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BACP Ethical Framework 2026 and AI

A quick guide

If you only have five minutes, this is what the BACP Ethical Framework 2026 says about AI and digital tools, the dates that matter, and what to do about them.

By **Theo Ruby**, Theo Ruby Digital Marketing. Checked against the framework on 27 October 2026.

When do the new BACP rules start?

4 August 2026

Framework published, three-month transition starts.

Midday, Tuesday 3 November 2026

Framework becomes mandatory for all BACP members.

From then

It applies to every tool you use, including ones you started using before November.

What are the five conditions for using AI?

The AI wording sits in core responsibility 2.1(e). Before you use any AI tool, digital tool, or online platform, you need to assess the risk and be able to show five things.

> Start by asking what data the tool will touch, because anything that could identify a client raises the stakes.

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1 You're competent to use the tool

You know what it does, what it gets wrong, and how to check its work.

2 You understand where the data goes

You know how client information is handled and stored, who can see it, how long it's kept, and whether it trains the AI. And you've reduced the risks to confidentiality as far as you can.

3 You're open with clients about it

You tell clients, in plain English, that you use AI or digital tools, including the benefits and the risks.

4 You have informed consent first

You ask before any client's personal data goes into an AI or digital tool. Personal data means anything that could identify someone, not just their name.

5 You're still making the decisions

AI can draft, summarise, and suggest. You decide, you check its output, and you're responsible for what you do with it.

What else changes alongside the AI rules?

Your privacy notice

Clauses 3.1c and 3.1d

It must tell clients about any digital systems, platforms, or tools that store or collect their data. Clients need to agree to these limits on confidentiality.

Your records

Clause 3.2c

They include all communications, notes, and other information about a client, so an AI summary you keep is part of the record.

Your marketing

Clauses 1.1b, 1.2a, and 1.3d

It must be accurate about your services, qualifications, and experience, including anything AI drafts for you.

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No.

Is there a list of BACP-approved AI tools?

The framework doesn't name, approve, or ban any specific tool. If a supplier tells you its product is "BACP approved", ask them to show you where that comes from.

What do I need to do now?

- [ ] List every AI and digital tool that touches your practice, including the ones you use "just for emails".
- [ ] Check each one against the five conditions on page 2.
- [ ] Update your privacy notice to name the digital tools and platforms you use.
- [ ] Add a plain-English consent line to your working agreement for any tool that handles client data.
- [ ] Write a short rationale note for each tool, with a review date.
- [ ] Take your AI use to supervision.
- [ ] Read the framework yourself, and check anything unclear with the BACP Ethical Framework team at efnew@bacp.co.uk.

My summary of a 19-page document, checked against the framework on 27 October 2026. Read the full framework yourself, and see BACP's Preparing for the 2026 Ethical Framework page for videos and resources.

About Theo Ruby

Theo is the founder of Theo Ruby Digital Marketing. He has worked in marketing since 2008 and, since 2018, mainly with therapists, counsellors, hypnotherapists, and psychologists in private practice.

He has spoken for groups including Counsellors' Staffroom, Grow Your Private Practice, and the UK College of Hypnotherapy.

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