



Note Taking Policy

This policy explains how I create, store and protect counselling notes and records at The Listening Ear. My aim is to keep your information safe, secure and handled with care, while meeting all legal, ethical and professional requirements.

I follow UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018, the Counselling Information Regulations (2025), and the BACP Ethical Framework.

1. Purpose of Counselling Notes

Counselling notes help me:

- Keep track of themes, progress and important information
- Maintain continuity between sessions
- Support safe, ethical practice
- Record safeguarding concerns when necessary

Notes are brief, factual and minimal. They are not full transcripts of sessions.

2. Types of Records I Keep

I keep the following records:

a) Personal Details

Your name, contact information, GP details (if provided), emergency contact, and any accessibility needs.

b) Session Notes

Short, factual notes summarising key themes or risks.

No opinions, diagnoses or interpretations are recorded.

c) Safeguarding Records

If a safeguarding concern arises, I keep a separate safeguarding record including dates, actions taken and outcomes.

d) Administrative Records

Invoices, appointment information, emails saved for clinical reasons, and consent forms.

3. How Records Are Stored

Zero-Knowledge Encryption (Primary Security Method)

All digital records — including personal details, session notes, safeguarding documents and emails saved for clinical purposes — are stored using zero-knowledge encrypted software.

This means:

- Your data is encrypted so that only I can access it
- No external provider can view or decode your information
- Even if the storage system were compromised, your data would remain unreadable

This is one of the highest levels of data protection available.

Device Security

- All devices are password-protected
- Multi-factor authentication is used
- Software is regularly updated
- No client data is stored on portable devices unless encrypted

Paper Records

If any paper documents are created, they are stored in a locked cabinet that only I can access.

4. How Long Records Are Kept

I keep records for:

- 7 years after counselling ends, or
- until a child reaches age 25, whichever is longer

This meets legal and professional requirements.

After this, all records are securely destroyed.

If you wish your records to be deleted sooner, please let me know.

5. Confidentiality and Access

Your records are confidential and protected by UK GDPR and the Counselling Information Regulations (2025).

You have the right to:

- Request a copy of your records
- Ask for corrections
- Ask for deletion (where legally appropriate)
- Understand how your data is used and stored

Requests can be made by emailing nic@thelistening-ear.co.uk.

I respond within 14 working days.

6. Communication Records

- Text messages are deleted within 24 hours unless clinically necessary
- Emails are deleted within 24 hours unless they need to be saved securely
- Sensitive information is not shared by text, WhatsApp or social media
- Online sessions take place on secure, encrypted platforms

Any information that needs to be kept is transferred into your encrypted record.

7. Safeguarding Records

If a safeguarding concern arises:

- A separate safeguarding record is created
- Notes are factual and written in your own words where possible
- Actions, decisions and outcomes are clearly recorded
- These records are stored securely using zero-knowledge encryption
- They are kept for the same retention period as other records

8. Supervision

I discuss my work in professional supervision to ensure safe practice.

These discussions are anonymised and follow the same confidentiality and data-protection rules.

9. Data Breaches

If a data breach occurs:

- I will investigate and record the incident
- You will be informed if your information is affected
- The ICO will be notified if required

10. Confidentiality After Death

Your confidentiality continues after your death.

My clinical will executor ensures your records are handled securely and respectfully.