

Decision making for ethical practice

Stop, think,
identify the
situation
or problem



Construct a
description of
the situation



Consider whose
ethical issue or
challenge it is?



Review the
situation in
terms of the
*BACP Ethical
Framework for
the Counselling
Professions*



Identify an
ethical goal



Identify what
support is
available



Reflect upon
the relational
processes that
have played out
in the situation



Consider
principles
and values
of relevance
to the issue



Consider
possible courses
of action to
achieve the
ethical goal



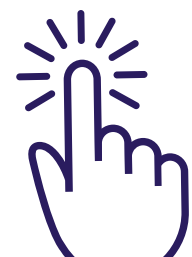
Implement the
chosen course
of action



Evaluate the
outcome



Check for
personal impact



Questions for consideration

Stop, think, identify the situation or problem

- Why do I think there's a potential problem here?
- What is it that concerns me about this?
- How did I become aware that there might be a problem?
- Am I being affected by others thoughts, events or situations?
- Do I need to respond urgently or can I give myself time?



Construct a description of the situation

- Who is this mainly about?
- Is anyone else involved?
- What has happened?
- What are the key facts in the case?



Consider whose ethical issues or challenge it is

- Mine?
- My supervisor's or supervisee's?
- The client's?
- The counselling organisation's?
- Someone else in the client's life?
- Who holds the greatest responsibility?



Review the situation in terms of the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions

- Is my supervisor available to discuss this, using the BACP *Ethical Framework*?
- Where's my copy of the *Ethical Framework*? Download a copy from www.bacp.co.uk.
- Is my client aware of the *Ethical Framework*?
- Does the client have a copy of 'Our commitment to clients'? Download a copy from www.bacp.co.uk.
- Is there relevant guidance in the good practice section of the *Ethical Framework*?



Consider principles and values of relevance to the issue

- Which ethical principles and values are being called into question?
- Are they in conflict and do they need to be weighed up against one another, for example, autonomy versus beneficence?
- Does one override the others in these circumstances?



Reflect upon the relational processes that have played out in the situation

- How would you describe the relationship between counsellor and client, counsellor and supervisor, client and others?
- How have those relationships been affected by this situation?
- Can you detect a parallel process in operation?
- Is a relationship at risk of breakdown, depending on the action taken?



Identify what support is available

- Who needs supporting? The client, the counsellor or others in the client's life?
- Where can support be obtained? For example, from a supervisor, line manager, colleagues, GP, friends or others in the client's life
- What resources could help me? For example, legal advice from my insurance company, *Good Practice in Action* resources or the Ethics hub on the BACP website.
- Is a consultation required with a GP, medical or psychiatric consultant?
- Is there an organisational policy or procedure to follow?



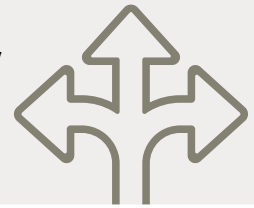
Identify an ethical goal

- What am I trying to achieve, as far as ethical practice is concerned?
- What would be a satisfactory outcome for all concerned?
- What would achieve the most good and the least harm?



Consider possible courses of action to achieve the ethical goal

- Who needs to take legal action, if any? Maybe the supervisor, organisation's manager, counsellor, client or others.
- Is a disclosure required? If so, by who?
- Should the client be encouraged to take action, rather than someone else acting for them?
- Would an apology be appropriate? (duty of candour)
- What are the pros and cons of the possible courses of action? Think 'what if.....?'
- Where does the boundary of responsibility need to be drawn?
- Could I account for my decisions?



Implement the chosen course of action

- When does action need to be taken?
- Do I need courage to act?
- Have I documented my action and the steps I have taken?



Evaluate the outcome

- What have I learnt from this experience?
- Would I do the same again?
- What would I do differently another time?
- Is any follow-up needed?
- Do I need to see this in a wider context?



Check for personal impact

- How am I left feeling?
- What do I need to do, to exercise self-care?
- Do I need support from supervision or personal therapy?
- What would help me to feel grounded?
- Is my self-respect intact?
- Is there anyone else I need to be looking out for, to consider the impact on them, for example, the client, supervisee or others?

