**Ethical Statement**

 We are a group of seven people working as counsellors or psychotherapists whose therapeutic work is diverse but broadly humanistic. Since 1997 we have been meeting for half a day at a time about eight times a year and in 2001 we became a Full Member Group of IPN. Our meetings provide us with an overview of our continuing personal and professional development and act as an adjunct to our individual supervision.

 **Values**

* We offer each other time, attention and respect.
* We welcome diversity.
* We are committed to openness, honesty and transparency in our dealings with each other.
* We strive for clarity in our communication, yet we are willing to tolerate ambiguity and a lack of clarity.
* We value participation, engagement and involvement.
* We value stimulus and support and aim to combine challenge with compassion.
* Through our involvement with each other we pursue our personal and professional development.

**Confidentiality**

* We offer the highest possible levels of confidentiality in order to respect the client’s privacy and create the trust necessary for our work.
* The therapeutic contracts we make include an agreement about the level and limits of confidentiality offered. This agreement can be reviewed and changed by negotiation.
* Exceptional circumstances may arise giving us good grounds for believing serious harm may occur to the client or other people.  In such circumstances we will seek the client’s consent to a change in the contract whenever possible unless there are good grounds for believing the client is no longer willing or able to take responsibility for his or her own actions. Normally, the decision to break confidentiality will be discussed with the client and will only be made after consultation with the supervisor or if he or she is not available, an experienced colleague.
* Any disclosure of confidential information is restricted to relevant information, conveyed only to appropriate people and for appropriate reasons likely to alleviate the exceptional circumstances.
* We will take all reasonable steps in the management of our work to respect the confidentiality of our clients.

**Non‑exploitation**

* We will not exploit our clients financially, sexually, emotionally or in any other way. Suggesting or engaging in sexual activity with a client is unethical.
* In our work the balance of power is unequal and we will take care not to abuse our power.
* We work with clients to reach a recognised ending when clients have received the help they sought or when it is apparent that the work we are engaged in is no longer helping or when the clients wish to end.

**Contracts**

* We intend that all publicity material and all written and oral information we provide will reflect accurately the nature of the service we offer and our relevant training, qualifications and experience.
* We will take all reasonable steps to honour the undertakings we make in this way.
* We are responsible for reaching agreement with our clients about the terms on which counselling is being offered, including availability, the degree of confidentiality offered, arrangements for the payment of any fees, cancelled appointments and other significant matters. The communication of essential terms and any negotiation should be concluded by having a clear agreement before the client incurs any commitment or liability of any kind.
* We have a responsibility to ensure that our clients are given a free choice whether or not to use our services.
* We give our clients opportunities to review the work we undertake together.
* We aim to avoid conflicts of interest wherever possible. Those that do arise must be discussed in supervision and where appropriate with the client.
* We are responsible for addressing any client dissatisfaction with the work we do.

**Boundaries**

* When we undertake counselling or therapy we are responsible for setting and monitoring boundaries throughout the sessions.
* We remain accountable for relationships with former clients and must exercise caution over entering into friendships, business relationships, sexual relationships, training, supervising and other relationships. We will discuss any changes in relationship in supervision.

**Supervision**

* We believe that supervision is essential. It is a formal arrangement which enables us to discuss our work regularly with one or more experienced practitioners. Its purpose is to ensure the health and efficacy of our relationship with our clients.
* We have a responsibility to assess our needs realistically and to seek an appropriate form and level of supervision.
* Supervision should be regular and consistent.
* Supervision is a confidential relationship.

**Competence**

* We actively monitor our own competence through supervision and otherwise. We aim to work within the limits of that competence. We are willing to consider any views expressed by our clients or our colleagues.
* We monitor our functioning and will not work when our functioning is impaired by alcohol or drugs. In situations of personal or emotional difficulty, or illness, we will monitor the point at which we are no longer competent to practice and take action accordingly.
* We are responsible for being open with clients if we believe it is appropriate to refer them elsewhere.
* We will encourage clients to seek medical or other appropriate advice if conditions indicate this would be helpful.

**Personal and Professional Development**

* We are committed to updating our knowledge, skills and understanding within the area in which we work. We maintain an interest in developments in related areas.
* We consider that our own personal development is ongoing and intrinsic to our work.
* We work together as a group in ways which support and challenge our personal as well as our professional development.

**Disputes**

The Western Valleys Group has a commitment to making mediation available to anyone concerned about the work of someone belonging to it.

We identified three roles – Support Person for the Client (SPC), Support Person for the Therapist (SPT) and Liaison Person (LP).

We identified a series of steps for a complaint coming to WV via our website –

* Client contacts Western Valleys via our website and sends an email registering a concern. This email will be set up so that it goes to all of us automatically.
* The therapist identifies someone within WV who agrees to act as SPT.
* The group identify SPC and LP from within its membership.
* LP contacts both Link Groups to inform them that a client has raised a concern.
* LP consults over provisional dates for a full WV meeting should this prove necessary.
* SPC contacts client and offers a face to face meeting.
* SPC seeks to establish (a) precisely what the concern is and (b) what the client would regard as a satisfactory outcome. This is put in writing and a copy is made available to the client.
* SPC then contacts therapist and conveys what the concern is and what the client wants. The therapist also has this information on paper.
* SPC relays the therapist’s response back to the client.
* It is anticipated that the majority of concerns will be resolved by this point and in a matter of days rather than weeks.
* If matters remain unresolved and the client wishes it, SPC and client will meet face to face with SPT and therapist.
* If matters are still not resolved LP contacts both Link Groups to report on progress and register any issues raised by the Link Groups.
* WV then meets to consider next steps drawing on any help available from the two Link Groups.
* WV will do its utmost to resolve matters to the satisfaction of the complainant within eight weeks.

We discussed the confidentiality of what is said by the client to the SPC. The following principles apply –

* The client needs to know that there will be a relationship of trust between client and SPC.
* The SPC will need to be free to put the client’s point of view into context when conveying to the therapist what the concern is and what the client wants as an outcome. SPC will clarify with the client any constraints the client wishes to impose on SPC’s freedom to talk on client’s behalf.
* The SPC needs to be free to join in WV group discussion about constructive ways forward.

**Contact us**

If you have any concerns about the work of any of the individuals in it you can contact Western Valleys Group through Barbara Hacking, Shipham Cottage, Congresbury – Tel 01934-835601

barbarahacking@talktalk.net