

The Association for Family Therapy and Systemic Practice in the UK



Guidelines for use of Case Vignettes

AFT

AFT has been energetic in making links with Parliamentary all-party select committees- both in the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Discussions have also been held with political advisors and submissions made to government and other consultations (for example NICE Guidelines) concerned with children and families.

AFT, as with other charitable organizations, has been trying to highlight issues concerning children, adolescents and families in order to influence proposed legislation. AFT Board members and officers who have been involved in this have been heartened by the enthusiasm of these committees to learn more and surprised at how much they don't know!

In discussing such matters with government and other relevant bodies we have found it especially helpful to use brief case vignettes which bring alive to them the issues, dilemmas and needs of clients and those who work with them. It is also important that they understand that the problems of children and adolescents must be viewed in the context of their families' lives including the problems other family members are experiencing, and the impact of these upon family relationships. Vignettes have been helpful in educating and informing members of the committee. When these include family members' own reflections, given verbally or in written feedback, they enable the voices of people using our services to be heard in different contexts.

From AFT's ethical standpoint such vignettes should always be anonymized and identifying details removed and/or altered. Notwithstanding this, permission should be sought first from those families concerned and written consent obtained (see consent form, below). These vignettes would not identify the NHS Trust or other services and agencies concerned. Obviously our first concern is to do no harm to any clients.

Confirmation that signed consent has been obtained should be sent with any family members' feedback and/or case vignettes submitted to AFT for inclusion in presentations. It is the responsibility of the individual practitioner to retain the original, for a minimum of seven years

Composite and therefore fictitious accounts do not have the same resonance as live accounts but may be appropriate where seeking consent is not appropriate or is impossible to obtain. Clearly, potentially identifying details must be removed from composite accounts as well as case vignettes. Some families may prefer to write their own vignettes. Composite fictitious accounts may/could be used when discussing issues with the media.

It is possible Trusts may wish to have a letter from AFT confirming that no information in the vignettes would be linked back to the Trust unless express Trust permission has been given [some Trusts are happy for us to promote their services and teams. Some Trusts have, for example, given permission for us to quote from 'service user feedback' in service level audits and other documents).

CONSENT TO SHARE INFORMATION

I/We consent to my/our written comments about my/our experience of family psychotherapy being shared with the Association for Family Therapy (AFT). I/We agree that these can be used as a case illustration when AFT makes verbal, written or audio visual presentations to Parliamentary Committees and other relevant bodies, to promote understanding of the mental health and welfare needs of families and family members.

And perhaps:

I/We consent to our verbal comments about our experience of family psychotherapy being shared with the Association for Family Therapy (AFT). I/We agree that these can be used as a case illustration when AFT makes verbal, written or audio visual presentations to Parliamentary Committees and other relevant bodies to promote their understanding of the mental health and welfare needs of families and family members and/or used for publication in books, articles/ in conferences, teaching situations. I/We wish/do not wish to see the wording that would be used.

I/We understand that the comments that we have provided will remain anonymous, that identifying details will be removed, and that we can withdraw our consent for their use..

Signed

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Signature of systemic family psychotherapist

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Date