**Privacy & Data Protection Policy**

In the course of my work as a counsellor, it is necessary for me to hold some personally identifiable information about my clients.

I am committed to protecting your privacy and complying with the terms of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) regarding the responsible and secure use of your personal data. I am registered with the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) – Registration Number ZB598911.

The purpose of this policy is to let you know the types of personal data I hold, why this information is collected, how it is stored, and what your rights are in relation to your data. If you have any questions or concerns, please get in touch with me.

**The types of personal information I hold and why**

I keep a record of your name, address, email address and phone number so that I can correspond with you. I may retain emails and text messages we exchange to help me organise the practical arrangements for counselling.

I also ask for your GP details and an emergency contact if you agree to sharing these with me, to safeguard your wellbeing.

I may collect personal data you give me regarding personal and family background, relevant details of your current situation, as well as potentially sensitive information relating to medical and mental health conditions. I have a legitimate interest to hold this information to provide a counselling service in accordance with our agreement to work together.

I may keep brief, pseudonymised notes relating to your counselling to help me monitor the quality of my work as a counsellor.

I retain copies of invoices and financial records in compliance with HMRC requirements.

**How I store your personal information**

All personal data is stored as securely as possible, on a password protected device with security protection software.

I use providers such as Gmail and Zoom to carry out specific tasks relating to my counselling practice. While I am satisfied with these providers’ commitment to complying with data protection legislation, the technology used is run by a third party and I cannot guarantee security.

I retain records relating to your counselling for up to 7 years after our work together, after which I will delete your personal data.

Any known data breaches will be reported to the ICO within 72 hours.

**Disclosure of your personal information**

I have a duty of confidentiality to you which I regard as a central aspect of our work together. I will not share any information about you with other organisations or people, except in the circumstances described in the Counselling Agreement.

In the event of my incapacity or death while you are my client, your contact information will be disclosed to the executors of my Clinical Will (other qualified therapists) so that they can notify you and help you to access any support you may need.

**Your rights**

Under data protection law, you have the right, under certain circumstances, to:

* View a copy of your personal information
* Ask to amend any personal information you think is inaccurate / incomplete
* Request to restrict the processing of your personal information
* Object to the processing of your personal information
* Ask for your personal information to be transferred to someone else

If you make a request to exercise any of these rights, I will respond to you within one month. If any requests make it impossible for me to meet the legal, ethical, or professional requirements of my practice, our work together would need to come to an end.

As a professional working within health and social care with a duty of confidentiality, any relevant personal data I have collected is not subject to a right of erasure.

If you have concerns about the way I handle your personal data I would invite you to share them with me. If your concerns have not been resolved effectively, you have the right to pursue the matter with the ICO (<https://ico.org.uk>).