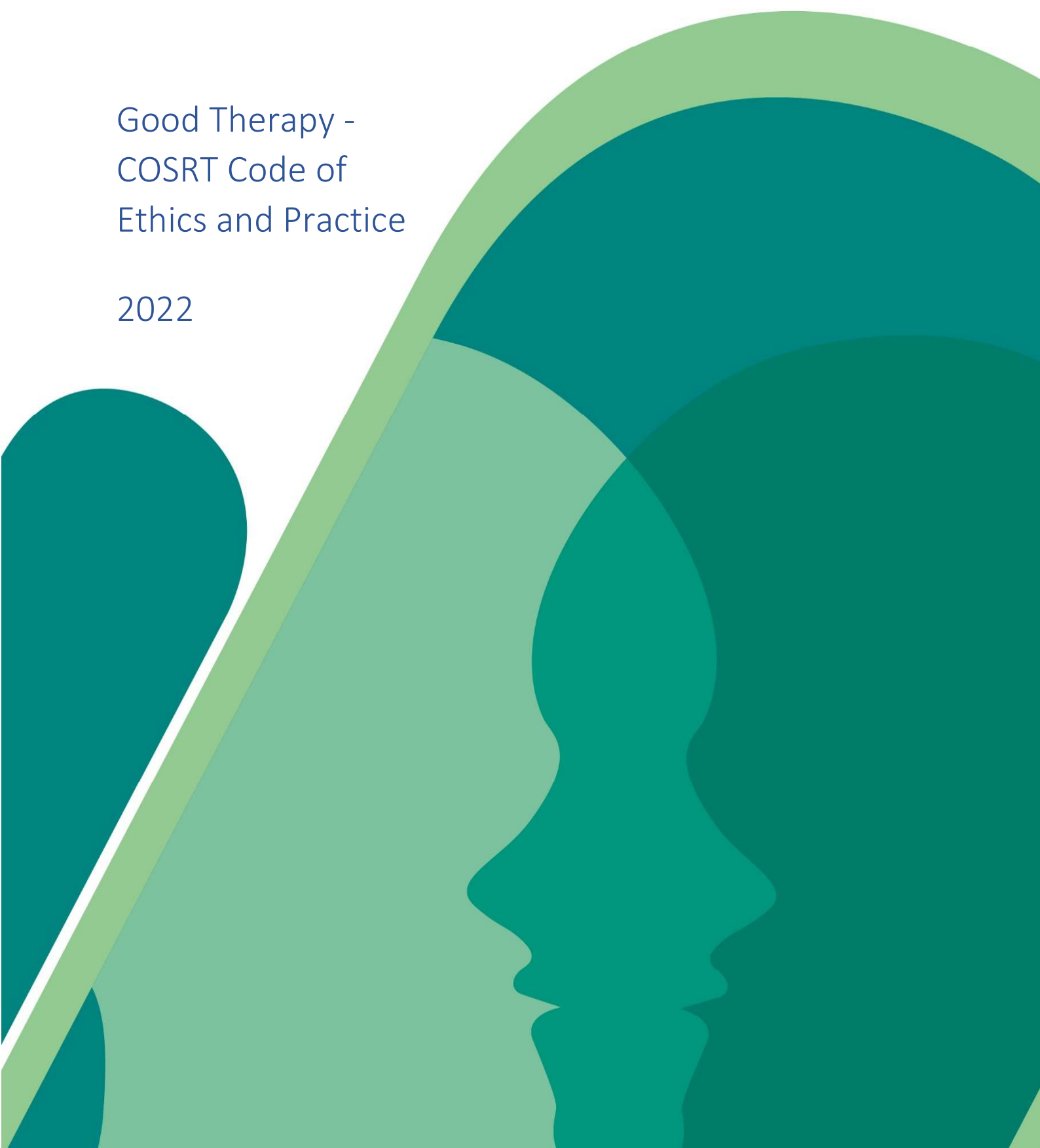


# **cosrt**

College of Sexual and Relationship Therapists

Good Therapy -  
COSRT Code of  
Ethics and Practice

2022



## Good Therapy – COSRT Code of Ethics and Practice

February 2022

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# The Code of Ethics and Practice

This Code contains the standards of ethics, practice and conduct which COSRT expects of all Members. All COSRT members comply with the Code of Ethics and Practice to ensure professional standards are upheld.

The Code of Ethics and Practice applies to conduct within all professional contexts. It also applies outside a professional context where there is a relevant connection to the profession, or the conduct could harm the reputation of, or trust and confidence in, COSRT or the professions it serves.

You commit to complying with the Code when you join COSRT or renew your membership.

Should a complaint be made against a Member, it will be judged against these standards under the Conduct Procedure.

The term Service User includes anyone who receives services from any COSRT Member. These services can include supervision.

The term Member refers to all Members of COSRT. You are personally accountable for your professional practice and conduct subject to the Code of Ethics and Practice and must always be prepared to justify your decisions and actions.

In the numbered clauses below, COSRT sets out the key elements to ethical practice and good professional standards under the following section headings:

- Prioritising People
- Skills and Knowledge
- Safety and Quality
- Integrity

# Prioritising People

As a COSRT Member you commit to acting in the best interests of others including Service Users. To do this you must:

1. Always treat people respectfully, honestly, and fairly.
2. Not have sexual contact or intimate relationships with Service Users, supervisees, or trainees.
3. Not have sexual contact or intimate relationships with close contacts of Service Users, supervisees, or trainees.
4. Consider and maintain appropriate boundaries with current and former Service Users or people close to them.
5. Carefully and regularly evaluate any active or potential dual/multiple relationships to ensure no party is or could be harmed, and that the integrity of the profession is maintained.
6. Not provide therapy, diagnoses, guidance or related activities to intimate partners, relatives, close friends, or other close associates.
7. Not exploit anyone emotionally, financially or in any other way.
8. Not misuse your position, power or professional knowledge in any way that is or could reasonably be expected to be detrimental to any person.
9. Not express your personal beliefs to Service Users or others in ways that could cause distress.
10. Consider the needs of all Service Users and make what arrangements and adjustments are reasonable to meet them.
11. Refer a Service User to another practitioner when this best serves the Service User's needs.

# Skills and Knowledge

Individual and collective standards are integral to good therapy. To maintain these, you must:

12. Be competent in all aspects of your work, including management and research.
13. Keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date, and regularly take part in activities that develop your competence and performance.
14. Be familiar with and abide by guidelines and developments that affect your work including legislation, COSRT policies and procedures, and other regulations relevant to your work.
15. Recognise and work within the limits of your competence and remit, including using supervisor feedback to understand these limits.
16. Have the necessary knowledge of the English language to provide a good standard of practice and care in the UK.
17. Ensure any therapy is based on a comprehensive assessment of the Service User.
18. Check that the therapy you provide for each Service User is compatible with any other therapies or treatments they are receiving.
19. Have proper, evidenced training and a current Full Disclosure DBS certificate to work with people under the age of majority or classified as persons with learning disabilities or vulnerabilities.
20. Have ongoing supervision from an experienced, qualified supervisor.
21. Use a supervisor with experience of and training in working with young people, or people with learning disabilities or vulnerabilities if you work with those groups.

# Safety and Quality

To ensure you provide an appropriate standard of service and to protect others, you must:

22. Ensure that you do not work with Service Users if your fitness to practise could reasonably be considered impaired - including by physical or mental wellbeing, drugs, alcohol, or medication.
23. Inform COSRT without delay if your fitness to practise is impaired or threatened.
24. Follow the advice and guidance of a suitably qualified professional about your fitness to practise, including any changes to your practice they consider necessary.
25. Not rely on your own assessment of risks to you, Service Users or others when considering your own fitness to practise.
26. Take all reasonable steps to protect people if you have concerns that a colleague may not be fit to practise, including reporting without delay to an employer, regulator, COSRT or other relevant professional body.
27. Not provide, advocate, or help anyone procure Conversion Therapy.
28. Not provide, advocate, or help anyone procure sexual surrogacy or bodywork involving touch.
29. Only provide or advocate therapy with robust and scientifically verifiable evidence bases.
30. Only perform a physical examination if you have appropriate medical qualifications, have written consent, and there is a medical requirement.
31. Agree a contract with the Service User before starting therapy unless in a professional setting where this is not required.
32. Follow all legislation and guidance related to data protection and confidentiality.
33. Treat information from and about Service Users as confidential unless a requirement to protect a person from harm, or to comply with the law means that breaching confidentiality is required and justifiable in all the circumstances.

34. Make sure you have adequate insurance or indemnity cover so your Service Users will not be disadvantaged if they make a claim about the clinical care you have provided.
35. Make notes and keep clinical records which are accurate, legible, and timely.
36. Ensure that materials which could be considered explicit are only used with Service User consent, when required and when appropriate.
37. Plan for the well-managed termination of therapeutic relationships in all circumstances.
38. Obtain the written consent of an appropriate adult before conducting therapy with people under the age of majority or classified as persons with learning disabilities or vulnerabilities.
39. Obtain explicit and informed consent from any participant in research.
40. Make sure you comply with the law, governance arrangements, codes of practice and the accepted standards of good practice that apply to the research you are undertaking .
41. Ensure that any research involving services or Service Users is designed and carried out with any legal requirements, strict ethical guidelines and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure Service Users are not adversely affected.



# Integrity

As a COSRT Member you commit to upholding trust and confidence in COSRT and the profession of Psychosexual and Relationship Therapy. You must:

42. Not act or behave in a way (in and out of professional life) which does or could reasonably be expected to harm the reputation of, or trust and confidence in, COSRT or the professions it serves.
43. Consistently evaluate the impacts or potential impacts of your actions or behaviours, giving special consideration to:
  - a. The distinct characteristics of the profession served by COSRT including therapeutic services which deal with sensitive topics including sex, intimacy, and relationships.
  - b. The requirement for robust boundaries and discretion that these characteristics emphasise.
  - c. The fact that an action or behaviour need not be illegal to harm the reputation or trust and confidence in COSRT or the profession it serves.
  - d. The reasonable expectation that those within the profession served by COSRT may be held to a higher standard than those that would apply to those outside the profession.
44. Follow all the requirements laid out in COSRT policies and procedures.
45. Be honest about your experience, qualifications, affiliations, and current and past roles.
46. Not advertise as a Psychosexual and Relationship Therapist, Sex Therapist, or any version thereof unless you hold COSRT Registered Membership.
47. Not practice as a Psychosexual and Relationship Therapist, Sex Therapist, or any version thereof unless you hold COSRT Registered Membership, or such practice is time-limited within a supervised clinical placement during professional training that meets COSRT training standards.
48. Not represent COSRT Membership as a professional qualification.

49. Not do or say anything that might lead a Service User to reasonably believe that you hold a Protected Title or are a licensed medical practitioner in the UK or elsewhere when you are not. This should include:
- a. Avoiding any improper, unjustified, or potentially confusing use of words commonly associated with medical roles and Protected Titles in job titles, biographies or similar.
  - b. Providing clear information to support/justify the use of unprotected words such as Consultant when used outside of reference to licensed medical practice.
50. Only use the titles Doctor or Professor in relation to therapy work if:
- a. The Doctorate is relevant to therapy (including medical Doctor where applicable) and is from a UK University or equivalent foreign institution; or
  - b. The title Professor is held by a Chair/visiting professor/emeritus professor linked to a UK University or equivalent foreign institution and is in a subject relevant to therapy.
51. Respond promptly, fully, and honestly to complaints and apologise when appropriate. You must not allow a Service User's complaint to adversely affect their care or service.
52. Co-operate with any lawful investigation or inquiry relating to your therapy practice and inform COSRT within 14 days if, anywhere in the world:
- a. A regulator, professional body, police, court, employer, or tribunal is investigating an allegation made against you.
  - b. A regulator, professional body, police, court, employer, or tribunal has formally made any charge or equivalent against you.
  - c. A regulator, professional body, police, court, employer, or tribunal has made a finding against you.
  - d. You have accepted or received a caution or any form of sanction/penalty from police, a regulator, professional body, court, or tribunal; or been criticised by any official inquiry.
53. Inform COSRT and any current Service Users within 14 days if you are suspended or removed by an organisation from a post, have restrictions placed on your practice or any professional membership, or have any sanction imposed on you.