutual consent in terms of how this is managed.

UKCP

The Humanistic and Integrative Section of the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy, articulate the following reasons for separating out the psychotherapeutic relationship from other relationships, these reasons are supported by AFSP:

- To prevent an undermining of the power and self-authority of the client
- a disproportionate balance of power in the relationship due to the therapist also being the client's trainer/supervisor/examiner which could, in extreme circumstances lead to a potential abuse of power on the part of the therapist.
- To provides a clear boundary around the client/therapist relationship with the purpose of protecting the possibility for in-depth relationship work, and to help provide safe conditions for working with transference and subtle energetic material within the field of the relationship.
- To protect the therapeutic relationship from unnecessary pressure, demand and influence caused by the tension inherent in holding two or more roles which involve different tasks.



- To protect the integrity of the discreet relationships involved.
- To encourage authenticity and appropriate challenge in each domain of training, supervision, examination and the psychotherapeutic relationship.
- To provide clarity when working with relationships and tasks which are intrinsically interrelated and potentially capable of becoming confused and /or enmeshed (for example, there are supervision processes implicitly present within trainer/trainee relationship).
- To encourage commitment and integrity in trainers, supervisors, examiners and therapists by their taking responsibility for their own relationship and the power of their position.

Such relationships carry the risk of deleterious consequences for both parties, including the impairment of professional judgement for the therapist, tutor or supervisor.

Where a therapist, tutor or supervisor at AFSP is found to be conducting a dual relationship with a client or student, the case will be dealt with using the complaints procedure for professional misconduct.

Where a complaint is upheld, the therapist's/tutor's/supervisor's membership from AFSP will be suspended or withdrawn, and UKCP informed.