

SFE CODE OF PRACTICE

This Code of Practice has been established for our members to follow when advising their clients.

Relationship with the Client

1. Members should act with honesty and integrity at all times and should always act only in the best interests of their clients, respecting their dignity and will take into account their need for a holistic approach to problem solving.
2. Members should be mindful of the well-being of their clients at all times.
3. When dealing with older or vulnerable clients, members should allow their clients the assistance of a trusted friend or family member or advocate if that is in the client's best interests. However, members should be mindful of potential issues of undue influence and should ensure that they have an opportunity to see the client alone.
4. Members should be aware of the risks of potential abuse, financial or otherwise to their clients and take relevant action if they believe that abuse is taking place.
5. Members should be sensitive to the client's needs. They should be aware of any potential difficulties with vision or hearing that the client may have and ensure that this is taken into account when communicating with their clients. Documents and correspondence may need to be produced in large print or Braille. Where the client has difficulties with hearing or speech, an appropriate speech and language therapist or sign language interpreter may be needed in order that members can communicate with the client and allow the client to give instructions. The pace and duration of any meeting will need to be adapted according to the particular needs of the client.
6. Members should ensure all practicable steps are taken to maximise decision making potential, particularly for those who may be compromised by physical, emotional and mental difficulties.
7. Members will communicate in plain English and should avoid the use of legal jargon where possible. When legal terminology has to be used, members should make sure that they are satisfied that the client has been given a proper explanation of the terms used and that they understand the explanation.
8. Members should offer home, hospital and care home visits as an alternative to a visit to the office. If this will incur additional cost for the client, this must be communicated to the client prior to the visit taking place but members should be mindful of their obligations under the Equality Act 2010. Members should ensure that they have complied with their obligations under the Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013.

9. Members will endeavour to ensure ease of access to their offices and parking for less mobile clients.
10. Members will ensure that all reception staff and any staff who may come into contact with their clients will be caring and sensitive to all older and vulnerable clients.
11. Members must remain up to date with legal issues affecting older and vulnerable clients and must also ensure that they act only within their level of expertise. If specialist advice is required which is outside of the member's capability then the client must be referred to a specialist expert.
12. Members must provide details of their charges and ensure that these are communicated to the client clearly and that the client is aware of and has agreed to the charges. Charges must be transparent and details of charges must be confirmed in writing to the client at the earliest stage possible. This should be accompanied by the client care letter, detailing the service the clients can expect to receive.
13. Members must operate their own complaints policy and ensure that a copy of this is provided to the client at the outset.
14. It is a condition of SFE membership that all SFE members must agree to conduct themselves and their business in accordance with this code.

Relationship with the Public

From 1st October 2016, only SFE Full Accredited Members can use the SFE logo and provide links to the SFE website from their own web pages. Any references made to SFE must relate specifically to the individual member of SFE and not to the member's firm.

The SFE Board

The SFE board is comprised of members of SFE. The board meets four times a year and is responsible for setting policy and strategy for SFE. All board members must be full members of SFE.

Board members are authorised to make statements on behalf of SFE.

The board has a duty to ensure the smooth, professional running of SFE.

To ensure the efficient of the operation the board, each board member should attend a minimum of two thirds of the scheduled board meetings each year.

The Advisory Board

The advisory board is comprised of a number of SFE's Regional Co-ordinators, who are themselves all members of SFE.

The Advisory Board is there to help the board with the running of SFE and to input into strategy. The Advisory Board is also there to represent SFE members.

Only members of the Advisory Board authorised by the Directors may make statements on behalf of SFE.

The Expert Panel

The expert panel is made up of experts in the field of Older Client Law and associated areas, who input into the SFE training curriculum and best practice guidelines. The expert panel also helps with the quality assurance process for SFE's accredited standards and assessments.

© SFE 4th February 2016