



# HANDLING DISAGREEMENTS WITH COLLEAGUES

Sometimes when working with colleagues or with a multidisciplinary team, we may find ourselves holding different views or having concerns regarding a colleague's behaviour.

The BACP Ethical Framework updated in 2018 recognises that in the service of the client, we may need to challenge colleagues by being candid.

The framework refers to this ethical duty in these terms:

*52. We will ensure candour by being open and honest about anything going wrong and promptly inform our clients of anything in our work that places clients at risk of harm, or has caused them harm, whether or not the client(s) affected are aware of what has occurred by:*

- a. taking immediate action to prevent or limit any harm*
- b. repairing any harm caused, so far as possible*
- c. offering an apology when this is appropriate*
- d. notifying and discussing with our supervisor and/or manager what has occurred*
- e. investigating and take action to avoid whatever has gone wrong being repeated.*

- BACP 2018

If you find yourself disagreeing with a colleague, the following steps may be useful in trying to resolve the issues in a professional and thoughtful way.

1. If the issue is regarding client work, take time to consider if the difficulty you are having is one of 'approach'. Just because your colleague works differently to you, does not automatically mean they are unethical.
2. Meet with your colleague and share your concerns. Sometimes miscommunication can be the cause of conflicts.
3. Use supervision to explore the issues you are having. Getting a 'third eye' on what is going on can be very useful.

If you have taken the steps above and still cannot get to an agreement, then it may be useful to approach your line manager and ask for **mediation**. Yourself and your colleague can meet with a neutral third party to explore the issues and come to some resolution.

In some cases, if you have evidence that a colleague has acted unethically towards a client, it may be useful to complete an ethical problem-solving grid to help inform your actions.

Taking this route is sometimes referred to as **defensible decision making**, a set of actions that evidences the steps you have chosen to come to your conclusions.

[CLICK HERE to listen to a podcast on ethical problem solving and download the ethical problem-solving document.](#)

When you have completed the grid, you may wish to escalate your concerns to your line manager.

## Reference

Bond, T. Et al (2020). *BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions*. [online] Bacp.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.bacp.co.uk/events-and-resources/ethics-and-standards/ethical-framework-for-the-counselling-professions/> [Accessed 4 Jan. 2020].