



National Association of Veterinary Physiotherapists.

**Changes adopted AGM March 2014.*

CODE OF CONDUCT.

All members, regardless of their and/or perceived role (including self employed/under contract, employed by the NAVP, employed by an external organisation) are first and foremost members of the NAVP and must abide by the Code of Conduct of the NAVP.

This code also applies to Student members who are in the process of completing a recognised course of study.

All members on entry to the Association will undertake the following declaration:

“I PROMISE AND DECLARE that my constant endeavour will be to ensure the welfare of animals committed to my care and that I will pursue the work of my profession with integrity and accept my responsibilities to my clients, the public, the profession and the NAVP”. Further, I promise and declare that I will abide by this Code of Conduct in all my dealings with clients, animals and all people as a result of undertaking my work or studies.

All members must abide by the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, and only treat with Veterinary referral. Failure to do so is an offence and may result in disciplinary action.

The overarching duty of NAVP members is to ensure the welfare of animals committed to their care and to fulfil their duties by maintaining:

1. Professional competence
2. Honesty and integrity
3. Independence and impartiality
4. Client confidentiality and trust
5. Professional accountability

1) NAVVP members and clients:

- a. Respect the needs and requirements of your clients, provided that they do not conflict with the principles of this Code or relevant legislation.
- b. Provide impartial, independent and objective advice and inform the client of any conflict of interest.
- c. Provide initial and ongoing professional advice, reasonable treatment options and estimates of associated fees
- d. Take all reasonable care when using your professional skills.

- e. Keep your skills and knowledge up to date.
- f. Stay within your area of competence.
- g. Maintain clear and accurate records.
- h. Explain your preferred treatment option including possible side effects.
- i. Obtain owners consent to treatment.
- j. Recognise the owners have freedom of choice.
- k. Promote responsible animal ownership.
- l. Maintain client confidentiality unless there are overriding reasons in the public interest, including animal health and welfare.
- m. Treat owners with respect and professional courtesy.
- n. Respond promptly and courteously to client complaints and criticism.
- o. Ensure all activities are covered by professional indemnity insurance and that at all times such professional indemnity is in place.

2) NAVPP members and animals

- a. Make animal welfare your first consideration when attending to animals.
- b. Ensure that animals committed to your care receive appropriate and adequate care.
- c. Ensure that you are competent in your performance.
- d. Ensure that clinical governance (consideration of animal safety, client experience and effective care) forms part of your clinical activities, including monitoring and reviewing clinical outcomes with the aim of improving the care you provide.
- e. Consider reporting to an appropriate authority when there is reasonable concern that animal welfare has been, or is likely to be, compromised.
- f. Treat all animals humanely and with respect.
- g. You must refer the animal back to the veterinary surgeon if your treatment is not producing the desired results or if the animals circumstances change dramatically.
- h. Maintain proper standards in practice premises and equipment and provide proper standards in relation to inpatient care.
- i. Ensure the animal does not suffer during treatment or is not restrained by excessive force or discipline.

3) NAVVP members and NAVVP

- a. Comply with NAVVP code of conduct.
- b. Provide the Association with their CPD record when requested to do so.
- c. Respond promptly and constructively to any request from NAVVP for comments in relation to any allegation or complaint of any kind.
- d. Provide the NAVVP clinical or client records or any other relevant information when requested to do so in writing or during a visit to your practice.
- e. Provide the NAVVP any relevant information when requested to do so in writing with regards to complaints (for instance by members, the public, other organisations).
- f. Disclose to the NAVVP any caution or conviction (including absolute and conditional discharges and spent convictions), or adverse finding by any other Court or regulator, wherever in the World.
- g. Must not engage in any activity or behaviour that would be likely to bring the NAVVP into disrepute (including dealing with the public, clients and their animals, NAVVP members and external organisations).
- h. Conduct yourself in a manner that respects the NAVVP and its members and must not maliciously, or unfairly, criticise or attempt to discredit the NAVVP or its members.
- i. Avoid any conflicts of interest.
- j. Not abuse your position in relation to fellow members and /or seek favours for past events (such as tutor/student roles)
- k. All members, regardless of their and / or perceived role (e.g. self-employed, self-employed and under contract, employed by the NAVVP, employed by an external organisation etc), are first and foremost members of the NAVVP and must abide by the Code of Conduct of the NAVVP.

4) NAVVP members and the public

- a. Ensure the protection of public health and consider the impact of all their actions and inactions or omissions on the public and the environment.
- b. Report any suspicion of a notifiable or reportable disease to the appropriate authority.
- c. Use their professional status to provide only factual information to the general public about physiotherapy services.
- d. Not to engage in any activity that would likely to bring the profession into disrepute or undermine public confidence in the profession

5) NAVVP members and the profession

- a. Take, and, at the request of the NAVVP, demonstrate that you have taken reasonable steps to address adverse physical and mental health (i) that could impair fitness to practise or (ii) that results in harm, or a risk of harm, to animal health or welfare, public health or the public interest (subject to legal advice on NAVVP jurisdiction).
- b. On return to practice after time off, you must ensure you are competent to do so, acknowledging that the Executive Committee will review your application to renew membership.
- c. Continue your professional education and maintain a record of CPD in accordance with current CPD requirements as published from time to time by the NAVVP (also ensuring you keep yourself aware of such CPD requirements published on reasonable notice by the NAVVP).
- d. Communicate with other members/NAVVP representatives as appropriate, to ensure continuity of care of animals.
- e. Conduct yourself in a manner that respects professional colleagues and must maliciously, or unfairly, criticise or attempt to discredit a professional colleague.
- f. Not hold yourself out as having expertise that cannot be substantiated, or call yourself a “specialist” where to do so would be misleading or misrepresentative.
- g. * Graduate and Full members must work within the area of their profession which they have knowledge, skill and expertise to practice lawfully, safely and effectively.

6) NAVVP members and their business

- a. As owners of a business to ensure professional colleagues, or staff within the organisation or practice, comply with responsibilities in the NAVVP code of conduct.
- b. Communicate comprehensively with colleagues and staff within your organisation and practice to co-ordinate the care of animals.
- c. Ensure that any member of staff to whom a task is delegated has the appropriate knowledge and skills and any relevant qualification necessary to undertake task competently.
- d. Advertise services in a legal, decent, honest, truthful and professional manner.
- e. Ensure that all staff are covered by professional indemnity insurance or equivalent arrangements.
- f. Ensure there are no conflicts of interest and not bring the NAVVP into disrepute with external people, organisations or bodies with regard to the objectives, contracts and decisions of the NAVVP.

7) **NAVP Members and Social Media.**

- a. The NAVP Code of Conduct should always be adhered to and across all forms of verbal and written communication including social media.
- b. NAVP members take personal responsibility when expressing personal opinions and using social media and the effect on the Association, its members and the profession.
- c. Use of social media which has a detrimental effect to the Association, its members or the profession will result in disciplinary action.
This includes any comments which are offensive, false, inaccurate or unjustified.
Defamation Laws apply to any comments posted online made in either a personal or professional capacity.
- d. NAVP members should refrain from posting comments on professional issues on forums/websites or other social media which are available for the public to view.
- e. Members must not diagnose or give advice on treatment over social media. You must always see an animal before giving advice.
- f. Members should be proactive when asked to remove content that could be viewed as unprofessional.
- g. Must maintain and protect client confidentiality at all times, unless the client gives explicit consent.
- h. Compliance with GDP, UK laws and regulations is compulsory not optional and social media is no exception.
- i. Only the Chair is permitted to post material on a social media website in the associations name and behalf. Any breach of this conduct will lead to disciplinary action.

8) Disciplinary Process

- I) A Veterinary Physiotherapist, or any other person/organisation subject to the Code of Conduct, may be removed from the Associations membership list if:
 - a. He or she is convicted of a criminal offence which the Disciplinary Committee considers makes him/her unfit to practise.
 - b. If the Disciplinary Committee has found them guilty of unethical conduct in any professional respect.
 - c. The required annual membership fee has not been paid.
 - d. He or she does not have appropriate professional indemnity insurance.
- II) Unethical Conduct and Gross Professional Misconduct.
 - a. Unethical conduct is that which departs from the standard of conduct accepted by members of NAVP.
 - b. A series of substantial allegations of unethical conduct may lead to a charge of gross professional conduct.
 - c. Gross misconduct is any behaviour/actions that (inter alia) is deemed to bring NAVP into disrepute. This includes actions such as writing/speaking disparagingly about NAVP or any of its members in any public forum, though this is not an exhaustive list.
- III) Sanctions.
 - a. For minor offences a written warning and/or fine can be imposed. Supervision by a senior colleague for a fixed term can also be imposed.
 - b. For more serious offences including for a finding of Gross Professional Misconduct a term of suspension or permanent expulsion can be imposed.
 - c. For Gross professional misconduct the member will be excluded from the Association permanently. Any sanction can be subject to any terms deemed fit.
- IV) Disciplinary process

Any complaint must be made to the Chair of NAVP, so that it can be referred to the Disciplinary Committee.

 - a. Upon receiving a complaint, the Disciplinary Committee will first investigate if such a complaint justifies further consideration, if so, it will notify person/s concerned that an allegation of misconduct has been made. At this stage it is not necessary for the Disciplinary Committee to disclose all details but it must tell the person/s concerned in broad terms the nature of the allegation.

- b. The Disciplinary committee will set a time and date to meet within 14 days of receiving the complaint, to investigate the allegations, without the presence of the person/s against whom allegation(s) have been made. The Association is mindful that there are times when complaints made against members are frivolous or malicious.
- c. If the Disciplinary Committee finds that there is no case to answer, the person/s concerned will be informed within 48 hours and told that no further action will be taken.
- d. If the Disciplinary Committee find that the complaint made is frivolous or malicious, they can commence disciplinary proceedings against the person or persons who instigated such frivolous or malicious complaint.
- e. If, after initially reviewing the complaint, the Disciplinary Committee finds that there is a case to answer, the full allegations, together with the name of the person(s) making the allegation(s) will be communicated in writing to the person(s) concerned who will be invited to attend before the Disciplinary Committee at a time and place within the next 14 to 28 days.
- f. The member may bring a friend with him/her to the disciplinary hearing and that friend must be a member of the Association. They may take no part in proceedings at this stage.
- g. If the Disciplinary Committee find that the member is not guilty of the allegations then no action will be taken and no record of the allegations will be kept.
- h. If the Disciplinary Committee upholds the allegations it may impose whatever sanction it decides appropriate as set out in paragraph III above.

V) Immediate suspension.

- a. If an allegation is, in the opinion of the Chair of the Disciplinary Committee, so serious as to warrant suspension whilst the allegation is investigated, the chair of the Disciplinary Committee will immediately notify the Executive Committee if there is sufficient evidence available to support the view that it is justified. In consultation with the Executive Committee a decision will be made as to whether person(s) may be suspended whilst such allegation is dealt with fully by the Executive Committee.
- b. If a person is immediately suspended, he or she is strictly forbidden to practice during the period of suspension and any attempt to do so may constitute a further offence which may be subject to separate proceedings.

VI) Appeals process

- a. Any person affected by a decision of the Disciplinary Committee may appeal against any finding and/or disciplinary sanction to the Executive Committee.
- b. The Executive Committee may reverse the finding of the Disciplinary Committee, uphold the Decision of the Disciplinary Committee, or alter the disciplinary sanctions as it deems fit.
- c. A letter of appeal should be sent to the Chair of the Association within 14 days of the Disciplinary Committee's decision.

- d. The Chair will notify the Executive Committee who will set a date for the appeal to be heard.