



Humanistic & Integrative Psychotherapy College Assessment Board

HIPC POLICY STATEMENT ON DUAL RELATIONSHIPS

POLICY STATEMENT

The HIPC requires that all organisational members implement policies on dual relationships which pertain to all aspects of psychotherapy practice, including training contexts. These policies need to:

- a) disallow the dual relationships of therapist/trainer; therapist/supervisor; therapist/examiner; and trainer/examiner* unless there are exceptional circumstances, in which case the organisation concerned is required to present a detailed account of its reasons for exception on a case by case basis to the College.
- b) make explicit an articulation of a dual relationship policy in the context of both the HIPC values referred to in the accompanying background information document and their own organisation's ethical understanding and culture.
- c) include reference to the frameworks of intention, including the therapeutic and educational, implicit within the specific relationships entered into as part of a psychotherapy training: namely, the client/therapist, trainee/trainer, supervisee/ supervisor and examinee/examiner relationships.
- d) give a high priority to creating the particular conditions necessary for creating and maintaining an ongoing in-depth client/therapist relationship as partial fulfilment of professional psychotherapy training requirements, without interference from any overlapping relationships

* 'examiner' refers here to a trainee's primary trainer; the 'examination' in question being the final exam/assessment procedure only, at the end of the trainee's period of training: for information on the principles involved please see the background information document to the HIPC Policy Statement

Introduction

A Professional Practice Working Party was set up in 1998 to address the question of dual relationships in the context of training psychotherapists. At that time a proposed Policy Statement was made which disallowed the following four dual relationships: therapist/trainer; therapist/supervisor; therapist/examiner; and trainer/examiner ('examiner' referring then to the final stage of a training).

All organisational members of the HIPC were initially sent a questionnaire to ascertain how our members are managing such relationships, and whether they have dual relationship policies in place to support them. The findings were subsequently incorporated into a Working Document (July 2000) which was discussed both in member organisation and College contexts in order to allow for a full debate of the issues and differences of view and practice which had been expressed. This debate clarified that many of the values represented were shared, the differences being found more in terms of the practical implementation of these principles in the contexts of particular training methods.

In July 2001 the College voted on the several Policy proposals in the Working Document and the result is set out below in the current Policy Statement.

The decision-making process had enabled more awareness to be brought to the subject of dual relationships within the College as a whole.

Background

The HIPC Policy is a clear statement (see above). Member organisations are required to formulate their own dual relationship policy and articulate this in their documentation. The intention behind providing the background information below is to support organisational members: it is critical that we know how we are making our decisions, what principles inform our decision-making and that we are able thereby to account for the training choices we are making.

What follows is a brief outline of the main educational and ethical issues involved in the dual relationships debate, and an articulation of some of the intentions relating to the domains of psychotherapeutic, supervisory and training relationships respectively.

This is of central importance since the debate largely fulcrums around the fact that there are different intentions linked to each of these relationships, and when these overlap in a training context, for example, there are inevitable incompatibilities.

In addition, clarification of the principles and values underpinning the HIPC policy on dual relationships is given below.

In recognition of the fact that there are a number of 'grey' areas in this territory, the Working Party recommended that the College create a file of 'Guidelines for Good Practice' which could serve as a further resource for us all.

1. The educational context

Over time we have all noted the significance of the numerous relationships involved when a person decides to train as a psychotherapist, and the need to manage with sensitivity the inevitable boundary complexities.

There are a number of questions arising in the context of the task of training psychotherapists which reflect certain basic philosophical issues. An example of this, which affects the dual relationship debate, pertains to the intentions behind requiring students to be in a psychotherapy relationship for the duration of the training.

The questions could be framed in the following way:

(i) Is the primary intention behind the requirement for psychotherapy students to be in a psychotherapy relationship for therapeutic or educational purposes? i.e. to serve the function of providing opportunities for personal growth and development, and support throughout the course (therapeutic purposes), or to learn more about how the work is done (educational purposes)?

(ii) If the latter, do training organisations need to require trainees to have completed personal psychotherapeutic work before they start the training? In this case the psychotherapy relationship they embark upon for the duration of the training could be viewed as a secondary relationship primarily for educational purposes.

(iii) If the former, an issue arises which serves to highlight the dialogue regarding dual relationships: is there a potential undermining of the client's authority and self-responsibility, and the integrity of the psychotherapeutic relationship, if his/her psychotherapist is also his/her trainer? Another position in relation to this can be framed as: is there potential learning and development in this situation?

(iv) If the requirement is intended to serve both therapeutic and educational purposes, another question arises: what is good practice with regard to honouring both the individual's 'client needs' (e.g. for safe holding, which includes contractual confidentiality) and also his/her 'trainee needs' (e.g. for support and challenge within the environment of a structured teacher/trainer – student relationship)?

This is one example of how viewing the dual relationship issues in terms of intentionality related to the specific domains of the psychotherapeutic and training relationships can help bring perspective to the debate, and hopefully help identify skilful practices which support both client/trainee and therapist/trainer in agreeing the focus and boundaries of their work together.

(v) The issues described above which arise in relation to the potential dual relationship between therapist and trainer (in other words for one person to be both therapist and trainer to the same person) are similarly instanced in situations where a client's therapist is also their supervisor, and where a client's therapist is also their examiner. Looking at the issue in terms of the potential ambiguities and conflicts, as well as potential learning and development, it can help to identify the intentions dedicated to the different domains of psychotherapy and supervision or training, and thereby locate the issue in an educational context.

(vi) A similar, but not identical situation is when a trainee's trainer (this refers to a main trainer as opposed to someone who gives one-off input to a course) is also their examiner. In other words, where a person's 'trainee needs' may become confused or conflict with his/her 'examinee needs' (note: this area requires further clarification).

2. The ethical context

These questions arise in the context of certain principles and values, most of which we understand all organisational members in HIPC to share and which are outlined below. There are also some principles and values which in their particular emphasis and formulation are specific to individual organisations.

The background context for this lies in the socio-historical background experience of the humanistic and integrative traditions of psychotherapy as a whole. This reflects an evolving articulation of commitment to respect individual responsibility and autonomy, and the uniqueness of the individual, who is entitled to respect and rights to protect his/her dignity, this being expressed in contractual responsibilities on the part of the therapist, for example, to protect the client's confidentiality and the integrity of the psychotherapeutic relationship as a vehicle for the work.

The current debate about dual relationships, which is a live issue for all the psychotherapeutic traditions and approaches represented by UKCP, revolves around different understandings of how the therapeutic and educational intentions underpinning specific relationships (see above) interface with the principles and values articulated within the various forms of psychotherapy trainings.

3. Intentionality

How do we support different learning intentions pertaining to the domains of psychotherapy training, supervision and assessment (examination) in relation to the unique intentions and conditions identified by us as a College which characterise the psychotherapeutic relationship?

a) Dis-allowed dual relationships:

- ◆ therapist/trainer
- ◆ therapist/supervisor;
- ◆ therapist/examiner

The points below give articulation to some of the philosophical bases for separating out the psychotherapeutic relationship from other relationships which are primarily oriented towards psychotherapy training, supervision and examination. This is in acknowledgement that whilst all roles and corresponding relationships overlap and interpenetrate, they also have clear differences, boundaries and limitations; awareness and management of particular role limitations is essential for 'non-harm' to all concerned

- (i) To prevent an undermining of the power and self-authority of the client through 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.
- (ii) To provide a clear boundary around the client/therapist relationship with the purpose of protecting the possibility for depth relationship work, and to help provide safe conditions for working with transference and subtle energetic material within the field of relationship.
- (iii) 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.
- (iv) To protect the integrity of the discreet relationships involved (such as therapist/client, supervisor/supervisee, and examiner/examinee).
- (v) To encourage authenticity and appropriate challenge in each domain of training, supervision, examination and the psychotherapeutic relationship.
- (vi) 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 the trainer/trainee relationship).
- (vii) To encourage commitment and integrity in trainers, supervisors, examiners and therapists by their taking responsibility for their own relationship to the power of their position.

b) Dis-allowed Dual Relationship:

- ◆ **trainer/examiner (at final stage)**

The following points below articulate some philosophical reasons for separating out the 'main' trainer relationship with a trainee from that of examiner at the final stage of the assessment process:

- (i) To ensure justice, objectivity, fairness and good practice is upheld by all those involved in a Training Programme for the protection of the public and the profession.
- (ii) To protect the integrity of a training's examination process.
- (iii) To protect trainers from using their power inappropriately (they also need to be well trained in power dynamics).

(iv) To create a measure of independence in the assessment procedure so that although a trainer could input a trainee's examination process, his/her role, knowledge and opinion is balanced by one or more others who have not been involved in training the trainee.

4. Ethical principles underpinning the Policy

- the principle of non-harm and 'right' use of power
- ethical and honest practice
- optimum conditions for learning
- optimum conditions for growth and development of client/trainee
- justice, objectivity and fairness to ensure and maintain high standards of professional practice for the benefit of clients, trainees and the public
- respect for the integrity and confidentiality of the relationship between client and therapist
- respect for the integrity of the training programs and the learning process
- respect for the integrity of the assessment and examination procedures
- openness and transparency and accountability
- value the humanistic principles of individual responsibility, personal autonomy and contractual relationships
- recognition of the limitations of all systems
- client's freedom to choose
- value the diversity of life in all of its complexity as a source of richness for our work in our various modalities
- respect for clients/trainees personal and professional developmental needs
- a dual role policy needs to be congruent with training models and methods
- supporting the health of a system by requiring both firm boundaries and structures to support it, as well as a degree of flexibility; a high value placed on awareness and management of the tension between these needs

5. Values informing the Policy

The following expressions of values are offered both to provide a philosophical rationale for the Policy Statement given above and also, together with any of the ethical principles and values given above, to support HIPC organisational members in the formulation of their own policies on dual relationships.

1. To recognise that the interconnectedness of relationships and tasks pertaining to the objective of training psychotherapists is complex, rich and diverse; and that it is important to bring awareness to this as part of creating an integrated training.
2. To uphold the principles of openness and transparency in all the different forms of relationships created in training psychotherapists in order to safeguard any potential abuse of power.
3. To value the aliveness and unpredictability within any systems and procedures which training organisations may put in place to control and regulate experience in psychotherapy training contexts.
4. To consciously seek to embody an intention of 'non-harm' in all such relationships.
5. To uphold the principle of making provision for external consultancy as well as internal supervision to support training staff in their management of personal and collective roles and responsibilities, and organisational dynamics.

This document was written by the HIPC Professional Practice Working Party in July 2001

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