

## Foreword

This Code of Ethics and Practice for Supervisors of Guidance Counsellors was drafted by the IGC Supervision Subcommittee – Eileen Boyle, Tina Doyle, Arthur Dunne, Marcella Finnerty, Séamus McDermott, Edmond McGrath, Helen Ó Colmáin, Carmel O'Donohoe, Elizabeth Tynan and Mary Lally. Work was started early in 2007. We met regularly, consulted widely and argued conscientiously through many draft copies until we produced the seventh and final draft in Spring of 2009.

From Section 2 until the end of the Code of Practice, this Code of Ethics and Practice for Guidance Counsellors is based upon the BACP Code of Ethics & Practice for Supervisors of Counsellors (Jan 2001). We are grateful to BACP for giving us permission to adapt their document and we recognise that copyright is held by BACP, under the Berne Convention.

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On behalf of the Subcommittee

Spring 2009

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## **Part I: The Professional and Organisational Context of the Work of the School Guidance Counsellor**

### **Preamble**

Supervision is an effective means of assisting guidance counsellors to maintain and enhance their competence by providing continuing clinical skill development, ongoing consultation regarding legal and ethical issues and a professional support system that can mitigate stress and burnout. There are two types of supervision: clinical supervision and administrative supervision. The primary purpose of clinical supervision is to enhance the competence and the counselling skills of the counsellor who is being supervised. Administrative supervision is usually provided by the school/college principal, or other administrator, and is focused on compliance with school/college requirements and accountability. Although clinical supervision is the primary focus of this Code of Ethics and Practice, because of the complex nature of the work of the guidance counsellor, ethical and legal issues that commonly arise in administrative supervision cannot be excluded.

Supervisors will be aware that there are two main groups of guidance counsellors engaged in guidance counselling: those who work with adults in Further Education, Higher Education or Adult Education, and those who work in second level schools where the majority of the students are under eighteen and thus minors. The role, function and responsibility of each group can be quite different. It is those who work with minors in second level schools that are the main focus of this preamble, because the scope and complexities of their work is unique in the world of counselling and counselling supervision.

### **Role**

The guidance counsellor participates in three main areas of activity:

- Personal/Social Guidance and Counselling
- Educational Guidance and Counselling
- Vocational Guidance and Counselling

The guidance counsellor in a second level school has a huge workload, having a duty of care for hundreds of students, providing counselling, taking classes (sometimes even subject teaching), administering aptitude and interests tests to assist in subject and career choice and having the responsibility of guiding all school leavers into a suitable career.





She/he deals routinely with complicated situations in which students have acute counselling needs, including depression, anxiety, stress, suicidal tendencies, pregnancy, gender issues, substance abuse, physical/psychological bullying, violence, physical or sexual abuse etc.

### **Organisational Context**

The guidance counsellor works as part of a team that includes other members of school staff, parents of students and other professionals outside the school setting. A typical second-level school usually has the following staff and management structures: Department of Education and Science, Guidance Counselling Inspectorate, Vocational Education Committee/Trustees and Board of Management, principal, deputy principal, assistant principals/special duties teachers, deans of study or discipline, year heads, class tutors, guidance counsellor/s, subject teachers, resource teachers, special needs assistants, chaplain, administrative and caretaking staff.

When working with guidance counsellor supervisees it is essential to be conscious of her/his many and intricate work relationships with the above personnel, her/his roles and functions within the school and how her/his working days can be unpredictable, no matter how carefully pre-planned. The guidance counsellor is constantly challenged to prioritise and make decisions about multiple demands on her/his time. For example, when she/he is working with a distressed client the phone may ring and then the bell rings for class which she/he has to take, and a passing teacher or student might knock at the door wishing to speak to her/him. Supervision of individual counsellors is impossible without equal 'supervision' of the programmes and functions they perform. And that is what makes the supervision of guidance counsellors so different and challenging.

The differences between counselling adults and school-based counselling should be clearly understood for effective supervision to take place. Generally in counselling adults, the counsellor is an independent practitioner seeing, on a contractual basis, an independent adult who is responsible for payment. In schools the guidance counsellor has responsibility for students who are generally minors, who are referred or who self-refer, and who occasionally might even be seeing the guidance counsellor under duress as part of the disciplinary process. Formal contracts do not usually exist in this setting – the relationship between the guidance



counsellor and student could be described as an informal contract. The culture and ethos of the school has a huge impact on the counselling relationship. When counselling takes place within a school there is a coming together of two worlds, the world of the school itself and the world of counselling. In a school setting the counselling dyad becomes a triad, with the school as a third member, and the therapeutic basis of the counselling relationship can be affected.

The role of the guidance counsellor to act as a mediator, between the school as an organisation and individual student, is integral to the job. She/he is sometimes torn between loyalty to colleagues and responsibility to students and she/he has to walk a tightrope between maintaining confidentiality and imparting sufficient information to protect the student within the disciplinary structures essential to the satisfactory running of a school. Her/his responsibility to act as an advocate for students in matters of discipline is not always well understood or welcomed by colleagues. This can be true for principals and senior staff who do not always appreciate the importance of confidentiality, or recognise students' rights to natural justice.

### **Confidentiality**

As ethical practitioners, guidance counsellors are faced with many challenging issues. Because a lot of guidance counsellors' work involves dealing with students on the fringes, they have to be careful not to become marginalized themselves and be perceived by staff and management as taking the side of the students against the school. Because guidance counsellors recognise the importance of maintaining confidentiality to develop student trust they may be reluctant to share information. Occasionally, guidance counsellors, in trying to help empower students to make decisions about their well-being, may find themselves in a situation of having to watch those students being adversely affected by a system that may be destructive of that well-being. These tensions can surface in supervision.

When supervising guidance counsellors, supervisors should be alert to the complexities of confidentiality in a school situation. Confidentiality between counsellor and student is vital for the success of the counselling relationship. However, as in all counselling relationships the generally accepted limits to confidentiality (when harm to self or others is threatened) pertain. Where disclosure of confidential or privileged information is





necessary, students are informed and involved in the decision-making process of the disclosure. The meaning and the limits of confidentiality are defined in developmentally appropriate terms to students. The success of supervision, and counselling, in a school context lies in all parties agreeing a definition of what confidentiality is for the student/client and the supervisee. In the context of supervision, the school principal, the supervisor and supervisee can have different ideas about confidentiality or counselling as part of the disciplinary process.

Most school managements allow a high degree of confidentiality, believe that parental right yields to the students' right to make their own decisions and feel that students have a right to seek confidential advice. If the principal in a school is sensitive to the professional culture of counselling, and trusts the supervision process then the supervisor can be satisfied that the supervisee will be supported should any problems emerge.

In some schools, however, an analysis of counselling shows that the responsibility of the counsellor is to the client, but the client is defined as the school and the students who are counselled as the consumers of a service. In this setting school managements believe that the moral and legal contract exists mainly between the student and the school and not between the student and the guidance counsellor. In such cases the supervisee's management of confidentiality needs to be monitored to ascertain the best possible outcome for the student and to maintain the supervisee's own professional safety.

Difficulties around maintaining confidentiality can also arise with members of school staff or management who may expect, or even press the guidance counsellor for information about the student in exchange for modifying disciplinary measures. Occasionally members of school staff or management may ask students what was being discussed in the counselling room. Or, students can sometimes talk to their peers about issues that were dealt with in the counselling room. In a school environment the tension between the potentially leaky nature of counselling, and the need for confidentiality if trust is to exist, can loom large in the supervision room.

A guidance counsellor dealing with minors is *in loco parentis*. Parents' rights to information about interventions by third parties in the lives of their children who are minors can be qualified by

the guidance counsellor's judgement as to what is in the best interests of the pupil. Some schools invite parents to sign a 'Consent Form' that explains and, when signed, gives permission to students to avail of the opportunity of a confidential counselling service. Even so, the tension of balancing conflicting rights and interests - the right of the student to confidentiality, the rights of family members to a meaningful involvement in decisions that affect their family will surface in supervision.

Supervisors will work with guidance counsellors in determining what ethical principles and legal issues apply in given cases so that the two objectives of supervision can be attained: the welfare of the client and the professional development of the supervisee. Clinical supervision can be a powerful vehicle for fostering the professional development of guidance counsellors. Providing guidance counsellors with ongoing clinical supervision will help them be more equipped to continuously improve the services they provide to students, parents and staff.



## Part 2: Code of Ethics and Practice

### Section I. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the Code is to establish and maintain standards for supervisors and to inform and protect guidance counsellors seeking supervision.
- 1.2 All supervisors are required to abide by existing Codes appropriate to them. They thereby accept a common frame of reference within which to manage their responsibilities to supervisees and their clients, colleagues, members of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors and the wider community.
- 1.3 Supervisors must satisfy themselves that guidance counsellors subscribe to and abide by the 'Constitution and Code of Ethics' of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors 2004.
- 1.4 Supervisors who are supervising guidance counsellors working in post-primary schools should direct the attention of their supervisees to the *Child Protection guidelines* of the Department of Education and Science, September 2004. Whilst this Code cannot resolve all ethical and practice related issues, it aims to provide a framework for addressing ethical issues and to encourage optimum levels of practice. Supervisors and supervisees (guidance counsellors) will need to judge which parts of this Code apply to particular situations. They may have to decide between conflicting responsibilities.
- 1.5 Counselling Supervision is a formal and mutually agreed arrangement for counsellors to discuss their work regularly with someone who is normally an experienced and competent counsellor and familiar with the process of counselling supervision. The task is to work together to ensure and develop the efficacy of the supervisee's counselling practice.  
Counselling Supervision is the term that will be used throughout this Code. It is also known as supervision, consultative support, clinical supervision or non-managerial supervision. It is an essential part of good practice for counselling. It is different from training, personal development and administrative supervision.
- 1.6 The Institute of Guidance Counsellors has a Problem Solving Protocol which is a step by step guide to resolving any interpersonal difficulties which could arise in supervision (Appendix).



## **Section 2. Nature of Counselling Supervision**

- 2.1 Counselling supervision provides supervisees with the opportunity on a regular basis to discuss and monitor their work with clients. It should take account of the setting in which supervisees practise. Counselling supervision is intended to ensure that the needs of the clients are being addressed and to monitor the effectiveness of the therapeutic interventions.
- 2.2 Counselling supervision may contain some elements of training, personal development, or administrative supervision, but counselling supervision is not primarily intended for these purposes and appropriate management of these issues should be observed.
- 2.3 Counselling supervision is a formal collaborative process intended to help supervisees maintain ethical and professional standards of practice and enhance creativity.
- 2.4 It is essential that counsellor and supervisor are able to work together constructively as counselling supervision includes supportive and challenging elements.
- 2.5 There are several modes of counselling supervision (see **4** below), which vary in appropriateness according to the needs of supervisees. More than one mode of counselling supervision may be used concurrently. This code applies to all counselling supervision arrangements.

## **Section 3. Anti-discriminatory Practice in Counselling and Supervision**

- 3.1 Anti-discriminatory practice underpins the basic values of counselling and counselling supervision as stated in this document.
- 3.2 Supervisors have a responsibility to be aware of their own issues of prejudice and stereotyping, and particularly to consider ways in which this may be affecting the supervisory relationship. Discussion of this is part of the counselling supervision process.
- 3.3 Supervisors need to be alert to any prejudices and assumptions that counsellors reveal in their work with clients and to raise awareness of these so that the needs of clients may be met with more sensitivity. One purpose of counselling supervision is to enable supervisees to recognise and value difference. Supervisors have a responsibility to challenge the appropriateness of the work of a supervisee whose own belief system interferes with the acceptance of clients.



- 3.4 Attitudes, assumptions and prejudices can be identified by the language used, and by paying attention to the selectivity of material brought to counselling supervision.

#### **Section 4. Modes of Counselling Supervision**

There are different modes of counselling supervision. The particular features of some of these modes are outlined below. Some counsellors use combinations of these for their counselling supervision.

4.1 **One to one, Supervisor-Supervisee**

This involves a supervisor providing counselling supervision on an individual basis for an individual counsellor who is usually less experienced than the supervisor. This is the most widely used mode of counselling supervision.

4.2 **Group Counselling Supervision with Identified Counselling Supervisor(s)**

There are several ways of providing this form of counselling supervision. In one approach the supervisor acts as the leader, takes responsibility for organising the time equally between the supervisees, and concentrates on the work of each individual in turn. Using another approach the supervisees allocate counselling supervision time between themselves with the supervisor as a technical resource.

4.3 **One to One Peer Counselling Supervision**

This involves two participants providing counselling supervision for each other by alternating the roles of supervisor and supervisee. Typically the time available for counselling supervision is divided equally between them. This mode on its own is not suitable for all practitioners, especially inexperienced practitioners.

4.4 **Peer Group Counselling Supervision**

This takes place when three or more counsellors share the responsibility for providing each other's counselling supervision within the group. Typically, they will consider themselves to be of broadly equal status, training and/or experience. This mode on its own is unsuitable for inexperienced practitioners.

#### **Section 5. The Structure of this Code**

- 5.1 This Code has two sections. Section A, the Code of Ethics, outlines the fundamental values of counselling supervision and a number of general principles arising from these. Section B, the Code of Practice, applies these principles to counselling supervision.



## **A Code of Ethics**

- A.1** Counselling supervision is a non-exploitative activity. Its basic values are integrity, responsibility, impartiality and respect. Supervisors must take the same degree of care to work ethically whether they are paid or work voluntarily and irrespective of the mode of counselling supervision used.
- A.2 Confidentiality**  
The content of counselling supervision is highly confidential. Supervisors must clarify their limits of confidentiality.
- A.3 Safety**  
All reasonable steps must be taken to ensure the safety of supervisees and their clients during their work together.
- A.4 Effectiveness**  
All reasonable steps must be taken by supervisors to encourage optimum levels of practice by supervisees.
- A.5 Contracts**  
The terms and conditions on which counselling supervision is offered must be made clear to supervisees at the outset. Subsequent revisions of these terms must be agreed in advance of any change.
- A.6 Competence**  
Supervisors must take all reasonable steps to monitor and develop their own competence and to work within the limits of that competence. This includes having supervision of their supervision work.

## **B Code of Practice**

- B.1 Issues of Responsibility**
- B.1.1 Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that an individual contract is worked out with their supervisees which will allow them to present and explore their work as honestly as possible.
- B.1.2 Within this contract supervisors are responsible for helping supervisees to reflect critically upon their work, while at the same times acknowledging that clinical responsibility remains with the counsellor.
- B.1.3 Supervisors are responsible, together with their supervisees, for ensuring that the best use is made of counselling supervision time, in order to address the needs of clients.



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- B.1.4 Supervisors are responsible for setting and maintaining the boundaries between the counselling supervision relationship and other professional relationships, e.g. training and management.
  - B.1.5 Supervisors and supervisees should take all reasonable steps to ensure that any personal or social contact between them does not adversely influence the effectiveness of the counselling supervision.
  - B.1.6 A supervisor must not have a counselling supervision and a personal counselling contract with the same supervisee over the same period of time.
  - B.1.7 Supervisors must not exploit their supervisees financially, sexually, emotionally or in any other way. It is unethical for supervisors to engage in sexual activity with their supervisee.
  - B.1.8 Supervisors have a responsibility to enquire about any other relationships which may exist between supervisees and their clients as these may impair the objectivity and professional judgement of supervisees.
  - B.1.9 Supervisors must recognise, and work in ways that respect, the value and dignity of supervisees and their clients with due regard to issues such as origin, status, race, gender, age, beliefs, sexual orientation and disability. This must include raising awareness of any discriminatory practice that may exist between supervisees and their clients, or between supervisor and supervisee.
  - B.1.10 Supervisors must ensure that together with their supervisees they consider their respective legal liabilities to each other, to the employing or training organisation, if any, and to clients.
  - B.1.11 Supervisors are responsible for taking action if they are aware that their supervisees' practice is not in accordance with the Institute of Guidance Counsellors' Code of Ethics for Guidance Counsellors.
  - B.1.12 Supervisors are responsible for helping their supervisees recognise when their functioning as guidance counsellors is impaired due to personal or emotional difficulties, any condition that affects judgement, illness, the influence of alcohol or drugs, or for any other reason, and for ensuring that appropriate action is taken.
  - B.1.13 Supervisors must conduct themselves in their supervision-related activities in ways which do not undermine public confidence in either their role as a supervisor or in the work of other supervisors.

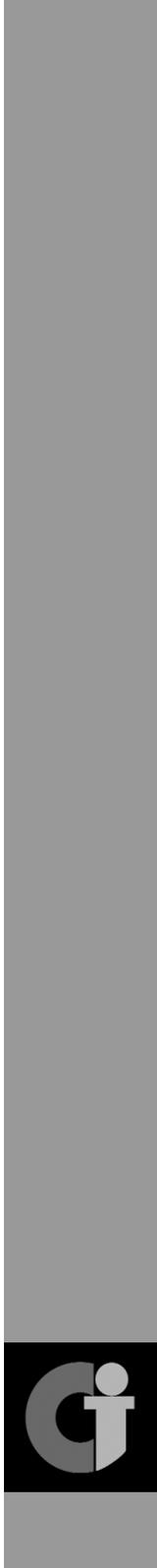
- B.1.14 Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that their emotional needs are met outside the counselling supervision work and are not dependent on their relationship with the supervisees.
- B.1.15 Supervisors are responsible for consulting with their own supervisor before former clients are taken on as supervisees or former supervisees are taken on as clients.

**B.2 Issues of Competence**

- B.2.1 Under all modes of counselling supervision listed above, supervisors should normally be practising and experienced counsellors for at least five years.
- B.2.2 Supervisors are responsible for furthering their own professional development.
- B.2.3 Supervisors are responsible for making arrangements for their own supervision in order to support their counselling supervision work and to help them to evaluate their competence.
- B.2.4 Supervisors are responsible for monitoring and working within the limits of their competence.
- B.2.5 Supervisors are responsible for withdrawing from counselling supervision work either temporarily or permanently when their functioning is impaired due to personal or emotional difficulties, illness, the influence of alcohol or drugs, or for any other reason.
- B.2.6 Some modes require extra consideration and these are detailed in this section.

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>
One to one supervisor-supervisee	✓							
Group counselling supervision with identified and more experienced counsellor	✓	✓		✓	✓			
One to one peer counselling supervision	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Peer group counselling supervision	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

*see overleaf*



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- A.** All points contained elsewhere within the Code of Practice should be considered.
  - B.** Sufficient time must be allocated to each counsellor to ensure adequate supervision of their counselling work.
  - C.** This method on its own is particularly unsuitable for trainees, recently trained or inexperienced counsellors.
  - D.** Care needs to be taken to develop an atmosphere conducive to sharing, questioning and challenging each others' practice in a constructive and supportive way.
  - E.** As well as having a background in counselling work, supervisors should have appropriate group-work experience in order to facilitate this kind of group.
  - F.** All participants should have sufficient group-work experience to be able to engage the group process in ways which facilitate effective counselling supervision.
  - G.** Explicit consideration should be given to deciding who is responsible for providing the counselling supervision, and how the task of counselling supervision will be carried out.
  - H.** It is good practice to have an independent consultant to visit regularly to observe and monitor the process and quality of the counselling supervision.

## **B.3 Management of Work**

### **B.3.1 THE COUNSELLING SUPERVISION CONTRACT**

- 3.1.1 Where supervisors and supervisees work for the same school or organisation the supervisor is responsible for clarifying all contractual obligations.
- 3.1.2 Supervisors must inform their supervisees, as appropriate, about their own training, philosophy and theoretical position, qualifications, approach to anti-discriminatory practice and the methods of counselling supervision they use.
- 3.1.3 Supervisors must be explicit regarding practical arrangements for counselling supervision, paying particular regard to the length of contact time, fees, cancellation policy, the frequency of contact, policy and practice regarding record keeping, and the privacy of the venue.
- 3.1.4 Fees are set by the Department of Education and Science for professional support for guidance counsellors through supervision.

- 3.1.5 Supervisors and supervisees must make explicit the expectations and requirements they have of each other. This should include the manner in which any formal assessment of the supervisee's work will be conducted. Each party should assess the value of working with the other, and review this regularly.
- 3.1.6 Supervisors must discuss their policy regarding giving references and any fees that may be charged for this or for any other work done outside counselling supervision time.
- 3.1.7 Before formalising a counselling supervision contract supervisors must ascertain what counselling training and continuing professional development the supervisee is having or has had. This is in order to take into account any effect this may have on the supervisee's counselling work.
- 3.1.8 Supervisors working with trainee guidance counsellors must clarify the boundaries of their responsibility and their accountability to their supervisee and to the training agency.

### B.3.2 CONFIDENTIALITY

- 3.2.1 As a general principle, supervisors must not reveal confidential material concerning the supervisee or their clients to any other person without the express consent of all parties concerned. Exceptions to this general principle are contained within this Code.
- 3.2.2 When initial contracts are being made, agreements about the people to whom supervisors may speak about their supervisees' work must include those on whom the supervisors rely for support, supervision or consultancy. There must also be clarity at this stage about the boundaries of confidentiality having regard for the supervisor's own framework of accountability. This is particularly relevant when providing counselling supervision to a trainee counsellor.
- 3.2.3 Supervisors should take all reasonable steps to encourage supervisees to present their work in ways which protect the personal identity of clients, or to get their client's informed consent to present information which could lead to personal identification.
- 3.2.4 Supervisors must not reveal confidential information concerning supervisees or their clients to any person or through any public medium except:
  - (a) When it is clearly stated in the counselling supervision contract and it is in accordance with the Institute of Guidance Counsellors' Code of Ethics



- (b) When the supervisor considers it necessary to prevent serious emotional or physical danger to the client, the supervisee or a third party. In such circumstances the supervisee's consent to a change in the agreement about confidentiality should be sought, unless there are good grounds for believing that the supervisee is no longer able to take responsibility for her/his own actions. Whenever possible, the decision to break confidentiality in any circumstances should be made after consultation with another experienced supervisor.

3.2.5 The disclosure of confidential information relating to supervisees is permissible when relevant to the following situations:

- (a) Recommendations concerning supervisees for professional purposes, e.g. references and assessments
- (b) Pursuit of disciplinary action involving supervisees in matters pertaining to standards of ethics and practice. In the latter instance, any breaking of confidentiality should be minimised by conveying only information pertinent to the immediate situation on a need-to-know basis. The ethical considerations needing to be taken into account are:
  - (i) Maintaining the best interests of the supervisee
  - (ii) Enabling the supervisee to take responsibility for her/his actions
  - (iii) Taking full account of the supervisor's responsibility to the client and to the wider community.

3.2.6 Information about work with a supervisee may be used for research, publication or in meetings only with the supervisee's permission and with anonymity preserved.

3.2.7 On occasion when it is necessary to consult with professional colleagues, supervisors ensure that their discussion is purposeful and not trivialising.

### B.3.3 THE MANAGEMENT OF COUNSELLING SUPERVISION

3.3.1 Supervisors must encourage the supervisee to belong to the Institute of Guidance Counsellors with its Code of Ethics. This provides additional safeguards for the supervisor, supervisee and client in the event of a complaint.



- 3.3.2 If, in the course of counselling supervision, it appears that personal counselling may be necessary for the supervisee to be able to continue working effectively, the supervisor should raise this issue with the supervisee.
- 3.3.3 Supervisors must monitor regularly how their supervisees engage in self-assessment and the self-evaluation of their work.
- 3.3.4 Supervisors must ensure that their supervisees acknowledge their individual responsibility for ongoing professional development and for participating in further training programmes.
- 3.3.5 Supervisors must ensure that their supervisees are aware of the distinction between counselling, accountability to management, counselling supervision and training.
- 3.3.6 Supervisors must ensure with a supervisee who works in an organisation – school or college – that the lines of accountability and responsibility are clearly defined: supervisee/client; supervisor/supervisee; supervisor/client; organisation/supervisor; organisation/supervisee; organisation/client. The distinction between administrative supervision and counselling supervision should be clearly outlined.
- 3.3.7 Supervisors who become aware of a conflict between an obligation to a supervisee and an obligation to the Department of Education and Science, the Institute of Guidance Counsellors or other relevant agency or individual, must make explicit to the supervisee the nature of the loyalties and responsibilities involved.
- 3.3.8 Supervisors who have concerns about a supervisee's work with clients must be clear how they will pursue this if discussion in counselling supervision fails to resolve the situation.
- 3.3.9 Where disagreements cannot be resolved by discussions between supervisor and supervisee, the supervisor should consult with a fellow professional and, if appropriate, recommend that the Problem Solving Protocol (Appendix) be implemented.
- 3.3.10 Supervisors must discuss with supervisees the need to have arrangements in place to take care of the immediate needs of clients in the event of a sudden and unplanned ending to the counselling relationship. It is good practice for the supervisor to be informed about these arrangements.



## APPENDIX

### PROBLEM SOLVING PROTOCOL FOR SUPERVISORS AND SUPERVISEES

It is envisaged that a situation could arise where a supervisor would have concerns in relation to the work of a supervisee/s. In addition, a supervisee could have a problem in relation to the quality of the supervision being provided by a supervisor, or difficulties could arise between members of a group. In seeking a resolution of such a difficulty, and in line with the protocol in operation within the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC), the problem should be addressed at the lowest possible level and every effort made to resolve the difficulty before moving to procedures that are more formal.

Five levels of procedure are detailed below.

#### **LEVEL 1**

The person with the problem approaches the other person directly, and explains the problem with a view to a quick resolution. If the problem is one that has its origin in the work of the Supervision group, then the Supervision group is the appropriate place to raise the issue. Doing so may have a positive impact on the group, if it is seen as an opportunity for open communication of concerns and for positive negotiation of differences.

#### **LEVEL 2**

If for some good reason it is thought inappropriate to raise the issue directly with the individual, or with the group, or if the procedure at Level 1 has been attempted without success, then the Branch Organiser may be consulted, in an informal manner, again, with a view to resolving the difficulty at a local level and in an amicable way.



### **LEVEL 3**

If these efforts fail, then the following procedure should be followed:

The complainant sends a signed written report of the problem to the Supervision Subcommittee of the IGC. One person on the Subcommittee will be given the task of reading the report, and then of contacting two other Subcommittee members, whom s/he judges might be best placed to help in the situation. These persons become the Dispute Arbitration Committee (DAC) for this issue. The DAC treats the issue in confidence, acknowledges receipt of the complaint in writing, and agrees to mediate on the issue.

The DAC will write to the person against whom the complaint has been made, outlining the nature of the difficulty and asking him/her for a statement or response, regarding the complaint. A copy of the complainant's report will be enclosed. A time limit will be given for the response to be received by the DAC. The person will also be offered the opportunity to meet with the DAC to discuss the matter. Such a meeting would be documented.

A copy of the response will be forwarded to the complainant, who is given a time limit within which to reply to the DAC. If the complainant is satisfied by the response of the person being complained about, then the procedure may be completed at this stage.

The DAC will bring the issue to the full Supervision Subcommittee in relation to any decisions, outcomes, procedures, etc. that require further consultation. Confidentiality would be maintained as far as possible, with as little detail disclosed as necessary, to enable the Subcommittee to discuss the principles/issues involved.

If the process reaches Level 3, the Dispute Arbitration Committee of the IGC will take no more than three months from receipt of the letter of complaint to the conclusion of Level 3.





#### **LEVEL 4**

If the matter is not resolved at Level 3, then the DAC, in consultation with the full Supervision Subcommittee may offer to facilitate an exploratory meeting between the two parties. Attendance at such a meeting would include the complainant, the person being complained against, two members of the DAC , and a suitably qualified external person, appointed by the IGC. In addition, it would be appropriate for the parties to each have an advocate present.

If further meetings are needed, following a period of reflection by both sides, then this is facilitated.

All meetings are documented.

The DAC makes a report and recommendations to the Supervision Subcommittee on the outcome of the process; again maintaining confidentiality as far as is possible.

Both parties would commit to abide by whatever solution emerged from the mediation process. In exceptional circumstances, where a solution cannot be agreed, the procedure at Level 5 should be invoked.

#### **LEVEL 5**

If all possibilities for resolution have been exhausted and outstanding issues remain, they will be referred to the IGC National Executive and processed through the IGC's own procedures and processes. At this stage, confidentiality cannot be maintained, as the Executive will need the details of the problem and the process followed up to that time.

