

Counselling Data Protection Policy and Privacy Statement

Any personal data provided by you through any means, (e.g. verbal, written, text or in electronic form via email), will be held and processed in accordance with the data protection principles set out in the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation, for the purposes for which you have given your consent, i.e. to provide the services you have requested from me and to meet my legal obligations.

Introduction

As a private practitioner, I am committed to protecting your privacy. When you request to use my service, you will be asked to 'consent' to my processing of your data under the terms of this policy. Please read the following in order to learn more about my privacy policy and my information collection and use practices.

What information do I collect?

Counselling Enquiries

Normally people contact me via email, text or telephone in the first instance. This involves providing me with your name, telephone number/s and email address. During the initial Telephone Assessment, I may then also request your home address, the GP practice to which you are registered and information on your availability, brief therapeutic issues and other details which I deem relevant to processing your enquiry.

Where you have contacted me via other organisation websites, i.e. BACP, Psychology Today, BHTH or Counselling Directory, please also refer to their website for their Data Protection and Privacy Policies.

Forms

At your Initial Consultation I ask you to sign a Client Agreement Contract, which sets out the terms and joint expectations of my service. I will also gain your signed consent for me to store and use your data. You will be informed of this Counselling Data Protection Policy and Privacy Statement available on my website.

Those seeking supervision will be asked to agree to a Supervision Contract plus signed consent for me to store and use your data.

Initial Consultation

At your Initial Consultation I will usually ask about your current personal, social, medical and mental health circumstances, where appropriate. I may also ask about your background and family history, as well as the issues that are affecting you now. I require this information so that I can assess and decide about my offer of counselling to you and to manage the service I provide to you.

Website

Information is collected from you when you make an enquiry via my website. The information I collect is clearly set out in the contact form. I collect this information about you so that I can contact you in response to your enquiry. This electronic data is stored on my personal computer, which requires password-protected authentication, or by reputable service providers using secure internet 'cloud' technology. At no times is your information passed on, sold or rented to any other party. Any data collected via the contact form is done so in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. Further details are available at The Information Commissioners Office Website.

Keeping information about you is very important. However, no data transmission over the internet can be guaranteed to be totally secure. As a result, whilst I take reasonable steps to protect your personal information, I cannot ensure or warrant the security of any information which you send and you do so at your own risk.

What do I use your information for?

I use information held about you in the following ways:

- To provide you with the professional counselling service requested to me.
- To offer suitable counselling appointments.
- To notify you about changes to your appointments and any other relevant changes to my service.
- To administer my service, including the arrangement of appointments and invoices.
- To seek feedback from you on your experience of counselling with me.
- To monitor, evaluate and improve my service to ensure it is provide in the most effective manner for you.
- Within the context of clinical supervision, wherein your identity will always remain protected.

What information do I share?

I will not share any information about you with other organisations or people, **except** in the following circumstances:

- **Consent** – I share your information with professional carers or others whom you have requested or agreed I should contact.
- **Serious Harm** – I may share your information with the relevant authorities if I have reason to believe that this may prevent serious harm being caused to you or another person.
- **Compliance with Law** – I may share your information where I am required to by law or by the regulations and other rules to which I am subject.
- **Event of Death** – In the event of my death, my nominated Clinical Executor has been instructed to access your name, email and contact telephone number/s. My Clinical Supervisor has then been instructed to contact you to communicate basic information about what has happened.

How do I keep your information safe?

All information you provide to me is stored as securely as possible. All paper forms, correspondence and brief clinical notes are kept in a locked filing cabinet. All electronic records are stored on my personal computer, which requires password-protected authentication, or by reputable service providers using secure internet 'cloud' technology.

Your identifiable personal information is kept separately from any session notes and descriptive materials. Contact details and personal details are destroyed 2 weeks after completion of therapy. In line with clinical guidance, any other mandatory documentation is destroyed 7 years after the completion of therapy.

Your Rights

You have the right to ask me to provide a copy of the information held by me in my records. You also have the right to require me to correct any inaccuracies in your information or to pass your information on to another service provider. If you would like to do this then please speak to me, or contact me directly.

You may withdraw your consent for me to hold and process your data at any time. However, if you do this while actively receiving counselling, your counselling may have to end, in accordance with my confidentiality statement in our Client Agreement.

Changes to this Policy

I may edit this policy from time to time. If I make any substantial changes I will notify you direct.

Last Updated January 2020