



# Association of Genetic Nurses and Counsellors

A constituent group of the British Society for Genetic Medicine

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## Private Practice as a Genetic Counsellor: things to think about

### How experienced do you feel in your clinical practice?

Working privately might be a lonely experience if you are the only genetic counsellor or you are 'the genetic counselling expert' in a new DTC company. Think carefully about what is on offer in terms of support so that you are 'safe' to practice. You may feel very differently about this if you are an experienced NHS genetic counsellor with 20 years under your belt of working autonomously as a genetic counsellor versus if you are two years post-GCRB registration.

### Can you access clinical support if needed?

If you are practising according to the AGNC Code of Ethics then you should know your boundaries and limits in terms of clinical knowledge and when to bring in others, e.g. a Clinical Geneticist. Do you have access to this level of clinical support in your private practice?

### Can you access counselling supervision?

If you are practising according to the GCRB Code of Conduct then you should have access to counselling supervision. Ask if your employer will supply this or supply this yourself. It is inappropriate to use NHS counselling supervision for private practice.

### Do you have union membership?

As for all genetic counsellors, whether NHS or private, it is worth being a member of a professional union. Your union membership that covers your practice as an NHS genetic counsellor may not cover private practice, so you need to check. If you are self-employed (rather than employed directly by a company) it is also worth double checking that you are also covered.

### Know your stuff!

Do you feel confident that the clinical utility and validity of the tests being offered by the company you are working for/considering working for, is good enough? Do you feel qualified to make a judgement on this? Part of working within the AGNC code of ethics is about being able to 'provide reliable and expert information'. This means, if the information is being used in a clinical setting, that it has been confirmed in a clinically accredited lab and is reliable enough for patients to base their healthcare on.

### If you haven't yet registered with the GCRB and want to?

You can't use any of your private practice as counting towards GCRB registration, so if you haven't yet registered and you want to, then you need to link in with a regional clinical genetics service in the NHS to do this.

## Practical nuts and bolts

There are lots of practical issues you need to sort out to work privately. E.g. do you have indemnity (you want to be protected if you are sued), if you are self-employed do you have an accountant? Have you heard of the Care Quality Commission? (If not, you need to). The GCRB have put together a great guide for registered genetic counsellors setting up and working in private practice. *We will link this article to it once the GCRB have published their guide.*