

Safeguarding & Information-Sharing Policy

Children & Young People – Counselling with Jemma (Operating within FC Family Ltd)

Purpose of this policy

This policy explains how I safeguard children and young people in my counselling practice, how I make decisions about sharing information, and under what circumstances I may need to contact a GP or other agency. It is designed to support children, young people, and their families to understand how confidentiality works in therapy, and how I meet my legal and ethical responsibilities.

This policy applies to all counselling work I undertake with anyone under the age of 18. Counselling with Jemma operates within FC Family Ltd, and this policy sits alongside the organisation's wider safeguarding framework.

Legal and ethical framework

My safeguarding practice is guided by:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (Department for Education)
- Information Sharing Advice for Practitioners (DfE)
- Children Act 2004 – s16LA Information-Sharing Duty
- The BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions
- Local safeguarding partnership procedures
- NSPCC safeguarding standards and guidance
- FC Family Ltd Safeguarding Policy (Children & Young People)

These documents set out the legal duty to protect children from harm and to share information when necessary to safeguard a child's welfare.

My safeguarding principles

I believe that:

- The welfare of the child is always paramount.
- Children and young people have the right to be listened to, respected, and taken seriously.
- Confidentiality is important, but it cannot be maintained when a child is at risk of harm.

- Parents and carers should be involved wherever possible, unless doing so increases risk.
- Decisions about information-sharing must be thoughtful, proportionate, and grounded in professional ethics.

Professional Boundaries & Safe Practice

I operate a no-touch policy in all counselling sessions. Physical contact is not used as part of the therapeutic process. This maintains clear professional boundaries and ensures emotional and physical safety.

No other adult will enter the counselling space during a session unless they are the parent or caregiver of the child or young person, or unless there is an immediate safeguarding concern that requires intervention. This protects the privacy and safety of the child and maintains a consistent therapeutic environment.

Sessions take place in a private, quiet space where confidentiality and safety can be upheld. Parents and caregivers are welcome to remain nearby, but not within the counselling room itself.

Confidentiality in counselling

Children and young people have a right to confidential counselling. I do not routinely share session content with parents or carers.

However, confidentiality has clear limits. I may need to share information if:

- a child is at risk of serious or imminent harm
- a child is at risk of harming someone else
- there are concerns about abuse, neglect, or exploitation
- there is a legal requirement to share information
- not sharing information would place the child at greater risk

These limits are explained to the child or young person at the start of therapy in age-appropriate language.

Contacting a GP or other agency without parental knowledge

In line with Department for Education safeguarding guidance, I would only contact a GP or other agency without parental knowledge if:

- there is a serious and immediate risk of harm, or
- there is another significant safeguarding concern, and

- informing the parent first would increase risk or delay essential protection.

This is extremely rare and would only occur in exceptional circumstances.

Any decision to do so would be made:

- with great care
- following a clear assessment of risk
- in consultation with my clinical supervisor
- in accordance with the BACP Ethical Framework
- with full consideration of my legal and ethical responsibilities to safeguard the child

Wherever possible, I will inform the child or young person that I need to share information, unless doing so increases risk.

Working with parents and carers

I aim to work collaboratively with parents and carers wherever appropriate. If a safeguarding concern arises, I will normally discuss this with the parent unless:

- the child may be placed at greater risk
- the child has asked me not to, and
- the child is assessed as having sufficient understanding (Gillick competence), or
- professional guidance indicates that parental involvement is not safe or appropriate

Record-keeping

Safeguarding concerns are recorded clearly, factually, and securely. Records are stored in line with data protection legislation and professional standards.

Review of this policy

This policy is reviewed annually or sooner if legislation or professional guidance changes.