**Privacy notice**

**Introduction**

To deliver effective therapy services, I need to collect and store your personal contact details and therapy session records. This privacy notice outlines how I'll handle your personal information throughout our interaction, from initial contact to after therapy concludes. I'm committed to protecting your privacy and ensuring your personal data is kept safe and secure. I'll only use your information for the purposes it's collected, and I adhere to relevant data protection laws, including the GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018, and Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations. As a BACP Accredited Member, I also follow their professional code of ethics regarding client confidentiality and privacy.

**Lawful Basis for Processing Your Personal Data**

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requires me to have a valid lawful basis for processing your personal data. The lawful basis I rely on depends on the stage of our interaction:

- For current clients, processing is necessary for the performance of our contract (i.e. providing therapy services).

- For past clients, I rely on legitimate interest as the lawful basis for holding and using your personal information.

- For sensitive personal information (also known as "special category personal data"), I process it on the basis that it is necessary for the provision of health treatment (therapy sessions) and for the performance of a contract with a health professional (our therapy agreement).

This ensures that I handle your personal data lawfully and securely, in accordance with GDPR requirements.

**Using and Retaining Your Personal Data**

I'll only use your personal data for administering the therapy service, including tasks like scheduling, cancelling, and rescheduling appointments. I'll retain your information for as long as necessary, following guidelines set by the Information Commissioner's Office, to ensure compliance with data protection regulations.

**Initial Contact and Information Collection**

When you reach out to book your first appointment, I'll collect some basic information to process your enquiry. This typically includes your name and a contact method, such as an email address or phone number. This allows me to schedule the appointment and notify you if I need to cancel due to unforeseen circumstances. You can choose not to provide a contact method if you don't want to be contacted. I may also receive your details from a third party, such as your employer or a relative, if they're making a referral or enquiry on your behalf. If you decide not to proceed with therapy, I'll delete your personal data within a month, or sooner if you request.

**During Therapy**

While you're in therapy with me, I'll use your contact information to send you written confirmations of your appointment times, but only if you've given your consent. I'll only use your email address and phone number for appointment-related communication unless we've agreed to use email or text messaging for therapy-related information.

At our first session, I'll ask you to complete a personal details form, which includes your name, address, date of birth, contact information, and GP details. This form is stored securely in a locked filing cabinet, accessible only to me.

Your therapy attendance is confidential, and I won't routinely contact your GP. However, if necessary, I'll discuss this with you before contacting them, balancing my duty of care with confidentiality.

As an Accredited Member of the British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP), I'm committed to maintaining confidentiality. I'll only breach confidentiality if there are legal or ethical obligations to disclose, such as:

- Disclosure of abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult

- Risk of serious harm to yourself or others

- Information about potential terrorist activity

- Court-ordered disclosure

If confidentiality must be broken, I'll try to discuss it with you first, unless safeguarding issues prevent this. I also receive regular supervision support, where I may discuss our work without identifying you, and my supervisor adheres to the BACP's code of ethics.

I keep brief, secure notes of our therapy sessions to assist our work together. These notes are stored in a locked filing cabinet, accessible only to me. They don't contain identifying information and are for my use only.

**After Therapy Concludes**

Counsellors are required to retain records after therapy ends for various reasons, including compliance with financial regulations and tax requirements. Keeping your therapy notes allows me to provide efficient service if you contact me again in the future.

Your therapy notes are stored securely in a locked filing cabinet, accessible only to me, and do not contain identifying personal details. They will be retained for seven years after therapy concludes, in line with industry guidelines, and then confidentially destroyed.

Your personal details form will be confidentially destroyed at the end of your therapy sessions. However, I'll retain a record of your name, date of birth, and client reference number for seven years after therapy ends. This allows me to identify your therapy notes if needed, while maintaining confidentiality and security.

**Sharing Information with Third Parties**

If a third party, such as your employer, pays for or arranges your appointments, I'll only share the dates of your attendance and non-attendance with them for invoicing and payment purposes. All information discussed during your appointments will remain confidential, and I won't share any details without your explicit written consent.

**Protecting Your Data**

I take data security very seriously and have measures in place to protect your information. My email account is password-protected, and devices used to access emails are also password-protected and have anti-virus software. If you contact me through the website's contact form, the data you provide will be sent to me via encrypted email using Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP) and will not be stored by the website or shared with third-party data processors.

Email correspondence is typically deleted within a month unless it's necessary to retain the information. If retention is necessary, I'll print the email and store it securely in a locked filing cabinet that only I can access**.**

**Your Rights Under GDPR**

As per the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guidelines, you have several rights regarding your personal data:

- You can request access to the information I hold about you.

- You can ask for corrections to be made to your personal data.

- You can request deletion of your personal data.

- You can ask me to restrict or object to processing your personal data in certain circumstances.

For more information about your rights, visit <http://ico.org.uk/your-data-matters> To make a request, please email chrissergeant@cscounselling.co.uk in writing. Note that there may be situations where I'm unable to comply with your request, such as if I'm legally required to retain records. Please also be aware that there may be a charge for complying with a request if it is deemed to be excessive in nature.

**Questions or Concerns**

As the data controller, I'm responsible for collecting, storing, and handling your personal data. I'm registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (Registration reference ZA283979) If you have any questions about this privacy policy or how I handle your personal information, you can reach me at:

Phone: 07535 261757

Email: chrissergeant@cscounselling.co.uk

**Complaints**

If you're unhappy with how I've handled your personal data, please contact me at chrissergeant@cscounselling.co.uk. For formal complaints about data processing, you can reach out to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), the UK's data protection regulator. Visit for more information on filing a formal complaint.

**Changes to privacy notice**
This privacy notice may be updated from time to time, so please check occasionally for any updates.