



Safeguarding Policy

At The Listening Ear, your safety and wellbeing are my highest priority. This policy explains how I protect children, young people, adults and adults at risk during counselling. It applies to all sessions, whether in person or online.

I am committed to creating a safe, respectful and supportive therapeutic environment, and to acting promptly and appropriately if I believe anyone is at risk of harm.

This policy is informed by current UK safeguarding law and guidance, including the Equality Act 2010, Children Acts 1989/2004, Care Act 2014, Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023), Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024), the Online Safety Act, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Mental Capacity Act 2005, UK GDPR, and the Counselling Information Regulations (2025). I also follow Bedford Borough safeguarding procedures and BACP good practice guidance.

1. Who This Policy Covers

- Children and young people (under 18)
- Adults
- Adults at risk (those who may struggle to protect themselves due to care or support needs)

I give equal priority to safeguarding all clients, regardless of age, disability, gender identity, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.

2. My Safeguarding Commitment

I will:

- Provide a safe, respectful and trauma-informed space.
- Promote your welfare and autonomy.
- Act quickly if I believe you or someone else is at risk.

- Maintain confidentiality unless sharing information is necessary to prevent harm.
- Follow local safeguarding procedures and seek guidance when needed.
- Keep my safeguarding training up to date and review this policy regularly.

3. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Counselling is confidential. However, I may need to share information if:

- A child, young person or adult at risk may be experiencing harm.
- There is a risk of serious harm to you or someone else.
- There is a legal requirement (e.g., terrorism, serious crime, court order).

I will share only what is necessary, with the appropriate agency, and will explain this to you whenever it is safe to do so.

Under the Counselling Information Regulations (2025), counselling notes are protected information. They can only be shared with police or courts under strict legal conditions.

4. Recognising Abuse and Risk

I stay alert to signs of:

- Physical, emotional or sexual abuse
- Neglect or self-neglect
- Domestic abuse and coercive control
- Child sexual exploitation (CSE)
- Child criminal exploitation (CCE) and county lines
- Financial abuse (adults)
- Online harms, grooming or sextortion
- Modern slavery or trafficking
- Institutional or organisational abuse

I also consider mental capacity, consent, and the impact of trauma when assessing risk.

5. If You Disclose Abuse or Risk

If you tell me something that raises a safeguarding concern, I will:

1. Listen calmly and take your disclosure seriously.
2. Reassure you that you have done the right thing.

3. Explain that I cannot keep it secret if someone is at risk.
4. Record what you have said in your own words, including date and time.
5. Complete a risk assessment if needed.
6. Seek advice from my supervisor or safeguarding professionals.
7. Make a referral to the appropriate safeguarding team if required.

6. Reporting Concerns

If anyone is in immediate danger, I will contact:

- Police (999)

For local safeguarding concerns, I will contact:

Bedford Borough Council (your local authority)

- Children's Services / MASH: 01234 718700
- Out of hours: 0300 300 8123
- Adult Safeguarding Team: 01234 276222

If you live outside Bedford Borough, I will contact the relevant local authority.

If I am unsure, I may seek advice from:

- NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000
- Bedford Adult Safeguarding Team
- BACP Safeguarding Team

All actions and decisions will be recorded clearly and stored securely.

7. Record Keeping

I will:

- Record safeguarding concerns factually and accurately.
- Keep safeguarding notes separate from counselling notes using secure, encrypted software.
- Store records confidentially for the required duration (usually 7 years, or until a child reaches 25).

8. Working with Parents, Carers and Support Networks

For children and young people, I will consider parental responsibility and Gillick competence when deciding how and when to involve parents or carers.

For adults, I will consider mental capacity and consent before sharing information.

If involving family or professionals may increase risk, I will seek advice from statutory agencies first.

9. Training and Professional Development

I will:

- Complete recognised safeguarding training at least every two years.
- Stay updated on changes in safeguarding law and best practice.
- Discuss safeguarding issues in supervision.
- Seek external consultation when needed.

10. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if guidance or legislation changes, or if a safeguarding incident requires reflection and update.

