

JANUARY 2021

UNREASONABLY PERSISTENT CONTACT AND UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR POLICY



PLAY THERAPY UK.

The Coach House, Belmont Road, Uckfield, TN22 1BP

Introduction

PTUK works to provide its members with support and information to enable safe and ethical clinical practice. The work of PTUK is varied in how we support members:

- Maintaining the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) accredited register which is its accrediting body
- Revalidation
- Education
- Continuing Professional Development – accreditation of CPD courses, monthly newsletters, journals, publications, webinars
- Practice advice and support, at all stages of career development and training
- Representation of PTUK appropriate organisation's like the APPG
- The sponsoring of the Child Mental Health Charter (www.childmentalhealthcharter.com)

In doing this, PTUK hope to support the Play Therapy Profession including trainees.

PTUK aim to provide an excellent level of service to every member who contacts us. Everybody is entitled to be treated with dignity and respect in a courteous and polite manner. Members who contact us for support or advice can expect to be treated fairly and for us to deal the enquiry ethically and fully.

PTUK are available to support members during the working week (Monday to Friday) providing contact communication without limitation. Our staff should not be expected to tolerate abusive, threatening or offensive communication or behaviours.

This policy sets out the actions that PTUK can take when dealing with either unreasonable persistent or unacceptable behaviours from members or, where we have a concern about someone's wellbeing. This policy applies to all members.

What is considered as unreasonably persistent?

Unreasonably persistent members are those who, because of the frequency or nature of their engagement with PTUK, can hinder our work. Those who are unreasonably persistent in their contact with PTUK, may have justified concerns or grievances, but are pursuing them in inappropriate ways, or may be intent on pursuing the same issue which have previously been addressed.

In supporting members, PTUK recognise that at times our resources such as staff time can be limited, and so we have to ensure that we prioritise and provide the most value to members. This might mean that PTUK cannot respond to every contact/communication in the way a member would like or at the speed of the response.

Examples of the types of actions/behaviours which may cause this policy to be used, these are not exhaustive, but provide an insight:

- Adopting a scattergun approach, pursuing issues with us which we have responded to, including others into your communication such as Professional Standards Authority, British Council for Therapeutic Interventions with Children (BCTIWC), Academy of Play and Child Psychotherapy (APAC), Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).
- Making excessive demands on the time and resources of staff whilst they are dealing with your query, for example excessively phoning, emailing not only the person who is assisting but also other members of staff within the organisation.
- Submitting repeated contacts/communications, after the initial communication has been responded to.
- Refusing to accept the decision, repeatedly pursuing the point or taking matters into their own hands.
- Refusing to accept that circumstances are not within our remit, despite the best efforts of PTUK being offered.

What is unacceptable behaviour?

PTUK expect our staff to be treated in a courteous and respectful manner

We appreciate that registrants and trainees can feel under pressure, becoming distressed at times and require answers to their contact/communication. PTUK recognise that emotions can “spill out” in ways which are not normal to the persons normal characteristics. Staff are able to distinguish between distress and other emotions to determine behaviour which is unacceptable.

Unacceptable behaviour is defined as: behaviour or language face-to-face, verbal or through written communication which can make a member of the team feel, insulted, intimidated, threatened or abused. This could include but is not limited to threats, rudeness, swearing, derogatory, belittling remarks, harassment and bullying.

How do we deal with these behaviours?

If the unacceptable behaviour occurs during a telephone call, the member of staff will explain to the caller why their behaviour is unacceptable. The caller will then have the opportunity to stop the unacceptable behaviour and the call can continue. If the unacceptable behaviour continues the member of staff will clearly state due to the unacceptable verbal behaviour the call will be ended. The member of staff will record the conversation which will be held as a complaint. Any written reports of unacceptable behaviour during a telephone call will be disclosable under the Data Protection Act 2018.

If the unacceptable behaviour occurs in writing via letter, email or via social media platforms, a copy of the communication will be kept. The author will be contacted in return and informed as to why the behaviour is unacceptable. This will include social media communication which harms the profession or members of the profession.

When should a written warning be issued?

A written warning will be given by the Chief Executive of PTUK if the offense is persistent or a 'one off' occurrence. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis and discussed with the PTUK Senior Management Team. Where a social media post has resulted in upset or complaints from members whether this is the official members site or not, a written warning will state why it has been issued including the behaviour which has been viewed as unacceptable. The warning will contain an explanation of the effect of such behaviour on the staff member, members, organisation and if this behaviour was to persist what could happen. A copy of this policy will accompany any warning.

If the behaviour brings PTUK into disrepute, this will be considered as a serious case of unacceptable behaviour and the policy will be applied without prior warning.

How is the decision taken?

Where evidence identifies the persistent contact/communication is resulting in unacceptable behaviour identified above, the decision will be taken at the Chief Executive level, prior to a written warning. This decision will be made where evidence of unacceptable behaviour has been presented to the Chief Executive including the steps which have been taken and the effect of the unacceptable behavior on the member of staff, members or the organisation.

The complaint and its outcome will be sent to the British Council for Therapeutic Interventions with Children to discuss. If confirmed, together with the PTUK Senior Management Team and in agreement with the Chief Executive there are a range of ways we can restrict access to the organization. The decision will be recorded, and the action applied will depend on the nature of the behaviour including but not limited to:

- Restricting contact with members of staff
- Communicating via a third party, in agreement with the organisation
- Only acknowledging new information within communication
- Not acknowledging further recommunication

- Undertaking a period of personal therapy, providing a report from therapist
- Give a warning to the registrant
- Suspend registration
- Repeated behaviour after the warning has been given can result in removal of the registrant from the PTUK register

How will decisions be communicated?

All decisions will be communicated in writing, setting out the reasons for why PTUK believe the member's behaviour is unacceptable and what action PTUK has decided to take. A copy of this policy will also be sent to the member.

Decisions will be reviewed after six months; the review will inform if the policy should continue to be applied. If personal therapy was recommended a report will be required to enable all evidence to be considered within the review. Where the member believes that personal therapy has changed their behaviour they should consult with the Chief Executive who will consult with the British Council for Therapeutic Interventions with Children and Career and PTUK Senior Management Team. This may result in the appropriate restrictions being removed.

Where a member continues to behave in such a way which is unreasonable, persistent or unacceptable, the Chief Executive in consultation with the British Council for Therapeutic Interventions with Children and Career and PTUK Senior Management Team may decide to continue with the applied measures.

How can you appeal a decision taken under the policy?

A member can appeal against the decision taken by the British Council for Therapeutic Interventions with Children, and PTUK Senior Management Team. A Professional Conduct Panel will be made up of three independent professionals, which will always include a PTUK member and a lay person. A 'lay' person is not a Play Therapist and has no connection to PTUK. The panel's role is to listen to the case,

consider the evidence and ask questions in order to make its decision which will be final. There is no right of appeal.

Version Control

Printed documents are uncontrolled. This policy is only valid on the day it was printed.

| Version | Description of version | Date completed |
|---------|---|----------------|
| 1.0 | Unreasonably Persistent Contact and Unacceptable Behaviour Policy | January 2021 |
| 1.1 | Amendments | June 2021 |
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This policy links with Data Protection Act 2018.