



UNREASONABLY PERSISTENT CONTACT AND UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR POLICY

PLAY THERAPY UK

contact@ptukorg.com
APAC – The Coach House – Belmont Road – UCKFIELD – TN22 1BP

Introduction

Play Therapy UK (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 within appropriate organisations like the All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPG)
- The sponsoring of the Child Mental Health Charter
www.childmentalhealthcharter.com

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

PTUK aims 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 with the enquiry fully and ethically.

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 of PTUK.

Definitions

Unreasonably Persistent Behaviours

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 has previously been addressed.

In supporting members, PTUK recognises 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 desired.

Unreasonably persistent actions/behaviour that may cause this policy to be utilised may include, but are not limited to:

- Adopting a scattergun approach, pursuing issues with us which we have responded to and 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.

Unacceptable behaviour

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

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 may include, but is not limited to:

- threats
- rudeness
- swearing
- derogatory or belittling remarks
- harassment
- bullying

We appreciate that registrants and trainees can feel under pressure, becoming distressed at times and require answers to their contact/communication. PTUK acknowledges that emotional responses may at times manifest in ways that are uncharacteristic of an individual's usual behaviour. Staff can distinguish between distress and other emotions to determine behaviour which is unacceptable.

How does PTUK respond to 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 that 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.

Written warnings

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 Executive Board. 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 or 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 behaviour 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 Executive Board and in agreement with the Chief Executive there are a range of ways we can restrict access to the organisation. The decision will be recorded, and the action applied will depend on the nature of the behaviour and may include, but is 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;
- Giving a warning to the registrant;
- Suspending registration;

Repeated behaviour following a warning can result in removal of the registrant from the PTUK register.

Communication of decisions

All decisions will be communicated in writing, setting out the reasons for why PTUK believes 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 Executive Board. This may result in the appropriate restrictions being removed.

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

Appealing the decision

A member can appeal against the decision taken by the PTUK Executive Board using the PTUK Complaints and Concerns about our Staff procedure. Due to the Chief Executive's involvement in the complaints process, any appeal against this decision will be considered by the Chair of the British Council for Therapeutic Interventions with Children. There is no right of appeal to this final decision.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

PTUK Complaints and Concerns Procedure
PTUK Complaints and Concerns about our Staff
PTUK Data Protection Policy.

DOCUMENT INFORMATION:	
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