ICPHAA

Irish Counselling, Psychotherapy & Allied Healthcare Professionals Association

GOVERNANCE OF THE ASSOCIATION

Ethical & Clinical Governance Policy

The system by which ICPHAA supports members to deliver safe, effective and ethical services: clear standards, monitoring, fair processes for addressing concerns, and a culture of reflective learning.

REFERENCE	ICPHAA-POL-30	VERSION	1.0
EFFECTIVE	9 November 2026	NEXT REVIEW	9 November 2027
POLICY OWNER	ICPHAA Board of Directors		

GOVERNANCE OF THE ASSOCIATION · ICPHAA-POL-30

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APPLIES TO	Every ICPHAA member who practises, supervises, trains or researches; accredited training providers; and the Association's Board, Accreditation Department, Registry and panels.
VERSION	1.0 · effective 9 November 2026 · next review 9 November 2027
POLICY OWNER	ICPHAA Board of Directors
CONTACT	ICPHAA Registry · admin@icphaa.ie

AT A GLANCE

- Four pillars: clear ethical standards, monitoring of compliance, fair processes for concerns, and a learning culture.
- Clinical risk is managed at three levels: the individual practitioner, the Association and the system as a whole.
- Supervision, CPD, accreditation of training and fair complaints processes are the core governance tools.
- Accredited training providers must meet defined standards and protect the welfare of students in placement.
- Patterns in concerns and outcomes are analysed so that standards and guidance keep improving.

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1. Purpose

Ethical and clinical governance is the system by which the Irish Counselling, Psychotherapy & Allied Healthcare Professionals Association (ICPHAA) supports its members to deliver safe, effective and ethical services to clients. It is not a bureaucratic imposition. It is a principled commitment to the continuous improvement of professional standards, the protection of client welfare and the maintenance of public confidence in counselling, psychotherapy and allied healthcare.

This policy brings together the structures, tools and responsibilities that make up ICPHAA's ethical and clinical governance, and explains how they work together.

2. Scope

This policy applies to every ICPHAA member in every membership category who provides client services, supervision, training or research; to training providers whose programmes are accredited by ICPHAA; and to the ICPHAA Board of Directors, the Accreditation Department, the Registry and any panel established by the Board, including the Complaints Panel.

3. The four pillars

ICPHAA's ethical governance framework rests on four pillars:

PILLAR	HOW IT IS DELIVERED
1. Clear and accessible ethical standards	The ICPHAA Code of Conduct for Members and the policies of the framework, written in plain language and published at www.icphaa.ie.
2. Effective monitoring of compliance	Renewal declarations, evidence checks and the requirements for each membership category, under the Regulatory Compliance Policy and Compliance Procedures.
3. Transparent and fair processes for addressing departures	The Complaints Procedures, Fitness to Practise Policy and Disciplinary Procedures, operated in line with natural justice.
4. A learning culture	Supervision, CPD, reflective practice and the use of learning from concerns to improve guidance.

Governance works best when it is embedded in a culture of professional responsibility, reflective practice and genuine commitment to the welfare of clients, rather than experienced as an external compliance exercise. ICPHAA works with members to foster that culture through education, support and engagement.

4. Governance structures

- **ICPHAA Board of Directors.** Holds overall responsibility for ethical and clinical governance, approves standards and policies, and receives regular reports on concerns, compliance and accreditation.
- **Ethics and standards oversight.** The Board may appoint a committee to oversee the Code of Conduct, advise on ethical questions and review the operation of the complaints and disciplinary processes, under written terms of reference.
- **Accreditation Department.** Led by the Accreditation Manager, it sets out the requirements for each membership category, assesses applications, accredits training programmes and checks compliance.
- **Complaints Panel.** Considers concerns about members in line with the Complaints Procedures.
- **ICPHAA Registry.** Administers membership and records, receives concerns and notifications, and is the contact point at admin@icphaa.ie.

5. Clinical governance mechanisms

Clinical governance is the set of processes by which ICPHAA makes sure that members maintain their competence and deliver services of appropriate quality. The core mechanisms are:

- **Clinical supervision.** Members meet the supervision requirements for their membership category, as set out in the ICPHAA accreditation requirements, with a clinical supervisor who meets ICPHAA's supervisor criteria. Supervision is the main vehicle for quality assurance at the level of the individual practitioner.
- **Continuing professional development.** Members undertake CPD that responds to reflection on their own practice and to developments in the field, as required for their category.
- **Accreditation of training.** ICPHAA accredits training programmes against defined standards of academic quality, ethical content and clinical training.
- **Review of membership standards.** The Accreditation Department periodically reviews the requirements for each category, taking account of good practice and the standards published by CORU as statutory registration of counsellors and psychotherapists is introduced.
- **Fair processes for concerns.** The Complaints Procedures, Fitness to Practise Policy and Disciplinary Procedures provide a route for addressing practice that falls short.

6. Clinical risk management at three levels

LEVEL	MAIN TOOLS	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE
Individual practitioner	Assessment and management of risk in each client's presentation, including risk of self-harm, suicide and harm to others; supervision; CPD; referral when a client's needs exceed the practitioner's competence or scope of practice	Each member
Professional association	Accreditation requirements; compliance checks; complaints, fitness to practise and disciplinary processes	Accreditation Department, Complaints Panel, Board
System	Analysis of patterns in concerns and outcomes; policy development and review; guidance to members	Board, with any ethics and standards committee it appoints

At the level of the Association, ICPHAA reviews patterns of concerns to identify systemic issues and to recommend changes to guidance or oversight where the evidence points to a need. This work is carried out collaboratively with practitioners, so that governance is proportionate, fair and supportive of good practice rather than punitive in its orientation.

> **SAFEGUARDING**
>
> Members follow the Safeguarding & Duty of Care Policy, the Children First Act 2015 and the HSE National Safeguarding Policy for adults at risk whenever a concern about the safety of a child or adult arises.

7. Accredited training programmes and student welfare

Clinical governance extends to training programmes accredited by ICPHAA. Accredited training providers must:

- demonstrate that their programmes meet ICPHAA's defined standards of academic quality, ethical content and clinical training;
- take part in periodic review to keep their accreditation;
- make sure students in clinical placement are properly prepared, supervised by a clinical supervisor who meets ICPHAA's supervisor criteria, and working within their competence;
- have clear arrangements for students' welfare, including access to support, fair assessment and a way to raise concerns;
- tell ICPHAA promptly of any significant change, or any concern about a student's fitness to practise that may affect clients.

The welfare of students, who are themselves engaging in supervised clinical practice, is a specific governance concern for the Association. The Education & Governance Policy and the Quality Assurance Policy give further detail.

8. Continuous improvement and quality assurance

For a professional association, quality assurance operates at the level of membership standards, ethical frameworks, training accreditation and the effectiveness of the processes for addressing concerns. ICPHAA is committed to continuous improvement through:

- regular review of its core policies;
- systematic analysis of complaints and disciplinary outcomes to identify trends and learning;
- seeking members' views on the effectiveness and accessibility of ICPHAA's services;
- independent review of its governance arrangements from time to time;
- keeping up to date with developments in national and international professional standards and in statutory regulation.

For individual members, continuous improvement is supported through the CPD framework, which asks members to reflect on their practice, identify areas for development and undertake learning that addresses them, and through supervision that is effective, reflective and genuinely supportive of good practice.

9. Responsibilities and concerns

Members

- Maintain their competence and practise within it.
- Engage in supervision and CPD as required for their category.
- Assess and manage clinical risk, and refer on when needed.
- Follow the ICPHAA Code of Conduct for Members and the policies of the framework.

Supervisors

- Provide supervision that attends to ethical as well as clinical questions, and to the supervisee's wellbeing.
- Help supervisees to recognise the limits of their competence and to refer on when needed.
- Raise concerns, first with the supervisee and then with ICPHAA if necessary, where a supervisee's practice may put clients at risk.
- Keep accurate supervision records and confirm supervision when asked.

ICPHAA

- Publish clear standards and keep them under review.
- Operate fair, timely processes for monitoring compliance and addressing concerns.

- Share learning from concerns, in anonymised form, to help members improve their practice.

Anyone with a concern about a member's practice can contact the ICPHAA Registry at admin@icphaa.ie. Concerns are handled under the Complaints Procedures and, where relevant, the Fitness to Practise Policy and the Disciplinary Procedures. A member's current status can be checked at www.icphaa.ie/verify-certificate.

10. Monitoring and review

The ICPHAA Board of Directors owns this policy and receives regular reports on its operation. The policy is reviewed by the date shown on the cover, and earlier where learning from concerns, developments in practice or statutory regulation show that changes are needed.

READ ALONGSIDE

- ICPHAA Code of Conduct for Members
- Supervision Policy
- Quality Assurance Policy
- Professional Standards & Accreditation Policy
- Complaints Procedures
- Fitness to Practise Policy

DOCUMENT CONTROL

VERSION	DATE	CHANGE	APPROVED BY
1.0	9 November 2026	Reissued in the ICPHAA policy framework (replaces the former ICPA version).	ICPHAA Board of Directors

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