All counsellors at MHFA Wales adhere strictly to the BACP Ethical Framework for Counselling Professions.

**What are the ethics in counselling?**

MHFA Wales adhere to the BACP’s ethical framework in counselling. This means we, and all our counselling staff put clients first, work to professional standards, show respect, build appropriate relationships, maintain integrity, and demonstrate accountability. It has three main sections:

* **A commitment to clients** provides a summary of working to professional standards and building an ethical relationship
* **Ethics** specifies the values, principles and personal moral qualities that inform our work and underpin supervision
* **Good practice** considers the application of our commitments to clients and ethics to our practice

The BACP’s ethics are based on values, principles and personal moral qualities that underpin and inform the interpretation and application the other two sections. The ethical framework outlines the appropriate:

* **Values**
* **Principles**
* **Personal moral qualities**

You can read the framework [here](https://www.bacp.co.uk/events-and-resources/ethics-and-standards/ethical-framework-for-the-counselling-professions/). This is a detailed explanation of the things we do to maintain ethics, and some good examples of standards and ethics for counselling in action.

**Why are ethics important in counselling?**

Ethics are important in counselling, as they are a means of protecting the welfare of both the client and the counsellor by clearly outlining what is appropriate.

Counsellors often come across difficult and sensitive subjects. This can leave the client in a vulnerable position. Counsellors are expected to act ethically, meaning adhering to what’s known as an ethical framework.

They have a duty of care for clients, and by nature of the profession, counsellors are to act in the best interest of their client, promoting client goals, protecting client rights, maximising good and minimizing harm.

Following a code of ethics means acting honestly as a counsellor.

**What about ethical concerns in counselling?**

There are plenty of ethical concerns and dilemmas in counselling. No two people will have the same set of issues, so counsellors need to be equipped to deal with a range of emotions and dilemmas.

Some of the potential ethical pitfalls that a counsellor can come across—which the ethical framework is designed to help them navigate include:

**Setting and maintaining boundaries**

This is probably the most important ethical concern for a counsellor. It’s necessary to avoid developing personal relationships with clients, due to privacy, confidentiality, and a duty of care. This isn’t always possible, and intense emotional connections can develop—from either side—when difficult subjects are discussed.

Counsellors should also avoid working with family, friends, or people they know personally. This includes working with family members of someone they know. These ethical boundaries are in place to allow everyone a fair, unbiased therapy, where they can rely on confidentiality to express their problems freely.

**Confidentiality**

Another important consideration. Every counsellor is responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of their clients. All personal information, and the disclosures made during sessions, need to be kept not only confidential but secure.

There are a few exceptions to this, for instance when a therapist strongly suspects immediate harm to the client or someone around them.

**Impartiality**

Clients can come from every walk of life, be in any situation, and belong to any one of myriad religions, cultures, and backgrounds. It’s vital for a counsellor to be able to take people at face value and use the same professionalism regardless.

In addition a counsellor is expected to leave their own issues at the door. Personal problems affect us all—but when your job involves dealing with and advising on the issues other people face, your own issues can introduce biases and prejudices. It’s about separating work from home life.

**Our commitment to ethical counselling**

MHFA Wales are committed to upholding the BACP’s ethical framework in counselling. Not only that, but we’re also committed to ethical conduct in every step of every process of our service.