**SAFEGUARDING**

This policy outlines the process by which all Counsellors / Counsellors in Training working with Therapy Centre Services need to ensure they are following to ensure they are safeguarding vulnerable adults and children.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

At the outset of therapy, it is the responsibility of the Counsellor / Counsellor in Training to explain to the client (and ensure that the client understands) about confidentiality which includes;

* Understanding the extent and limitations of confidentiality
* To understand the circumstances where a Counsellor / Counsellor in Training may need to breach confidentiality
* Clear contracting which the client fully understands and agrees to.
* To know who will make, keep and have access to their notes and records, how they will be kept, for how long, how they will be retained and for what purposes they may be retained / destroyed.
* To be informed of circumstances when the Counsellor / Counsellor in Training may have to breach their confidentiality
* To know how, why and to whom the information will be given by the Counsellor / Counsellor in Training

Therapy Centre Services provide all Counsellors / Counsellors in Training with a **Statement of Understanding** which is our internal contracting document which must be introduced at the initial session and clearly talked through, and agreed with any client before counselling commences.

**CHILD PROTECTION**

A ‘child’ is defined as a person under the age of eighteen. The Children’s Act 1989 (CA 1989) in conjunction with subsequent legislation including the Children’s Act 2004, places a statutory duty on health, education and other services to co-operate with local authorities in child protection. There is a statutory duty to work together, including information sharing, in conducting initial investigations of children who may be in need or subject to abuse. Further information can be found at **Every Child Matters.**

Counsellors / Counsellors in Training working with children should have supervision with a person suitably qualified and experienced in child protection matters. If there is a concern that a child may be at risk of serious harm and the therapist does not have consent from the child or from a person with parent responsibility for the child to make a referral, then the Counsellor / Counsellor in Training will have to decide whether to make a referral anyway, without consent. Information can be found from the Local Authority, Department of Social Services or from Specialist Lawyers where required to support any decision making.

Any concerns must be documented using our Safeguarding Form and discussed with your Account Manager and taken to Supervision.

**CLIENTS AT RISK OF SUICIDE OR SERIOUS SELF-HARM**

Responding appropriately to suicidal clients creates one of the most challenging situations encountered by Counsellors / Counsellors in Training.

There is no general ‘duty’ to rescue in British Law, Counsellors / Counsellors in Training need to be explicit about reserving the power to breach confidentiality for a suicidal adult client. To do so without explicit agreement may constitute an actionable breach of confidence.

A Counsellor / Counsellor in Training who knows that a client is likely to harm themselves or others but who will not give consent for a referral must carefully consider the ethics of going against the client’s known wishes and also the possible consequences for their client of a referral or non-referral.

Our policy guidance is that all of the following steps are considered and followed;

Discuss with the client if appropriate, and where possible ascertain or agree;

* What is the client giving me permission to do?
* Does the client’s permission include making a referral?
* Is there anything I, or anyone else can do to prevent serious harm?
* What steps would need to be taken?
* How could the client be helped to accept the proposed action?

It is useful at this stage to implement the **Safety Plan** with your client.

It is also important to discuss the above with your Supervisor, and to also consider;

* Do the likely consequences of non-referral include serious harm to the client or others?
* Does my client have the mental capacity to give explicit informed consent at this moment in time?
* If the client does not have mental capacity, then what are my professional responsibilities to the client and to the public interest?
* If the client does have mental capacity, but does not consent to my proposed action (e.g. referral to a GP), what is my legal situation if I go ahead and do it anyway?

All Counsellors / Counsellors in Training have a professional responsibility that requires that they act within the area of their personal expertise and should consider their own limitations. The implication of this is that when they reach the limits of their expertise, consideration should be given to refer on with the client’s consent.

The Counsellor / Counsellor in Training must email the Safeguarding Manager (Lucy Shepherd) to request an internal referral if this has been agreed with the client, or where the Counsellor / Counsellor in Training feels that they have reached the limits of their expertise.

**THERAPY CENTRE SERVICES INTERNAL PROCESSES**

The Safeguarding Manager (Lucy Shepherd) manages the risk and safeguarding of all clients within the Counselling Service, with the Counsellor / Counsellor in Training.

When a Counsellor / Counsellor in Training identifies risk, this is indicated on the appointment handover message, and recorded on our own internal systems and monitored.

Where a client is indicated as a Risk Level 3 or above the Account Manager responsible for the Counsellor / Counsellor in Training will contact the Counsellor / Counsellor in Training to discuss the risk highlighted, and to manage their own mental wellbeing following the disclosure.

Should a client be at risk of harm by others, a Safeguarding Form must be completed and emailed to the Account Manager within 24 hours of the end of the session.

The Safety Plan should be used with all clients who indicate they are at risk of self-harm, and the Account Manager informed that a Safety Plan has been put in place.