

REPORT TO NZAP COUNCIL, JULY 2021

Ethics and Professional Standards Committee

Complaints

Thanks go to Helen Packard for her ongoing work in the role of Complaints Convenor. There are currently no active complaints; however, one complaint was received.

A woman rang with concerns about her daughter's therapist. She said that her daughter has seen a Wellington therapist for some time and their relationship has deteriorated to the point where there is distance between herself and her daughter that wasn't there previously. She has been shut out of her life and has limited contact with her granddaughter. She is a counsellor herself and doesn't consider that this reaction is normal. The Convenor talked with her on the phone about the process of making a complaint and she agreed that there were no specific ethical breaches, though she wondered whether this could be considered incompetence. She accepted that there was no further action that could result.

Queries from members and Council

Two questions have been fielded recently, one from a member about a client requesting copies of audio recordings of their sessions and another from the Balint Society about them basing their Code of Ethics upon the NZAP Code of Ethics.

Replacement committee members search

As two members of the EPSC had stepped down, the committee has been actively seeking new members. As all people known to the current committee had declined when approached, Nikky helpfully sent out a message on Inform to all NZAP members. At the time of writing, two NZAP members have made contact and expressed interest and are in discussions with the Chair.

EPSC Review recommendations

The committee has had two in-person meetings so far to begin working through the recommendations of the EPSC review. These are expected to continue on a roughly monthly basis.

Complaints liaison role

Processes, flowcharts, and guidelines for a new Complaints Liaison (as opposed to Convenor) role are being worked on. This will include a process for responding to complaints about members and directing and supporting the complainant to the HDC and/or PBANZ when that is appropriate. Also being developed is a process for supporting members who have had a complaint made against them with, either with HDC or PBANZ.

Once the committee has finished drafting these, they will be presented to Council for approval and possibly also to PBANZ for approval regarding our obligations as a training provider for ACP candidates. Once these new processes are approved, they can be publicised to members and the public (via the NZAP website) and the current NZAP complaints process can then end. Until that time, complaints will continue to be handled as per the current process so as not to prejudice any complainants.

Ethics and Professional Practice workshops

Work to develop an education programme around ethics and professional practice in the form of workshops is ongoing. Once the committee has our proposed workshop content, we will liaise with the PDCC to explore how this might best be delivered to members.

Non-actioned recommendations

Two of the recommendations of the EPSC review that were tasked on the Chair and committee are not currently being actioned and have been questioned by the committee members:

- Reformulating the NZAP Code of Ethics into guidelines and deferring to the PBANZ Code of Ethics for the association.

Firstly, EPSC views this as a significant undertaking and is not currently convinced of exact gains to the Association that would justify the work involved. Secondly, considerable effort and mana is embodied in the NZAP Code of Ethics as recently recognised by the Balint Society. Indeed, committee members noted that the PBANZ Code of Ethics largely builds upon NZAP's prior work. Thirdly, any work on ethical practice guidelines for members might be better delivered via the educational workshops mentioned earlier.

- Developing sound practices for managing dissatisfactions and conflicts between members.

Firstly, members who have concerns about another therapist's competence or conduct are already encouraged to raise these directly with the therapist themselves and if not satisfied, to make a formal complaint, either to NZAP, PBANZ or the HDC as appropriate. (See sections 2.13 and 2.14 of the NZAP Code of Ethics and the parallel sections 9.7 and 9.8 of the PBANZ Code of Ethics.) Secondly, dissatisfactions and conflicts which centre upon issues that are outside the realm of ethics or professional practice (e.g., conflicts arising due to differences in values or personality) were felt to fall outside the core brief of the EPSC which has a very full workload going forward.

Paul Wilson
Chair of Ethics and Professional Standards Committee