



PCPB core principles for international counselling and psychotherapy

Therapists are increasingly working across international borders using electronic means. This means potential legal, cultural and safeguarding issues. These core principles are not regulatory requirements and do not replace detailed guidance issued by individual professional bodies. Instead, they are good practice principles, agreed by all PCPB partners, designed to provide a plain-language framework to support therapists and reassure the public. They aim to help practitioners think through some of the challenges of international work and to promote safe, ethical and effective practice.

Unlike in the consulting room, therapists may be working where they cannot see their client/patient and this may give rise to particular issues of technique and in relation to the frame. In addition, the therapist may be working in a country where they did not train and with a client/patient who may be residing in a different country.

These principles of practice are designed to provide a framework in which to think about international work and to ensure safe practice.

These principles are divided into issues relating to the therapy frame, the geographical frame and the psychotherapeutic work.

Legal and ethical compliance

Follow UK and client/patient's local legislation.

Ensure clarity and agreement with clients about applicable legislation that is relevant in both countries.

Adhere to professional ethical standards.

Insurance and liability

Confirm insurance covers international work, which can differ dependent on the country.

Be aware of client/patient local legal risks.

Risk management and safeguarding

Plan for emergencies and risk management according to local laws and safeguarding procedures.

Be aware of how suicide and crisis measures differ according to the legislative and cultural context of the client.

Data protection and confidentiality

Comply with UK/EU GDPR and Data Protection laws relating to the country where the client is based.



Always use secure, encrypted platforms, whilst being aware this may not be possible in some countries.

Understand confidentiality limits in therapist's and client's/patient's geographical location.

Competency and supervision

Be competent to work online and be supervised in online/international work.

Adhere to ethical framework in relation to working internationally and working with electronic equipment.

Practical arrangements

Manage time zones, privacy, payments and connectivity.

Cultural and language awareness

Understand and respect all aspects of difference.

Address language barriers; arranging appropriate translation if required.

Professional and regulatory standards

Meet any necessary competencies for client's legislative and cultural context.

Clarify professional affiliations and legal accountability.

Working with children and vulnerable clients

Be aware of local safeguarding laws and processes, including legislation concerning mental health.

Seek additional, appropriate supervision or guidance when needed.

PCPB partners have further guidance for their members for international working.