



# Contract for Physical Touch Policy

Psychotherapy Institute

## Purpose

In line with Transactional Analysis principles of autonomy, protection, and permission, this policy sets out clear guidelines regarding the use of physical touch within our training and therapeutic environments. The aim is to safeguard all participants, uphold professional standards, and ensure any form of touch is consensual, appropriate, and explicitly contracted.

## Scope

This policy applies to all trainees, trainers, supervisors, and staff members engaged in activities delivered under the Psychotherapy Institute.

## Core Principles

1. **Autonomy** – Each individual has the right to choose whether or not to engage in physical touch, at any time, without pressure or consequence.
2. **Explicit Contracting** – No physical touch should take place without a clear, verbal or written contract.
3. **Contextual Appropriateness** – Touch may only be used when it serves a professional, pedagogical, or therapeutic purpose (e.g., a handshake, a demonstration in body-oriented technique, or supportive grounding with prior consent).
4. **Boundaries** – Touch must always respect professional boundaries, cultural considerations, and power dynamics.
5. **Withdrawal of Consent** – Consent can be withdrawn at any point, verbally or non-verbally, and must be respected immediately



## Contracting Process

- Before any instance of touch (e.g. demonstrations, experiential work, therapeutic interventions), the trainer/therapist must explicitly state the intention and seek permission.
- The participant has full choice to agree, decline, or propose an alternative.
- Where touch forms part of an exercise, participants must have the option to observe only.
- Any agreement to touch is time-limited and specific (e.g., "I agree to you placing your hand on my shoulder while you demonstrate grounding").

## Ethical Safeguards

- No physical touch will ever be used as a surprise, without contracting, or as a substitute for verbal process.
- Touch must never exploit dependency needs, blur professional boundaries, or be used to gratify the practitioner.
- If a participant feels uncomfortable with an interaction, they are encouraged to raise this directly or through the Institute's safeguarding and complaints procedure.

## Training Context

In TA training, this policy also serves as a live example of the Adult-to-Adult contracting **process**, reinforcing the importance of clarity, transparency, and mutual respect.

## Review

This policy will be reviewed annually in line with UKCP, BACP, and EATA standards, and in response to feedback from trainees and trainers.