JM Counselling

Safeguarding Policy

Last updated: November 2026

As a counsellor and accredited member of the BACP I am fully committed to creating and maintaining a safe, confidential, and respectful environment for all individuals who engage in therapy with me in my practice (JM Counselling)

Purpose

This policy sets out how safeguarding concerns relating to children, young people and adults at risk are identified, assessed and responded to within my counselling practice.

My practice is committed to providing services that are safe, ethical, inclusive and responsive to concerns about abuse, neglect, exploitation, self-harm, suicide risk or any circumstances where a person may be at risk of significant harm.

This policy reflects the requirements of the Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions 2026 and is informed by safeguarding principles published by professional bodies including the BACP.

Statement of Commitment

I am committed to:

- Prioritising the safety and welfare of all my clients at all times.
- Protecting the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk.
- Recognising signs of harm, neglect or abuse.
- Taking all safeguarding concerns seriously.
- Acting promptly where there is reason to believe someone may be at risk of significant harm.
- Balancing respect for confidentiality with legal and ethical duties to protect people from harm.
- Maintaining appropriate safeguarding knowledge, training and supervision.
- Working collaboratively with clients wherever possible.
- Keeping accurate records of safeguarding concerns, decisions and actions.
- Promoting equality, dignity, inclusion and respect in all professional relationships.

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Scope

This policy applies to:

- All counselling services provided by my practice.
- In-person, telephone and online counselling.
- Contact with adults, young people and children where services are offered.
- All safeguarding concerns disclosed during counselling, assessment, enquiry or correspondence.

Legal and Professional Framework

The practice works within relevant legislation and guidance, including:

- Children Act 1989 and 2004.
- Care Act 2014.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children.
- Human Rights Act 1998.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.
- Mental Capacity Act 2005.
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003.
- Relevant local safeguarding partnership procedures.

The practice also works in accordance with professional standards requiring members to:

- Have safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Ensure clients can access safeguarding information.
- Understand legal obligations relating to safeguarding disclosure.
- Share information where there is a belief that someone is at risk of immediate serious harm.

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Safeguarding applies to anyone, but especially to individuals who may be vulnerable due to:

- Age (children or older adults)
- Physical or mental health conditions
- Learning disabilities
- Experiences of trauma or abuse
- Isolation or lack of support
- Substance misuse

How I will respond to safeguarding concerns

I recognise that safeguarding concerns may arise through:

- Direct disclosures.
- Behavioural indicators.
- Information provided by family members or professionals.
- Concerns observed during counselling sessions.
- Communications received outside of sessions.

No single sign necessarily indicates abuse or neglect. Concerns will be assessed in context and discussed in supervision where appropriate. If I become aware of a safeguarding concern during our work together, I will take concerns seriously and listen carefully with empathy and respect. I will make a professional assessment of risk and urgency and take appropriate action. This may include;

- Discussing the concern with you (where it is safe and appropriate to do so).
- Contacting emergency services or relevant safeguarding authorities if immediate danger is present.
- Referring to appropriate services (e.g., GP, crisis team, social services).
- Seek supervision to ensure my actions are ethical and in line with best practice.

I will record any safeguarding concerns accurately, clearly and factually.

Confidentiality and Safeguarding

Confidentiality is a fundamental part of counselling practice. However, confidentiality is not absolute.

Information may be shared without a client's consent where there is a legal, ethical or safeguarding obligation to do so, including circumstances where:

- A child may be at risk of significant harm.
- An adult at risk may be experiencing serious abuse or neglect.

- There is a serious and imminent risk of harm to the client or another person.
- Disclosure is required by law.
- Information is requested through lawful statutory processes.

Wherever possible and safe to do so:

- I will inform you of the safeguarding concern.
- The intention to share information will be discussed with you.
- Your views will be considered.
- Collaborative decision-making will be encouraged.

Where immediate serious harm is believed to be present, appropriate agencies may be contacted without delay, including:

- Children's Social Care
- Adult Social Care
- Police
- NHS Crisis Services
- Emergency Services

The welfare and safety of the individual will be the primary consideration.

For non-urgent support, I may suggest:

- Your GP
- Samaritans: 116 123 (24/7 free support)
- NHS 111 (non-emergency medical support)

Working with Adults at Risk

I recognise that some clients may experience temporary or longer-term difficulties in their ability to make informed decisions. Where capacity is in question, every effort will be made to support autonomous decision-making while taking proportionate action to protect individuals from serious harm, abuse or neglect.

All adults will be presumed to have capacity to make their own decisions unless there is reason to believe otherwise.

A person will not be considered to lack capacity simply because they make decisions that others regard as unwise, unusual, or potentially harmful.

Where concerns arise regarding a person's ability to make informed decisions, reasonable steps will be taken to maximise their ability to participate in decision-making. This may include:

- Providing information in clear and accessible language.
- Allowing additional time for discussion and reflection.

- Checking understanding and inviting questions.
- Offering information in alternative formats where appropriate.
- Working collaboratively with relevant healthcare professionals, carers or advocates where consent is given or there is another lawful basis for involvement.

Where an adult appears unable to make informed decisions about their safety, welfare or protection from abuse, neglect or exploitation, safeguarding concerns may need to be shared with appropriate agencies. In such circumstances, decisions will be guided by:

- The person's wishes, feelings, beliefs and values as far as these can be reasonably established.
- The seriousness and immediacy of any risk.
- The need to prevent significant harm.
- Relevant legal obligations.
- Professional ethical responsibilities.
- Consultation with supervisors and, where appropriate, statutory safeguarding agencies.

If a client lacks capacity and there is concern about serious harm, abuse or neglect, information may be shared without consent where there is a lawful and ethical basis to do so.

Where possible, the client will be informed about any action taken and involved in discussions to the fullest extent they are able.

Record Keeping

Where safeguarding concerns arise:

- Records will be factual, accurate and contemporaneous.
- Decisions and reasons for decisions will be documented.
- Referrals and consultations will be recorded.
- Records will be stored securely in accordance with UK GDPR and data protection legislation.

Training and Supervision

To maintain safeguarding competence, I will:

- Undertake regular safeguarding training relevant to my client group.
- Maintain awareness of current safeguarding legislation and guidance.
- Discuss safeguarding concerns within professional supervision.
- Engage in continuing professional development relating to safeguarding and risk management.

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How to Raise a Concern

Anyone who has concerns about safety, safeguarding or professional conduct may contact:

JM Counselling via jules@jmcounselling.co.uk

I may update this privacy notice from time to time to reflect changes in my practice, legal requirements or professional guidance.

The latest version will be available on my website.

Definitions

Child
Any person under the age of 18.

Adult at Risk
An adult aged 18 or over who:

- Has needs for care and support, whether or not those needs are met by services; and
- Is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- May be unable to protect themselves as a result of those needs.

Safeguarding Concern
I will remain vigilant to the possibility a person may be experiencing or at risk of:

- Physical abuse (causing physical harm or injury).
- Emotional or psychological abuse (verbal attacks, manipulation, emotional neglect).
- Sexual abuse (non-consensual sexual contact or behaviour)
- Neglect (failing to meet a person's basic needs, including emotional, physical, psychological).
- Domestic abuse (single incident or continuous pattern of behaviours).
- Financial abuse (exploitation or misuse of someone's finances or possessions)
- Coercive control (purposeful and continuous pattern of intimidation, humiliation, isolation or manipulation by another in an intimate or family relationship).
- Child criminal or sexual exploitation (slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour, human trafficking).
- Modern slavery (slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour, human trafficking).
- FGM

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- Online abuse (malicious communication, harassment, abuse, threats).
- Self-neglect (lack of care for self, their health, their living environment).
- Serious self-harm (life threatening injuries, long-term impairment to physical/ mental health)
- Suicide risk
- Radicalisation or violent extremism
- Discriminatory abuse (unequal treatment based on race, gender, sexuality, age, disability etc)
- Institutional abuse (abuse that occurs within an organisation or professional setting)
- Any other form of significant harm