



Safeguarding Policy

1. Purpose and Scope

This policy outlines the commitment to safeguard and promote the welfare of all clients — including adults, children, young people, and vulnerable adults — who engage in counselling with the sole practitioner Nicola Simpson at The Listening Ear and applies to all types of counselling sessions. I will give equal priority to keeping all children and young people safe regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

The aims of this policy is to:

- Protect children, young people, and vulnerable adults from harm, abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- Ensure clear and consistent safeguarding procedures.
- Fulfil legal and ethical responsibilities under UK law and professional frameworks.

2. Legal and Ethical Framework

This policy is guided by:

- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- Care Act 2014 (for adults at risk)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023)
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Data Protection Act 2018 & UK GDPR
- BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions (2018)

Definitions:

- Child / Young Person: Anyone under 18 years of age.
- Vulnerable Adult (Adult at Risk): A person aged 18 or over who has needs for care or support, and who, as a result, may be unable to protect themselves from abuse,

neglect, or exploitation (as defined in the Care Act 2014).

3. Safeguarding Commitment

As a sole practitioner I am committed to:

- Providing a safe, respectful, and supportive therapeutic environment.
- Promoting the welfare and autonomy of all clients.
- Acting promptly and appropriately when safeguarding concerns arise.
- Maintaining confidentiality except where there is a duty to share information to protect a client or others from harm.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

As a sole practitioner, I am solely responsible for:

- Receiving, recording, and responding to all safeguarding concerns.
- Ensuring compliance with relevant safeguarding and data protection legislation.
- Keeping safeguarding and mental capacity training up to date (renewed at least every two years).
- Seeking guidance, supervision, or consultation where necessary.

5. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Counselling is confidential. However, confidentiality cannot be maintained if:

- There is reason to believe a child, young person, or vulnerable adult is at risk of significant harm.
- There is evidence or disclosure of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- There is a legal requirement to share information (e.g., terrorism, drug trafficking, or court order).

I will share information on a need-to-know basis only, in accordance with the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018. Where safe and appropriate, I will inform the client before sharing information, explaining what will be shared, with whom, and why.

6. Recognising and Responding to Abuse

I am alert to the signs and indicators of abuse in both children and adults, including:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional or psychological abuse

- Sexual abuse or exploitation
- Neglect or self-neglect
- Domestic abuse
- Financial abuse (for adults)
- Institutional or organisational abuse
- Online abuse or grooming

If a client discloses abuse or risk of harm:

1. Listen calmly and take the disclosure seriously. Ask open ended questions as appropriate and do not lead the disclosure
2. Reassure the client that they have done the right thing.
3. Do not promise to keep it secret including reminding them of our contract agreement.
4. Record the disclosure on a safeguarding disclosure form as soon as possible, using the person's own words and no opinions, including a date and time stamp. If deemed necessary complete a risk assessment
5. Report to the relevant safeguarding team (dependent on LA) and speak with my supervisor

7. Reporting and Referrals

If I believe a child, young person, or adult is at immediate risk of harm, I will contact:

- Police (Emergency): 999

Where the client lives will determine which local authority I report it to:

My local authority information is:

- Bedfordshire County Council Children's Services (Integrated Front Door / MASH): 01234 718700 or out of hours 0300 300 8123 or 0
- Bedfordshire County Council Adult Safeguarding Team: 01234 276222

If uncertain, I will seek advice from:

- NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000 (for children)
- Bedfordshire Adult Safeguarding Team (for vulnerable adults)
- BACP Safeguarding Team (for professional consultation)

For further local contacts please see the link

<https://bedfordscp.trixonline.co.uk/chapter/local-contacts>

All safeguarding concerns, actions, and decisions will be recorded in writing, dated, signed, and securely stored.

8. Record Keeping

I will:

- Record all safeguarding concerns factually and accurately.
- Note what action was taken, by whom, and with what outcome.
- Keep safeguarding records separate from general counselling notes.
- Retain records securely and confidentially for the legally required duration (normally 7 years, or until the child reaches 25, whichever is longer).

9. Working with Parents, Carers, and Support Networks

I recognise the importance of working collaboratively with parents, carers, or support professionals when appropriate. However, where such involvement might increase risk to the client, I will seek guidance from statutory agencies before making contact. For adult clients, I will consider mental capacity and consent under the Mental Capacity Act 2005 before sharing any information.

10. Training, Supervision, and Professional Development

I will:

- Complete recognised safeguarding and child/adult protection training at least every two years.
- Keep informed about relevant changes to safeguarding legislation and best practice.
- Engage in regular clinical supervision in line with BACP requirements.
- Discuss safeguarding issues in supervision or with external safeguarding professionals as appropriate.

12. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislation, guidance, or professional standards change.