



**UK Society for  
Behaviour Analysis**

**UK-SBA CODE OF ETHICAL  
& PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

Committee responsible: Public Protection and Benefit  
Committee

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# UK SOCIETY FOR BEHAVIOUR ANALYSIS CODE OF ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

## Introduction

The UK Society for Behaviour Analysis (UK-SBA) is the professional body for practitioners of Behaviour Analysis, those studying or preparing to practice Behaviour Analysis and professionals teaching or otherwise promoting Behaviour Analysis for the benefit of the public.

The UK-SBA Code of Ethical and Professional Conduct provides a set of standards the public can expect to be met by practitioners, students or other members of the Society. It provides protection for the public from any form of harm, discrimination, unwarranted disclosure of information, or otherwise unethical or unprofessional conduct.

The Code of Ethical and Professional Conduct specifies principles and practices that must be adhered to by members of the Society's Voluntary Register whether currently practicing Behaviour Analysis, training in Behaviour Analysis or promoting Behaviour Analysis as a valuable public service.

Professionals and students who are members of the Society's Voluntary Register – **hereafter referred to as Registrants** – have signed a declaration that they will adhere to this Code of Ethical and Professional Conduct, recognising that reported infringement of any aspect of the Code may result in investigation by the relevant Committee of the UK-SBA.

In addition to conforming to the Code of Ethical and Professional Conduct of the UK-SBA, Registrants who are Certified by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) have also agreed to be bound by the Professional and Ethical Compliance Code for Behaviour Analysts of the BACB. For information on that Code see [www.bacb.com/ethics-code](http://www.bacb.com/ethics-code)

## CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

### 1. PRINCIPLE: Do No Harm

1.1 Registrants do not engage in or condone harmful, degrading, painful or dehumanizing practices. They are aware of and committed to guarding against financial, social, organisational, political, emotional, personal or sexual factors that may lead to a misuse of their expertise or exploitation of those they work with or for.

1.2 Registrants do not provide services while they are unfit to do so due to personal circumstances including: illness, adverse personal circumstances that may impair judgement, emotional imbalance, intoxication or addiction to substances likely to impact on professional judgement or practice.

## 2. PRINCIPLE: Ensure Safety

2.1 At all times, Registrants protect clients, colleagues and organisations from risk of harm presented by another person's conduct, performance or health.

2.2 Registrants ensure their practices and the environments in which they work pose no physical or emotional threat to the safety of clients, colleagues or staff. Environments presenting risk of harm are evaluated and relevant persons informed of measures necessary to reduce such risk and foster safe and secure places of work or leisure.

## 3. PRINCIPLE: Respect Diversity

3.1 Registrants acknowledge and respect social diversity and provide services without discrimination of any kind.

3.2 Registrants do not engage in or condone discrimination against individuals or groups based on age, gender, race, culture, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability, language, LGBT+ identity or socioeconomic status. They do not engage in behaviour that is harassing or demeaning to colleagues, supervisees, students, clients or representatives of organisations or other persons with whom they work based on age, gender, LGBT+ identity, race, culture, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability, language or socioeconomic status of those persons.

## 4. PRINCIPLE: Challenge Malpractice/Misconduct

4.1 Registrants have a responsibility to Behaviour Analysis and to the individuals and organisations with whom they work to challenge the incompetence or malpractice of others and to contribute to investigations or adjudications of such incompetence or malpractice. Where a Registrant witnesses incompetence or malpractice they will initially raise the issue with relevant personnel and seek to make corrections and improvements with those involved. If correction or improvement is avoided by those involved, the Registrant will refer the circumstances to appropriate individuals or organisational representatives for further action.

4.2 Registrants do not condone or participate in practices that do not meet the standards expected of practitioners of Behaviour Analysis. Practices such as: absence of or inadequate data collection and analysis, insufficient attention to the production of assessment plans or reports on the implementation of Behaviour Analytic procedures, behaviour support plans compiled without sufficient observation of and data collection on relevant behaviour, or without the participation and consent of the individual and/or their family/carers.

4.3 The UK-SBA has a formal complaints system for consumers who wish to raise issues.

## 5. PRINCIPLE: Confidentiality

5.1 Registrants ensure information pertaining to present and past clients, professional colleagues and/or organisations they have worked with or for remains strictly confidential. They protect all such information from unauthorised disclosure.

5.2 Registrants take necessary and appropriate steps to ensure personal information, practice reports, data sets and other records pertaining to Behaviour Analysis services are stored securely with access restricted to relevant concerned parties only. Examples of relevant concerned parties may be fellow professionals working collectively on a behaviour intervention or skill building programme for an individual, group or organisation (as in a single case, a whole-class project, or an Organisational Behaviour Management project).

5.3 Where Registrants are supervising the implementation of Behaviour Analytic services by others, Registrants ensure all other personnel are aware of and adhere to principles of confidentiality.

5.4 Communications or sharing of information on the basis of client consent or as required for safeguarding purposes do not constitute a breach of confidentiality.

## 6. PRINCIPLE: Use of Social Media and Networking Sites

6.1 All forms of social media and networking are used appropriately and responsibly by Registrants.

6.2 Registrants ensure no confidential information is shared on social media and that any information or detail that might potentially identify consumers of services provided by a Registrant, supervisees of a Registrant or students of a Registrant do not form part of any social networking communications.

6.3 Registrants take responsibility for ensuring fellow professionals, supervisees and students are aware of the absolute necessity to ensure personal or organisational information of any kind is not shared on social media.

## 7. PRINCIPLE: Maintain Appropriate Professional Boundaries

7.1 Registrants recognise the importance of maintaining appropriate professional boundaries and take steps to ensure relationships between themselves and those to whom they provide services are and remain professional.

7.2 Registrants do not provide professional services to members of their immediate or wider family.

7.3 Registrants are sensitive to the potential harmful effects of multiple relationships and avoid social or other non-professional contacts with persons to whom they provide services.

7.4 Registrants do not exploit persons to whom they have supervisory, evaluative or other authoritative responsibility: e.g. supervisees, students, employees, clients.

7.5 Registrants do not engage in sexual relationships with persons for whom they have supervisory or other authoritative responsibility: e.g. supervisees, students, employees, clients. Registrants recognise that such relationships impair judgement and have the potential to be exploitative.

## 8. PRINCIPLE: Informed Consent

8.1 When Registrants provide services to individuals they obtain informed consent from those individuals according to the current and locally relevant law on consent. Where individuals are legally incapable of consent, persons holding legal responsibility must be appropriately consulted and included in best interests decision making as set out in current and locally relevant law.

## 9. PRINCIPLE: Work Within the Bounds of Competence/Expertise.

9.1 Registrants benefit the individuals or organisations they work with by working only within the limits of their own competence, training and experience. In situations outside a registrant's personal competence, the registrant must either: 1) clearly state the limits of their skills or experience and decline to offer services in that area or 2) seek relevant training and supervision from a fellow professional with the necessary experience and knowledge, and be open with the individual or organisation concerned that they are receiving such training and support.

9.2 Registrants must have and be able to provide documentary evidence of training and experience, including evidence of specific areas of expertise.

## 10. PRINCIPLE: Maintain and Improve Competence, Pursue Excellence

10.1 Registrants who are practitioners continually update scientific, practical and professional information by: attending conferences and workshops on Behaviour Analysis, keeping abreast of advances reported in scientific literature relevant to their work, obtaining (where required by the UK-SBA) formal credits in Continuing Professional Development (also known as Continuing Education Units).

10.2 Experienced practitioners, including BCBAs, should regularly seek supervision and/or peer review of their practice from one or more qualified behaviour analysts.

10.3 Excellence in the field of Behaviour Analysis involves being aware of the latest research in areas of application specific to Registrants' expertise.

10.4 Registrants have an ethical responsibility to consult key journals relating to their areas of expertise and to attend specialist conferences, workshops and meetings to keep abreast of advances in those areas.

10.5 Up-to-date knowledge and the pursuit of excellence in practice ensures consumers of Registrants' services receive the highest quality of input.

## CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

UK-SBA Registrants work in a variety of settings and provide a diverse range of Behaviour Analytic services. Registrants work for organisations such as hospitals, assessment and treatment centres, care establishments and schools. Many also work for charitable and private practices, or as sole independent practitioners providing services on a consultancy basis. Others are based in universities teaching, training or otherwise supervising persons training to provide Behaviour Analytic services or they provide services to businesses or other commercial or educational organisations.

The Code of Professional Conduct will need to be interpreted by Registrants according to the role they perform. For example, those in supervised roles working under the direction or instruction of others will need to interpret components of the code according to the requirements of that specific role. Sections of the Code of Professional Conduct relate closely to practices involved in service provision that require generation and analysis of data. Other sections relate closely to the professional conduct of Registrants providing training, supervision or oversight of the work of others.

At all times all Registrants, regardless of the role they perform or the context in which they provide Behaviour Analytic services, are required to work only within the limits of their own competence, training and experience. In addition, Registrants observe all current and locally relevant laws.

For the purpose of the Code, persons receiving input from Registrants are referred to as clients, service users, trainees or supervisees. The term Practitioner refers to Registrants providing Behaviour Analytic services of any kind.

## 11. SCIENTIFIC PRACTICE

11.1 Throughout their work Registrants rely on the scientific knowledge, conceptual analysis, and technical practices derived from, and which define, the field of Behaviour Analysis. They maintain knowledge of current scientific and professional information in their areas of practice and continue to update their knowledge and skills by keeping abreast of relevant scientific literature, attending professional and scientific meetings and conferences, and accruing continuing professional development credentials as required. At all times they work within the boundaries of their own competence, training and experience.

11.2 Registrants are aware that clients have a right to effective treatment based on current scientific knowledge and their unique requirements. Registrants at all times seek to maintain the highest standards of technical, scientific and analytic practice.

11.3 Registrants advocate for scientifically supported and most effective procedures and inform clients and the public at large about such procedures.

11.4 Registrants have an obligation to collect and graphically display data using the conventions of Behaviour Analysis and in a way that allows decision-making and recommendations for the development of behaviour-change procedures.

11.5 Registrants observe behaviour and conduct assessments prior to making recommendations for or developing behaviour-change programmes. They explain assessment results to clients using language and graphic displays of data that are reasonably understandable by them.

11.6 Registrants ensure that behaviour-change procedures are conceptually consistent with Behaviour-Analytic principles and scientific knowledge. They ensure that behaviour-change procedures address the unique behaviours, environmental contexts, assessment results and goals of each client individually, with the participation and consent of the individual and/or their family/carers.

11.7 Registrants have an obligation to continue data collection throughout behaviour-change programmes. They use data collection and graphical display of data to inform judgements of the progress of behaviour-change, the suitability of procedures for individual clients and environments, the value of aspects of behaviour-change procedures in terms of efficacy, and the necessity of adjustments or revisions based on outcomes. Recommendations for new procedures or adjustment of procedures already in place are at all times based on an analysis of ongoing data collection.

11.8 Where Registrants oversee the provision of services by others, they ensure those they oversee are skilled in the collection, graphical display and analysis of data.

11.9 In seeking to provide the most effective procedures available, Registrants do not succumb to undue pressure from, for example, clients, relatives, school personnel or other service providers to abandon or compromise the scientific, analytic or technical procedures that characterise the field of Behaviour Analysis. In such circumstances, Registrants make clear their adherence to the UK-SBA Code of Ethical and Professional Conduct and seek to educate those concerned of the practical importance of maintaining the high standards set by the UK-SBA and the wider profession of Behaviour Analysis.

## 12. DOCUMENTING PROFESSIONAL WORK

12.1 Registrants who are practitioners document their professional work for purposes of review with clients and other relevant parties and to accurately inform the provision of services by them, supervisees and trainees. Thorough and sound documentation of work also facilitates the handover of services from the Registrant to another professional should such a need arise. At all times, Registrants ensure documentation meets the standards of confidentiality described in the Code of Professional Conduct.

## 13. RESEARCH

13.1 The UK-SBA is committed to fostering research that will inform and develop practice. Registrants are encouraged to participate actively in research and to support research undertaken on behalf of the profession.

13.2 Close attention should be paid to both the integrity and quality of research undertaken and to the accurate dissemination of research findings.

13.3 Registrants ensure that proper consent is obtained prior to the commencement of any research project. Further, they ensure that all research participants consent on a completely voluntary basis, without enticement or undue pressure, making clear that, where relevant, ongoing service provision is not dependent on consent to participate in research.

13.4 Where research and service provision needs conflict, the safety and welfare of the participant is prioritised.

13.5 Consent must be obtained free from any form of implied or explicit coercion. Registrants inform research participants that they are free to withdraw consent at any time throughout the research process without disadvantage.

13.6 Where applicable, research approval must be formally obtained from relevant Ethics Committees, e.g. NHS, Education Authority, University.

13.7 Registrants only conduct research independently following appropriate training and supervision in research methods, including research ethics, commonly practiced in the field of Behaviour Analysis.

13.8 Registrants are responsible for the ethical and competent conduct of research assistants or others under their supervision or oversight.

13.9 At all times, Registrants ensure that research methods do not adversely affect participants in any way.

## 14. MANAGEMENT, SUPERVISION AND TRAINING

14.1 Registrants responsible for managing, supervising and training practitioners identify the developmental needs of those for whom they have responsibilities.

14.2 Registrants managing, supervising or training practitioners rely on principles of Behaviour Analysis. They draw on relevant scientific literature to bring about and improve the skills required for the safe and reliable practice of Behaviour Analysis by those they oversee. Where possible and appropriate, managers, trainers and supervisors use principles of Behaviour Skills Training, notably: Instruction, Modelling, Rehearsal, Feedback.

14.3 Registrants are required to be fair, honest and accurate in their assessment of those they manage, supervise and train.



14.4 Registrants have a responsibility to protect the standards of the Society and the profession. They are responsible for taking all reasonable steps to safeguard service users from being exposed to risks of harm and breaches of confidentiality as a result of the conduct, performance or health of those they oversee. They have a responsibility to maintain and enhance good practice and to protect service users from poor practice by their supervisees.

14.5 All management or training in Behaviour Analysis should model practices and standards of conduct expected of practitioners in the roles for which training is provided.

14.6 Registrants undertake any relevant training, including safeguarding training, specific to the setting or population with which they work.

## 15. IN CASE OF ABSENCE

15.1 Registrants who are practitioners ensure suitable arrangements are in place to cover roles and responsibilities in case of absence. This includes handover of relevant case notes, reports, assessment/treatment plans at sufficient level of detail to competent colleagues.

15.2 Handover of information must include discussions with affected service users where relevant, including their consent to sharing and maintaining confidentiality of such information.

15.3 Registrants take care to avoid interruption or disruption to the services they have agreed to provide. In the event of unplanned disruption – e.g. through illness or other impairment, relocation, change of employment status etc. – Registrants make reasonable and timely efforts to facilitate the continuation of services to affected clients.

15.4 Registrants do not abandon clients, trainees, supervisees. If discontinuation of services becomes necessary, Registrants take the following actions: discuss service needs with the relevant parties, provide appropriate pre-termination services and advice, suggest alternative relevant service providers and, where appropriate, facilitate timely transfer of reports, documentation, service plans to another provider with full consent of all parties involved.

## 16. PERMISSION FOR ELECTRONIC RECORDING

16.1 In situations where electronic recording of interviews, assessments or service delivery sessions is required, Registrants ensure clients understand the purpose of such recording and secure permission from clients and from relevant staff in service settings.

16.2 Consent for different uses of electronic recording must be obtained from all concerned parties and separately for specific uses.

## 17. CONFIDENTIALITY

17.1 Registrants discuss issues relating to client confidentiality with service users, fellow professionals with whom they work and supervisees or trainees at the outset and remind all concerned parties of the importance of maintaining confidentiality throughout.

17.2 Registrants and those with whom they work take precautions to protect confidentiality, ensuring client notes and records are kept secure and use of computer records remain within the terms of the Data Protection Act. Records held on computer should be password protected and manual records locked away when not in use. When client records need to be kept in a car, they should be in a secure locked container and stored in the car boot.

17.3 Registrants only discuss confidential information with service users and relevant professionals and only for appropriate professional purposes.

17.4 Registrants do not share information on service users or supervisees on social media and ensure other persons involved do not.

## 18. SAFETY

18.1 The UK-SBA is committed to protecting consumers of Behaviour Analytic services from any form of harm or degradation, including malpractice by Registrants or by any other persons with whom the Society's Registrants work.

18.2 Registrants take all reasonable steps to reduce risks of harm to service users, carers and colleagues with whom they work. They report any concerns about the safety or wellbeing of service users promptly to appropriate personnel. They support and encourage others to report concerns and do not impede anyone raising concerns about safety, malpractice or risk of harm.

18.3 Registrants ensure that the safety and wellbeing of service users always takes precedence over professional or other loyalties.

18.4 All practising members make and maintain appropriate provision for professional indemnity insurance. Practitioners will also ensure they have the appropriate DBS checks and Safeguarding training relating to vulnerable populations for whom they provide services.

18.5 Registrants ensure their practices and the environments in which they work pose no physical or emotional threat to the safety of clients, colleagues or staff. Environments presenting risk of harm are evaluated and relevant persons informed of measures necessary to reduce such risk and foster safe and secure places of work or leisure.

## 19. WORKING WITH OTHERS

19.1 Professional relationships should be conducted on the basis of mutual respect both within the profession of Behaviour Analysis and across other relevant professions.

19.2 Registrants do not publicly criticise, malign or professionally obstruct another member of the profession. This excludes situations relating to issues of safety or concern for the wellbeing of service users or others with whom they work. In such cases, appropriate action must be taken in line with the Society's Code of Ethical and Professional Conduct.

19.3 Registrants do not undermine colleagues' relationships with clients or potential clients by making unjustified or unsustainable comments.

19.4 Registrants avoid the use of professional jargon when communicating with clients.

## 20. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

20.1 Registrants do not use trademarked or copyrighted materials without specific permission from the rightful owners of such materials as required by law. Further, they do not use materials related to assessments, data collection, reports etc. that have been developed by other professionals without their permission.

20.2 Registrants delivering teaching or training avoid plagiarism and only deliver services that are entirely their own intellectual property. They give appropriate credit to authors during teaching or training sessions.

## 21. FEES, CONTRACTS, FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

21.1 Registrants are honest, open and clear in relation to any and all financial matters concerning clients, service delivery, training and provision of supervision.

21.2 Before providing services, Registrants explain fully to clients: fee levels and structure, terms and methods of payment and any charges that might be imposed for, for example, non-attendance or cancelled appointments.

21.3 Registrants clarify the terms on which they offer services in advance of clients incurring any financial cost or obligation or other costs or liabilities reasonably foreseen by the Registrant.

21.4 After consultation with potential service recipients, Registrants prepare a contract outlining responsibilities of all parties, the scope and nature of the services to be provided and the Registrant's commitment to the UK-SBA Code of Ethical and Professional Conduct. The contract must be agreed and signed by all relevant parties before service provision begins.

## 22. CREDENTIALS

22.1 Registrants are open and honest about their professional credentials and their areas of expertise. Clients, trainees and supervisees must be provided, on request, with evidence of a Registrant's professional credentials.

22.2 In addition, when requested, Registrants provide contact information for persons who can speak to their competence and expertise in professional references and recommendations.

## 23. THE RIGHT TO COMPLAIN

23.1 Recipients of services provided by UK-SBA Registrants must be informed of the Society's Code of Ethical and Professional Conduct and provided with information on how to make a complaint in the event of dissatisfaction with services provided.

23.2 Registrants should inform service recipients about how they may obtain further information concerning the UK-SBA's Complaints Procedure.

## 24. ADVERTISING, DISPLAY OF CREDENTIALS AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS

24.1 Registrants ensure any and all advertising of services or display of credentials, in whatever form, represents their expertise and credentials truthfully, accurately and without deception or exaggeration.

24.2 Registrants claim as credentials for Behaviour Analytic practice only degrees and continuing professional development that were primarily or exclusively in Behaviour Analysis.

24.3 Registrants distinguish in practice and in public statements (including advertising, brochures, printed material, public speaking, media appearances etc.) between Behaviour Analytic and non-Behaviour Analytic procedures.

## 25. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UK-SBA

Registrants agree to:

25.1 Inform the Society in writing of any changes to their personal or practice name, contact information – including address, email, telephone number - at the earliest convenient time.

25.2 Inform the Society in writing of any change to personal circumstances that might alter their fitness to provide Behaviour Analytic services or to protect the safety or wellbeing of those to whom they provide services. This includes direct clinical services, training services, teaching or supervision of others.

25.3 Inform the Society of any complaint made against them of which they are aware.

25.4 Inform the Society of any disciplinary action taken against them by employers or professional bodies.

25.5 Inform the Society of any criminal offence for which they have been arrested or cautioned and ensure the Society is updated on the progress of any case or criminal conviction.

25.6 Inform the Society of any restriction placed upon their practice, or any disciplinary procedure, suspension or dismissal by an employer as a result of concerns about their conduct, ethical or professional competence.

25.7 Refrain from using any and all of the UK-SBA's intellectual property, including use of the UK-SBA logo on personal materials such as websites, business cards, assessment and data-collection paperwork or other materials such as advertising flyers and other service adverts. Registrants may say "Registered with the UK-SBA" on marketing materials without inclusion of the logo.

25.8 Inform the UK-SBA of unauthorised use of the Society's intellectual property by others.

## CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Central to its aim of promoting and providing Behaviour Analysis services in its many forms and to many populations is the safeguarding of consumers from breaches of ethical and professional conduct as they are defined in this Code. All UK-SBA Registrants have confirmed they will adhere to the principles and practices described herein. In doing so, they have committed to the protection of the public and agreed to uphold the high professional standards of the UK-SBA and the wider profession of Behaviour analysis.