



Ethics case study

Principle 4: Competence

1. Identify the problem

You are a career adviser with 20 years' experience and employed by a career service. You have worked in the same secondary school for 5 years and have built up a good working relationship with staff and pupils. You enjoy working as a career adviser and you feel that your role is important in helping young people to move onto their next transition stage.

You recently attended training on new interview standards and company procedures to monitor the practice of career advisers. You understood from the training that the company is encouraging career advisers to use the new interview standards for them to reflect on their guidance interviews. The interview standards will also inform team managers of the support that career advisers may need to enhance their skills. The company introduced a procedure to listen to career adviser's interviews either by face to face observations or record interviews on an annual basis. The purpose of this is for managers to not only identify best practice, but also to recognise guidance practice that is inconsistent or unethical. Your company has made all career advisers aware that further observations will take place if support has been identified.

The following week you have been asked to record a guidance interview by your team manager; and to self-assess against the interview standards. You do not feel comfortable in being asked to record an interview and certainly not to listen back to your own interview. You just wish that you were left alone to get on with the job, you have so much experience and you don't see the point of changing your practice.

You decide to select a 'good' year 11 pupil to interview who agreed to be recorded. You had spoken to the pupil when you booked the interview and found out that she was interested in Teaching. You felt comfortable that you would be able to help this client and would have the opportunity to show your manager that you have good guidance skills and can be left alone for another year.

Post interview you reflected on the interview recording and used the interview standards. It became quite clear whilst listening that many of the standards had not been met. It became quite evident that you dominated the interview by talking at the client. The client became less engaged as the interview progressed. You agreed to help the client to look at her career idea, but had not explored into enough depth of the reason she was looking at teaching. The interview focussed on the client's presented need and became an information and advice interaction, not a guidance interview. You spent too much time giving information on qualifications required and how to train as a teacher. The interview became adviser led and you recognised that you had ignored the interview standards and just followed your own agenda and the interview approach that you normally follow.

What is the problem?

Professional: You recognised that until now you have not been monitoring your own performance as a guidance practitioner and your approach in supporting clients has not been ethical.

Organisation: Interview standards have been developed to help career advisers to reflect and improve interview practice within the organisation; however has enough support been given to support career advisers to help with their understanding of the new interview standards?

2. Apply the code of ethics

There are number codes of ethics principles that can apply to this example:

Principle 4: (Competence) states that

Members must monitor and maintain their fitness to practice at a level that enables them to provide and effective service.

Members must represent their professional competencies, training and experience accurately and function within their boundaries of their training and experience.

Principle 2: (Accountability) states that

Members must promote access to career development activities and services in range of ways that are appropriate and ensure inclusions

Principle 6: (Continuous Professional Development) states that:

Members must maintain their professional competence, knowledge and skills through participation in continuous professional development informed by reflective practice and the NOS: Career Development

Principle 7: (Duty of care – to clients, colleagues, organisations and self) states that:

- Members have a duty of care and are expected always to act in the best interests of their clients.
- Members must fulfil their obligations and duties to their employer (where applicable), except where to do so would compromise the best interests of clients.
- Members have a duty of care to themselves, both in terms of their personal integrity, personal safety and their capacity to practice in order to provide an effective service to clients.

3. Review the relevant professional literature

What is meant by competency?

CEDEFOP Report Professionalising career guidance: practitioner competences and qualification routes in Europe (2009) the following definitions are provided,

- **Cognitive competence**, involving the use of theory and concepts, as well as informal tacit knowledge gained experientially;
- **Functional competence** (skills or know-how), involving those things that a person should be able to do when they are functioning in a given area of work, learning or social activity;
- **Personal competence**, involving knowing how to conduct oneself in a specific situation;
- **Ethical competence**, involving the possession of certain personal and professional values.

4. Consult with experienced professional colleagues and/or supervisors and/or relevant bodies.

- **Team Manager** would be able to provide constructive feedback on your performance, identify your development needs and review your performance. Regularity of these can be reviewed as your confidence returns.
- **An expert coach.** The role of a coach/mentor could be the responsibility of the team manager within the organisation, although it could also be an individual working within your organisation that has been trained as a coach to work with staff to enhance their performance skills. They would support staff member using coaching techniques and tailoring their support to meet the needs of the individual. They will provide opportunities to coach individuals on a 1:1 or a small group setting. The support will cease once the staff member have met their development goals.
- **Colleagues.** It would be beneficial to consult a colleague that has been through a similar position and how they have now progressed in their practice.
- **Peer observations.** This is not a substitute to being observed by a team manager, but observing another career adviser that you respect would allow you to see different ways of delivering a guidance interview, questioning styles, tools and techniques being used. Peer observations can also be useful way of being observed in a supportive environment and having feedback on your practice other than your team manager.
- **CDI mentoring service.** As a mentee you will be paired up by with CDI trained mentor. The role of the mentor is to respond to the development needs of the mentee. "Mentees will all have different needs: you may want to talk through your own career development; use a mentor as a sounding board to talk through issues you are currently facing at work or you may be looking for support on particular topics. Topics could include but are not limited to: working with clients, ethical practice, challenging clients/ SEND clients; theory and practice" (CDI newsletter 2nd June 2017). You will be working with a mentor external to your organisation, the service is in confidence.

5. Potential course of action

- Continue recording interviews to help with your self-assessment against the new interview standards or ask to be observed by your manager.
- Agree to meet with the manager to receive feedback and adopt any actions that you can engage in to help improve your practice.
- Engage the services of an expert mentor or coach within the organisation.
- Participate in the CDI mentoring programme.
- Carry out peer observations with colleagues that you feel comfortable with and have been recommended as a good practitioner.
- Attend training on guidance skills within the organisation or sessions arranged by the CDI.
- Look at the CDI Career Matters magazine to get hints and tips on interviewing.

6. Select the most appropriate course of action

It would be useful initially to record further interviews just to check whether it is a one off problem and to help you become more familiar with the interview standards.

7. Evaluate the selected course of action

Test of competency: You feel that this would be helpful as it allows you to identify areas that you need support, plus it will also demonstrate that you are monitoring your practice and that you are taking into account the training and interview standards are being adopted in your practice.

Test of accountability: You are starting to take ownership of your career development

Test of Continuous Professional Development: You are reflecting on your interview practice and taking actions to ensure that you improve your practice and recognise the importance of maintaining professional competence.

Test of duty of care – to clients, colleagues, organisation and self: You feel that this will ensure that you are providing the best service to your clients, it meets the organisation requirements expected from you as a career adviser and your will integrity as a career adviser will be recognised.

8. Implement a course of action

- You have carried out further self-reflection of your career interview and you have recognised you would benefit in having further support in helping improve your interview practice. However you recognise yourself that it is difficult to accept support, especially as you are looked upon with high regard from your colleagues.
- You have arranged to meet with your team manager to discuss the recordings and share your self-reflection notes. This helped your discussion and established whether your reflective notes coincided with the manager's feedback. Having an honest, transparent discussion was helpful in agreeing a plan to support and improve your practice.

- It had been agreed for you to attend refresher training on guidance skills and to have support from a coach. This will allow you to reflect on how you apply your skills into practice.
- You agreed with your team manager that you would like to be observed or to submit recordings on a more regular basis.
- You have found having time to reflect on your practice has been helpful and you would like to continue to do this.

9. Monitor and evaluate outcome

- You learnt no matter the length of time you have worked as a career adviser, the importance of keeping your own CPD updated is essential to ensure that you give best practice to your clients. You have realised that you have picked up bad habits over the years. These bad habits now need to be changed to best practice habits.
- You have recognised that you have to be accountable for your own development, by doing this you are working ethically.
- You also recognise that providing best practice for your client can result in positive outcomes.
- Having time to reflect on your practice is important, allowing you to keep a check on your practice.
- You should recognise and use the CPD support that is available within the organisation or the CDI.