

Unreasonably Persistent contact and unacceptable behaviour policy



ACADEMY PLAY AND CHILD PSYCHOTHERAPY

APAC

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

Introduction

APAC works to provide its students with a positive learning experience to enable students to full fill their potential and undertake safe and ethical clinical practice with children. APAC support students in the various ways:

- Dedicated staff to support potential students on their journey to training
- Provide students with up-to-date course information including venues and course dates
- Provide responsive and clear information to students and the public
- Designated teaching team
- Teaching Staff who support and teach students to meet the required standards to become play therapists and therapeutic play practitioners.
- Dedicated team which manages final submissions of students work in preparation for exam board.

In doing this, APAC hope to support students in their development and growth.

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

APAC are available to support Students 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 APAC can take when dealing with either unreasonable persistent or unacceptable behaviours from Students or, where we have a concern about someone's wellbeing. This policy applies to all Students.

What is considered as unreasonably persistent?

Unreasonably persistent Students are those who, because of the frequency or nature of their engagement with APAC, can hinder our work. Those who are unreasonably persistent in their contact with APAC, 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 Students, APAC recognise that at times our resources such as staff and their time can be limited, and so we must ensure that we prioritise and provide the most value to Students. This might mean that APAC cannot respond to every contact/communication in the way a Student 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 Leeds Beckett University, British Council for Therapeutic Interventions with Children (BCTIWC), Play Therapy United Kingdom (PTUK), 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 APAC being offered.

What is unacceptable behaviour?

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

We appreciate that Students can feel under pressure, becoming distressed at times and require answers to their contact/communication. APAC 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.

If the unacceptable behaviour occurs face to face during the teaching of an APAC course, a record of concern form will be completed. Teaching staff/s will meet with the student to try

to resolve any conflict, if this is not possible the student will be informed as to why the behaviour is unacceptable.

When should a written warning be issued?

A written warning will be given by the Chief Executive of APAC if the offense is persistent or a 'one off' occurrence. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis and discussed with the APAC Senior Management Team. Where a social media post has resulted in upset or complaints from students, 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, students, organisation and if this behaviour was to persist what could happen. A copy of this policy will accompany any warning.

If the behaviour is slanderous towards APAC, 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 Senior Management Team 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 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 student
- Repeated behaviour after the warning has been given can result in removal of the student from the course

How will decisions be communicated?

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

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 Student 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 Senior Management Team. This may result in the appropriate restrictions being removed.

Where a student 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 Senior Management Team may decide to continue with the applied measures.

How can you appeal a decision taken under the policy?

A Student can appeal against the decision taken by the British Council for Therapeutic Interventions with Children, and Career and Senior Management Team. A Professional Conduct Panel will be made up of three independent people, which will always include an

APAC Student and a lay person. A 'lay' person is not a Play Therapist and has no connection to APAC. 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

This policy links with Data Protection Act 2018.