ICPHAA

Irish Counselling, Psychotherapy & Allied Healthcare Professionals Association

COMPLAINTS, FITNESS TO PRACTISE & DISCIPLINE

Public Protection Policy

How ICPHAA's standards, public directory, verification service, complaints and safeguarding arrangements work together to protect people who use its members' services, and the limits of what ICPHAA can do.

REFERENCE	ICPHAA-POL-21	VERSION	1.0
EFFECTIVE	9 November 2026	NEXT REVIEW	9 November 2027
POLICY OWNER	ICPHAA Board of Directors		

Public Protection Policy

APPLIES TO	All ICPHAA members and the Association's Board, staff, volunteers and panel members; it also explains to the public how ICPHAA protects them.
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

- Public protection is the overriding purpose of ICPHAA's standards and procedures.
- The public directory shows each member's category, and anyone can check a member's status at www.icphaa.ie/verify-certificate.
- Concerns about a member can be raised with the ICPHAA Registry at admin@icphaa.ie.
- ICPHAA acts promptly where there is risk, including interim suspension of membership.
- ICPHAA is a voluntary association, not a statutory regulator, and can act only on membership.

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1. Purpose

Public protection is the central and overriding purpose of the standards and procedures of the Irish Counselling, Psychotherapy & Allied Healthcare Professionals Association (ICPHAA). Every policy, procedure and standard that the Association operates exists, ultimately, so that people who seek counselling, psychotherapy and allied healthcare services from ICPHAA members receive safe, ethical and competent care.

This policy explains how ICPHAA's arrangements work together to protect the public, what members must do, and, just as importantly, what ICPHAA can and cannot do. It is written to be read by members of the public as well as by members.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all ICPHAA members, in every membership category, and to the ICPHAA Board of Directors, staff, volunteers and panel members. It covers the Association's accreditation standards, its public directory and verification service, its complaints, fitness to practise and disciplinary processes, its safeguarding expectations, and the information it provides to the public.

3. Why public protection matters

The therapeutic relationship is a relationship of trust and vulnerability. People often seek support at the most difficult times in their lives, when they may be emotionally exposed and more susceptible to harm. The power imbalance between practitioner and client places a responsibility on the practitioner to maintain high standards of ethical and clinical conduct, and a responsibility on ICPHAA to make sure that those standards are clearly defined, maintained and enforced among its members.

Statutory registration of counsellors and psychotherapists is being introduced by CORU, Ireland's regulator for health and social care professionals under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005. Until and alongside statutory regulation, voluntary professional standards such as ICPHAA's play an important part in helping the public to choose practitioners with confidence.

4. The public protection framework

ICPHAA's public protection framework has six connected parts.

ELEMENT	HOW IT PROTECTS THE PUBLIC
Accreditation standards	Members must meet published training, supervised practice, supervision, CPD, insurance and Garda vetting requirements for their category, as set out in the Professional Standards & Accreditation Policy.
Code of conduct	Every member agrees to the ICPHAA Code of Conduct for Members as a condition of membership.
Public directory and verification	The public can see each member's category and check their current status.
Complaints, fitness to practise and discipline	Concerns about members are assessed fairly and acted on, under the Complaints Procedures, the Fitness to Practise Policy and the Disciplinary Procedures.
Safeguarding	Members must meet their legal and professional duties to protect children and adults at risk.
Information and transparency	ICPHAA explains its standards, processes and limits clearly and honestly.

5. Public directory and verification

ICPHAA maintains a public directory of its members on www.icphaa.ie. The directory helps people to find practitioners, to understand each member's category and areas of practice, and to confirm that a practitioner is a current ICPHAA member in good standing.

- Only members in current, active membership appear on the directory. Members whose membership is suspended or has ended are removed, and conditions that affect a member's practice are reflected.
- Each listing clearly shows the member's category, so that prospective clients can understand the member's level of training and experience and, in particular, whether the member is a student who may not practise independently.
- ICPHAA updates the directory without delay when a member's status changes, and responds promptly to any report that the directory is inaccurate.
- Anyone can check a member's current status at **www.icphaa.ie/verify-certificate**.

Members are responsible for keeping their own listing accurate and must tell the Registry promptly about changes to their contact details, areas of practice or professional status. Misrepresenting qualifications, experience or membership status, on the directory or anywhere else, is treated as a serious matter under the Complaints Procedures and the Disciplinary Procedures.

6. Acting on concerns and risk

Anyone can raise a concern about an ICPHAA member with 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, with fairness to everyone involved.

Where a member's health, conduct or competence raises concerns about their ability to practise safely, ICPHAA's approach is remedial where possible and protective of the public at all times. Its first response will ordinarily be to support the member in getting appropriate help and making any necessary changes to their practice. Where there is a serious risk to client safety, however, ICPHAA acts promptly and decisively, including by interim suspension of membership where this is necessary to prevent harm. In making these decisions, ICPHAA balances the rights of the member with the paramount need to protect clients and the public, and seeks expert advice, including medical or clinical advice, where relevant.

> **IF SOMEONE IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER**
>
> Contact the emergency services straight away. A concern about a child's safety should be reported to Tusla, and a possible crime to An Garda Síochána. ICPHAA's processes do not replace these services.

7. Safeguarding and information sharing

Members must know and meet their safeguarding duties. Under the Children First Act 2015, counsellors and psychotherapists registered with a voluntary professional body are mandated persons and must report reasonable concerns about the abuse or neglect of a child to Tusla. Members must also act on concerns about adults at risk in line with the HSE National Safeguarding Policy and applicable law. Where work with children or vulnerable persons requires it, members must hold current Garda vetting under the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012–2016.

ICPHAA may share information about a member with An Garda Síochána, Tusla, CORU or another relevant body where this is required by law or necessary to protect the public. Any sharing is limited to what is necessary and is carried out in line with the Data Protection Acts 1988–2018 and the GDPR. Concerns about wrongdoing within the Association itself can be raised under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 (as amended).

8. What ICPHAA can and cannot do

Being clear about the limits of ICPHAA's role is itself part of protecting the public.

- ICPHAA **can** set standards for its members, accredit them, publish their status, investigate concerns, and impose conditions on, suspend or remove membership.
- ICPHAA **cannot** prevent a person from practising in law, license practitioners, award compensation, or deal with people who are not ICPHAA members.
- ICPHAA membership and accreditation are professional standards, not statutory registration. Members must never present them as a licence or as statutory registration.

People choosing a practitioner are encouraged to check the practitioner's membership status at www.icphaa.ie/verify-certificate, to ask about their training, supervision and insurance, and, where relevant, to consult CORU's published information on statutory registration.

9. Responsibilities

Members

- Practise safely, ethically and within their competence and membership category.
- Keep their directory listing accurate and describe their status honestly.
- Meet their safeguarding duties and declare matters that may affect their fitness to practise.
- Raise concerns about the safety of another practitioner's practice through the appropriate channels.

ICPHAA

- Maintain clear standards and an accurate directory and verification service.
- Handle concerns fairly and promptly, and act decisively where there is risk.
- Explain its role and limits honestly to the public.

10. Monitoring and review

The effectiveness of ICPHAA's public protection arrangements is monitored through the accuracy of the directory, the handling and outcomes of complaints, fitness to practise and disciplinary cases, and feedback from members and the public, as set out in the Quality Assurance Policy. The ICPHAA Board of Directors owns this policy. It is reviewed by the review date shown in the document control table, and sooner if law, statutory regulation, including CORU's arrangements for counsellors and psychotherapists, or professional practice changes. Questions and suggestions are welcome at admin@icphaa.ie.

READ ALONGSIDE

- Complaints Procedures
- Fitness to Practise Policy
- Disciplinary Procedures
- Safeguarding & Duty of Care Policy
- Garda Vetting Policy
- Emerging Regulation (CORU) 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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