



Confidentiality Policy

Forks and Spoons

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Online Counselling for Young People (Aged 12–25)

Website: forksandspoons.co.uk

Email: claire@forksandspoons.co.uk

This policy explains how confidentiality is maintained within counselling, the circumstances in which information may need to be shared, and how information is stored and protected. It should be read alongside the Counselling Agreement and related policies.

1. Commitment to Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a fundamental part of counselling. It helps create psychological safety, trust and openness within the therapeutic relationship.

As a registered member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (Membership No. 418039), I work in accordance with the BACP Ethical Framework. This includes clear and responsible management of confidential information.

Information shared in counselling will not be disclosed to third parties without consent, except in the circumstances outlined below.

2. Limits to Confidentiality

Confidentiality is not absolute. Information may need to be shared if:

- There is a risk that a young person is being harmed, has been harmed, or may harm themselves
- There is a risk of harm to others
- There are safeguarding concerns involving a child or vulnerable person
- Disclosure is required by law (for example, court order or serious crime)

Where possible and appropriate, I will aim to discuss any need to share information with the young person before doing so. If the client is under 18, parents/carers may be informed where safeguarding concerns arise.

Any information shared will be proportionate, relevant and limited to what is necessary to promote safety.

3. Crisis Support and Emergency Situations

I do not provide crisis or emergency support outside scheduled sessions.

Online private practice counselling does not allow for the level of immediacy, coordination or multidisciplinary involvement that is required for safe and effective crisis intervention. Unlike statutory or specialist crisis services, I do not have access to rapid response pathways, emergency assessment teams or immediate onward referral systems.

For this reason:

- I am not able to provide urgent support between sessions.

I do not offer on-call availability.

Email and administrative contact are not monitored continuously and should not be used in an emergency.

If a young person experiences acute distress, feels unsafe, or requires urgent support, it is important to contact appropriate crisis services or emergency support. These services are specifically designed to respond quickly and provide coordinated care.

The availability and limitations of support are discussed at the outset of counselling to ensure clarity and shared understanding.

4. Confidentiality for Clients Under 18

Young people under 18 are entitled to a confidential therapeutic space. This means:

- Session content will not be routinely shared with parents/carers.

Parents/carers may contact me regarding practical or administrative matters (appointments, fees).

I will not share personal disclosures unless there is a safeguarding concern or the young person has given consent.

Where helpful and agreed by the young person, brief parent/carer review meetings may be arranged. The purpose and boundaries of such meetings will be agreed in advance.

I review the counselling work half-termly with the young person. I may share general information with parents/carers about whether counselling is recommended to continue and at what frequency, without disclosing session content.

5. Online Working and Privacy

Counselling is delivered via Google Meet.

A secure meeting link is sent to an agreed email address.

A virtual waiting room is in place.

Sessions must take place while the client is physically located within the UK (for safeguarding purposes).

Clients are asked to attend sessions from a private space where they can speak freely without being overheard.

I do not record sessions. Sessions must not be recorded by clients.

If there are technical difficulties and the session continues by telephone, confidentiality expectations remain the same.

6. Supervision

Supervision is a professional and ethical requirement of counselling practice.

I attend regular supervision to ensure safe, reflective and effective practice. In supervision:

- Identifying details are not shared.

Cases are discussed in a general, anonymised manner.

The focus is on supporting best practice and safeguarding.

Supervisors are bound by professional confidentiality requirements.

7. Record Keeping and Data Protection

I keep brief, factual session notes as a memory aid and to support safe, ethical practice.

Notes are stored electronically in a secure, password-protected format.

Records are handled in accordance with UK data protection legislation.

Notes are retained only for as long as professionally required and are then securely deleted.

Personal contact details are stored securely and used only for counselling-related purposes.

I do not use session material for teaching, publication or training without explicit, informed consent and full anonymisation.

8. Communication Outside Sessions

Communication outside sessions is limited to practical matters such as scheduling, cancellations or payment.

I do not provide therapeutic support via email, text or social media.

Email communication is not guaranteed to be fully secure, and clients should be mindful of the information they choose to share electronically.

9. Information Sharing with Other Professionals

Information will only be shared with other professionals (e.g., GP, school, CAMHS) with explicit consent from:

- The client (if aged 18 or over), or

A parent/carer where appropriate for clients under 18

Exceptions apply where safeguarding or legal obligations require disclosure.

Where collaborative working is agreed, the scope and purpose of information sharing will be discussed in advance.

10. Policy Review

This Confidentiality Policy is reviewed periodically to ensure alignment with current ethical guidance and safeguarding requirements.