

## A Core Competence Framework When Working With Clients' Religious/Spiritual Issues in Clinical Practice

© Heather Churchill 2021

In Partnership with the Association of Christian Counsellors

Over the years I have become more and more convinced of the need to have a Core Competence Framework in the UK which specifically provides guidance to therapists when their clients' religious/spiritual issues emerge in clinical practice. As a result of this conviction, and as part of my further studies, during 2019, I started to draft out a '*Core Competence Framework when working with clients' religious/spiritual issues in clinical practice*'.

In order to produce the framework, I have drawn on several existing models, theories and frameworks (nearly all emanating from the USA), which provided recommendations as to how practitioners can ethically and competently address their clients' religious/spiritual issues in clinical practice, and these sources are listed at the end of the framework. I have also drawn on my experience with clients, together with the numerous discussions, debates and reflections that I have undertaken with students, tutors and colleagues over many years in order to set out 27 core competences that I believe are relevant for a UK audience and vital to be included in a Competence Framework.

## Process of Development

Having produced the first draft of a '*Core Competence Framework*', I submitted an article for the 2019 summer edition of *Accord*, which was entitled '*Core competences for working with a client's religious/spiritual issues in clinical practice*'. Following the publication of this article, Kathy Spooner, the then Director of Counselling and Psychotherapy of the ACC and now CEO of the organisation, contacted me and asked me to consider whether I would be interested in a leading a collaborative project, initiated by the ACC, which would facilitate a number of senior Christian counselling practitioners in the UK to peer review and scrutinise the framework I had produced, and to make suggestions and recommendations for further improvement.

I was very interested in this idea and delighted to learn that a number of expert practitioners expressed an interest in being involved in the task, including, Dr Owen Ashley, Dr Martyn Baker, Dr Roger Bretherton, Professor Christopher Cook, Dr Precious Koce, Richard Lahey-James, Sue Monckton-Rickett, Dr Janet Penny, Gwyn Pritchard, Kathy Spooner and Professor William West. The aforementioned practitioners provided feedback on my draft Framework and then several: Dr Martyn Baker, Dr Precious Koce, Sue Monckton-Rickett, Dr Janet Penny, Gwyn Pritchard, Kathy Spooner, Professor William West and I, met together by Zoom, in order to have two 'round table discussions' (19<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and 10<sup>th</sup> October 2020) to make further recommendations to improve the Framework. I am immensely grateful for the time they freely gave in scrutinising the Framework and for their wisdom, insights and suggested amendments, all of which have been reflected in the Framework.

The competencies in the framework fall naturally into four key domains: Relational Communication, Knowledge and Skills, Self-awareness and Reflective Practice, and Supervision. These are set out in the Competence Framework document.



*Heather Churchill*

Heather Churchill

March 2021