

Independent Practitioners Network Principles & Procedures (amended February 2016)

A Principles

1. The Network exists to further and support good and empowering practice which is open about its aims and underlying principles. It seeks to assure those looking for a practitioner that Network members can provide and sustain a suitable environment for the work they offer and are able to communicate clearly their particular form of work to each other and to the public.
2. The Network seeks to develop a culture of openness, mutuality, support and challenge within and between its member groups.
3. Member groups are committed to fostering evaluation and accountability through an ongoing process of self and peer assessment.
4. Each group takes responsibility for resolving problems which may emerge in the practice of its members, including issues raised by clients. It accepts that its membership of the Network stands or falls by how it carries out this responsibility and is, therefore, prepared to have its process examined, supported and challenged by other groups, and to do the same in return.
5. The Network specifically favours diversity and ecological complexity and has no commitment to any particular model of therapy, therapy training, or therapeutic relationship.

B Organisation

6. The Network is a system of linked groups which accept the responsibility of standing by each other's process of self-monitoring and resolving issues, offering support and challenge as appropriate.
7. Membership of the Network is only as a group. A group will ordinarily be comprised of at least four practitioners who are prepared to know and stand by each other's work. In principle, groups are open to practitioners who are, counsellors, psychotherapists, educators, complementary health or any other allied practitioners.
8. Types of involvement in the Network:
 - Individual participants
 - Forming/prospective groups
 - Full member groups

8a) Individual Participants

Everyone in the Network is an equal participant, whether newly exploring or being in a full member group.

8b) Forming/Prospective groups

Groups comprised of individuals who are working towards:

- Establishing whether they can stand by each other and their work
- If so, declare themselves to the Network with a group name, contact details, and list of group participants
- Develop & publish a group Code of Ethics/Practice or equivalent
- Once at this stage, in the event of a difficulty/dispute with a client, there is an expectation the group would draw on the IPN process of conflict resolution or equivalent as needed
- The group would then seek and form links with two other groups, these links being there to validate the group's process of standing by each other and their work. An equivalent validation process can be agreed with the network through the Gatherings
- Groups are free to take whatever time they need to move through these stages
- A group becomes a Full Member Group when, in addition to the above, it provides and publishes in Netcom the names of the link groups or details of the equivalent validation process.

8c) Full Member Groups

Having gone through all this rigorous process the group is deemed to be Peer Accredited and has Civic Accountability.

9. A link may be withdrawn by either party, at which point a period of conditional membership, of up to one year and more by negotiation, will obtain for each group until another link is formed. Similarly, if a group's membership falls below four they will have conditional membership, of up to 6 months, until it restores its numbers. In either case, the situation should be made known to the Network.

10. All full member groups have equal status within the Network.

11. To ensure the integrity of the Network, no three groups may link in a closed triangle.

12. In the event of conflict between a practitioner and a client, the practitioner's group will facilitate the situation using a conflict resolution model. When necessary, a Full Member Group can draw on its linked groups and, ultimately, on resources of the Network, to ensure that all parties feel the issue has been properly dealt with. Other groups are also encouraged to use the Network for support and facilitation in such circumstances.

13. Groups and individuals, which do not annually update the information held by IPN about their involvement, will not be listed as participants or members until they do so.

14. The life of the Network will arise from the actions and interactions undertaken freely by its members. The Network as a whole has no power to constrain its member groups to any course of action, or to prevent them from any course of action. No group or individual has the right to speak on behalf of the Network. Decisions will be made by pluralistic consensus, defined as an ongoing process which considers all

options available, listens to all views, and supports a variety of outcomes being pursued simultaneously. This approach implies an emphasis on issue identification, discussion and 'sense of the meeting' rather than on adversarial proposals and counter-proposals. Ultimate responsibility for decision making/taking rests with Member Groups. Unresolved issues will be held open for further discussion and all decisions will remain open to subsequent modification.

15. Action will only be taken on the Network's behalf after agreement is reached at a National Gathering and any proposed action is circulated throughout the Network.

C Administration

16. The Network's business will normally take place at National Gatherings, at least one of which must take place annually.

17. Attendance at National Gatherings shall be open to anyone who is part of a Full Member group or a Potential Member group, a Forming Group, or an individual seeking to participate.

18. With the agreement of a National Gathering, individuals or groups will from time to time take responsibility for one or more of the following functions: --

- to provide and maintain a public contact address for the Network.

- to provide and maintain a bank account for administrative functions.

- to maintain and make available to the Network lists of member groups, of the individuals belonging to those groups and of the links between groups, of potential member groups, and of individual practitioners intending to participate.

- to hold and circulate to other groups each member group's code of practice.

- to produce and publish a "Network Communication" bulletin.

- to provide liaison which makes the resources of the Network available to groups who require them.

- to arrange Gatherings or other meetings of the Network.

- to draw any issues or problems to the attention of the Network as a whole.

- to act as Regional Contact Persons.

- to liaise with, or otherwise relate to, other professional or relevant bodies.

These Principles and Procedures replace the IPN Interim Constitution and reflect the evolving nature of the Network and its process.

Record of amendments

2010 Amendments

This amended Principles and Procedures was proposed by Houghton Gathering, February 2010 and ratified by Unstone Gathering, June 2010.

2016 Amendments

The penultimate sentence in section 14 was added by a proposal by Unstone Gathering 2015 and confirmed by Barns Gathering 2015.