Safeguarding policy

1. Introduction and premise

This policy outlines the commitment of Growing Space Counselling to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all clients receiving counselling services with us. It aims to provide clear guidance on responsibilities, procedures, and legal obligations to ensure a safe and supportive environment.

2. Legal and ethical frameworks

This policy is informed by relevant UK safeguarding law and guidance, including the Care Act 2014, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Data Use and Access Act (DUAA) 2025, and the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) ethical framework for counselling and psychotherapy practice (2026).

3. Principles

- The welfare and safety of children, young people and adults at risk is paramount.
- Clients will be treated with dignity, respect and sensitivity.
- Safeguarding responses will be proportionate, timely and based on the information available.
- We will seek to involve clients in safeguarding decisions wherever it is safe and appropriate to do so.
- Confidentiality is important, but it is not absolute where there is a risk of serious harm, abuse or neglect.
- We will consult supervision, professional guidance and local safeguarding services when needed.

4. Scope of this policy

This policy applies to all counselling work undertaken, whether delivered face to face, online or by telephone. We will consider the impact of adult behaviour, conflict, domestic abuse, substance misuse, mental health difficulties or unsafe care arrangements on any children or adults at risk connected to the client(s).

In couple work, we will remain aware of domestic abuse, coercive control, intimidation, fear, unequal power, retaliation risk, and the possibility that joint sessions may increase risk. Where domestic abuse or coercive control is suspected or discussed, we will consider, and may include discussions with the couple, as to whether couples counselling remains appropriate and whether separate risk assessment, signposting, counselling or safeguarding action is required.

5. Definitions

Safeguarding Adults at Risk: Protecting an adult's right to live in safety and free from abuse and neglect. It is about preventing and stopping both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while at the same time making sure the adults wellbeing is promoted, where appropriate, having regard to their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on any action (The Care Act 2014)

Safeguarding Children: Protecting children from harm, preventing harm to children's health or development, and ensuring that children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care.

Abuse: Includes physical, emotional, sexual abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

6. Growing Space Counselling (the counsellor) is committed to:

- Undertaking suitable safeguarding training.
- Working within recognised legal, professional, and ethical frameworks.
- Responding to and managing issues of confidentiality and data protection.
- Conducting initial, emerging, and ongoing risk assessments and responding to safeguarding and child protection issues.
- Working within limits of competence and using referral and signposting processes appropriately.
- Engaging with inter-agency work when appropriate.
- Maintaining high standards of honesty and probity.

7. Confidentiality and information sharing

Confidentiality is a cornerstone of therapeutic work. However, when there is a safeguarding concern, the counsellor may be obliged to break confidentiality if it is in the best interests of the client and connected 3rd parties.

Where possible, the counsellor will seek to include the client in the decision-making processes that affect them, particularly when considering sharing information with other professionals or agencies.

Information will only be shared on a 'need-to-know' basis with appropriate agencies (eg. children's social care, police).

Records of all safeguarding concerns, actions taken, and outcomes will be maintained securely.

These records include the date and time of the incident, nature of harm, relevant background information, actions taken, and outcome of any investigation.

8. Procedures for responding to concerns

1. **Listen and clarify:** We will listen carefully, remain calm, avoid leading questions, and clarify immediate safety needs.
2. **Assess urgency:** If there is immediate danger, we will contact emergency services.
3. **Consider who may be at risk:** We will consider risks to the client, their partner, children in the household or wider family, adults with care and support needs, and any other identifiable person.
4. **Consult where appropriate:** We will consult our clinical supervisors, professional body guidance, or local safeguarding advice line unless doing so would create an unsafe delay.
5. **Make a referral if required:** We will contact the relevant local authority children's social care or adult safeguarding team, or the police where a crime or immediate risk is suspected.
6. **Record the decision:** We will record the concern, information considered, advice received, action taken, reasons for decisions, including any ethical decision-making, and any follow-up required.
7. **Follow up:** We will continue to monitor risk and update the safeguarding record as needed.

9. Supervision and training

Growing Space Counselling (the counsellor) will engage in regular, appropriate clinical supervision to discuss cases, reflect on practice, and ensure adherence to safeguarding procedures.

Ongoing professional development and safeguarding training will be undertaken to keep knowledge and skills up to date.

10. Review of policy

This safeguarding policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there are changes in legislation, BACP guidance, or best practice.

11. Contact information for safeguarding concerns:

For non-emergency safeguarding concerns, we will contact the relevant local authority children's social care or adult safeguarding team for the area where the person at risk lives. In UK-based cases of immediate risk of serious harm, or when a crime may be in progress, we will contact emergency services on 999. For urgent but non-emergency police matters, we may contact 101.

Police (emergency): 999

Police (non-emergency): 101

BACP: email ethics@bacp.co.uk

Growing Space Counselling

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