Safeguarding Policy

Practitioner: Dr John Hills

Professional Body: Senior Accredited Member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

Date Last Reviewed: November 2026

1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to set out my commitment to protecting clients and third parties from harm, abuse, or neglect. Grounded in the **BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions**, safeguarding is an integral component of ethical therapy practice.

This policy applies to all clients accessing my practice across all delivery formats (in-person, phone, and online therapy). While my primary work is with adult clients, safeguarding responsibilities extend to children, young people, or other adults at risk who may be affected by disclosures made during therapy.

2. Safeguarding Commitments & Principles

In line with BACP guidelines, my practice is committed to:

- **Prioritising Safety & Wellbeing:** The health, safety, and welfare of clients and individuals at risk come first.
- **Promoting Autonomy:** Wherever safe and legally permissible, I work collaboratively with clients, keeping their voice, wishes, and feelings central to decision-making.
- **Transparency:** I aim to seek informed consent before making external referrals or reports, unless doing so would increase the risk of harm.
- **Ethical Record-Keeping:** Clear, objective, and proportionate records are kept regarding any safeguarding concerns and ethical rationales.

3. Understanding Safeguarding Concerns

Safeguarding concerns may arise from direct client disclosures, observations during sessions, or information provided by third parties.

A safeguarding response may be triggered if there is evidence or reasonable concern regarding:

1. **Children & Young People (Under 18):** Severe risk of physical, sexual, emotional abuse, exploitation, or neglect.
2. **Adults at Risk:** Adults with care and support needs who may be unable to protect themselves from abuse, financial exploitation, domestic abuse, or severe self-neglect.
3. **Severe Risk to Self or Others:** Imminent risk of serious self-harm, suicide, or harm to another individual.

4. Confidentiality and its Limits

Confidentiality is fundamental to establishing therapeutic trust, but it is **not absolute**. In accordance with UK law and professional standards, confidentiality may be broken if:

- There is a clear and imminent risk of serious harm to the client or another person.
- A child or adult at risk is experiencing or at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- I am legally mandated to disclose information under statutory legislation (e.g., Terrorism Act, drug trafficking, or money laundering statutes) or by a court order.

Rationale & Collaboration: If confidentiality must be broken, I will—whenever safe and practical to do so—discuss the concern with the client beforehand to explain what information will be shared and why.

5. Action Procedure

If a safeguarding concern arises:

1. **Immediate Safety:** If an individual is in immediate physical danger, emergency services (999) will be contacted straight away.
2. **Clinical Supervision:** Non-emergency safeguarding matters are brought promptly to my qualified clinical supervisor to ensure objective, ethical decision-making.

3. **External Reporting:** Where appropriate, reports will be escalated to the local authority Adult Social Care or Children's Services team, or relevant emergency contacts.

6. Professional Standards & Training

To ensure robust safeguarding oversight, I undertake to:

- Maintain active registered membership with the BACP.
- Undertake regular continuing professional development (CPD) in child and adult safeguarding.
- Hold an active, up-to-date Enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check.
- Maintain active clinical supervision with a supervisor who reviews safeguarding dilemmas.

7. Key Contacts & Raising a Concern

If you have a safeguarding concern regarding your own safety, my practice, or another individual, please reach out to:

- **BACP Professional Standards:** www.bacp.co.uk

Emergency Support:

- **Immediate Danger:** Call **999**
- **NHS Non-Emergency:** Call **111**
- **NSPCC Helpline (Child Safeguarding):** 0808 800 5000
- **Samaritans (Emotional Crisis):** 116 123