



Health and Safety Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline how Nicola Simpson as the sole practitioner at The Listening Ear ensures a safe, comfortable, and compliant counselling environment for clients and the practitioner.

The practice operates from either a dedicated room upstairs in a private residence, which has been adapted to meet health and safety standards appropriate for professional counselling work. Alternatively, in a space within a school, community centre or charity office.

This policy applies to all counselling sessions for adults, children, and young people and covers face-to-face sessions conducted on the premises.

2. Statement of Intent

The Listening Ear is committed to:

- Providing a safe and healthy environment for clients and the practitioner.
- Complying with relevant health, safety, and fire regulations.
- Identifying and managing potential hazards through regular risk assessment.
- Taking reasonable steps to reduce or eliminate risks.
- Ensuring accessibility, confidentiality, and comfort within the counselling space.

Health and safety are reviewed regularly as part of ongoing ethical and professional practice.

3. Responsibilities

As the sole practitioner, Nicola Simpson holds full responsibility for:

- Implementing this policy and associated risk assessments.
- Maintaining safe premises, equipment, and facilities in her private practice space in a private residence

- Recording and addressing any incidents, hazards, or near misses, when outside the private resident reporting to the relevant premises H & S officer.
- Reviewing health and safety procedures at least biannually or following any incidents.

Clients are expected to act responsibly while on any of the premises to protect their own safety and that of others.

4. Risk Management and Safety Measures on the private premises residence

Access to the counselling room

- Entrance and stairs kept clear of obstacles.
- Adequate lighting provided.
- Regular maintenance to prevent hazards, especially during winter months.

Potential Risks

- Slipping hazard in wet or muddy weather.
- Trip hazard if the ground is uneven or soft.
- Mobility access needs to be considered on an individual basis

Control Measures / Actions:

- Keeping entrance and driveway clear to access
- Ensuring the area is well-lit (for evening sessions).

Fire Safety

- Smoke alarm fitted and tested regularly.
- Fire extinguisher and blanket available downstairs.
- No candles or open flames permitted.
- Clear fire evacuation route briefed to clients when necessary.

Electrical Safety

- All electrical appliances checked before use.
- Sockets not to be overloaded.
- Heaters and electrical devices switched off when not in use.

Lighting, Heating, and Ventilation

- Room equipped with heating and ventilation.
- Adjustable lighting and curtains for comfort and privacy.

Hygiene and Infection Control

- Hand wipes and tissues provided.
- Surfaces and seating cleaned regularly weekly or between sessions as needed.
- Room ventilated after sessions.

Lone Working and Personal Safety

- Trusted contact aware of session schedule.
- Emergency contact information held securely.
- Safety procedures reviewed regularly.

Confidentiality and Privacy

- The counselling room is private and away from communal areas.
- No interruptions permitted during sessions.

Client Distress or Crisis

- Crisis plan and safeguarding protocol in place.
- Emergency contacts and GP details (if consent given) collected during assessment.

Accessibility

- Step into the house and up to the counselling room.
- Alternative online sessions available for clients with mobility issues.
- Reasonable adjustments will be offered where feasible.

Data and Record Security

- Paper records kept in a locked cabinet.
- Digital files on zero knowledge encrypted and password-protected and GDPR compliant.
- Devices encrypted and securely stored.

5. Emergencies

In an emergency:

- Emergency services: Dial 999
- Nearest hospital: Bedford Hospital, South Wing, Kempston Road, Bedford MK42 9DJ
- Fire evacuation: Exit through main door and gather at the front driveway assembly point

Emergency procedures are reviewed bi annually.

6. Accident and Incident Reporting

- Any accident, near miss, or injury will be recorded in the Incident Log.
- Serious incidents will be reported to health and safety executives
- Review and follow-up actions will be taken to prevent recurrence.

7. Safeguarding and Vulnerable Persons

If a safeguarding concern arises, the practitioner will contact the relevant authority:

Bedford Borough Council

- Children's Services: 01234 718700 (Out of Hours: 0300 300 8123)
 - Email: IFDinformation@bedford.gov.uk
- Adult Safeguarding: 0300 300 8122
 - Email: adult.protection@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): 01234 276 693
 - Email: Lado@bedford.gov.uk
- In an emergency: Call 999 or contact Bedfordshire Police

Central Bedfordshire Council

- Children's Services: 0300 300 8585 (Out of Hours: 0300 300 8123)
 - Email: cs.accessandreferral@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
- Adult Safeguarding: 0300 300 8122
 - Email: safeguardingadults@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): 0300 300 8142
 - Email: lado@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
- In an emergency: Call 999 or contact Bedfordshire Police

8. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed bi annually, or sooner if:

- There is an accident, incident, or change in the working environment.
- Regulations or professional guidelines are updated.
- The practice's structure or setup changes.