



New Hope Christian Counselling

Code of Standards:

*Confidentiality
and*

*General Data Protection
Regulation GDPR*

Confidentiality and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

This leaflet outlines our responsibilities and practices in respect of information we hold about clients and explains our policies on confidentiality and GDPR.

Last reviewed: 01/06/2020

1

New review due: 01/06/2021

Confidentiality:

Staff** working for New Hope will not pass on personal information about clients (including information on attendance) to anyone outside the agency, subject to the following exceptions:

- **Where the staff member has the signed consent of the client to disclose the information.**
- **Where the staff member would be liable to civil or criminal court procedure if the information were not disclosed.**
- **Where the staff member believes the client or third party is in serious danger.**

In any of these circumstances the counsellor will normally encourage the client to pass on information to the relevant person/agency. If there is no indication that this has happened, or is likely to happen, or if the crisis or danger is sufficiently acute, the counsellor may pass on the information directly. Consent to disclose information will be sought from the client if at all possible.

Supervision/Consultation:

Qualified and student New Hope counsellors meet with clinical supervisors to speak about their client work in line with their professional requirements at least once per month. The supervisor is a qualified counsellor who is also Registered with the PSA. Internal supervision is offered but never with the counsellor's line manager.

The purpose of clinical supervision /consultation is to help the counsellor reflect on their work with clients and also ensures best practice and the safety of the client. In this process the client's identity is not revealed.

Liaison and correspondence:

With the express permission of the client, it may be appropriate for the counsellor to liaise with or write to a third party - for example a client's Psychiatrist or General Practitioner. In the case of telephone calls, the purpose of the call, and the nature and extent of the information to be given, will be agreed with the client prior to the call. In the case of letters, clients will be asked for their written consent and will agree the contents of the letter in discussion with their counsellor.

Record Keeping and Data Protection:

Counsellors will keep brief records of client sessions. These will contain factual information of the session content. All clients using New Hope will be asked to sign a form (Agreement to Counselling) which includes a reference to notes being kept by the agency. If a client feels unable to give their permission for us to keep confidential case-notes, we regret that we will be unable to offer them counselling. We can,

however, meet with them to discuss their reservations and offer information on possible referrals to another service.

General statistics about clients seen at New Hope eg. Ethnicity, gender, dates of initial contact and assessment, dates of starting and ending therapy, age group, faith group, employment and the type of problem addressed in counselling are kept on spreadsheet form. These statistics do not contain information from which an individual can be easily identified and are used to monitor and improve effectiveness.

Counselling notes:

These may record background information and key issues discussed in the sessions. These will vary in length and detail. Points of concern are also noted. These notes are kept separate from identity records. Notes are kept for a minimum period of three years after the final counselling session after which they will be shredded. New Hope will regularly review the length of time notes are kept and may decide to keep certain sets of notes longer if this is considered to be in the client's interest. Notes could be requested in the event of future Court Cases by either the client or a Judge or in the event of a future complaint about the service.

Data Handling:

A 'Data Controller is a person who determines the purposes for, and the manner in which data is collected and processed. There must be a purpose for any data collected. The current data controller for New Hope is Liz Charton.

Code of Ethics:

The counsellors within the agency adhere to either the Association of Christian Counsellors Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy. Copies of this are available from New Hope.

Access to Notes:

Under the Data Protection Act 2018, clients have a right of access to all notes kept on them within one month. Notes can be read at the office or they can be sent to the client.

If a client's file includes a letter or additional information from the person responsible for their clinical care, usually their GP or psychiatrist, consent from the relevant practitioner must be obtained before the correspondence can be seen.

Right to Erasure:

Under GDPR guidelines, a client normally has the right to be forgotten, the right to have their information deleted or to withdraw their consent. However, as a counselling agency we have a 'legitimate interest' in holding information, in case of possible future court cases, and to respond to any complaints. We therefore are unable to destroy client notes and records of client attendance until a minimum of three years has passed since the final counselling session.

Security:

All notes and records of client sessions are kept on paper with access restricted to the counsellor who delivers the therapy. Notes are kept in locked cabinets between sessions.

Because they may contain sensitive personal information, counselling case notes are kept anonymously and contain no reference to the clients' surnames, place of residence, contact numbers or email addresses.

Case notes are kept for a minimum of three years after the final session and are then shredded.

Data Security Breaches:

The Data Controller will notify the client within 72 hours if a data breach occurs. They will also notify the Information Commissioners Office (ICO).

**Staff includes – New Hope Managers, qualified counsellors and student counsellors. Administration staff have limited access to client files in order to store and shred documents but they always work under the direction of a New Hope Manager who is on the premises at the time.