



Draft ethical guidelines for working with extremism, violent extremism and terrorism

Consultation response

The Society publishes guidance, reports and position papers on areas of psychological education, research, professional practice and ethics. These documents are prepared on the basis of the expert contributions of our members and members are consulted with on the content of these documents prior to their publication.		
Who are you responding on behalf of:	Partners to the EU-funded Horizon2020 Project PERICLES (A comprehensive approach to prevent and counter violent radicalisation and extremism): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interdisciplinary Ethics Research Group, University of Warwick• ARQ Psychotrauma Expert Group• Future Analytics, Ireland• Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony	
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Section Number	Page Number	Comments
		Please insert each new comment in a new row.
		The guidance would benefit from an introduction or preface in which the most salient dilemmas or issues are highlighted. The next two comments indicate some examples of such recurring concerns.
4.4, 1.7, 2.1, 3.1	3,4,5	Attitudinal bias, practitioners' cultural perspective, and the need for objectivity are related issues that arise repeatedly throughout the guidance, in the indicated sections.
1.9, 2.3, 3.2, 3.4.		The need to acknowledge and respond responsibly and transparently to the limited evidence base is an issue that recurs across the indicated sections.
		Drafters should review the Guidance for repetition, which seems to occur at a number of points.
1.2, 1.3, 1.4	2	There is a potential tension between the need to obtain informed written consent from clients and other legitimate aims of psychological practice. There is a risk that psychologists keen to 'cover their backs' by obtaining consent undermine these aims in the process. For example, onerous and risk-averse consent procedures risk scaring people off from participation in ways that squander opportunities to serve the imperative of helping the vulnerable. Differently, insisting on written consent may put people at risk of security threats if, for example, the written document gets into the hands of people who would object to or feel threatened by the client's participation. Striking a sound balance probably means refraining from making sweeping stipulations about consent procedures in advance but rather acknowledging that cases differ. Perhaps the best psychologists can do is take the full range of relevant considerations into account when designing consent procedures for each case. The Guidance should provide sources for where these relevant considerations can be found.

1.1	2	The need (a) to focus on illegal and harmful behaviour should be distinguished from the need (b) to avoid labels that may be experienced as stigmatising. With respect to (a), it seems important for practitioners to distinguish between the need for these kind of labels <i>within the context of psychological practice</i> and political/other reasons for adopting them. The latter should not impinge on the former. With respect to (b) imposition of labels that might be experienced as stigmatising should be avoided where to do so is <i>unnecessary</i> , but all of the labels discussed in the document are likely to be experienced as stigmatising. The adoption of labels/categories for research should be justified on scientific grounds, not merely borrowed from existing political terminology.
1.5	2	The phrase 'within a formulation on an individual' is ambiguous.
1.7	3	It would be useful to have some more practical guidance on how this be ascertained and dealt with. There is always the concern of a subliminal impact of innate fears or societally influenced notions influencing a practitioners' analysis. Should the practitioner clearly identify a "possible bias" upfront and highlight any predispositions that may exist? What support will the BPS offer practitioners in maintaining an awareness of unconscious bias and mitigating its effects on their work?
1.9	3	The guidelines do not distinguish between the role of the psychologist as a practitioner and the role of the psychologist as a researcher, though these roles carry with them different responsibilities and risks. and though the research role is implied in this section.
2.3	4	The phrase 'They should seek to use those specifically developed for this purpose that are informed by psychological theory, principles and evidence' implies that some such tools may be poorly informed. The consultation should include guidance for practitioners who have reason to doubt or question the basis in theory and evidence of tools they are requested or required to use and may therefore find themselves in a difficult situation.
2.6	4	Drafters should consider including here a recommendation that expert analysis and comment should always also aim educate the public on the need for caution for understanding the individual contexts clearer before conclusions are drawn.
2.6	4	The phrase 'should not risk bringing their profession into disrepute' seems underspecified and redundant here. If the point is that to comment on issues one is not qualified to comment on is prohibited because it risks bringing the profession into disrepute, this should be stated clearly and distinguished from the more serious harm done by unqualified comment to people's welfare.
3.3	5	The principle of the primacy of the duty to the professional code guides all conduct included in this guidance and therefore should preface the rest of the sections rather than be buried amongst them.
3.6, 3.7	5, 6	Though the two indicated sections address potential threats to the security of clients, and of practitioners and their families, it does not provide guidance for practitioners on how to act in the case in which they receive information from a client which indicates that a threat exists to the security of persons or society. Such guidance or at least an indication of where such guidance might be found would be helpful both for practitioners and researchers.

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Closing date: Friday 5th January