Therapists in Private Practice

Guidance Sheets 1

Setting Up in Private Practice

Foreword

I'm thoroughly delighted to be able to share this comprehensive, thoughtful, and realistic guide covering everything you need to know about building and developing a successful Private Practice: whether you're just starting out or have decades under your belt.

For many years we've shared resources for developing Private Practice with our members that originated from outside of the Society; while we were confident of their quality when we chose them, as time went on we were still signposting to these resources but found they were no longer serving our members well.

We took the decision to move this support in-house, because so many of our members had their own Private Practices and we therefore realised how important it was that we offered something really valuable here. Subsequently, we appointed a Head of Private Practice - Faye Blackwell - in early 2020.

Since doing this, we have conducted a survey of our members to find out how they practice, how they advertise their business, how successful they have found different ways of advertising, and generally taken a holistic view of Private Practice in the current age. Following the results of the survey, we have put together this Guidance, and are already working on further tools and support.

At the heart of everything we do sits what our members want and need, and I believe that this guide is a testament to that.

Huge thanks to Faye for the wonderful information and guidance; to our Communications Manager, Elaine, for making it a joy to read; and, most importantly, to our members for responding to our survey and giving us such incredible insight and vital food for thought.

My very best wishes for a thriving private practice,

Meg Nunn

CEO

Getting off the ground

Congratulations! Your dream of becoming a hypnotherapist has come to fruition and all of your hard work (and tears!) has paid off. Feels great, doesn't it? But the fun (and hard work…) has only just begun.

Much about how your practice evolves will be about personal choice: what works for you and how you would like it to look. However, there are some aspects that are universal and important to have in place.

In the first instance, before you even see your first client, this chapter covers the things you will need to do.

First, you will need to register with HMRC and notify them of your self-employment. You can do this here:

https://www.gov.uk/log-in-file-self-assessment-tax-return/register-if-youre-self-employed

Understandably many of us can get a little nervous about having to deal with HMRC directly, but in reality, they are usually friendly and happy to help.

You need to decide whether you wish to trade as a sole trader under your own name, or practice under a business name and form a company. There are advantages and disadvantages for both (mostly regarding tax and liability) and it is important you know what obligations you have depending on which you decide to do.

If you have decided to give your practice a business name, then you will need to register this with Companies House. You can find out more information about this here -

https://www.gov.uk/topic/company-registration-filing/starting-company

Since May 2018, new legislation has been put in place regarding the holding of people's personal information. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) registration will need to be completed with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as your work necessitates the obtaining and keeping of your client's contact details and other personal data. You can go through the process here - https://ico.org.uk/

It is also important for you to have Professional Civil Liability Insurance before you start to see clients. This is for protection should anyone choose to take legal action against you because of your work. There is a wide range of insurance companies that specialise in this type of insurance for counsellors/psychotherapists/hypnotherapists, so you can choose whichever best suits your needs. Premiums cost on average somewhere between around £60 – £90 annually.

If you have decided to work with children or in other specialist fields or settings, then you will need to have an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check done (used to be known as a CRB check). This will provide evidence to those who need it that you do not have a criminal record and are therefore safe to work with vulnerable people.

The process for this is not as easy as it used to be and you are not able to apply for a certificate yourself; instead, it needs to be done through an organisation or your local authority. More information can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dbs-checking-service-guidance--2

The final piece of the jigsaw that needs to be in place before you start practising is finding yourself a supervisor. Possibly more than anyone else, your supervisor will be the most important person involved in your work – other than yourself and your clients! Finding the right supervisor can be much like finding the right therapist. Shop around, ask for recommendations and also use the HS register to help you. Your supervisor will be supporting and guiding you through all aspects of your work, your wellbeing, and your business, so choose well and they will be like a silent partner by your side. Even before your first client comes along you can engage them to assist you with aspects of setting up, contracts, etc, so don't hesitate to engage someone.

Getting off the Ground Checklist:

- HMRC
- Companies House
- Insurance
- DBS
- Supervisor

Next Steps - Planning Your Journey

Now you have some basic foundations in place, you may like to ask yourself (if you haven't already….) what will help you take the next steps and start to build your practice in your own vision.

So first, why private practice?

What are your motivations for entering into private practice? Your answer will dictate a lot about how you go about setting up your business.

Is it to supplement your income from an existing job? Do you intend to keep that job with private practice alongside, or is your intention to build up enough client hours to leave current employment and earn a living solely from private practice?

Are you entering into private practice in order to contribute to your community in a meaningful way and/or have a more meaningful job, rather than looking to earn a living? Do you wish to start a private practice so that you can specialise in working with a specific client base?

Is private practice primarily about being your own boss; are you making this choice to choose your own hours/clients etc more than any other factor?

Are your motivations realistic?

All of the above will, to some degree, dictate some of the things you need to consider and the decisions you will be making.

Where will you Practice?

Once you have defined the goals and founding principles of your practice, you'll need to decide where you will see your clients.

Will you work from home, rent an office space, rent a room at a health clinic, or even go mobile and visit clients' in their own homes? There are unique considerations, advantages and disadvantages for each that you will need to think about and whichever option you choose needs to be the right one for you.

Working From Home

Working from home is a popular choice amongst many practitioners. There are no rental charges or leases to be negotiated and paid, it is a controlled environment and comes with all the obvious benefits of working from home that do not need to be set out here. You will, however, need to explore any changes that might need to be made to your home insurance to incorporate running a business from home. You can claim a percentage of your household bills (e.g. council tax, electricity, water etc.) if you work from home so ask an accountant or bookkeeper about this.

If your idea is to have a detached office space (a garden room/summerhouse type set up) then enquire about planning permission for a structure of this sort. A risk assessment for your property to ensure the environment is safe for clients to enter should also be conducted.

Other points to consider are aspects of client confidentiality and your family's privacy when working from home. How will your clients access the therapy room? Does it involve entering other areas of your home and if so, how can you be sure that everyone involved is protected? Are there toilet facilities for your clients? Will they be able to hear other family members when they are home and vice versa?

It may be good practice to see things from your client's point of view and think about what is and isn't appropriate. They need to feel safe, protected and contained in the environment.

Renting Space

Renting office space, either in a shared clinic or your own independent room, will have rental fees and other associated costs compared to using your own home. However, there are many practitioners that value working from a place completely separate from their own personal life; a place they can lock the door on and leave everything behind at the end of the day.

One way of reducing costs is to rent somewhere by the hour or day rather than committing to a monthly or annual lease in the beginning. Some therapists are happy to share use of their rooms when they are not using it and charge a small fee for doing so. Explore all possible avenues in your locality and find out what might be available. It's also a great way to make connections with other professionals who might offer other support, help and advice to you.

Visiting clients in their own home

Visiting clients in their own home could create a unique selling point for your business and enable you to support vulnerable or older people who otherwise may not be able to visit a therapist. However, you will need to factor in travel costs to your fees and time spent travelling between clients into your daily schedule. It is also impossible to have any control over the environment in which you work, which could create some challenges.

Working remotely

One final point to consider is whether you opt to see clients via video conferencing software; it is becoming increasingly common practice, but needs additional consideration. With the right training, security, safeguarding, and procedures in place using online platforms can be an alternative to working in-the-room. A quiet, private, confidential environment and a good internet / phone connection is all you need. There are some important things to consider, so please see Appendix A of our Code of Ethics for more information if you choose to offer hypnotherapy remotely.

What will your office look like?

Once you have decided where you will work, then you can spend some time setting it up ready to receive your first client. There are some basic items you will want to have in place, as well as being able to enjoy creating the personal touches that make it your own.

Basic office needs include:

- Comfortable chairs for yourself and your client
- (maybe a recliner and/or blankets for client comfort?)
- Telephone – Mobile, landline or both. Consider pros and cons of having separate numbers for personal and professional use.
- Internet connection
- Email address – As with your telephone, do you wish to use an existing one or a create a new one for your business?
- Lockable filing cabinet
- Printer
- Clock
- Tissues
- Fresh drinking water
- Card reader for payment (if applicable)

Extra personal touches may include blankets, books/bookshelf, artwork, a mirror, whether you offer a hot drink, lamps, soft furnishings. Caution is wise with the use of scented flowers or other strong scents (e.g. aromatherapy oils, incense, perfumes): they have the potential to trigger clients. One person's soporific lavender is another person's migraine. One man's expensive aftershave is another's potent reminder of childhood sexual abuse. With every decision you make, consider it from a client's perspective: this is their space as much as yours. In fact, some would consider it is solely their space and the environment needs to reflect this.

Remember – Anything you purchase, or any services you use to set up your business, keep all receipts and invoices! These can then be offset against earnings on your tax return.

Summary

To summarise, although this is a very active and dynamic phase when starting out in private practice (lots to do, lots to put in place (and maybe lots to buy!)) its seeds lie within you and your personal vision. By reflecting on your motivations as well as the sense of how you want your client to feel when they contact or meet you for the first time, you will know which decisions are best for you. Allow your empathy, as much as the practicalities, to guide your choices.

Your Business Model

You now have formal and legal aspects of your business taken care of and a place from which to work. What next? Have you considered how your business will function on a daily, practical basis? For example, what hours are you available to see clients? Will you be working in the evenings or at weekends, and if so, will you charge more for this?

The following are points you may want to reflect on:

- Your working hours will not just be those in session with clients. You need to factor in time for admin – e.g. accounts/emails/case notes etc. as well as time responding to client's emails and telephone enquiries, for example.
- Do you want to offer concessions and if so, how will you do that? Some practitioners use a sliding scale of fees based on the clients' income, or keep two spaces each week for low paying clients, for example. How will you decide who can/cannot qualify for concessions? You may also decide not to offer concessions at all.
- Will you offer a discount in return for 'bulk' buying several sessions in advance? This is not unusual practice at all, but there are ethical points to consider. E.g. if a client has paid for 12 sessions in advance, does a therapist consequently run the risk of consciously or subconsciously prolonging the process beyond the point where it's needed? Equally, does

the client expect to be improved, or think they are improving only because the 12 sessions are completed? These are all points to discuss with your supervisor and, if necessary, contract for.

- What are your thoughts about offering a free initial consultation?
- You will need to have a cancellation policy in place. What will that look like?
- What services will you offer; just Hypnotherapy, or Counselling/ Psychotherapy, Reiki, Life Coaching, Mindfulness Coaching etc? Do you integrate these models, or will you offer each separately?
- Where will you get your clients from? How will people know you are there?
- Expenses – learn from HMRC, or a good bookkeeper or accountant, about what you can and cannot claim.
- How much do you need to earn and what measures do you need to take to do this? I.e. how many clients per year, how often and how much time can you take off?
- Remember being self-employed means that there is no sick pay. Do you need to take out health/life insurance?
- There is also no holiday pay – you will need to factor this into your costs.
- How will you communicate with clients (text, email, phone, Whatsapp)?
- How will clients pay you? Cash, bank transfer, credit card? What facilities will you need for each?
- How long will each session be – 50 mins, 1 hour? Many practitioners work to a 50-minute hour; 50 minutes in a session, then 10 minutes to write up case notes. Others prefer to devote a whole hour to their client and factor in admin another way.
- How often will you see clients? This may depend on your therapeutic approach. Will it be strictly weekly sessions only, or are you willing to offer fortnightly or even monthly sessions?
- Have you considered implementing a waiting list if necessary; and if so, how will that work? Much like the ‘bulk’ sale of sessions mentioned earlier, there are important ethical considerations to take into account when thinking about waiting lists. It sounds great, doesn’t it? You have such a full caseload and are still so much in demand that you need to begin having a ‘reserves’ list. In reality, not only can it be stressful, but it could potentially, (consciously or subconsciously), affect your ongoing client work.
- Are you running the risk of ending therapy too soon with an ongoing client because you are aware of other people waiting in the wings? And why should those who are waiting, see you anyway? Is there a good enough reason why you haven’t referred them on to colleagues who may have the space to see them immediately? Are you keeping a waiting list to provide clients with the support they need when you can, or is it more of an ego trip? There are no right or wrong answers to this, but it all needs to be reflected on and maybe taken into supervision.
- How many clients will you see per day and how long will you give yourself to breathe in between sessions? What structure will your working day take?

- How will you keep yourself safe, if, for example, you are working alone in an office at night? There are a variety of different apps or alarms that are specifically for the purpose of gaining assistance if you feel at risk and vulnerable. The following link may guide you some way through what's available. https://www.suzylamplugh.org/lone-worker-solutions-safe-hub-app

It is important to have realistic expectations for your first year in business. As you start to see clients, you may need to put money earned back into the business to pay for some more advertising or cover costs, so your practice can evolve and grow. It won't all be profit for you. Which leads on to the final point here...:

Remember to put money aside to pay your tax and national insurance!

Summary

All businesses are not the same. All hypnotherapy practices are not the same. If you have the legal and ethical basics in place, everything else is about who you are and the clients you hope to see. It's not black and white, it's nuanced, it's subjective, and creative. Many of the questions posed in this section have required you to think about yourself and your own goals and needs. It is important and it's okay to think about yourself in your decision making. Reflective practice doesn't only have to only be about your client work, it's about your business too!

Paperwork/Forms

When you have created and formulated your vision of how you would like your practice to function, then you can start putting some things in writing that will become the documents you need as part of your work.

These include the following:

- A client contract.
- An initial consultation/assessment form. There are differing opinions about what information should be taken here, which will have been part of your training. However, it is worth bearing in mind that with the new GDPR laws in place, on the whole, the less information you keep, the better.
- GDPR agreement for the client to sign.
- Financial records: accounts, invoices, receipts, etc. This will be your responsibility, but it's up to you whether you manage your accounts and submit your tax return yourself (there are lots of apps that can help with this) or whether you choose to engage a bookkeeper/accountant.
- Case notes – depending on your therapeutic approach.
- Crisis support sheet – contact details of organisations that can help a desperate client when you are not available.

Advertising/Marketing

You're now pretty much ready to go, but where will your clients come from? How will people know you're there and how will they find you? The only limits on this are those of your own imagination; be as creative as you like. Don't fall into the trap of believing that the glossier the magazine, or the more upmarket the shop where you place some flyers, the better it will be. A client who has seen your business card in a newsagent's window, or the noticeboard at the local Chinese takeaway, will be no different to any other.

Here are some ideas worth considering:

- Business cards
- Flyers/brochures
- Articles (local media and online)
- Blogs
- Website
- Referrals – from who? Not just GPs: schools, social care, local organisations/clubs
- Peers/fellow practitioners
- Talks/presentations for local groups
- Sponsorship of local events/clubs
- Directories – once registered, you can check their statistics of traffic to your profile in order to better target ads in the future, or to adapt your profile.
- EAPs
- Health insurance providers
- Business directories e.g. Bark – some therapists get a lot of work from such platforms, others believe it to be more hassle than it's worth.
- Social Media. This is a great way to not only get your name out there – free of charge! – but it's also a lovely way to promote counselling and mental health more generally (as written into your Code of Ethics). You will get to know your audience as it grows (it can be a different demographic depending on which platform you use) and you can adapt your posts according to what seems most popular. An important note though is to be sure you post regularly, otherwise it is not worth doing.
- Research other practitioners in your area – what do you like / not like about their directory profiles or websites.
- If you want to put some money into advertising, investigate Google Adwords or similar.
- Think about what will make you stand out. Why would someone choose you over other practitioners in your area? Consider specialising or stating specific areas of interest.
- Testimonials – it is worth taking some time to think about how you feel about including testimonials from past clients in any of your literature or on your website. This is quite a controversial and thorny issue among

therapists, with strong feelings on both sides. Opinions can be based on a therapeutic approach, as well as guidelines from various membership organisations.

Those advocating the use of client feedback believe that, like any other business, reviews and testimonials are an important part of what might encourage someone to contact you. Some perceive it as recognition of their hard work, success, and skills as a practitioner, and some prefer to see it as a way of promoting hypnotherapy more generally and helping the layperson who is searching for a therapist be less fearful and more confident about seeking help. On the other hand, some argue that it is wholly inappropriate to obtain and use client comments. That the comments would need to be anonymous could render them almost meaningless and inauthentic. There are also ethical concerns about coercion etc. It is up to you to reflect on how you feel about this subject, and maybe take it into supervision, before deciding what you would like to do.

Initial contact with an enquirer is included here. Whether via email or phone call, your relationship with this person starts at the point of contact. Your clever, media-savvy adverts or state of the art website may enable someone to find and contact you, but it won’t convert them into a paying client unless your response is meaningful. Respond in a timely manner, or at least give a realistic time frame as to when you will get back to them, via your email auto-reply or voicemail message.

Offer your time, listen, understand, reassure. They will have probably taken a long time to find the courage to call; they are likely anxious, scared, or upset. We are not selling them an appointment; we are starting a therapeutic relationship. What did your training teach you about how an anxious brain works? That is what you will be communicating with in the first call/email, so use your knowledge to inform your response.

Create an illusion of choice – would they like to book an initial consultation now or would they like to take some time to think about it before doing so?

Don't forget to spell check!

Summary

There are many ways in which we can market our practice, and it’s important in these times not to dismiss the real benefit that can be gained from ‘analogue’ advertising methods (brochures, business cards, flyers etc) targeted and promoted in your local area. Technology is wonderful, but it isn’t everything. More than anything, and perhaps the most difficult part of this to accept, is that you are not actually marketing your business; you *are* your business, so you are really marketing yourself. Just take a moment to think about that. You are advertising you!

Your Website

A website is a multi-faceted thing. It is a cross between an advert, the open door to your office (your 'shopfront'), an introduction to you, as well as a source of important information for your prospective clients.

Like your therapy room, it provides a wonderful opportunity to get creative, but we mustn't lose sight as to who it's really for. When considering your content, remember it is about and for the reader, not you.

Think: What problem do they have and what solution can you offer?

Imagine an anxious client and write in response to their fear and uncertainty. You could use all your wonderful knowledge of hypnotherapy and your natural empathy; use authenticity and integrity, be clear and concise.

As a start to this process, it may be worth reflecting on the following:

Who is your ideal client? Who are you trying to attract? Imagine them in detail then write content as if directed at them.

There are plenty of different ways in which you can create a website. You may already be familiar with the sites such as Wix or Squarespace for example, which help you to create, build, and publish by yourself. Alternatively, you can pay a professional website designer. Either way, all the blurb and content will be written by you. We have already discussed imagining your ideal client, or anyone in need of support, and writing with them in mind; although this may help with tone and the feeling you are trying to create, it's equally as important to get the right information across.

Think: What do potential visitors to your site want to know and what do you want them to know?

Researching other practitioners' websites will help, especially if you imagine you are the client. What tone engages you and what puts you off? What information did you find helpful, or what was missed? Fees, opening hours, and contact details are basic information, but you could also consider answering questions that they may have, like: what is hypnotherapy? How can it help them? Where can they park? Also, what do you want your client to know about you? We know from our training that self-disclosure is a delicate thing, yet we also know that we are ultimately functioning in what is a warm, intimate human relationship. Our clients are reaching out to fellow humans, not robots. Finding that fine line of writing a little about ourselves without disclosing too much may not be easy, but is something you'll need to contemplate. How far do you want to go? How little do you want to say?

On a more practical note, you will find many people mentioning SEO (search engine optimisation) when it comes to writing for websites. This is an ever-changing, complicated process and one which is too intricate to discuss here. However, it is worth familiarising yourself with or engaging someone who knows enough about it to help you incorporate it into your website content.

Summary

At its heart, your website is about giving prospective clients hope and offering solutions to the problems they have. We're not talking about making promises we can't keep, of course, but you want your client to see themselves reflected back at them by what they read. It's about identifying with them and giving them the opportunity to believe there is, at least, the possibility of change.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Whilst it can be easy to see this as an informal way of picking up a few more hints and tips to help you learn more as your career progresses, CPD is so much more important than this. It's considered a fundamental part of your practise, ongoing development, and growth; so much so that membership bodies expect you to complete a specific number of hours of CPD per year and have proof of doing so. Should you be randomly chosen for an audit, then you will need this information in place to meet the criteria to remain on the register.

Bearing in mind the importance of CPD, it is worth remembering that there are generally costs involved, which you will need to cover. **For the most part, these can be classed as expenses you can claim against your tax.**

The HS has a wide-ranging CPD programme in place, although spaces are limited on each course and they often get taken quickly. Make sure you subscribe to the newsletter or stay informed in the Members Area of the website to see what is on offer. There are also many other organisations that offer courses, both online and in-class, that you can use. Reading books and writing articles, blogs, etc can all be classed as part of your CPD; just make sure you keep a record of when and how long you spent on each.

At its best, CPD can reignite your passion for a topic, help you to expand your knowledge, and hone your skills, all of which can then be passed on in your practise to your clients. You can refresh stale information that you learned long ago in your training, or get yourself fully immersed in a subject that you have become more interested in over time. CPD is for you, your business, and your clients.

Self-Care

This is one of the aspects of our work that can be difficult to remember and make time for. Burnout is debilitating and not something to be taken lightly, yet we are all at risk from it and need to take our own wellbeing as seriously as everyone else's.

Self-employment can lead us to make poor choices when we are so dependent on our work for income and the nature of our role can tempt us outside of our professional boundaries and lead us into 'rescuing' rather than 'supporting'.

We are not a 24-hour crisis service. We are promoting and encouraging the tolerance of unpleasant feelings and emotional resilience in our clients; we are not there to rescue.

Your professional boundaries are there to keep your clients and yourself safe. Good supervision provides a place where you can explore this and how, under times of pressure or tiredness, we can lose sight of the structures that enable us to work safely. The sooner measures are put in place to minimise the risk of burnout, the better.

Being self-employed can put us at risk of doing too much and making poor choices. Fear and anxiety can dictate the decisions we make and we end up spreading ourselves too thin as a result.

Earlier you were encouraged to consider what hours you may be available to see clients, but what amount of time, over and above being in session, are you going to devote to answering enquiries? Responding to messages in evenings or weekends is perfectly acceptable if it's for the right reasons, but be clear with clients about what you offer and when to manage their expectations.

Adaptability and some creative thinking can do wonders when things aren't working well. Reflecting not just on your therapeutic work, but your business model too, every so often can help you to identify any problems; hit the 'refresh' button on things every once in a while. Whether it is simply checking you've kept up to date with everything, or identifying strengths and weaknesses, it's all valid. Our business has pitfalls and potential for relapse at times, just like our clients, so we can adopt similar methods of checking in on it. Good problem identification and solution-focused work is a great habit to adopt. It is all too easy to get stuck. Don't be afraid to adapt and change. Rather than being concerned that changes to the way you operate will adversely affect your clients, consider how powerful our modelling adaptability and flexibility to them could be for their own individual growth.

Equally, if you are unwell or overtired and need to take some time out, by doing so you are showing your clients what self-care looks like. By saying 'No', you are demonstrating to them what boundaries are.

Remember; therapy is about what we do, as much as about what we hear or say. You can use your own self-care to help your clients.

Another important aspect of self-care is knowing when to refer clients on. It is all about perspective; what may feel like letting somebody down is almost certainly more helpful for that individual and yourself in the long term. It could be your caseload is full, but your colleague up the road may specialise in the issue you're being presented with and better placed to help, or you may be aware of feeling tired and unmotivated and recognise that taking on another client may not be in anyone's best interests. Our egos may tell us otherwise, but we would do well to ignore them.

In practice, some practitioners have reported getting word of mouth referrals on the back of referring someone on. In doing so, they had, without realising, displayed integrity, honesty, and authenticity to that person and as a consequence, they had been recommended to a friend or family member. It's important to understand that even when you are in the position of saying 'No', you are still potentially investing in your business, as well as making strong ethical decisions; i.e. staying within your competencies.

In many ways, we are very lucky; we could view other local practitioners as competition, but it may be healthier and more beneficial to see them as part of our support network, as our colleagues, and even our friends. Peer supervision is an important and rewarding aspect of our work; whether meeting in person, checking in on the phone or online, or joining some of the private social media groups/forums run by therapists for therapists, they will play their own part in your self-care, and you in theirs.

Unfortunately, our position can leave us vulnerable to the attention of scammers, trolls, or disturbing calls. This is rare but it does happen. It may come in the form of an email (directly to you, or via a directory), social media comments or messages, or phone calls. They may simply be a clearly inauthentic request for advice or support, a financial scam, or something offensive and upsetting. If this happens to you, be clear and resolute in your response, or, even better, don't engage at all. If necessary, contact any directory the contact may have come from. It is also a good idea to do this even if the caller didn't come through a directory, as the information you give can be shared with other practitioners as a warning. If it feels very threatening, don't hesitate to contact the police. If you let the HS know we can notify other members.

Summary

This is all about practising what we preach! Please remember, you are as important as anyone. You are even as important as your abused client, or your suicidal client. If you want to work long term in this field, this will be what helps you survive, and so in turn, what helps your clients to survive. It's like the analogy of an emergency on a plane: you need to put your own oxygen mask on before you can effectively assist others. No one benefits if you are trying to help while you are struggling yourself. There are many areas you could work in, many businesses you could run, all while running yourself into the ground. But the business of therapy isn't one of them. Show your clients how it's done; look after yourself!

Therapeutic Will

This process begins by appointing a Therapeutic Executor; usually this is someone you know, such as your supervisor or one of your peers/colleagues. Someone you trust to manage your professional affairs in case of an emergency. This includes notifying your clients and, if necessary, signposting them to other practitioners, taking care of all sensitive and confidential records you have, as well as managing your financial affairs.

Whilst friends or family will be entrusted to manage your personal affairs, taking care of your clients is something that needs to be managed quickly, and as such anyone linked to you closely on a personal level may be too upset to implement any plans efficiently.

You will need to discuss the agreement with your executor in depth; not only concerning the plans you have put in place, but you should also discuss the terms on which your executor is prepared to do this work. Will they want to be paid for the service or not? And if so, how much will they charge (e.g hourly or a flat rate?) and how will they get paid (especially in your absence)?

Once you have decided who your Therapeutic Executor is, they will need all the necessary information in the form of a document that will be, in essence, a professional will. This document should be kept somewhere secure (e.g. at your bank, or in a safe). Of course, people will need to know of its existence in order to access and implement it, so consider notifying a couple of people (including the executor) of where the file can be found.

Here are some examples of what to include in your will. There will be differences depending on how you run your business, and other factors individual to you.

1. Contact information for anyone related to the running of your business. For example, your accountant/bookkeeper, bank, secretary, insurance provider, membership body, the landlord should you rent an office, etc.

2. Your office address, along with information regarding keys, security codes, etc.

3. Computer passwords for email accounts and login details for any other apps, accounts, or software.

4. Information about where you keep your diary, your client records.

5. Instructions about who will be responsible for contacting your clients and how they should be contacted.

6. If possible, consider providing information about other private practitioners or organisations who could accept referrals for your current clients.

7. Provide information about your financial records, bank details, and any relevant information about the payment of outstanding invoices, etc.

This short guide has given you an overview of setting up and reviewing the basics for your private practice. We hope you've found it useful and food for thought. If you have any questions please do get in touch and let us know.

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