



The Association  
of UK Dietitians

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## Code of Professional Conduct

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## Introduction

The British Dietetic Association proudly represents the whole of the dietetic workforce in the UK, and is the only body to do so. The Code of Professional Conduct applies to all members who may be dietitians, dietetic support workers, dietetic students or nutritionists, and applies to all the roles and settings in which they work. It sets out the high standards of behaviour required of BDA members. Members have an obligation to adhere to the standards within this Code, and those of their regulator (HCPC, SENr), their employer, and educational institution as appropriate.

The Code is based on three core standards:

### 1. Values

Members will respect an individual's needs, values, culture and privacy, and act with integrity, honesty and openness.

### 2. Practice

Members will put the interests of their service-users first, practise safely and effectively, and identify and manage risk.

### 3. Knowledge and Skills

Members will seek to promote best practice, based on the most up-to-date knowledge, practice and evidence, whilst developing and pushing the boundaries of dietetics and dietetic services.

The standards are necessarily broad and cannot provide definitive answers to every situation a member may encounter over the course of their career. They have been written in such a way as to provide members with the freedom to advance, develop, and innovate practice in their chosen area of nutrition and dietetics, centered on the needs and expectations of their service users.

## 1. Values

**Members will respect an individual's needs, values, culture and privacy, and act with integrity, honesty and openness.**

The BDA places these values at the heart of professional behaviour, and they describe core expectations for all members whatever the setting, sector or role in which they choose to practice. Ethical and moral dilemmas will routinely arise over the course of a career in dietetics. In most situations it will be clear and easy to demonstrate professional behaviour. However, there will inevitably be times when challenges will require deeper thought and personal reflection in order to safeguard service users from unprofessional behaviour. The BDA expects members to proactively engage in peer support, discussions, practice supervision, and use all other tools available to them to ensure they uphold these values.

Members will:

- Ensure services which do not discriminate, are provided to all individuals with particular regard to any characteristics protected under law including: age, disability, gender reassignment, sex and sexual orientation, religion and belief, race, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership.
- Respect the rights of individuals to make informed choices.
- Adhere to the laws governing mental capacity, and ensure that the rights and best interests of those who lack capacity are always at the centre of the decision making process.
- Respect the confidence and trust placed in them in their relationships with service users.
- Promote a professional relationship and maintain appropriate professional boundaries between themselves and service users.
- Treat their service users and colleagues with compassion and empathy, fairness, honesty, courtesy, respect and in good faith.
- Ensure that they do not exploit relationships with clients for emotional, sexual or financial gain.
- Be impartial, objective and honest in their actions towards their service users.
- Be aware of personal biases, and reflect on how personal perspectives may influence their practice.
- Behave in a way that promotes confidence in the profession.
- Not accept private financial benefits or favours, which could be interpreted as an attempt to gain preferential treatment, or present a conflict of interest.
- Advocate for the health and welfare of their service users.
- Be open and honest if things go wrong.

## 2. Practice

**Members will put the interests of their service users first, practise safely and effectively, and identify and manage risk.**

The scope of the profession is constantly evolving to meet the demands of services, service users and other social, economic and environmental factors. Each dietetic intervention will be different, with competing and conflicting demands. The BDA expects members to be aware of the many factors that will have an influence on their practice, including food, nutrition and health policy, standards, rules and regulations, healthcare systems, national guidelines and industry standards. Members must only undertake activities which fall within their scope, in a way that is collaborative, safe and effective and will strive to secure the best outcomes from nutrition and dietetic interventions.

Members will:

- Ensure appropriate consent has been given for any dietetic intervention.
- Respect and safeguard confidentiality of service user information.
- Be able to articulate the limits of their personal scope of practice and practise within them.
- Work within the current scope of dietetics, and look to influence the evolving scope of the profession.
- Provide high quality, cost efficient services based on the needs of the population and service users.
- Be accountable for their decision making, given that they have a moral and legal obligation for the provision of safe and competent service delivery.
- Report and escalate unsafe and unethical practice, and support colleagues who appropriately notify the relevant authorities of such practice.
- Take appropriate action if there are concerns about the safety and wellbeing of a service user.
- Respect the collaborative nature of comprehensive health care with recognition and respect for the perspective and expertise of other health professionals.
- Not use inaccurate or misleading ways to promote their services or products.
- Behave safely, responsibly, legally and ethically online, particularly in relation to social networking sites.
- Provide services within the legal requirements of professional indemnity cover, occupational health, welfare and safety and workplace requirements.
- Delegate work only to those who have the knowledge and skills to undertake the work safely and effectively.
- Accept responsibility for their own physical and mental health, in order to practise safely.

### 3. Knowledge and skills

**Members will seek to promote best practice, based on the most up-to-date knowledge, practice and evidence, whilst developing and pushing the boundaries of dietetics and dietetic services.**

Dietary modification is at the core of dietetic practice. The skills of the dietetic workforce lie in assessing the needs of an individual, community or population, the risks and challenges, and deciding how they may best be addressed in those particular circumstances. The dietetic workforce is unique in being able to manage, lead and support nutrition and dietetic interventions by using sound evidence, practice and reasoning. Members have a personal responsibility to maintain and advance their own knowledge and skills by undertaking regular continuing professional development. The BDA expects members to contribute to the development of the nutrition and dietetic evidence-base within their own scope of practice.

Members will:

- Recognise the limits of their own competence, and refer on to an appropriate provider if necessary.
- Undertake CPD and practice supervision, so as to continually reflect, update, evaluate and extend professional knowledge and skills appropriate to their role and promote emotional resilience.
- Communicate appropriately and effectively with service users and colleagues.
- Practise within current evidence and practice-base.
- Limit the provision of advice about alternative therapies to those who voluntarily seek it, and actively discourage therapies which might be harmful.
- Understand and respect diversity of nutrition and dietetic practice and promote an ecological, social and economic environment which supports health and wellbeing.
- Interpret, apply, participate in or generate research and audit, to enhance practice and develop a unique body of dietetic knowledge.
- Demonstrate leadership within their scope of practice, for example through problem solving, enhanced service delivery, or role extension.
- Ensure that outcome measures demonstrate the value of dietetic intervention.
- Contribute to the learning and development of students and colleagues, as appropriate to member's role.

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