



MARCHES COUNSELLING SERVICE:

## **Private Work**

**Includes guidance on:**

- Ethical considerations when a client requests to see an MCS counsellor privately even whilst a member of MCS or after they have left

[www.marchescounselling.org](http://www.marchescounselling.org)

**Document Type:** Protocol

**Reference:** S-005

**Document Author:** Clinical Management Team/CD/CC

**Document Purpose:** This policy sets out the ethical expectation for counselling staff & volunteers with respect to clients who request to see them privately

**Responsible Group:** Board of Trustees, Clinical Management Team

**Date Ratified:**

**Where this is to be held:** in the main MCS office, digitally

**Abbreviations/terms used in this document:**

- BACP – British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
- CC – Clinical Coordinator
- CD – Clinical Director
- Counsellor - should be read as meaning all types of psychological therapist
- MCS – Marches Counselling Service

**Documents referred to in this protocol**

- MCS Policies and Procedures
- BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions

**The master copy of this policy, and others referenced, is in the indexed and referenced Policies Handbook. This is held in the office digitally and in hard copy. The validity of this copy can be ensured by date checking with the office where any updates are recorded. To ensure its validity, if this document is printed into hard copy or saved to another location it should be**

- a) clearly marked as a copy
- b) checked against the reference number in the handbook

**Version History:**

<b>Reference Number</b>	<b>Circulation/ratification/review Date</b>	<b>Job title/ name of group circulated to</b>
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**1. Introduction**

This policy addresses the issues that arise for counsellors who are approached by clients who they have seen through MCS to see them privately and sets out the expectations for responding to such requests either whilst still working for the service or after they have left.

**2. Leaving the service**

If a counsellor leaves the service but continues to work privately, it is possible that clients they saw as part of MCS may contact them. It is understandable that, having built up a relationship of trust, clients may prefer to come back to their previous counsellor. We are sometimes approached by an ex client asking if they can see the same person and they may ask for contact details if the counsellor is no longer with us.

If a counsellor is comfortable with this happening then we ask them to leave details of how they would prefer them to be approached (for example through their professional organisation’s website or directory). We do not give out personal details of anyone who has worked with us.

**3. MCS Expectations**

- 3.1. If you do intent to see an ex client of MCS privately please be clear in contracting with them that this is a new relationship and not an extension of the work with MCS.
- 3.2 If, on leaving the service, you have clients with whom work has not been brought to a satisfactory conclusion, we feel strongly, that it is not ethically acceptable to take them with you into private work. (See also BACP Ethical Framework)

- 3.3 You should offer a transfer to a new counsellor within the service. (You may also direct them to the BACP website, Counselling Directory, their GP, or other relevant counselling services dependent upon situation)
- 3.4 If the client chooses to end their counselling with MCS and asks if it might be possible to see you privately you should leave a clear ‘cooling off’ period of at least three months before accepting them as a client.
- 3.5 You should document what you have decided in your case notes. If the client chooses to work with you privately the following should take place:
- Please inform your MCS supervisor of the possibility of this client engaging in a private arrangement. We have a duty of care to our clients and need to ensure that they are offered appropriate support wherever possible.
  - Ensure that you have appropriate supervision in place for your private work.
  - Leave at least a three month gap between the counselling provided under MCS and any private arrangement. This allows the client some time to process the work that has already taken place and to consider their decision. It also protects both yourself and MCS as it presents a clear line between the existing work and any subsequent private arrangement. [See also MCS Professional Standards Policy (S-006) and Conflict of Interest Policy (S-001)]
  - The client should be advised to contact you at least 10 weeks after the MCS counselling ends if they still wish to take up the option of counselling with you. You should not make a private appointment before that time. If you feel that it would not be in the best interest of the client to have a 3 month gap you should discuss this with your supervisor.
  - You should give your client a written contract making it clear that this is a new arrangement and that they are responsible for paying your normal fees. Their fees to you should be negotiated irrespective of what they were paying MCS. As an autonomous practitioner there should be no obligation to provide a subsidised service under a new contract.

#### **4. Approaches whilst still in the service**

It is possible that a client, learning that you work privately, will ask if they might see you in that context rather than through MCS. They may explain this in terms of a need for greater confidentiality than they feel an organisation can offer, or it might be linked to the desire to renegotiate payment. Whatever their reasons this needs to be taken to supervision where the dynamics of what is taking place for the client in the context of your relationship can be discussed.

You may choose to clearly state that this would be unethical and you are unable to do so. However if you feel it is clinically desirable to be less dismissive, and to give you the opportunity of exploring what is going on for your client in therapy, you may prefer to state that any approach to you privately would need to be after the existing piece of work within MCS has been completed.