

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.