



Alison Smith Counselling Staff Behaviour Policy

This document provides a guide for adults working and volunteering in
Alison Smith Counselling
regarding acceptable and desirable conduct to safeguard clients.

Policy agreed (date):	1 September 2024
Policy published (including on website) (date):	1 September 2024
Next review (date):	31 August 2025 .

Key Personnel			
Role	Name	Tel.	Email
Managing Director	Alison Smith	07805987472	alisonsmithcounselling@gmail.com
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Alison Smith	07805987472	alisonsmithcounselling@gmail.com .

Children's Social Care referrals: Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH):	0300 456 0108
Vulnerable Adults Social Care referrals: Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH):	0300 456 0111
Out of hours:	0300 456 0100

If you believe a Client is **at immediate risk** of significant harm or injury,
you **must** call the police on 999.

Introduction

Alison Smith Counselling is committed to providing age appropriate therapeutic counselling support to children from as young as four, through to teenagers and adults, including vulnerable adults. Alison Smith Counselling offers a safe space where clients can explore all aspects of their lives, their feelings, thoughts and experiences. This can help clients to make sense of what's going on and find ways of coping when things are difficult, building emotional resilience, self-awareness and self esteem – and improving general wellbeing.

Alison Smith Counselling is equally committed to the welfare of our staff, who are expected to adhere to the highest standards of professional behaviour to maintain confidence and respect of the general public and colleagues.

We will fulfil our local and national responsibilities as laid out in the following key documents:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (Sept 2024)
- The Procedures of Safeguarding Vulnerable People Partnership

This policy:

- Takes account of the Guidance for Safer Working Practice for those working with children and young people in education settings (2020).
- aims to provide a guide for adults about acceptable and desirable conduct to ensure that staff maintain safe working practice and so safeguard children and vulnerable adults.
- does not provide a complete checklist of appropriate behaviour for staff in every circumstance. Staff must make judgements about their behaviour to secure the best interests and welfare of the clients in their charge and, in so doing, will be seen to be acting reasonably.

In *very exceptional* circumstances where a member of staff believes it is the best interest of a Client or member of the wider community, to breach these guidelines, that person **must** tell the managing director of the justification for any proposed, or action already taken, at the earliest opportunity. The managing director will make a written record of that discussion including any areas of disagreement and actions taken.

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Alison Smith Counselling is also an accredited member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). As a member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), any complaints about Alison Smith and Alison Smith Counselling can be directed to the BACP. You can find a form that may help you to include all the necessary information at

www.bacp.co.uk/aboutus/protecting-the-public/professional-conduct.



Registered Member 386335
MBACP (Accred)

Scope

This policy is consistent with all other Alison Smith Counselling policies and should be read alongside the **Safeguarding policy** as well as the following documents relevant to the safety and welfare of our clients:

- Behaviour policy
- SEND policy
- Lone Worker Policy
- Health and safety policy
- Whistleblowing policy
- Safe Touch Policy

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers working at our school.

For the purposes of this policy:

- **Staff** refers to all those working for or on behalf of the organisation full time or part time, in a paid or regular voluntary capacity.
- **A volunteer** is a person who performs an activity that involves spending time, unpaid with our organisation (except for approved expenses).
- A **'position of trust'** is one in which one party is in a position of power or influence over another, due to their work or the nature of their activity.
- **Child** refers to all children attending our provision and any child under the age of 18 who encounters our organisation. This includes unborn babies.
- **It does not apply to** employees of external contractors and providers of services (eg contract cleaners). Such staff are covered by the relevant Code of Conduct of their employing body.

Expectations

All staff:

- are familiar with this policy and have an opportunity to contribute to its review.
- understand their responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.
- are aware that failure to meet the standards of behaviour and conduct in this policy may result in disciplinary action. This includes dismissal, criminal action and/or other proceedings including barring by the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) from working in regulated activity.

Mandatory Procedures

Confidentiality

The sorting and processing of personal information is governed by GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations 2018) - see Data Protection Policy 1 September 2024.

Client records are shared with those who have a professional need to see them. When staff have access to confidential information about colleagues, children or their parents/carers, the staff must treat such information in a sensitive and confidential way, sharing it only in the interests of a Client and when legally permitted to do so.

Staff will not use their position to gain access to information for their own advantage and/or a Client's or family's detriment.

If a member of staff is concerned that a Client is being abused, is at risk of being abused or may have been abused in the past, they will follow the agreed procedure set out in the flowchart 'What to do if you are worried about a child'. See Safeguarding Policy 1 September 2024.

If a member of staff is ever in any doubt about whether to share information or not, they should get advice from the designated safeguarding lead.

Staff relationships with clients and parents

Staff responsibilities

All staff know that:

- they are in positions of trust in relation to all children (and clients over the age of 18) on roll. They ensure that the power imbalance is never used for personal advantage or gratification. They avoid behaviour which might be interpreted by others as an abuse of the position of trust, and report any incident with this potential to the manager. This includes sharing personal contact details with clients or families.
- they have a legal duty to protect the interests of children and vulnerable adults and accept the obligations inherent in that responsibility.
- they must not establish or seek to establish social contact with clients to secure a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship.
- they must inform the managing director of any pre-existing (prior to the member of staff or Client starting at the setting) or new relationship with a Client or close family member, which they feel, might compromise the organisation or their own professional standing.
- they should disclose any relationship or association (in the real world or online) that may impact on the organisation's ability to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.
- it is an offence (Sexual Offences Act 2003) for a member of staff in a position of trust to engage in **any** form of sexual activity with a child under the age of 18.

Certain behaviours are at odds with a position of trust. These include, but are not limited to:

- Harassment or discrimination based on any characteristic protected by the Equality Act 2010
- Loss of personal civility including, personal attacks or insults, displays of temper (such as throwing objects), unwanted physical contact (pushing, shoving, hitting) or the threat of the same.
- Staff must not swear, blaspheme or use offensive language in front of clients, nor use language which is discriminatory and demeaning in any way.

Such behaviours are disciplinary offences and may be referred to Local Authority and/or the police.

Communication with clients and parents, including social contact outside of the workplace

Staff must use their professional judgement when requesting or accepting any social contact (including through social media). This means that they must:

- not accept any request from clients for contact via any social media platform.
- make a judgement about whether to maintain the connection in any cases where contacts were made before the Client started at NAME AP (eg staff member being friend with a parent). Staff must discuss any decision to maintain such contact with the proprietor.

We acknowledge that staff may have friendships and social contact with parents of clients outside of the organisation. Staff will not engage in conduct outside work that could damage their professional reputation or the reputation of the organisation.

Any contact between staff and clients and/or parents that is deemed to bring the organisation into disrepute or that might lead a reasonable person to question the staff member's motivation or intentions will always be investigated and could lead to disciplinary action.

Staff must not make sexual innuendos or any comments of a sexual nature to any Client (other than in the context of sex and relationship explorations – appropriate to the therapy, nor make any comments trivialising alcohol or drug abuse.

Occasionally, clients may develop an infatuation for a member of staff. In such situations, the advice of the proprietor must be sought. Staff should deal with these situations sensitively and appropriately to maintain the dignity and safety of all concerned. They should remain aware, however, that such infatuations carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and should therefore make every effort to ensure that their own behaviour is beyond reproach.

Staff must inform the proprietor of any proposed or pre-existing arrangements between them and the families of clients on roll that take place outside work eg baby-sitting, sports coaching, music tuition.

Staff are advised to wait until after an ex-Client's 18th birthday before accepting any request on social media. In the case of ex-clients who were adults while at Alison Smith Counselling, staff should discuss the request with the proprietor before making a decision.

Gifts, rewards, favouritism and exclusion

Staff must:

- declare any gift they receive from a parent or Client. This does not include small tokens of appreciation such as at Christmas or the end of the year.
- not give gifts to individual clients Any rewards or treats will be given only as part of the organisation's agreed behaviour (or other relevant) policy.
- advise the proprietor about the offer of any gift or hospitality, from outside or inside the organisation, which might be interpreted as an attempt to influence staff conduct towards clients, parents or other employees.

Physical contact including intimate/personal care and behaviour management

It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one Client, in one set of circumstances, may be inappropriate in another, or with a different child or vulnerable adult. Any physical contact will be in response to the Client's needs, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, background and any agreed support or care plan.

The use of physical intervention including the use of reasonable force will always be in line with the following policies Safe Touch Policy 1 September 2024, SEND Policy (1 September 2024),

Staff understand that:

- on a daily basis, it may be entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with clients and that they do so in ways appropriate to their professional role and in relation to the Client's individual needs.
- some clients are more comfortable with touch than others and/or may be more comfortable with touch from some adults than others. Whenever possible, adults seek the Client's permission before initiating contact and are sensitive to any signs that the Client may be uncomfortable or embarrassed.
- they have a responsibility to ensure the way they offer comfort to a distressed Client is age appropriate.
- they must never touch a Client in a way which may represent a misuse of authority or considered indecent.
- physical contact must never be secretive, or for the gratification of the member of staff.
- they should be aware of cultural or religious views about touching and be sensitive to the issues of gender.

If a member of staff believes that an action by them or a colleague could be misinterpreted, or if an action is observed which is possibly abusive, the incident and circumstances will be immediately reported to the Managing director/DSL and recorded in writing. If appropriate, the managing director/DSL will consult with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or adult MASH.

Staff understand that a Client who has suffered previous abuse or neglect may associate physical contact with such experiences. They recognise that such a child or vulnerable adult may seek out inappropriate physical contact and know to deter the Client sensitively to help them to understand the importance of personal boundaries. Staff know that they must never indulge in play that involves rough-and-tumble or fun fights.

Clients with disabilities may require more physical contact to assist their everyday learning. The arrangements are understood and agreed by all concerned, justified in terms of the Client's needs, consistently applied and open to scrutiny. Staff always allow/encourage clients, where able, to undertake self-care tasks independently.

If a Client's behaviour presents a serious risk to themselves or others, a robust risk assessment and, where relevant, a physical intervention plan is always put in place and reviewed regularly. In all cases where physical intervention takes place, staff record the incident and subsequent actions and report these in line with Alison Smith Counselling behaviour and safeguarding policies.

First aid

Staff adhere to the organisation's health and safety policy, the policy for supporting clients with medical conditions and for administering first aid or medication.

One to one situations

My work is predominantly one to one and private by its very nature. Alison Smith has specific training in lone working and child protection (Level 3 October 2022) and Level 3 Safeguarding Children (September 2023) and Level 3 Safeguarding Adults (September 2023).

Clients are provided with age/developmentally appropriate advice about managing distressing feelings that may arise during 1-1 situations at Alison Smith Counselling. Generally, staff will not record any time a client has appeared upset/angry during a 1-1 session. These sorts of feelings are a normal and expected part of the counselling process

Staff carefully consider the welfare needs of clients when with them in a one to one situation. See lone working procedures/policy (1 September 2024)

Home visits and transporting clients - See also Lone Working procedures/policy (1 September 2024).

Client work generally happens on site, however, there are instances where I will meet a client in an agreed space off site or at their home. This is generally with older clients (late teenage/18 years plus) and consent is always sought from the referrer, the young person or young adult client, and a parent or guardian.

In the event that I am contracted to transport a Client in my own vehicle, Alison Smith Counselling will:

- have prior written permission from parents (where appropriate)
- have the appropriate vehicle insurance for business use
- ensure that all passengers wear seat belts
- carry out a risk assessment of the journey and place for walk and talk therapy

Health and Safety arrangements require members of staff to keep colleagues aware of their whereabouts, during an out of setting activity. See Lone Working Policy.

Staff appearance

Staff will dress in clothing appropriate to the role, compliant with professional standards and not likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing or sexually provocative. It should not distract, cause embarrassment or give rise to misunderstanding. Political slogans must be avoided.

Any staff with tattoos that might be viewed as offensive, provocative or likely to give rise to misunderstanding must ensure those tattoos always remain covered when that adult is working for the organisation.

The acceptable use of technologies

Staff must not engage in inappropriate use of social network sites which may bring themselves, the setting, organisation community or employer into disrepute. Staff should ensure that they adopt suitably high security settings on any personal profiles they may have.

Staff must be circumspect in their use of **all** social media or any other web based presence that they may have, including written content, videos or photographs, and views expressed directly or by association with websites/pages or posts established by others (eg 'liking', reposting or forwarding). This includes the use of dating websites where staff could encounter parents or clients either with their own profile or acting covertly.

They must consider the long-term implications of any content published by them online, specifically how it might ever have an adverse effect:

- on their reputation as an individual working in an education setting
- their ability to maintain good professional boundaries with parents and with clients
- on the reputation of the organisation.

Staff must not access any content from the internet on personal device during operating hours, onsite, or on a school computer or device at any time that could bring the school into disrepute or that might lead a reasonable person to question the staff member's motivation or intentions.

All staff are aware of their part in ensuring the DFE Filtering and monitoring standards and cyber security standards are upheld. If staff become aware of misuse by another member of staff (in or out of the setting), they must report those concerns using the concerns and allegations against staff (including supply teachers, third-party & self-employed staff, volunteers, contractors) procedures.

Exceptional operating circumstances

If the organisation is required to change the way we offer our provision to children and vulnerable adults due to unforeseen circumstances eg during a pandemic lockdown, staff safeguarding responsibilities to children and vulnerable adults will continue to apply. In line with the safeguarding policy

The DSL will ensure staff, clients, and families are provided with written:

- temporary changes to procedures for working with clients eg online or face-to face offsite.
- timescales for such changes so that all clients, families and staff understand when such arrangements will end, and arrangements revert to those in place prior to the events leading to the need for the temporary changes.

Photography and recording

Staff are not permitted to not use their phones, cameras or any device that can be used for photographing or recording clients, when on duty for any purpose. Phones are kept in the designated area. Any pictures taken of clients' work or art work will be done so with their consent and anonymised (as per Alison Smith Counselling's client contract).

Staff will not:

- take images of a Client's injury, bruising or similar (eg following a disclosure of abuse)
- make audio recordings of a Client's disclosure.

Whistleblowing

All staff and volunteers should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the organisation's safeguarding regime (or whistleblowing). All staff who wish to raise an issue relating to the organisation with someone in confidence can use the following whistleblowing procedures:

In the first instance, concerns about poor or unsafe practice within must be raised with:

Simon Parrett - Supervisor

Where a staff member feels unable to raise an issue with Alison Smith Counselling or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, other whistleblowing channels may be open to them:

- Simon Parrett, Supervisor
- The [NSPCC whistleblowing helpline](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-we-do/our-services/whistleblowing/) is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call: 0800 028 0285 or email: help@nspcc.org.uk if:
 - they think the concern will not be dealt with properly or
 - may be covered up or
 - if they raised a concern but it has not been acted upon or if they are worried they are being treated unfairly.

Training

All members of staff and volunteers have read and signed to confirm they understand this Staff Behaviour Policy.

Induction

The welfare of all our clients is of paramount importance. All staff including volunteers are informed of this policy at induction and given the chance to question and discuss the expectations set out.

Staff support

Work with children and vulnerable adults is both rewarding and demanding. We support staff by prioritising time to discuss the challenges of their role linked to any aspect of this Staff Behaviour Policy with their line manager and seek further support as appropriate.

Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed annually or earlier as required by changes to legislation or statutory guidance.