



The Association for Family Therapy & Systemic Practice

Terms of Reference

Name of committee: ETHICS Committee

Terms of reference were updated March 2021

1. Purpose / role of the committee:

- To assist AFT in promoting high standards of ethical practice throughout all aspects of its activities and at all levels of the organisation.
- To encourage all individuals within AFT to share the responsibility for achieving and maintaining high ethical standards, by supporting members and AFT staff in a consultative role, individually or in groups in making their own ethical decisions.
- To be guided by the AFT code of Ethics and Practice and Rules of Conduct for Members.
- To contribute to the review and revision of the AFT Code of Ethics and Practice and Rules of Conduct for Members.

When was the committee established

The committee was established at least since 1990 and before complaints were taken over by UKCP in 2012.

2. Responsibilities/aims:

- The Ethics Committee will support members or AFT staff in a consultative role, individually or in groups, in making their own ethical decisions. It is not able to advise what decision should be taken, but can help to map the factors that need to be considered, depending on the context. It is able to do this as part of supporting members and their supervisors' ethical practice.
- The Ethics Committee is not able to offer an opinion as to whether a member has acted ethically. Nor is it able to advocate for a member, but will remain an advocate for ethical practice. Judgement & advocacy remain the roles of the individual, their supervisor(s), indemnity insurers or other representatives, within the policies and the authority structures of AFT & UKCP.
- To liaise with College in considering the ethical factors affecting systemic practice, when required.
- To recognise that complaints or legal procedures will take precedence over any considered ethical perspective which the committee may offer.
- To collaborate closely with all other committees of AFT recognising that there is an ethical dimension to the work of all of AFT's committees.

3. Membership:

- Only AFT members may be part of the committee. No more than nine regular members shall serve on the committee at any one time.
- Membership of the committee is for a three-year period, extendable to 6 years.
- Members can serve on more than one AFT committee.
- Additional members may be co-opted for specific purposes.
- The Chair of the committee is elected by committee members for an initial term of 3 years which can be extended by up to 9 years.
- The committee seeks to offer an inclusive and diverse representation of the membership.

4. Accountability:

- The Ethics committee is answerable to the Board of AFT.
- An annual report is written for the Board and also for the AFT membership.
- The Ethics committee shall provide the minutes of all meetings for ratification to the AFT Board.
- The Ethics committee may be called upon to assist with complaints about the organisation.
- The committee shall ensure all meetings remain quorate with 75%-member attendance.

5. Review:

- The Ethics Committee reviews its work annually and this is summarised in the annual report to the Board.
- The Code of Ethics and Practice is reviewed and amended on an annual basis.

6. Working methods:

- The working methods of the committee are guided by systemic principles.
- The committee invites comments and representations on any ethical issue from members, AFT staff, members of the public and relevant organisations such as UKCP.
- The committee will seek the views of the membership and questions may be raised through other committees, the AFT Board, Context, workshops at conferences and other relevant venues.
- Where the committee identifies an ethical issue which would benefit from wider discussion this will be raised with members and/or the appropriate committees
- There will be at least four meetings a year.
- There will be an annual face-to-face meeting in conjunction with the DEI. Under circumstances where it is not possible to meet face-to-face, remote conferencing will be utilised as an alternative.
- Remote conferencing methods will be used for most of the meetings.
- Committee meetings will be chaired by the committee chair and the agenda will be organised by the AFT office and the chair.
- Meeting papers will be circulated by the AFT office to members prior to each meeting.
- Minutes will be circulated to committee members and to the chairs of the other AFT

committees.

- Non-members will be invited to group meetings when a member has a specific ethical issue which has not been addressed in another way.
- The secretariat for the committee will be provided by the AFT office.
- Sub-groups may be convened to address certain tasks e.g. amending the Terms of Reference and so on.

7. Sharing of information and resources:

- The committee will share information and resources by telephone and e-mail.
- Any confidential information that is discussed in committee meetings will be anonymised to protect the member or members involved.
- Adherence to GDPR will be maintained.
- Confidential information pertaining to the ethical dilemmas shared in meetings will be destroyed as appropriate.
- Confidentiality will be maintained, unless there are circumstances that require confidentiality to be breached e.g. with regards to risk, fitness to practice concerns.

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