

# **CANVASSING CODE OF PRACTICE**

## **relating to**

### **Three-yearly elections to the post of the RCPsych President and Five-yearly elections to the posts of RCPsych Registrar, Dean and Treasurer**

1. This Code of Practice sets out the manner in which all candidates for the posts of RCPsych President, Registrar, Dean and Treasurer are required to conduct canvassing, during the elections that take place on either a three-yearly cycle (for the President) or five-yearly cycle (for the other Honorary Officers).
2. The RCPsych supports canvassing and indeed encourages it, but it is essential that, in the interests of clarity and to provide a fair process for all candidates, whilst also encouraging informed participation, that the Code is fully complied with.
3. Canvassing by candidates is therefore allowed, subject to compliance at all times with the terms and conditions of this Code and with the terms and spirit of the RCPsych's "Officers, College Members, Lay People and Employees: Joint Code of Conduct" (Appendix 1), the RCPsych's "Values and Behaviours" (Appendix 2) and the RCPsych's "Social Media: House Rules and Principles" (Appendix 3).
4. All candidates are required to prepare personal election statements, limited to a maximum of 500 words, which will be uploaded to the RCPsych website and linked to the RCPsych's centrally managed social media accounts.
5. All candidates are required to produce a 50-word summary statement for use on College communication channels. Presidential candidates are also required to produce an edited version of their personal election statement, limited to a maximum 250 words, which will be published in the RCPsych College membership magazine, RCPsych Insight.
6. Presidential candidates will be required to record a three-minute statement to camera, recorded as live, for which RCPsych will provide assistance, and which will be used on College communication channels.
7. All candidates will be required to take part in a hustings event. During the hustings events, candidates will be required to make a statement, after which there will be a "Q&A" session, to be officiated by an independent chair appointed by the RCPsych.
8. The RCPsych may facilitate an online "Q&A" session to be hosted and managed by the RCPsych on a platform selected by the RCPsych.
9. All candidates can address RCPsych committee meetings during the election period. Where a committee facilitates one candidate to address its members, they must make all reasonable efforts to invite other candidates standing for the same office to address its members either at the same meeting or an equivalent meeting, provided that this does not become a hustings event. College committees cannot hold their own full scale hustings events.
10. Canvassing by candidates and their supporters on their personal social media is allowed, subject to compliance at all times with this code and those codes referred to in Section 3.
11. Use of RCPsych social media, email accounts or mailing lists for canvassing purposes, including those of RCPsych committees, is prohibited.

12. Members of the RCPsych Board of Trustees must not campaign for any individual candidate (unless standing for election themselves) and must remain neutral in elections. Other RCPsych office or post holders are allowed to openly support individual candidates but must do so in their personal capacity, not as an office or post holder of the RCPsych and not through any RCPsych channels or using RCPsych resources.
13. Canvassing by personal email and telephone is allowed.
14. In their personal election statements, candidates may include links to their own social media accounts and/or a URL to a personal website. Candidates may also make available for download from their social media accounts and personal websites, any live recordings made, as referred to in this Code, and the podcasts from the hustings events.
15. Information about candidates standing in the elections for Honorary Officers may be made known by Chairs of RCPsych/Faculty/Devolved Council/Division/SIG to members, but such information must include the names of all the candidates and must not advocate support for any one particular candidate.
16. The RCPsych does not provide funding for candidates' canvassing campaigns.
17. Candidates must not spend their own money on campaigning activities.
18. The following restrictions apply to canvassing by candidates:
  - (a) candidates and their supporters must not use, or attempt to access, any databases or other records held by the RCPsych, including any of its committees, and nor can they use their own personal databases for any purpose connected to the elections to the extent that those databases include information from databases held by the RCPsych;
  - (b) candidates and their supporters must not use any RCPsych email address, RCPsych social media accounts, branding or stationery or any RCPsych resources to conduct canvassing;
  - (c) candidates must not conduct any canvassing through the national media or press, and nor should any comments or responses be made to journalists, the national media or press by candidates, including through social media. Any enquiries received must be referred immediately to the Strategic Communications Department at the RCPsych;
  - (d) candidates must not engage paid-for agents or any non-RCPsych members to act for them in the conduct of their canvassing;
  - (e) candidates must ensure that any statements or claims made by them or their supporters are accurate, fair, reasonable and not misleading;
  - (f) candidates and their supporters must not make any adverse comment about, or make reference to, another candidate's personal election statement, or any live recording or podcast made pursuant to this Code, nor to another candidate's canvassing campaign generally and must not make any comments that are not in line with the RCPsych's "Values and Behaviours" (Appendix 2);
  - (g) candidates must at all times maintain the confidentiality, integrity and good standing of the election and its process and the RCPsych, and not bring the election or the RCPsych itself into disrepute; and

- (h) RCPsych staff members must remain neutral and candidates must not request support from members of staff. If candidates would like College information, they should request this from the RCPsych Chief Executive Officer/Returning Officer or Head of Membership Services & Faculties.
- 19. Where 'RCPsych communication channels' have been referred to, this includes those of Civica Election Services.
- 20. The RCPsych Chief Executive Officer/Returning Officer reserves the right to determine whether or not a candidate is complying with this Code, and to take appropriate steps.
- 21. Candidates may be liable to disqualification from the election by the RCPsych Chief Executive Officer/Returning Officer if found to be in breach of the spirit and terms of this Code.
- 22. The Code is mandatory for all candidates, and the RCPsych reserves the right to amend its terms and conditions as it sees fit.
- 23. The decision of the RCPsych Chief Executive Officer/Returning Officer on all matters relating to the Code shall be final and binding on all candidates.

**The Royal College of Psychiatrists, April 2021**

## Appendix 1

### Officers, College Members, Lay People and Employees: Joint Code of Conduct



## **OFFICERS, COLLEGE MEMBERS, LAY PEOPLE AND EMPLOYEES: JOINT CODE OF CONDUCT**

*College members, lay people and employees working together to improve the lives of people with mental illness through patient-centred care*

### **Introduction**

The RCPsych is the professional membership body of psychiatrists. We work to secure the best outcomes for people with mental illness, learning difficulties and developmental disorders by promoting excellent mental health services, training outstanding psychiatrists, promoting quality and research, and being the voice of psychiatry.

The RCPsych has 18,000 members who are supported through the work of around 220 employees across the UK and is one of the most influential medical royal colleges. We have played a key role in shaping modern psychiatry, and ensuring that our standards of psychiatric practice provide the benchmark of the effective delivery of psychiatric services in the UK and many other nations around the world.

### **Working together**

Since its foundation in 1971, the College has achieved its impact through its members, lay people and employees working collaboratively as valued colleagues to promote excellent mental health care. Across RCPsych HQ and the RCPsych in the Devolved Nations, the Faculties and Divisions members of the College, lay people and employees work together in unison, respecting each other's expertise and the contribution they make.

### **Underlying principle**

For the RCPsych to continue to operate effectively, it is critical that everyone involved in the organisation treats everyone with whom they work – College members, lay people and employees – with respect and courtesy.

## **The RCPsych's Expectations**

This document explains the RCPsych's expectations about the type of behaviours that are necessary for a successful working relationship to exist between College members, lay people and College employees.

'College members' means everyone involved in RCPsych activities across the UK including (but not limited to) Honorary Officers, Trustees, members of Council, members of Executive Committees of Faculties, Divisions and Special Interest Groups, Special Advisors and Leads.

Similarly, 'lay people' means everyone involved in RCPsych activities across the UK who are not employees or members of the College.

## **Behaviours**

The behaviours in the document apply equally to working relationships solely involving College members, solely involving lay people and solely involving employees. It also applies to all lay people on all committees, groups and boards across the College.

The RCPsych offices are a professional business environment which may be culturally different from the closer-knit environment with which clinicians are familiar. All who share in the RCPsych's work (as employees, as lay people and as members) are entitled to be treated with the professional respect commonly found in a business environment. The College is also mindful of its obligations as an employer.

To this end we are committed to ensuring that College members, lay people and employees are not subjected to behaviour that may be considered to be out of place in a professional environment or unlawful. We want anyone who genuinely feels they have been subjected to inappropriate behaviour to be empowered to speak out by using the appropriate College policies and procedures, as set out at the end of this document.

## **The law: The Equality Act 2010**

Everyone in Britain is protected by the Equality Act 2010. The "protected characteristics" under the Act are (in alphabetical order):

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Further, in Northern Ireland Section 75 of, and Schedule 9 to, the Northern Ireland Equality Act 1998 should be observed.

## **What behaviour is unlawful?**

Under the Act people are not allowed to directly discriminate, indirectly discriminate, harass or victimise another person because they have any of the protected characteristics. Instructing, causing, inducing and helping discrimination is also prohibited.

There is also protection against discrimination where someone is perceived to have one of the protected characteristics or where they are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic.

## **Unlawful behaviours**

Some examples of unlawful behaviours are:

- Comments about the way someone looks which they may find demeaning
- Treating someone unfairly because of their marital status
- Indecent remarks
- Touching without permission
- Spreading malicious rumours about someone's sexuality.

It is important to emphasise that although those exhibiting a particular behaviour may intend it to be friendly it is the way that behaviour is perceived by the recipient which normally determines whether it is appropriate.

## **Unacceptable Behaviours**

This section should be read in conjunction with the RCPsych's *Dignity at Work Policy*, which concerns bullying and harassment and makes specific reference to all forms of harassment in the context of working relationships, not only between employees but between RCPsych members and employees.

We have listed below examples of unacceptable behaviours. This is a non-exhaustive list

### Oral and written harassment:

- Verbal abuse of any kind
- Derogatory or abusive comments
- Offensive banter, insults and taunts
- Emails or any form of written communication that is aggressive, rude, upsetting or which could amount to sexual or racial harassment, or harassment on the grounds of someone's disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age or being or becoming transgender. Email harassment can arise simply from unreasonable repeated or unwanted requests, or messages containing sexual or racial innuendos
- Distasteful jokes or ridicule and making someone the butt of jokes
- Asking intimate questions about someone's personal life

- Gossip, speculation or malicious rumours
- Transmission or display of pornographic or sexually suggestive images
- Suggesting sexual favours that may further an employee's career or that refusal may hinder it

Other personal harassment:

- Individuals can also experience harassment based on disability, race or national origin, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, age, gender, being or becoming transgender, or sexual orientation
- Assumptions based on stereotyping
- Asking unwanted intimate questions

**Our Behavioural Expectations**

***What we expect of employees***

What members and lay people should expect from employees:

- Using their knowledge, skills and expertise to deliver the best possible service
- Listening to views and trying their best to understand and solve problems
- Taking responsibility for problems and getting back to people when they say they will
- Being honest about what they can and cannot do
- Giving a balanced view of the facts
- Being courteous, respectful and helpful
- Recognising members' expertise
- To inform the necessary individuals if agreed actions have not been implemented within a reasonable time
- Appropriate use of social media, as set out in the RCPsych's Social Media Policy (August 2013).

***What we expect of members***

This section should be read alongside the RCPsych's *Council and Committee Code of Conduct*, which asks members involved in College work to make a number of specific commitments, including observing the Nolan Principles of conduct in public life.

### What employees and lay people should expect from members:

- Being courteous, respectful and supportive
- Being challenged in a constructive way at the right time and place
- Listening and understanding
- Respect for their areas of expertise
- Respect for management authority
- Freedom to say to members when something is not achievable due to resource or time constraints
- An understanding that the relationship between College members and lay people/employees is not the same as between clinicians, clinical managers and members of the clinical team
- Appropriate use of social media, as set out in the College's Social Media Policy (August 2013).

### **What we expect of lay people**

This section should be read alongside the:

- RCPsych's Council and Committee Code of Conduct, which asks those involved in College work to make a number of specific commitments, including observing the Nolan Principles of conduct in public life; and the
- RCPsych's Volunteers' Agreement Code of Conduct.

### What members and employees should expect from lay people

- Being courteous, respectful and supportive
- Being challenged in a constructive way at the right time and place
- Listening and understanding
- Respect for their areas of expertise
- Respect for management authority
- Freedom to say to members and employees when something is not achievable due to resource or time constraints
- An understanding that the relationship between lay people and College members/employees is not the same as between patients/carers and clinicians and members of the clinical team
- Appropriate use of social media, as set out in the College's Social Media Policy (August 2013).



## **How to raise a concern**

Below is a list of related policies and procedures that should be read in conjunction with this Behaviour Framework and followed dependent on the nature of the concern.

Some policies only apply to employees of RCPsych. Each policy contains an explanation as to the parameters of the policy and details the relevant process as applicable.

Please note that each policy, where possible, in this list has been hyperlinked to allow ease of access (read only access).

- [Grievance](#)
- [Dignity at Work \(Bullying and Harassment\)](#)
- [Disciplinary](#)
- [Whistleblowing](#)
- [Members of Council and Committee Code of Conduct](#)
- [Conflict of Interest](#)
- [Equality and Diversity](#)
- [Social Media Policy](#)
- [Remit and Operation of the Disciplinary Complaints Committee \(DCC\), January 2016](#)
- [Complaints policy relating to service users, carers and lay representatives of the College, January 2016](#)
- [Complaints procedure – complaints against College staff, September 2011](#)
- [Volunteers Agreement Code of Conduct \(2017\)](#)

Each policy listed above is subject to regular review, or when there is a significant change in employment law.

## **Sanctions**

Failure to adhere to the behaviours stated in this framework may result in sanctions in line with the College's policies as listed above up to and including dismissal, removal from membership, and removal from office.

Agreed by RCPsych Board of Trustees

27 October 2017

## Appendix 2

### Values and Behaviours

# ROYAL COLLEGE OF PSYCHIATRISTS VALUES AND BEHAVIOURS

## COURAGE

- Champion the specialty of psychiatry and its benefits to patients
- Take every opportunity to promote and influence the mental health agenda
- Take pride in our organisation and demonstrate self-belief
- Promote parity of esteem
- Uphold the dignity of those affected by mental illness, intellectual disabilities and developmental disorders

## INNOVATION

- Embrace innovation and improve ways to deliver services
- Challenge ourselves and be open to new ideas
- Seek out and lead on new, and where possible evidence-based, ways of working
- Have the confidence to take considered risks
- Embrace the methodology of Quality Improvement to improve mental health services and the work of the College

## RESPECT

- Promote diversity and challenge inequalities
- Behave respectfully – and with courtesy - towards everyone
- Challenge bullying and inappropriate behaviour
- Value everyone's input and ideas equally
- Consider how own behaviour might affect others
- Respect the environment and promote sustainability

## COLLABORATION

- Work together as One College – incorporating all members, employees, patients and carers
- Work professionally and constructively with partner organisations
- Consult all relevant audiences to achieve effective outcomes for the College
- Work together with patients and carers as equal partners
- Be transparent, wherever possible and appropriate

## LEARNING

- Learn from all experiences
- Share our learning and empower others to do the same
- Value and encourage personal feedback
- Use feedback to make continuous improvements
- Create an enabling environment where everyone is listened to, regardless of seniority
- Positively embrace new ways of working

## EXCELLENCE

- Deliver outstanding service to members, patients, carers and other stakeholders
- Promote excellent membership and employee experience
- Always seek to improve on own performance
- Promote professionalism by acting with integrity and behaving responsibly
- Demonstrate accountability in all that we do
- Uphold the College's 'Core Values for Psychiatrists'

### Appendix 3

#### Social Media: House Rules and Principles

##### Tone

What we are	What we are not
Evidenced	Political
Engaging	Provocative
Active	Negative
Relevant to current news	Overgeneralisations
Professional	Personal

##### Rules

1. Respect other people, comments should not be abusive, intimidating or offensive in nature, and should not be made to deliberately provoke other commentators.
2. Avoid excessively negative, sweeping or unbalanced comments.
3. Our feed is not to be used to promote commercial products and services.
4. Don't reveal contact details such as phone numbers, postal or e-mail addresses, or any details that can personally identify you or someone else.
5. If you feel provoked by what you consider to be a personal comment, please try not to respond and contact the RCPsych Digital team for any expert advice.