



Online Working Policy

Forks and Spoons

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Online Counselling for Young People (Aged 12–25)

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This policy outlines how online counselling sessions are delivered, the expectations for safe and effective remote working, and the boundaries that support confidentiality, safeguarding and professional standards. It should be read alongside the Counselling Agreement, Confidentiality Policy and Crisis & Emergency Information Sheet.

1. Platform and Technology

Counselling sessions are delivered via Google Meet.

- A secure meeting link will be sent to an agreed email address prior to the session.
- A virtual waiting room is in place. Clients will be admitted at the scheduled start time.
- Sessions last 50 minutes and take place weekly during school term time (local term dates shared in advance).

Clients are responsible for ensuring they have:

- A stable internet connection
- A suitable device (phone, tablet, or computer)
- A private space where they can speak freely

2. Location Requirements

For safeguarding purposes:

- Clients must be physically located within the United Kingdom at the time of each session.
- If a client is outside the UK, the session cannot proceed.

This ensures that appropriate local emergency services can be contacted if required.

3. Privacy and Environment

Clients are expected to:

- Attend sessions from a quiet, private space

Ensure they cannot be overheard

Minimise interruptions where possible

Headphones are recommended to enhance privacy.

I will also conduct sessions from a confidential, professional space and use secure devices protected by passwords and up-to-date security measures.

4. Use of Camera

I will have my camera switched on during sessions.

Clients are encouraged to have their camera on to support connection and relational work. However, this is not always comfortable or accessible for everyone. If having the camera on feels difficult, this will be respected and can be discussed openly.

For clients under 18:

If the camera is off at the start of counselling, a brief parent/carer check-in may be required to confirm safety and environment. This will be kept as short and unobtrusive as possible.

5. Recording of Sessions

Sessions are not recorded by the counsellor.

Clients must not record sessions.

Recording without consent would breach confidentiality and trust within the therapeutic relationship.

6. Technical Difficulties

If technical difficulties occur:

- We will first attempt to reconnect via Google Meet.

If reconnection is not possible, the session may continue by telephone using a pre-agreed number.

If connection cannot be restored within a reasonable timeframe, the session may need to be rearranged at the counsellor's discretion.

7. Online Communication Outside Sessions

Communication outside sessions is limited to administrative matters (appointments, cancellations, payments).

I do not provide therapeutic support via:

- Email

Text message

Social media

Messaging platforms

Emails are not monitored continuously and must not be used for urgent or crisis communication.

8. Safeguarding in Online Work

At the start of counselling, the following will be clarified:

- The client's physical location during sessions

Emergency contact details (and parent/carer details for under 18s)

The procedure in the event of non-attendance

If concerns arise during a session about a client's safety, appropriate steps will be taken in line with safeguarding responsibilities and the Confidentiality Policy.

9. Professional Standards

As a registered member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (Membership No. 418039), I work in accordance with the BACP Ethical Framework, including guidance relating to online and remote practice.

This includes:

- Maintaining clear professional boundaries

Ensuring informed consent for online work

Working within my competence

Regular supervision

10. Suitability for Online Counselling

Online counselling may not be suitable for everyone. If it becomes apparent that online work is not the most appropriate format, this will be discussed openly and alternative options may be considered where possible.

11. Policy Review

This Online Working Policy is reviewed periodically to ensure alignment with current professional guidance and safeguarding expectations.