



Alison Smith Counselling MA, MBACP (Accred), Dip Couns
Phone: 07805 987472 Email: alisonsmithcounselling@gmail.com Web site: alisonsmithcounselling.com

Alison Smith Counselling

Data Protection and Privacy Policy

Policy implemented: 1 September 2025

Policy to be reviewed 31 August 2026

This notice is in regard to data protection laws and is regarding information that is both requested by Alison Smith Counselling and that which emerges as a result of the counselling service that I provide to yourself and the child/young person you have parental responsibility for, or have referred to my service.

About Alison Smith Counselling

I am a creative, outdoors and animal assisted therapist, working with children (from as young as four), teenagers, young adults and adults, including vulnerable adults and those with additional needs. I am also training as a Synergetic Play Therapist. I am a sole trader and work in private practice, based at Wick Yard in Wiltshire. In our sessions, we can have time in the therapy room and spend time outside in the adjoining fields and woodland, as well as accessing public footpaths to go further afield (with older clients and with consent).

As director of Alison Smith Counselling, I am responsible for data processing and data control.

I am a Registered Member of the ICO under the company name Alison Smith Counselling – Reference: **ZB34373** If you have any queries or concerns about how I am handling your data, then please contact the ICO quoting this reference for further advice on how to query or complain.

General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR): The new GDP Regulations were introduced on May 25th, 2018 and must be complied with by any business that handles personal data. This means that as my client you have the right to know how and why your information is being used by me and I must obtain your explicit consent to hold your personal details in my files 'in any form', both online and paper.

The information I will collect includes:

- Contact details (referrer/parents/carers/guardians)
- Contact details (child or young person where relevant – eg. If their contact details are different to parents/if they are over 16 and arrange counselling independently)
- Relevant life data for both child and parent which may help to inform the counselling work/treatment plan – eg. Medical history, family set up, school history, bereavements or losses, personal and emotional challenges etc.
- Counsellor's notes throughout treatment and in relation to research/further referencing undertaken to aid and enhance the work
- Where and when relevant, information may be requested from other professionals who have experience of your child/young person/you and the challenges they are facing – eg. Teachers, SENCos, educational psychologists, social workers, speech therapists, GPs etc.

Who I might share this information with and why

Due to the confidential nature of the counselling service, sharing any information given is kept to an absolute minimum. Circumstances where sharing might/will be necessary are as follows:

- **Supervision:** I attend regular supervision to ensure good, safe and ethical practice is maintained in all my counselling work. All communication between me and my supervisor concerning my clients is done in the client's best interests. Your personal details are kept confidential.
- **Part of a safeguarding concern:** There may be times when I have to break confidentiality If I am concerned about a risk of serious harm to the client or someone else. In this instance, certain information might have to be shared with other people. Where possible, I would try to do this with the consent and knowledge of the client. As an Accredited member the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), I am bound by and adhere to the BACP Ethical Framework.
- **As a legal requirement:** The law requires disclosure in the case of terrorism, or money laundering, the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.
- **Use of anonymised client information:** I may wish to use completely anonymised client information to further enhance my professional development.
- **Invoices** are anonymised, using instead a client code so no identifiable information about the client is not put onto invoices
- **Attendance information** some referrers stipulate that I notify them of a client's attendance and non-attendance, in particular those referred by schools and the council and children who are EOTIS. They also require safeguarding information to be shared. This will be discussed at the point of referral

Your information will never be used for anything other than a vital supplementary aid to the counselling work as a means of contacting you where necessary.

How I collect and store your information: In addition to the contact data that you provide me with I keep brief handwritten notes that record the themes of our sessions to assist me in our work. Any electronic information including referrals, notes, reports and email correspondence are kept on a dedicated work laptop that is password protected.

All handwritten (manual) client information is held in locked cabinets and all identifying information is held separately to client notes which are anonymised. Invoices are anonymised and accessible electronically only with a passcode. All interaction by email or text is of a general nature and no phone numbers held in my counselling practice phone have a name attached to them.

Artwork is stored in the therapy room if a client does not want to take it with them, in drawers or folders for each individual client. If I take a photo of an art work (a sand tray for example) I will only do so with the client's consent and digital images are kept on my work phone device with no name or anything that can identify the client.

How long I store your information for

For children and young people, I will keep notes for seven years after their 18th Birthday. This is stipulated by my insurance company and professional body. I will keep adult notes for seven years. After this time, notes will be destroyed.

Your rights and access to information: You have the right to ask to see any information that I hold about you, including session notes. Unless I am legally prevented from doing so I will provide this information to you within a month of your request. Please put any requests in writing. If you should ask for your notes, I ask that you use the phrase 'Reference Request' in your email to ensure that any notes are never sent to a third party trying to see your notes.

You also have the right to ask me to change any information that I hold that is incorrect and to ask me to delete any information that I hold about you. I will do this except for any information I am bound to hold for legal reasons such as tax purposes.

I am happy to discuss any of these issues in a session should you wish to.

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For more information on your individual rights please go to:

<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/individual-rights/>

Social Media: I will never knowingly contact or engage in any relationship with present or former clients on any form of social media. My position is that all information that I have relating to my clients comes to me directly from them through our time together.

Referring on: On occasion, I may need to refer on to other agencies or health care professionals but this would only ever be done after discussion and full consultation with a referrer/parent/carer/client and with consent.

With best wishes, *Alison*

I have read the information about Alison Smith Counselling and been given a copy for my personal records:

.....Date.....

Client

I have made this Information about my Counselling Practice available to my client and they have been given a copy for their records:

.....Date.....

Alison Smith

GDPR - Your consent to my holding and use of your data

Alison Smith Counselling

'I agree that Alison Smith has my permission to hold any manual or electronic records of telephone numbers, email addresses and emails and that these may be retained for any future communication that we may have'

Signed..... Date.....

'I agree that Alison Smith has my permission to hold manual notes of our sessions and that these may be retained for a reasonable period once our sessions have been completed'

Signed..... Date.....

'Alison Smith has made me aware that I have the right to withdraw my consent at any time by making this known to her in writing.'

Signed..... Date.....