



PRIVACY NOTICE

INTRODUCTION

In order for me to fulfil my responsibilities as a counsellor, and to provide the best service to clients, I need to collect and hold personal information related to you and your counselling sessions. Your privacy is important to me, and you can be confident that your personal information will be kept safe and secure, and will only be used for the purpose it was given to me. For transparency, this Privacy Notice outlines how I will collect, use, disclose, and protect your information in accordance with applicable privacy laws and ethical standards right from initial contact to the end of our work together.

I adhere to current data protection legislation, including the General Data Protection Regulation (EU/2016/679) (the GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003. I also adhere to the ethical guidelines regarding protecting client privacy and confidentiality set by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), of which I am a Registered Member. I am also registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO): Registration number ZB688053

If you have any questions that are not answered in this document, please feel free to contact me on: meg.lewiscounselling@gmail.com

MY LAWFUL BASIS FOR HOLDING AND USING YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION

The GDPR states that I must have a lawful basis for processing your personal data. There are different lawful bases depending on the stage at which I am processing your data, which are described below.

If you have had therapy with me and it has now ended, I will use legitimate interest as my lawful basis for holding and using your personal information.

If you are currently having therapy or if you are in contact with me to consider therapy, I will process your personal data where it is necessary for the performance of our contract.

The GDPR also makes sure that I look after any sensitive personal information that you may disclose to me appropriately. This type of information is called 'special category personal information'. The lawful basis for me processing any special categories of personal information is that it is for provision of health treatment (in this case counselling) and necessary for a contract with a health professional (in this case, a contract between me, a counsellor, and you, the client).

HOW I USE YOUR INFORMATION

Initial contact: When you contact me with an enquiry about counselling, I will collect information to help me process and respond to your enquiry. This will include your name and your chosen contact methods, such as an email address or phone number. Alternatively, an organisation such as your employer may send me your details when making a referral, or a relative/contact may give me your details when making an enquiry on your behalf. If, after an enquiry, you decide not to proceed with counselling, I will ensure that all of your personal

data is deleted within 30 days of receipt. If you would like me to delete this information sooner, please do let me know.

While you are accessing counselling:

Our counselling sessions are confidential, which means I won't discuss anything you share in sessions with others. However, there are some circumstances where confidentiality may need to be broken. For example, if there is:

- A risk of harm to yourself or others.
- A safeguarding issue for a child or vulnerable adult.
- Criminal activity, including an act of terrorism, drug trafficking or money laundering.
- A serious health problem for you within a counselling session.

(This list is not exhaustive. I am happy to discuss further if you would like more information).

Where it is possible and legal to do so, I will discuss any concerns I may have with you before making any decision on breaking confidentiality.

In line with my professional and ethical obligations, I also attend regular supervision with a qualified supervisor. In these sessions I may discuss some of our work together, however I will never refer to you by name and your identity will be protected. These sessions are for my professional development and to ensure the best quality of work for my clients.

During your first session, I will ask you to complete a Client Information Form that requests personal information such as: Your name, date of birth, contact information, emergency contact and GP details. Copies of this document will be stored securely for 7 years after the end of therapy and will then be disposed of appropriately.

I keep brief session notes in line with BACP ethical guidelines. These notes will never name you as a client and are kept separate from any documents containing personal identifiable data. All notes and documents are stored securely for up to 7 years after the end of the counselling relationship, after which they will be disposed of appropriately. You can request to see your notes at any time.

For security reasons, I do not retain text messages or emails for more than 6 months. If there is relevant information contained in a text message, this will be copied and retained on a document, kept securely electronically or in a locked filing cabinet.

After counselling has ended: Once counselling has ended your records will be kept for 7 from the end of our contact with each other in order to fulfil any legal and ethical responsibilities I have as a counsellor. After this time, your records will then be securely destroyed. If you want me to delete your information sooner than this, please tell me.

THIRD PARTY RECIPIENTS OF PERSONAL DATA

In order to provide counselling services to you, and to fulfil any legal and ethical obligations I have as a counsellor and self-employed person, I may need to share limited amounts of your personal data with third parties. This may include the BACP, ICO, HMRC, banks, email service providers and cloud services. In such cases I have carefully selected which partners I work with and take great care to ensure they do not use your information in any way other than the task for which they have been contracted.

If your appointments are paid for or arranged via a third party, for example, your employer the only information shared with the third party is your dates of attendance and non-attendance for invoicing and payment purposes. Details about what is discussed in your appointments will remain confidential and can only be shared if you give me your written consent to do so.

In line with my professional and ethical obligations, I also attend regular supervision with a qualified supervisor. In these sessions I may discuss some of our work together, however I will never refer to you by name and your identity will be protected. These sessions are for my professional development and to ensure the best quality of work for my clients.

I will never pass on your contact details to any third-party organisations for the purposes of sales, marketing or research.

YOUR RIGHTS

You have a right to ask me to delete your personal information, to limit how I use your personal information, or to stop processing your personal information. You also have a right to ask for a copy of any information that I hold about you and to object to the use of your personal data in some circumstances. Please be aware that in some circumstances, it may not be possible to comply with all of the above rights. For instance, where it is legally required to retain records by a court of law. You can read more about your rights at ico.org.uk/your-data-matters.

To make a request for any personal information I may hold about you, please put the request in writing addressing it to meg.lewiscounselling@gmail.com

If you have any complaint about how I handle your personal data please do not hesitate to get in touch with me by writing or emailing to the contact details given above. I would welcome any suggestions for improving my data protection procedures. If you want to make a formal complaint about the way I have processed your personal information you can contact the ICO which is the statutory body that oversees data protection law in the UK. For more information go to ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint.

DATA SECURITY

I take the security of the data I hold about you very seriously and as such I make every effort to ensure it is protected. I use a password protected and encrypted laptop to carry out remote counselling sessions and to store electronic documents. My mobile phone is also password protected and any call history or text messages will be deleted after 6 months. If there is relevant information contained in a text message, this will be copied and retained on a document, kept securely electronically or in a locked filing cabinet. Paper documents are stored in a locked filing cabinet.

VISITORS TO MY WEBSITE

When you visit my website you will be prompted to Accept or Decline Cookies. Cookies are small files that are stored on your device (computer or mobile device) to track how you interact with a website. This may include remembering your preferences, analyzing usage patterns, and delivering customized content. If you Decline All Cookies, this information will not be collected. By clicking Accept, you consent to the collection and use of this information. This information is only processed in a way that does not identify anyone. I use legitimate interests as my lawful basis for holding and using your personal information in this way when you visit my website.