

Code of Ethics for the Association for Social and Therapeutic Horticulture

This Code of Ethics expresses the values which Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (STH) practitioners commit to upholding. We see them as enduring and the Code as a document to which the public, practitioners and other professionals can refer to see what values a STH practitioner will demonstrate in the course of their work. The Code sits alongside our Standards of Practice which describes how we go about our work and the Competencies which describe the skills needed by a STH practitioner.

An STH practitioner is a trained professional who engages with people using plants, activities centred on horticulture and nature connection to enable people to improve their physical health, mental health and wellbeing. Practitioners seek to bring about a tangible or experiential benefit for each client in response to their defined need(s) and goal(s), taking a holistic and person-centred approach.

Practitioners bring about benefits through three key processes, facilitating time:

- in nature,
- in meaningful activity, and
- in a positive social environment.

Words which are in the Key Terms section are highlighted the first time they appear. The Key Terms section is at the end.

We gratefully acknowledge that we have drawn on professional codes from other bodies, specifically: the British Association of Art Therapists, the American Horticultural Therapy Association, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, and the Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT). “RCOT” in the text means we are using wording from the RCOT’s Professional standards for occupational therapy practice, conduct and ethics. Sources are in brackets: BAAT = British Association of Art Therapists. AHTA = American Horticultural Therapy Association. HCPC = Health & Care Professions Council. BACP = British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. RCOT = Royal College of Occupational Therapists. ASTH = the Association for Social and Therapeutic Horticulture.

	SECTION	SUBSECTION		Link to resource or relevant part of the Standards of Practice or the Competencies
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Code of Ethics for the Association for Social and Therapeutic Horticulture, May 2025

<b>1</b>	<b>General principles</b>	<b>Overriding principle</b>	We will abide by the overriding principle that we should act at all times in the best interests of the <b>client</b> , and to that end we will practise lawfully, safely, effectively, <b>accountably</b> and fairly.	
		<b>Duty of candour</b>	We will be open, honest and candid and prompt to act when something has gone wrong with the service provided to a client, or where it is uncertain whether we will be able to achieve the benefit the client wants or if we have the skills / knowledge / experience to work with them.	
		<b>Integrity</b>	<p>We will act with honesty and integrity at all times.</p> <p>We will notify the <b>ASTH</b> if convicted of a criminal offence, receive a conditional discharge for an offence or accept a police caution. <i>(RCOT)</i></p> <p>We will notify the ASTH if suspended or dismissed by an employer or similar organisation, because of concerns about our conduct or competence. <i>(RCOT)</i></p>	
		<b>Inclusivity, diversity, equality</b>	<p>We will treat clients and colleagues fairly and equally and facilitate a respectful, non-judgmental environment.</p> <p>We will work in an inclusive way, including making reasonable adjustments to enable access by any client.</p> <p>We will take all reasonable steps to prevent unfair discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation of clients or colleagues by a professional or another client.</p>	
		<b>Respect for autonomy</b>	<p>We will make all practicable efforts to uphold the <b>autonomy</b> of clients by:</p> <p>adopting a person-centred approach;</p>	

Code of Ethics for the Association for Social and Therapeutic Horticulture, May 2025

			<p>obtaining the client’s informed consent whenever possible;</p> <p>enabling choice, shared decision-making and partnership working through active support, if that is what the client wants;</p> <p>promoting independence; and</p> <p>supporting the client’s self-efficacy.</p>	
		<b>Care for the environment/ practising sustainably/ to support biodiversity</b>	We will actively encourage an awareness, appreciation and respect of plants, ecosystems and nature to enhance the therapeutic environment.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Professional competence and accountability</b>	<b>Scope of practice</b>	<p>We will only practise in the areas where we have the appropriate knowledge, skills, experience and capability to meet the needs of a client safely and effectively.</p> <p>We will be alert to the possibility that we cannot offer a professional service to a client, whether that is because we do not have the knowledge, skills, experience or personal capability to meet their needs or for some other reason.</p> <p>In that event, and acknowledging that we will have a continuing duty of care to the client, we will direct the client to the most appropriate practitioner or service as far as practicable.</p> <p>In order to widen a scope of practice, we will undertake additional training and/or research to update knowledge, skills and experience.</p>	
		<b>Maintaining and developing knowledge and skills</b>	We will engage in <b>Continuous Professional Development (CPD)</b> to maintain and develop our knowledge and skills and to keep up to date with developments in our field and scope of practice.	

Code of Ethics for the Association for Social and Therapeutic Horticulture, May 2025

			We will seek feedback and reflect on our practice.	
		<b>Fitness to practise</b>	We will refrain from practising if our physical and/or mental health is such that we cannot practise safely or effectively, or if we are under the influence of an intoxicating substance.	
		<b>Accountability</b>	We will co-operate with any investigation or formal inquiry into our own professional conduct, the conduct of another worker or the treatment of a client, where appropriate. <i>(RCOT)</i>	
		<b>Safeguarding</b>	<p>We will treat all children and adults at risk with respect and dignity. We understand our responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk.</p> <p>We recognise our professional duty of care to our clients which must override confidentiality, especially if there are concerns about the safeguarding and wellbeing of clients or others.</p> <p>We will respond promptly and appropriately to all incidents, allegations or concerns of abuse in relation to clients, volunteers or staff.</p>	<p><u>Working together to safeguard children</u></p> <p><u>National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland</u></p> <p><u>Section 14 of Care and Support Statutory Guidance</u></p> <p><u>Code of Practice to Protect Adults at Risk in Scotland</u></p>
<b>3</b>	<b>Confidentiality and data protection</b>	<b>Confidentiality</b>	<p>We will adopt reasonable measures to ensure clients' information is i) kept confidential and secure and ii) collected and used appropriately, in line with the Caldicott Principles.</p> <p>Confidentiality is not an absolute concept. There may be occasions when we need to share information as part of our duty of care or we are required to do so by law. For example, if we perceive a risk of harm to the client or to anyone else, our safeguarding duty may override the duty of confidentiality.</p> <p>We will make clear to clients that information provided by or about them is held by the professional team of which the practitioner is a</p>	<p><u>The Caldicott principles</u></p>

Code of Ethics for the Association for Social and Therapeutic Horticulture, May 2025

			<p>part or in a secure system by the practitioner if they are a lone worker.</p> <p>If we share information about a client, we will do it in the way which best protects the client’s interests.</p> <p>Where we are working with a client in a group setting, we will endeavour to ensure the client understands how and to what extent other group members will respect confidentiality and that the client, as part of the group, has a duty of confidentiality to the others in the group.</p> <p>We will make clear to clients when and how we might need to share information.</p>	
		<b>Data Protection and record-keeping</b>	We will maintain secure, accurate records in compliance with the applicable law and regulations relating to Data Protection and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).	
<b>4</b>	<b>The Client relationship</b>	<b>Communication about the practice</b>	We will provide our clients with information about the nature of the social and therapeutic horticulture experience, the activities, processes and expectations. We will ensure that this information is provided in a format that is appropriate for the target client group.	

Code of Ethics for the Association for Social and Therapeutic Horticulture, May 2025

		<p><b>Informed consent</b></p> <p>In all situations where the client’s consent is needed, we will consider whether the client has capacity at that time to give informed consent (with support adequate to their needs) to the intervention in question.</p> <p>If the client can give informed consent, we will endeavour to facilitate that.</p> <p>If the client’s consent is needed and they do not have capacity to give informed consent in the particular circumstance, we will endeavour to obtain the informed consent of their carer or legal guardian.</p>	<p>Mental Capacity Act 2005</p> <p>Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000</p> <p>Mental Capacity Act (Northern Ireland) 2016</p>
		<p><b>Safety of the working environment</b></p> <p>We will work with clients in an environment which provides a physically safe and functional place in which to offer STH services and engage in dynamic risk assessment.</p> <p>Where the environment in which the service is offered is provided by another person or body, we recognise a responsibility to conduct regular checks and alert the person or body responsible to unsafe conditions of policy, procedure or physical hazards.</p>	
		<p><b>Professional boundaries</b></p> <p>We will respect professional boundaries, and in particular will not (a) use our position to pursue personal, sexual, financial or emotional relationships with clients or carers, (b) engage in sexual harassment, nor (c) use our position to seek or receive unjustified gains, favours, goods or services.</p> <p>We will not allow personal relationships to influence professional decisions.</p>	
<b>5</b>	<b>Minors</b>	<p><b>Additional considerations</b></p> <p>We will make clear when we are competent to work with minors and obtain relevant disclosure checks.</p>	

Code of Ethics for the Association for Social and Therapeutic Horticulture, May 2025

		<b>(see also Safeguarding and Confidentiality)</b>	<p>We will endeavour to communicate with and involve parents/guardians and carers in planning and review meetings subject to safeguarding and confidentiality requirements.</p> <p>Confidentiality: in serving the best interests of the child/young person, we will follow the advice on Information Sharing issued by the Department of Education in May 2024 or the Scottish Practice Guidance on Information Sharing.</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Information Sharing - Advice May 2024</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Getting it Right for Every Child: Practice Guidance on Information Sharing in Scotland</u></a></p>
<b>6</b>	<b>Inter-professional relationships</b>		When working with professional colleagues, we will respect their rights and responsibilities and seek to work jointly in the best interests of the client.	
<b>7</b>	<b>Whistleblowing</b>		<p>In the best interests of the client, we will report unsafe or unlawful practices to the appropriate authority, whether a manager, an employer or an outside body.</p> <p>We will notify the ASTH of a breach of this Code by another member of the ASTH.</p>	
<b>8</b>	<b>Financial arrangements</b>	<b>Transparency</b>	<p>We will give clear and accurate information about our charges.</p> <p>We will give reasonable notice of any change in charges or charging practices.</p>	
		<b>No pressure</b>	We will not structure charges in such a way as to put inappropriate pressure on clients to attend.	
<b>9</b>	<b>Publications/research</b>	<b>Consent</b>	We will obtain the informed consent of the client before using histories, spoken or written words, or images of clients in research, publicity or for any other purpose. If the client does not have capacity to give consent, we will only use the details or image of the client	

Code of Ethics for the Association for Social and Therapeutic Horticulture, May 2025

			with the consent from the person with authority to give it and if it is not contrary to the client's interests to do so.	
		<b>Anonymity</b>	Where consent for use of the details or image has been given, we will anonymise the information unless we have the explicit consent of the client to identify them in whole or in part.	
<b>10</b>	<b>Promotion, advertising and fundraising</b>		<p>In all materials, we will represent accurately our professional competence, experience, training and area(s) of expertise, and will not present ourselves in a way which is false or misleading in any detail.</p> <p>If we become aware that someone else is presenting us in a way which could be misleading, we will correct that information or presentation as far as is reasonably possible.</p> <p>We will only make claims about treatments which are supported by evidence.</p>	
<b>11</b>	<b>Insurance</b>	<b>Public liability insurance</b>	We will have appropriate public liability insurance and professional liability insurance, whether directly or as provided by an employer or other body.	
		<b>Professional liability insurance</b>		
	<b>Key terms</b>	<b>abuse</b>	This may be physical, sexual, emotional, financial, material, discriminatory, institutional, modern slavery or domestic violence.	<a href="#">See definitions in the Care and Support Statutory Guidance</a>
		<b>accountably</b>	A member practises accountably when they can explain their decisions and actions or inactions.	
		<b>autonomy</b>	A person has autonomy when they can make decisions and direct their own life.	
		<b>ASTH</b>	The UK Association for Social and Therapeutic Horticulture	[weblink]

Code of Ethics for the Association for Social and Therapeutic Horticulture, May 2025

		<b>client</b>	Different organisations use different terms (eg service user, participant, patient) but here we mean the person using the service or directly benefiting from the service.	
		<b>CPD (Continuous Professional Development)</b>	Any learning experience that can be used for the systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of competence, knowledge and skills to ensure that the practitioner has the capacity to practise safely, effectively and legally within their evolving scope of practice. It may include both personal and professional development.	
		<b>self-efficacy</b>	A person's belief in their capacity to act in the ways necessary to reach specific goals.	