PRIVACY POLICY

I understand how important your privacy is. I take care to maintain your confidentiality in accordance with current data protection laws (GDPR, 2018) and the ethical guidelines of [The National Counselling Society]. These guidelines have been set up to protect your confidential material and ensure that I always conduct myself with professionalism and integrity.

In order to provide you with the best service possible, I will hold your personal contact details and records of your therapy sessions. Please find below important information about how this information will be held and used.

**Your personal information**

Contact details and personal details are kept on a memory stick which is kept in a safe. Any notes that I take are kept in written format locked away in a lock box. At the point of booking, you will be asked for your personal contact information, for example your name, address, email address and telephone number and you may also choose to share details of the issues you are looking for help with.

In order to be able to fulfil my duty of care to you, in your initial consultation or first session, I will ask you for contact information for your GP and elected Emergency Contact person. These details will be stored securely in on a memory stick and will only be accessible to me.

This personal information will be held for the duration of your therapy and kept for 7 years after which it will be deleted.

Please note that I will need to keep a record of your name and client reference number for seven years after the end of your therapy, so that we can respond effectively to any potential requests regarding your clinical notes and treatment.

I will never pass on your contact details to any third-party organisations for the purposes of sales, marketing or research and will never use your personal data for any purposes other than the administration of the counselling service I am providing to you i.e., to arrange, cancel and rearrange appointments and collect payment for sessions.

**Your therapy sessions**

Everything that you discuss with me is confidential. Confidentiality will only be broken if there is concern about your safety or the safety of someone else or I am instructed to do so by a Court of Law. I will always endeavour to speak to you about this first.

During remote working I will ensure that I am conducting online and telephone sessions in a quiet, private and confidential setting. I am aware that as I write this policy, that Zoom is currently the most secure platform to use. Using other platforms is an option but I cannot take responsibility for the security of any platforms. Please note however that I cannot be held responsible for any breaches that occur due to failures in this technology.

I discuss my clinical work with a supervisor. This is to ensure that I am offering you the best service possible. These conversations are bound by confidentiality, and you will only be referred to by your first name.

I will also keep notes of each session. These are anonymised and are stored in a locked filing cabinet or within a password protected file.

These notes are for my use only and help to keep a track of everything that is being discussed. In line with industry guidelines, these notes will be kept securely for up to seven years after your therapy comes to an end. After this time, they will be confidentially destroyed.

**Data Usage**

I will only use your email address and telephone number to contact you about your appointments. I may also contact you directly via email in order to share information with you that is pertinent to your therapeutic process.

Your phone number may also be used to issue appointment reminders via text message.

**Your rights**

Any personal data retained by me is kept in accordance with the GDPR, 2018.

Under these guidelines you have the following rights

1. The right to request access to your data

You can request to view the information that I hold about you at any time. If during therapy you would like to see your session notes, please let me know.to Should you require a copy of your notes after your therapy has come to an end you can make this request by emailing.

1. The right of rectification

At any point during your time using my service or during the seven years thereafter, while we retain your records, you have the right to request amendments to your contact details or session notes. This right can be exercised either by speaking directly to me.

1. The right to be forgotten

You can request that I delete and confidentially destroy the information that I hold about you and your sessions at any time. This request can be made by contacting me.

Instances where I would not be able to comply with your request are as follows:

1. a) It is necessary for me to retain these records in order to continue providing an effective service
2. b) I am compelled to retain these records by a Court of Law
3. c) I require these records in order to establish, exercise or defend legal claims

**Breaches of data protection**

In the event of any breach of my data protection policies, I will notify you and the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) within 72 hours and will seek to rectify this immediately.

**Raising concerns**

Should you have any concerns about my data protection practices, you can raise these directly with me. You can also notify the Information Commissioner’s Office. I am registered with ICO.

Dates

This Policy Statement comes into force with effect from 11 January 2023 and will be reviewed annually, with the next review taking place on 11th January 2024.