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Inclusion and Ethical Care in the Counselling Professions

A Mixed-Methods Evaluation of a CPD Workshop at Reflect On Academy

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Ethical care begins with inclusion, with noticing who is in the room, who is missing, and how we create spaces where every person feels seen, respected, and safe enough to speak." – J. McClymont (2026)

ABSTRACT

This mixed-methods evaluation explored participants' experiences of the *Inclusion and Ethical Care in the Counselling Professions* CPD workshop delivered at Reflect On Academy in April 2026. The workshop focused on inclusion, the Equality Act 2010, value-free counselling, informed consent, confidentiality, therapist values and bias, and ethical decision-making. Twenty usable questionnaire responses were analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.

Quantitative findings indicated high levels of satisfaction, with 90% rating the workshop 4 or 5 for usefulness and 95% rating the small-group format 4 or 5. Qualitative analysis identified four overarching themes: Inclusion as Active Practice; Legal and Ethical Literacy; Value-Free Counselling and Therapist Bias; and Ethical Complexity in Practice.

The findings suggest that the workshop provided a valuable space for reflective dialogue, ethical inquiry, and shared learning. Participants valued the opportunity to explore complex issues collaboratively and expressed interest in further CPD focusing on practical ethical application. Implications for practice and recommendations for future CPD development are discussed.

Keywords: inclusion, ethical care, counselling, psychotherapy, Equality Act 2010, informed consent, confidentiality, therapist bias, CPD, mixed-methods evaluation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Counselling and psychotherapy place significant emphasis on ethical practice, reflective awareness, and ongoing professional development. Practitioners are required to engage with complex issues relating to inclusion, equality, diversity, legal frameworks, and the relational dynamics that shape therapeutic work.

The *Inclusion and Ethical Care* CPD workshop at Reflect On Academy was designed to create a reflective space where counsellors, trainees, and helping professionals could explore these themes collaboratively. The workshop addressed inclusion, the Equality Act 2010, value-free counselling, informed consent, confidentiality, and therapist values and bias.

As the workshop covered areas central to ethical practice, evaluating participants experiences is important for understanding its impact and informing future CPD development. This study therefore examines participants' reflections, learning, and perceived value of the workshop.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Inclusion and Anti-Discriminatory Practice

Inclusion has become an increasingly important focus within counselling and psychotherapy, reflecting wider social, cultural, legal, and professional developments that have reshaped expectations regarding equality, diversity, and ethical care. While inclusion is often associated with access and representation, contemporary counselling literature increasingly argues that genuinely inclusive practice extends beyond policy compliance or organisational statements. Rather, it requires practitioners to engage critically with issues of power, identity, privilege, bias, oppression, and structural inequality, recognising how these factors shape both therapeutic relationships and clients' lived experiences (Ahmed, 2026; Black et al., 2023).

Recent authors emphasise that inclusion is not simply about acknowledging difference but about creating therapeutic environments in which individuals experience belonging, safety, and equitable participation. Ahmed (2026) argues that counsellors must embed context, diversity, and equality throughout practice rather than viewing them as discrete areas of competence. Similarly, Black et al. (2023) highlight the importance of intersectional, anti-racist, and intercultural approaches that recognise the complexity of identity and challenge assumptions rooted in dominant cultural perspectives. Ellis (2024) further suggests that meaningful conversations about race and difference

require practitioners to tolerate discomfort, remain curious, and critically reflect on their own assumptions and biases as part of ethical practice.

Questions of inclusion are also closely connected to issues of power. Proctor (2017) argues that power operates within all therapeutic relationships and that ethical practice requires counsellors to remain aware of both visible and less visible power dynamics that may influence the therapeutic process. Inclusion, therefore, is not understood as a fixed achievement but as an ongoing process of reflection, learning, and adaptation in response to changing social contexts and the diverse experiences of clients.

Professional guidance reflects this evolving understanding. The BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions (2026) emphasises that practitioners should actively promote equality, value diversity, challenge discrimination, and work towards creating inclusive therapeutic relationships. Ethical practice therefore requires counsellors to engage not only with individual client needs but also with broader questions of social justice, belonging, accessibility, and cultural responsiveness. Collectively, this literature positions inclusion as a dynamic ethical commitment that extends beyond individual competence to encompass continual self-reflection, professional development, and responsiveness to the wider social context in which counselling takes place.

2.2 Legal and Ethical Frameworks

Ethical counselling practice is underpinned by both professional values and legal responsibilities. While legislation establishes minimum standards of practice, ethical frameworks encourage practitioners to exercise professional judgement in situations where competing responsibilities, values, and contextual factors may not be resolved through legislation alone. Competent practice therefore requires counsellors to understand not only what the law requires, but also how ethical principles can guide decision-making in complex and often uncertain situations.

The Equality Act 2010 provides the principal legal framework protecting individuals from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation on the basis of protected characteristics. Within counselling and psychotherapy, an understanding of this legislation is fundamental to promoting equitable access to services and ensuring that therapeutic practice is inclusive, respectful, and free from unlawful discrimination. However, legal compliance should be viewed as the starting point rather than the endpoint of ethical practice.

The BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions (2026) extends beyond legal obligations by emphasising values such as respect, integrity, beneficence, and accountability. It encourages practitioners to recognise the uniqueness of each client, actively value diversity, challenge discrimination, and engage in ongoing self-reflection

and professional development. Ethical decision-making is therefore understood as an active and reflective process rather than the application of fixed rules.

Bond (2015) argues that ethical dilemmas frequently arise when professional responsibilities appear to conflict, requiring counsellors to balance client autonomy, confidentiality, safeguarding responsibilities, organisational expectations, and wider public interests. Such situations rarely present straightforward answers and instead call for thoughtful reflection, consultation, and supervision. Consequently, ethical competence is best understood as the integration of legal knowledge, professional values, critical thinking, and reflective practice.

This relationship between legislation, ethical principles, and professional judgement formed a central focus of the Inclusion and Ethical Care workshop, providing participants with opportunities to explore how these frameworks inform everyday counselling practice and ethical decision-making.

2.3 Therapist Values, Bias and Reflective Practice

The concept of value-free counselling has been widely debated within counselling and psychotherapy. While person-centred theory encourages practitioners to offer unconditional positive regard and avoid imposing their own beliefs or values on clients (Rogers, 1957), contemporary literature increasingly recognises that complete value neutrality is unlikely to be achievable. Rather than striving to eliminate personal values, counsellors are encouraged to develop an awareness of how their beliefs, identities, experiences, and cultural positioning may influence the therapeutic relationship.

Ahmed (2026) argues that effective counselling requires practitioners to embed context, diversity, and equality throughout their practice, recognising that therapeutic work is always situated within wider social and cultural realities. Similarly, Ellis (2024) suggests that engaging authentically with issues of race, identity, and difference requires practitioners to examine their own assumptions, tolerate discomfort, and remain open to challenge. This perspective shifts the emphasis from attempting to be value free towards cultivating cultural humility, reflexivity, and ethical self-awareness.

The importance of self-awareness has long been recognised within multicultural counselling. Sue, Arredondo and McDavis (1992) argue that counsellors inevitably bring their own cultural identities, assumptions, and values into therapeutic work. Consequently, multicultural competence begins not with knowledge of others but with awareness of oneself and an understanding of how personal perspectives may shape professional judgement. More recent intercultural approaches similarly emphasise that ethical practice requires practitioners to recognise the complexity of intersecting identities and to remain responsive to the diverse lived experiences of clients (Black et al., 2023).

Reflective practice provides one of the principal means through which this awareness can be developed. Schön (1983) describes reflective practitioners as professionals who critically examine their responses while engaged in practice, enabling them to learn from uncertainty and complexity rather than relying solely on technical expertise. Bolton (2014) further argues that reflective practice supports ethical decision-making by encouraging practitioners to question assumptions, consider alternative perspectives, and develop greater professional self-awareness. These principles are reinforced within the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions (2026), which identifies self-reflection, supervision, and continuing professional development as essential components of competent and ethical practice.

Taken together, this literature suggests that ethical counselling is not characterised by the absence of values, but by practitioners' willingness to critically examine their own values, recognise potential biases, and remain accountable for the ways in which these may influence therapeutic relationships. This understanding formed a central theme of the Inclusion and Ethical Care workshop, where participants were encouraged to reflect on the relationship between personal values, professional ethics, and inclusive practice.

2.4 Continuing Professional Development and Reflective Learning

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is widely recognised as an essential component of maintaining professional competence within counselling and psychotherapy. Beyond updating theoretical knowledge, effective CPD provides opportunities for practitioners to critically examine their practice, deepen ethical understanding, and develop the reflective capacity required to respond to increasingly complex client needs. Within a rapidly changing social and professional landscape, CPD plays an important role in supporting counsellors to remain responsive to evolving legislation, professional guidance, and diverse client experiences.

Adult learning theories suggest that professional development is most effective when knowledge is integrated with reflection and experience. Jarvis (2004) argues that meaningful learning occurs through the interaction between experience, reflection, and new understanding, while Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory proposes that learning develops through a continuous cycle of experience, reflective observation, conceptualisation, and application. Rather than viewing learning as the acquisition of information alone, these approaches emphasise the importance of critical reflection in transforming knowledge into professional practice.

Collaborative learning further enhances this process by creating opportunities for practitioners to explore different perspectives, challenge assumptions, and learn from the experiences of others. Wenger (1998) describes learning as a social process that develops within **Communities of Practice**, where knowledge is constructed

collectively through participation, dialogue, and shared professional endeavour. Similarly, Raymundo (2020) highlights the value of collaborative discussion in promoting engagement, creativity, and reflective thinking. Workshops that combine theoretical input with facilitated discussion therefore offer opportunities not only to develop knowledge but also to strengthen professional judgement and ethical decision-making.

Within counselling and psychotherapy, CPD focused on inclusion and ethical care is particularly significant because these topics rarely present simple or definitive answers. Questions relating to equality, diversity, therapist values, confidentiality, informed consent, and ethical decision-making require practitioners to engage with ambiguity, complexity, and multiple perspectives. Opportunities to discuss these issues collaboratively can support the development of greater confidence, cultural responsiveness, and ethical reflexivity.

Despite the recognised importance of CPD within the counselling professions, relatively little published research has explored participants' experiences of workshops specifically addressing inclusion and ethical care. Evaluating such workshops can therefore contribute to a better understanding of how reflective learning environments influence practitioners' knowledge, confidence, and professional development. The present study seeks to contribute to this emerging area by exploring participants' experiences of an Inclusion and Ethical Care workshop delivered at Reflect On Academy.

2.5 Informed Consent and Confidentiality

Informed consent and confidentiality are fundamental principles of ethical counselling practice and are central to establishing trust within the therapeutic relationship. While informed consent is often associated with obtaining a client's agreement at the beginning of therapy, contemporary ethical guidance increasingly recognises it as an ongoing relational process that develops throughout the course of counselling. Clients should be provided with sufficient information to make informed decisions about their participation in therapy, including an understanding of the therapeutic process, the counsellor's role, potential limitations, and circumstances in which confidentiality may need to be breached.

Confidentiality is widely recognised as one of the cornerstones of effective therapeutic practice because it enables clients to disclose sensitive and personal experiences within a safe and trusting environment. However, confidentiality is not absolute. Bond (2015) argues that counsellors are frequently required to balance their commitment to client privacy with legal, ethical, and safeguarding responsibilities. Decisions concerning confidentiality therefore require careful professional judgement, particularly where there are concerns relating to serious harm, risk, or statutory obligations.

The BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions (2026) emphasises that practitioners should communicate clearly about the limits of confidentiality and ensure that informed consent remains an ongoing dialogue rather than a single contractual

event. Maintaining trust therefore depends not only on protecting confidential information but also on engaging clients in transparent conversations about how information may be used, recorded, and shared throughout the therapeutic process. Taken together, informed consent and confidentiality illustrate the dynamic nature of ethical practice. Rather than representing fixed procedures, they require counsellors to continually balance ethical principles, legal responsibilities, and the unique circumstances of each therapeutic relationship. These issues formed an important area of discussion within the Inclusion and Ethical Care workshop, encouraging participants to consider how ethical principles are translated into everyday counselling practice.

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to evaluate participants' experiences of the Inclusion and Ethical Care in the Counselling Professions Continuing Professional Development (CPD) workshop delivered at Reflect On Academy. Specifically, the study sought to explore how participants experienced the workshop as a reflective learning environment, examine its perceived contribution to professional knowledge and ethical practice, and identify factors that supported meaningful learning and future professional development. In doing so, the study aimed to contribute to the growing evidence base regarding the value of CPD that integrates inclusion, ethical care, and reflective dialogue within the counselling professions.

4. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim

To explore participants' experiences of the Inclusion and Ethical Care in the Counselling Professions CPD workshop and evaluate its contribution to reflective learning, ethical awareness, and professional development within the counselling professions.

Objectives

The study sought to

- Evaluate participants' overall experiences and satisfaction with the workshop;
- Explore the perceived relevance of the workshop to participants' counselling practice and professional development;
- Identify the key themes, concepts, and learning experiences that participants considered most significant;
- Examine how participation influenced or deepened participants' understanding of inclusion, ethical care, therapist values, informed consent, confidentiality, and professional responsibility;
- Identify the aspects of the workshop that participants intended to carry forward into their future practice;
- Explore participants' recommendations for future Continuing Professional Development relating to inclusion and ethical care.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods evaluation design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences of the Inclusion and Ethical Care in the Counselling Professions CPD workshop. Mixed-methods research enables numerical data to be interpreted alongside participants' written reflections, offering both breadth and depth of understanding (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Within this study, descriptive statistics were used to summarise participants' ratings of different aspects of the workshop, while qualitative responses were analysed thematically using the approach developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Combining these methods allowed the researchers to examine not only participants' levels of satisfaction but also the meanings they attached to their learning experiences and the impact of the workshop on their professional thinking.

5.2 Participants

Participants were attendees at the Inclusion and Ethical Care in the Counselling Professions Continuing Professional Development (CPD) workshop delivered by Reflect On Academy in April 2026. A total of 35 practitioners attended the workshop, representing a range of professional backgrounds, including trainee counsellors, qualified counsellors, psychotherapists, and other helping professionals.

Following the workshop, participants were invited to complete an anonymous evaluation questionnaire. Twenty completed questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of approximately 57%, and were included in the analysis. Participation was entirely voluntary, and all responses were anonymised prior to analysis.

Although the study involved a relatively small sample drawn from a single CPD workshop, the response rate provided sufficient quantitative and qualitative data to support an in-depth evaluation of participants' experiences. As the purpose of the study was to evaluate a specific professional learning event rather than to generalise findings across the wider counselling profession, the sample was considered appropriate for the aims of the study.

5.3 Data Collection

Data were collected using an anonymous post-workshop questionnaire designed to evaluate participants' experiences of the event. The questionnaire incorporated both closed and open-ended questions, enabling participants to provide quantitative ratings alongside qualitative reflections.

Closed questions explored participants' perceptions of the workshop's usefulness, relevance, and learning environment using rating scales. Open-ended questions invited participants to reflect on the themes that had most influenced their thinking, aspects of the workshop they intended to carry forward into practice, and suggestions for future Continuing Professional Development. This combination of question types enabled the evaluation to capture both measurable outcomes and richer narrative accounts of participants' learning experiences.

5.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative responses were analysed using descriptive statistics to summarise participants' ratings of key aspects of the workshop, including perceived usefulness and the value of the small-group learning format. Frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency were used to provide an overview of participant responses.

Qualitative responses were analysed using the six-phase thematic analysis framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Responses were read repeatedly to achieve familiarity with the data before initial codes were generated. Codes were subsequently reviewed, refined, and organised into broader themes that captured shared patterns of meaning across participants' accounts. The resulting themes were reviewed against the complete dataset to ensure they accurately reflected participants' experiences and addressed the aims of the study.

5.5 Trustworthiness and Rigour

Although this study was designed as an evaluation rather than a large-scale research project, several steps were taken to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings. Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed together, allowing findings to be considered from multiple perspectives. Qualitative themes were developed through repeated engagement with the data and reviewed against participants' responses to ensure they accurately reflected recurring patterns of meaning. The integration of numerical ratings with participants' written reflections strengthened the credibility of the findings by allowing convergence between quantitative and qualitative evidence (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

5.6 Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted as part of Reflect On Academy's evaluation of its Inclusion and Ethical Care in the Counselling Professions Continuing Professional Development (CPD) workshop. The evaluation was designed to explore participants' experiences of the workshop and to inform the ongoing development of Reflect On Academy's CPD provision.

Participation in the evaluation was voluntary, and participants were invited to complete an anonymous post-workshop questionnaire following the event. Of the 35 workshop participants, 20 returned completed questionnaires for analysis, representing a

response rate of approximately 57%. No identifying personal information was collected, and all responses were anonymised prior to analysis to protect participants' confidentiality and privacy.

The evaluation focused on participants' reflections on the workshop rather than personal therapeutic experiences. Findings are presented in aggregate form, with qualitative comments reported anonymously to ensure that individual participants cannot be identified. Data were analysed solely for the purposes of evaluating the workshop and contributing to the development of future professional learning opportunities.

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles outlined in the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions (2026), including respect for participants, integrity, confidentiality, and responsible stewardship of data. Throughout the evaluation, care was taken to ensure that participants' contributions were represented accurately and respectfully, reflecting the values of inclusion, ethical practice, and reflective inquiry that underpinned the workshop itself.

6. RESULTS

The findings are presented in two sections. Quantitative findings provide an overview of participants' evaluations of the workshop, while qualitative findings explore participants' reflections on the aspects of the workshop that were most meaningful and influential to their professional practice.

6.1 Quantitative Findings

The workshop was perceived as highly valuable, with 90% of participants rating its overall usefulness as either 4 or 5 on a five-point scale. Similarly, 95% of respondents rated the small-group learning format as 4 or 5, suggesting that participants particularly valued opportunities for discussion, shared reflection, and collaborative exploration of ethical issues.

These findings indicate that participants viewed both the content of the workshop and its interactive delivery as important contributors to their learning experience. While the quantitative findings demonstrate a high level of satisfaction, the qualitative data provide greater insight into the aspects of the workshop that participants considered most meaningful.

Table 1: Summary of Quantitative Findings

Domain	Mean Rating	Modal Rating
Usefulness of Workshop	4.4	5
Small-Group Format	4.5	5

90% rated usefulness as 4 or 5. 95% rated the small-group format as 4 or 5.

6.2 Qualitative Findings

Analysis of participants' written responses identified **four interconnected themes** that reflected participants' experiences of the workshop and its influence on their professional thinking. Rather than existing independently, these themes frequently overlapped, illustrating the interconnected nature of inclusion, ethical care, professional identity, and reflective practice within counselling.

Theme 1: Inclusion as Active Practice

Participants consistently described inclusion as an active and ongoing process rather than a theoretical concept or organisational aspiration. Responses suggested that participants viewed inclusion as something enacted through everyday therapeutic practice, requiring continuous self-awareness, openness, and responsiveness to individual client experiences.

Many participants reflected on the importance of recognising diversity beyond visible characteristics and acknowledged the need to create therapeutic environments where clients experience genuine belonging, safety, and respect. Several respondents described the workshop as encouraging them to think more deeply about how inclusion is demonstrated in their own professional practice rather than simply understood conceptually.

Theme 2: Legal and Ethical Literacy

Participants identified the workshop as increasing their understanding of the legal and ethical frameworks that underpin counselling practice, particularly in relation to the Equality Act (2010), ethical responsibilities, and professional accountability.
Several respondents reported that the discussions helped clarify areas where they had previously lacked confidence or knowledge, particularly regarding the relationship between legal obligations and ethical decision-making. Rather than viewing legislation as separate from therapeutic practice, participants increasingly recognised the importance of integrating legal awareness with professional judgement and ethical reasoning.

Theme 3: Value-Free Counselling and Therapist Bias

The discussion surrounding value-free counselling generated considerable reflection among participants. Responses indicated widespread recognition that complete value neutrality is unlikely to be achievable within therapeutic relationships. Instead, participants emphasised the importance of developing greater awareness of personal values, assumptions, and potential biases.

Many respondents described leaving the workshop with a heightened appreciation of reflective practice, supervision, and ongoing self-examination as essential safeguards for ethical counselling. Participants frequently acknowledged that recognising one's

own perspectives was viewed as more important than attempting to deny their existence.

Theme 4: Ethical Complexity in Practice

Participants described ethical practice as involving continual judgement rather than the application of straightforward rules. Discussions relating to informed consent, confidentiality, professional boundaries, safeguarding, autonomy, and power illustrated the complexity of everyday counselling practice.

Rather than seeking definitive answers, participants valued opportunities to explore ethical dilemmas collaboratively through discussion and shared reflection. Responses suggested that the workshop increased participants' confidence in approaching complex ethical situations by encouraging thoughtful consideration of multiple perspectives rather than reliance on prescriptive solutions.

7. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study suggest that participants experienced the Inclusion and Ethical Care in the Counselling Professions workshop as considerably more than a Continuing Professional Development event focused on the acquisition of knowledge. Rather, participants described the workshop as a reflective learning environment that encouraged critical dialogue, challenged existing assumptions, and supported deeper engagement with the ethical, relational, and professional complexities of counselling practice.

The quantitative findings demonstrated consistently high levels of participant satisfaction, with both the workshop content and the small-group learning format receiving very positive evaluations. These findings support previous research suggesting that collaborative learning environments enhance professional engagement and reflective learning (Jarvis, 2004; Wenger, 1998). Participants appeared to value opportunities not only to receive information but also to explore ethical dilemmas collectively through discussion, reflection, and the sharing of diverse professional perspectives.

The qualitative findings further reinforce contemporary literature emphasising that inclusion extends beyond policy compliance towards an active commitment to ethical, culturally responsive practice (Ahmed, 2026; Black et al., 2023). Participants' reflections suggested an increased awareness of how issues of identity, power, bias, and diversity influence therapeutic relationships, echoing Ellis' (2024) argument that meaningful engagement with difference requires practitioners to examine their own assumptions and remain open to challenge.

Discussion surrounding value-free counselling generated particularly rich reflection. Participants broadly recognised that complete value neutrality is unlikely to be achievable, instead emphasising the importance of self-awareness, reflexivity, and supervision. This finding aligns with the work of Sue, Arredondo and McDavis (1992),

who argue that counsellors inevitably bring their own cultural identities and values into therapeutic relationships, and with the BACP Ethical Framework (2026), which positions self-reflection and ongoing professional development as essential components of ethical practice.

Participants also highlighted the complexity of applying ethical principles relating to informed consent, confidentiality, safeguarding, and professional judgement within everyday counselling practice. Rather than seeking definitive answers, participants valued opportunities to explore uncertainty and ethical complexity collaboratively. This supports Bond's (2015) argument that ethical competence involves balancing competing responsibilities through reflective professional judgement rather than relying upon fixed procedural rules.

Overall, the findings suggest that CPD addressing inclusion and ethical care is most effective when it integrates contemporary scholarship, legal and ethical frameworks, critical reflection, and collaborative discussion. The workshop appeared to facilitate not only knowledge acquisition but also professional reflexivity, encouraging participants to consider how inclusion and ethical care are enacted within their own counselling practice.

8. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The findings have several implications for counselling practice, professional training, and Continuing Professional Development.

Firstly, inclusion should be understood as an ongoing professional commitment rather than a discrete area of knowledge. Developing inclusive practice requires continual reflection on issues of identity, power, culture, bias, and accessibility throughout therapeutic work.

Secondly, the findings reinforce the importance of integrating legal knowledge with ethical decision-making. Understanding legislation such as the Equality Act (2010) provides an essential framework for practice; however, ethical competence also requires practitioners to exercise professional judgement when responding to complex and often ambiguous situations.

Thirdly, participants' reflections emphasised the continuing importance of supervision and reflective practice in supporting awareness of therapist values and potential bias. Creating opportunities for practitioners to examine assumptions within supportive professional environments remains an important safeguard for ethical practice.

Finally, the study highlights the value of CPD that combines theoretical input with facilitated discussion and collaborative reflection. Participants consistently valued opportunities to engage critically with real-world ethical dilemmas, suggesting that experiential learning approaches may enhance both professional confidence and ethical competence.

9. LIMITATIONS

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings of this study. The evaluation was based on responses from a relatively small sample of participants attending a single Continuing Professional Development workshop delivered by one organisation. Consequently, the findings cannot be assumed to represent the experiences of all counselling practitioners or CPD programmes.

Participation in the evaluation was voluntary, resulting in a response rate of approximately 57%. It is therefore possible that participants who chose to complete the questionnaire held different perspectives from those who did not respond. In addition, the study relied upon participants' self-reported perceptions immediately following the workshop and did not examine whether learning was sustained or translated into longer-term changes in professional practice.

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insight into participants' experiences of a CPD workshop focusing on inclusion and ethical care and contributes to the growing evidence base concerning reflective professional learning within the counselling professions.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE CPD

The findings suggest several opportunities for the future development of Continuing Professional Development relating to inclusion and ethical care.

Participants expressed interest in opportunities for more in-depth exploration of complex ethical issues. Future workshops may therefore benefit from extended delivery formats, including full-day events or multi-session programmes that allow greater time for discussion, reflection, and applied learning.

Participants also highlighted the value of practical application. Future CPD could incorporate additional case studies, ethical dilemmas, role-play activities, and reflective exercises that encourage practitioners to apply ethical principles within realistic counselling scenarios.

The findings further suggest ongoing demand for CPD exploring topics including neurodiversity, trauma-informed practice, supervision, therapist bias, power, intersectionality, and ethical decision-making. These areas reflect the increasingly complex contexts within which counsellors practise and reinforce the importance of providing professional learning opportunities that remain responsive to contemporary developments within the profession.

Finally, future evaluations could adopt longitudinal designs to explore how participation in CPD influences counselling practice over time. Examining the longer-term impact of reflective learning may provide a deeper understanding of how workshops contribute to sustained professional development and ethical practice.

11. CONCLUSION

This study evaluated participants' experiences of the Inclusion and Ethical Care in the Counselling Professions Continuing Professional Development (CPD) workshop delivered at Reflect On Academy. The findings indicate that participants experienced the workshop as more than a source of professional knowledge; rather, it provided a reflective learning environment that encouraged critical dialogue, challenged assumptions, and supported deeper engagement with the ethical and relational complexities of counselling practice.

The quantitative findings demonstrated high levels of participant satisfaction with both the workshop content and the collaborative small-group learning format. The qualitative findings further illustrated that participants valued opportunities to explore inclusion, ethical care, therapist values, informed consent, confidentiality, and professional judgement within a supportive and reflective professional community. Collectively, these findings reinforce the importance of CPD that integrates contemporary scholarship, ethical inquiry, and collaborative discussion to support professional growth.

The study also highlights the increasingly interconnected nature of inclusion and ethical practice within contemporary counselling. Participants' reflections suggest that ethical competence extends beyond knowledge of legislation and professional guidance to include ongoing self-awareness, critical reflection, cultural responsiveness, and a willingness to engage with complexity and uncertainty. These findings support current literature emphasising that ethical practice is a dynamic and reflective process rather than the application of fixed procedures.

Although the evaluation was limited to a single workshop within one organisation, it contributes to the growing evidence base concerning reflective professional learning within the counselling professions. It demonstrates the value of creating professional learning environments where practitioners are encouraged not only to acquire knowledge but also to question assumptions, examine practice, and learn collaboratively. Future research could build upon these findings by exploring the longer-term impact of CPD on counselling practice and professional development across a broader range of settings.

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APPENDIX A – WORKSHOP EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

The evaluation questionnaire included both quantitative and qualitative questions designed to explore participants' experiences of the Inclusion and Ethical Care in the Counselling Professions Continuing Professional Development (CPD) workshop delivered by Reflect On Academy.

Quantitative Questions

- What is your current professional role?
- On a scale of 1–5, how would you rate the overall usefulness of the workshop?
- On a scale of 1–5, how would you rate the small-group learning format?

Qualitative Questions

- What key message or learning has stayed with you following today's workshop?
- What aspect of the workshop did you find most valuable?
- Is there one idea or theme that you intend to carry forward into your professional practice?
- Do you have any suggestions for improving future workshops?
- Is there anything else you would like to share?

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Data Collection and Preliminary Analysis

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