



WELLS COUNSELLING

Safeguarding Policy

Wells Counselling

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Wells Counselling is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all clients, including children, young people and adults at risk. This policy sets out how safeguarding concerns will be recognised, considered, recorded and responded to within the counselling practice.

1. Purpose and scope

The welfare and safety of a child, young person or adult at risk will be given appropriate priority when there is reason to believe that they may be experiencing, or be at risk of, abuse, neglect, exploitation or serious harm.

This policy applies to all counselling services provided by Wells Counselling, whether sessions take place face-to-face, online, by telephone or through another agreed method. It covers safeguarding concerns relating to children and young people under 18; adults with care and support needs who may be unable to protect themselves from abuse or neglect; clients who may present a serious risk of harm to themselves or another person; and information disclosed by a client which raises safeguarding concerns about another person.

2. Legal and professional framework

Wells Counselling will have regard to relevant legislation, statutory guidance and professional standards, including, where applicable, the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004; Working Together to Safeguard Children; the Care Act 2014; Mental Capacity Act 2005; Domestic Abuse Act 2021; Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR; Human Rights Act 1998; Equality Act 2010; relevant local safeguarding partnership procedures; and the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions and associated BACP guidance.

3. Safeguarding Lead

As a sole practitioner, Jenny Wells is the Safeguarding Lead for Wells Counselling.

The Safeguarding Lead is responsible for responding appropriately to safeguarding concerns; maintaining knowledge of current safeguarding guidance and local procedures; making safeguarding referrals where appropriate; maintaining appropriate safeguarding records; seeking consultation or supervision where appropriate; and reviewing safeguarding practice and this policy regularly.

Where a safeguarding concern arises, professional supervision or appropriate safeguarding advice may be sought. However, seeking consultation will not delay action where there is an immediate risk of serious harm.

4. Safeguarding children and young people

A child is anyone under the age of 18. Safeguarding concerns may include physical, emotional or sexual abuse; neglect; domestic abuse; child sexual or criminal exploitation; grooming; online abuse; bullying; coercive or controlling behaviour; harmful sexual behaviour; female genital mutilation; forced marriage;



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honour-based abuse; trafficking or modern slavery; radicalisation; abuse within teenage relationships; and significant concerns regarding self-harm or suicide.

A child does not have to disclose abuse directly for a safeguarding concern to arise. Concerns may arise through observations, behaviour, information provided by another person or information disclosed during counselling.

5. Safeguarding adults

Wells Counselling will respond appropriately where there are concerns about an adult who has needs for care and support, is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect, and because of those needs is unable to protect themselves from the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

Forms of abuse may include physical abuse; sexual abuse; psychological or emotional abuse; financial or material abuse; domestic abuse; discriminatory abuse; organisational abuse; neglect or acts of omission; self-neglect; and modern slavery.

Safeguarding responses will, wherever possible and appropriate, take account of the adult's wishes, views, mental capacity and desired outcomes.

6. Confidentiality and safeguarding

Confidentiality is fundamental to the counselling relationship. However, confidentiality is not absolute. The limits of confidentiality will be explained to clients as part of the counselling agreement.

Information may need to be shared without the client's consent where there is a legal requirement to do so or where disclosure is considered necessary and proportionate to protect the client or another person from serious harm, including safeguarding a child or adult at risk.

Where possible and safe to do so, I will discuss the need to share information with the client before doing so. There may be circumstances where informing the client beforehand would increase risk, prejudice an investigation or otherwise be inappropriate. Only information that is relevant and necessary for safeguarding purposes will normally be shared.

7. Responding to a disclosure or safeguarding concern

If a client discloses abuse or information giving rise to a safeguarding concern, I will listen carefully and remain calm; take the disclosure seriously; avoid making promises of complete confidentiality; avoid conducting an investigation or asking unnecessary leading questions; clarify information only where necessary to understand the nature and level of risk; consider immediate safety; explain, where appropriate, what action may need to be taken; make an accurate and timely record; seek supervision, safeguarding consultation or professional advice where appropriate; and make a referral to the appropriate safeguarding authority or emergency service where necessary.

8. Immediate danger and emergencies

If there is reason to believe that a child, adult at risk, the client or another person is in immediate danger or at immediate risk of serious harm, emergency action may be taken. This may include contacting the police on 999, or relevant emergency healthcare services where urgent medical intervention is required. Police may be contacted on 101 where involvement is required but the situation is not an emergency.



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Protecting life and preventing serious harm will take priority where immediate action is necessary.

9. Referrals and information sharing

Where a safeguarding referral is necessary, the appropriate service may include Children's Social Care or the local Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH); Adult Social Care or the relevant local authority safeguarding adults service; the police; the client's GP or another relevant healthcare professional; or emergency services.

The appropriate local safeguarding service will normally be determined according to the area in which the person at risk lives. Where there is uncertainty about whether information should be shared, advice may be sought from an appropriate safeguarding service, clinical supervisor, professional body, legal adviser or professional indemnity insurer. Information-sharing decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis and appropriately documented.

11. Self-harm and suicide risk

Expressions of suicidal thoughts or self-harm will be taken seriously and explored appropriately within the therapeutic relationship. The existence of suicidal thoughts or self-harm will not automatically result in a breach of confidentiality. The nature, severity and immediacy of the risk will be considered.

Where there is a serious or immediate risk to life, it may be necessary to contact an emergency contact, GP, crisis service, emergency service or another appropriate professional, including without the client's consent where justified. Where possible, any action will be discussed with and undertaken collaboratively with the client.

12. Domestic abuse

Wells Counselling recognises that domestic abuse may include physical or sexual abuse, violent or threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse and psychological or emotional abuse. Where domestic abuse is disclosed, consideration will be given to the safety of the client and to whether any children or adults at risk may also be affected. A safeguarding referral may be necessary where a child or adult at risk is experiencing or at risk of significant harm.

13. Record keeping

Clear, factual and contemporaneous records will be maintained where safeguarding concerns arise. Records should include, where appropriate, the date and nature of the concern; relevant information or words used by the client; assessment of risk; advice or consultation sought; decisions made and the reasons for them; information shared and with whom; referrals made; and any subsequent actions or outcomes known to the practice.

Safeguarding records will be stored securely and handled in accordance with the Wells Counselling Privacy Notice and applicable data protection requirements.

14. Supervision

Safeguarding matters may be discussed within clinical supervision while maintaining client confidentiality as far as reasonably possible. Supervision supports ethical decision-making but does not transfer responsibility



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for safeguarding decisions from the counsellor. Urgent safeguarding action will not be delayed in order to wait for a supervision session.

15. Allegations or concerns about the counsellor

Any allegation that the counsellor has harmed, abused or behaved inappropriately towards a child or adult at risk will be taken seriously. Where appropriate, the matter may be referred to the relevant local authority safeguarding service, police, professional body or other appropriate authority. Where the concern relates to professional conduct, clients may also use the Wells Counselling Complaints Procedure.

16. Professional competence

Wells Counselling is committed to maintaining appropriate safeguarding knowledge and competence through continuing professional development, safeguarding training, clinical supervision, reviewing relevant legislation and professional guidance, and maintaining awareness of local safeguarding referral pathways.

17. Review of this policy

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where relevant legislation, statutory guidance, professional guidance or safeguarding procedures change; a safeguarding incident identifies a need for review; or there is a significant change in the services provided by Wells Counselling.

Next review: September 2027.

Contact

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