



GDPR/Privacy Policy

Introduction

Your privacy is very important to me and I want you to feel confident that your personal information will be kept safe, secure, and used only for the purpose it was provided.

I fully comply with current data protection laws, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018, and the Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003.

This privacy notice explains how I handle your personal information from the moment we first make contact through to after your therapy has ended. It covers:

- Why I am allowed to process your information and the purpose for doing so
- Whether you are required to provide certain information
- How long I will retain your data
- Whether anyone else will receive your personal information
- Whether I plan to transfer your information to another country
- Whether automated decision-making or profiling takes place
- Your rights regarding your data protection

My lawful basis for holding and using your personal information

Under the GDPR, 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, and I've outlined these below:

- If your therapy has ended, I will rely on legitimate interest as the lawful basis for holding and using your personal information.
- If you are currently in therapy or in contact with me to discuss therapy, I will process your personal data because it is necessary for the performance of our contract.

The GDPR also ensures that I handle any sensitive personal information you may share with me, referred to as 'special category personal information,' with the utmost care. The lawful basis for processing this type of information is that it is necessary for providing health treatment (in this case, counselling) and necessary for a contract with a health professional (in this case, a contract between me and you).

How I use your information

Initial contact

When you contact me with an enquiry about my counselling services, I will collect information to help me satisfy your query. This will include your name, address, phone number, email address, and your doctor's details. Alternatively, your GP, another health professional, or a trusted individual (such as a parent) may provide me with your details if they are making an inquiry or referral on your behalf. If you decide not to proceed with counselling, I will ensure that all your personal data is deleted within a month. However, if you would like me to delete this information sooner, please let me know.

While You Are Accessing Counselling

Please be assured that everything you share with me during our sessions is completely confidential. However, confidentiality may be broken in the following situations:

- If I believe there is a risk of harm to yourself or others, or if a child or vulnerable adult is at risk.
- If you disclose information about a planned act of terrorism or an intention to break the law.
- If I am required to do so by law.
- to discuss aspects of our work together with my supervisor to further develop my practice and to ensure that I continue to work ethically in your best interests. On these occasions your identity will remain anonymous.

I will always aim to discuss any concerns with you first, unless there are safeguarding issues that prevent this. To ensure the smooth running of counselling services, I will keep a record of your personal details. These records are stored securely, either in a locked filing cabinet or on a password-protected device and are never shared with any third parties.

I will keep brief written notes after each session, which are anonymised and stored separately from your personal details in a locked filing cabinet.

For security reasons, I do not retain text messages longer than necessary and typically delete them once our sessions have ended. If there is any important information in a text message, I will transfer it to my anonymised notes before deleting it. Similarly, any email correspondence will be deleted if it's not relevant, with key information added to my anonymised notes if necessary before deletion.

After counselling has ended

I will shred this privacy consent document and your registration/contact form with your personal information one month after our work finishes. I will keep your session notes and your name for 6 years. These will be securely destroyed six years after our final contact. If you want me to delete your information sooner than this, please tell me.

Third party recipients of personal data

It is highly unlikely that I will need to share your data, and I will never sell it or use it for unethical purposes. However, there are certain circumstances where I may be required to share it: for example, if my notes are requested by a court of law, or if you inform me that you or someone else is at serious risk of harm, in which case I may need to share your information with your doctor or the police.

I have also appointed a Clinical Executor who, in the event that I am unable to continue working with you, will have access to your details and will reach out to you.

Your rights

I try to be as open as I can be in terms of giving people access to their personal information. 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. You can read more about your rights at www.ico.org.uk/your-data-matters.

If I do hold information about you I will:

- give you a description of it and where it came from;
- tell you why I am holding it,
- tell you how long I will store your data and how I made this decision;
- tell you who it could be disclosed to;
- let you have a copy of the information in an intelligible form.

You can ask me at any time to correct any inaccuracies in the personal information I hold about you.

To request access to the personal information I may hold about you, please submit your request in writing to: **liz@coastalcounsellingwhitstable.co.uk**

If you have any concerns or complaints about how I handle your personal data, please feel free to reach out to me directly by writing or emailing the contact details above. I also welcome any suggestions for improving my data protection practices.

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 www.ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint.

Data security

I take the security of your personal data very seriously and make every effort to ensure it is kept safe. This includes using encrypted devices and storing physical records in a locked filing cabinet within a secure office.

Visitors to my website

I do not use analytic cookies to track your behaviour or store data about you. If you have any questions about my data protection policy, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone on **07842 842584** or by email at **liz@coastalcounsellingwhitstable.co.uk**

The term 'data controller' refers to the person or organisation responsible for collecting, storing, and managing personal data. In this case, I am the data controller, and I am registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (registration number ZC073593).