

Safeguarding Policy

Nicola Pruce Counselling

Policy owner	Nicola Pruce
Role	Independent counsellor and sole trader
Professional status	BACP registered and accredited counsellor; BUPA-registered therapist
Practice base	Wales, United Kingdom
Policy date	25 October 2026
Review date	October 2027, or sooner if guidance or circumstances change

1. Purpose and scope

I am committed to protecting the safety, dignity, rights and wellbeing of my clients and other people who may be affected by my work.

I practise as an independent counsellor based in Wales and provide counselling to adults. Clients may be located in Wales, England, Scotland or Northern Ireland, particularly when sessions take place online.

I do not provide counselling to children or young people. However, safeguarding concerns may arise if an adult client discloses information about a child, another adult or a situation involving abuse, neglect, exploitation or risk of harm.

This policy sets out how I will respond to safeguarding concerns in line with the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions 2026, applicable law, relevant safeguarding procedures and guidance, and any applicable BUPA provider requirements.

2. Safeguarding principles

I will take safeguarding concerns seriously and respond proportionately; respect the dignity, rights, wishes and autonomy of clients wherever possible; recognise that confidentiality is fundamental but not absolute; act appropriately where there is a serious concern about safety; work within my competence and seek advice when needed; and keep accurate, factual and secure records of concerns and decisions.

3. Confidentiality and information sharing

I explain to clients that information shared during counselling is confidential, subject to certain limitations.

Information may need to be disclosed where required by law, or where there is an appropriate legal and ethical basis for sharing information to protect a client or another person from harm.

Where practicable and safe, I will discuss a proposed disclosure with the client and seek their consent. I may share relevant information without consent where this is necessary and lawful, including where seeking consent could increase risk or delay necessary protective action.

I will share only information that is relevant and necessary for the safeguarding purpose, with appropriate agencies or professionals, and record the reasons for any disclosure.

4. Safeguarding children

Although I work with adults only, a client may disclose information suggesting that a child or young person is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse, neglect, exploitation or other harm.

If this occurs, I will listen carefully, take the information seriously, and consider the nature and urgency of the concern without attempting to investigate the allegation myself.

I will contact the appropriate children's social care or social services team, safeguarding hub or other relevant authority, following the procedures applicable to the area where the child is located. If I am unsure which service to contact, I will seek advice from an appropriate safeguarding agency.

If a child appears to be in immediate danger, I will contact the emergency services.

I will record the concern, my assessment, the reasons for my decisions, any advice received and actions taken. I will not delay urgent safeguarding action while seeking supervision or professional advice.

Where safe and appropriate, I will explain to the client why information may need to be shared. I will not promise confidentiality where doing so could prevent necessary safeguarding action.

5. Safeguarding adults

If I become concerned that an adult may be experiencing abuse, neglect, coercion, exploitation or another serious threat to their safety, I will take the concern seriously and consider the person's circumstances, wishes, immediate safety and ability to make relevant decisions.

Depending on the circumstances, I may discuss the concern with the client, encourage them to access support, seek advice from the relevant local authority adult safeguarding team, make a safeguarding referral where appropriate and lawful, or contact the police or emergency services if there is immediate danger.

Wherever possible, I will respect the adult's wishes and seek consent before sharing information. I may need to act without consent where there is a sufficient legal and ethical basis, including where serious harm, risks to other people or applicable legal duties justify disclosure.

I will follow the relevant procedures for the nation in which the person at risk is located.

6. Immediate risk of serious harm

If information disclosed during counselling indicates that a client or another person may be at immediate risk of serious harm, I will assess the urgency and take reasonable, proportionate and appropriate action. This may include contacting emergency services, the police, an appropriate safeguarding agency or another relevant professional.

For online sessions, I will use the information reasonably available to establish the person's location and obtain appropriate assistance. Where reasonably necessary, I will seek the client's current location and appropriate emergency contact details as part of managing an urgent safety concern.

I will document the circumstances, my assessment, the action taken and the reasons for my decisions.

7. Online work and cross-border safeguarding

Because I practise from Wales and may provide online counselling to adults located elsewhere in the United Kingdom, I recognise that legal obligations and safeguarding procedures can differ between jurisdictions.

I will take reasonable steps to understand and comply with relevant legal and professional obligations both where I practise and where the client or other person at risk resides. This includes obligations relating to child abuse, safeguarding concerns, suicide risk and serious crime.

I will identify the appropriate safeguarding authority for the circumstances and location concerned, seek advice where necessary, and make reports to the appropriate authorities in accordance with my legal obligations. I will not assume that procedures in Wales automatically apply to a person located elsewhere.

8. Recording safeguarding decisions

For significant safeguarding concerns, I will record the nature of the concern, relevant information disclosed, the ethical issues considered, the client's perspective where appropriate and possible, relevant internal and external factors, the decision reached and reasons for it, actions taken, and the outcome where known.

I will also record relevant consultations with my supervisor or other professionals and review the decision and its outcome where appropriate. Records will be factual, adequate and relevant, stored securely, and handled in accordance with my data protection and record-retention arrangements.

9. Data protection and record retention

Safeguarding information will be handled in accordance with applicable data protection legislation and my Privacy Policy. I will keep records secure and share only information necessary for the safeguarding purpose.

My usual client-record retention period is five years, subject to any applicable legal or professional requirement to retain particular records for longer. I will ensure my safeguarding records, Privacy Policy and record-retention arrangements are consistent.

10. Training, advice and supervision

I will maintain appropriate safeguarding training and keep my knowledge of relevant legislation, referral procedures and professional guidance up to date.

I will use professional supervision to reflect on safeguarding concerns and ethical dilemmas while protecting client confidentiality as far as possible. Where necessary, I will seek advice from the BACP, an appropriate safeguarding professional, a relevant statutory agency or another suitably qualified professional.

I remain responsible for my professional decisions and will not allow the need to obtain advice to delay urgent action to protect someone from harm.

11. Concerns about professional conduct

If I become aware of an allegation or concern that a practitioner or another professional may have caused harm, abused their position or acted in a way that places a client or another person at risk, I will consider what action is appropriate to protect those affected.

This may include seeking independent professional advice and contacting the relevant safeguarding authority, employer, regulator or professional body, as appropriate. Any action will be proportionate and consistent with applicable legal and professional obligations.

12. BUPA and other professional requirements

Where a client is referred through or receives funding from BUPA, I will comply with applicable safeguarding, incident-reporting, confidentiality and information-sharing requirements in my provider agreement, insofar as these are consistent with my legal and professional obligations.

13. Access to this policy and raising concerns

This policy will be made available to clients as part of the information provided about my counselling practice. Clients may ask me questions about the policy or raise concerns about safeguarding or my professional practice.

Clients may contact me directly about concerns relating to my practice. Where appropriate, they may also contact the BACP or the relevant safeguarding authority. If someone is in immediate danger, they should contact the emergency services.

14. Review

I will review this policy at least annually and sooner if there are significant changes to safeguarding legislation, national guidance, the BACP Ethical Framework or my practice arrangements. I will ensure that I remain familiar with relevant safeguarding referral routes for the areas in which my clients are located.

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Date: 25 October 2026

Next review: October 2027