SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Gail Ann Counselling
Manor Offices
10 Turf Street
Bodmin
Cornwall
PL31 2DH

Policy Effective Date: 19 June 2026
Review Date: June 2027

As a sole practitioner, I am responsible for all safeguarding decisions within the practice and therefore undertake the role equivalent to a Designated Safeguarding Lead. Safeguarding decisions may be supported through clinical supervision, consultation and referral to statutory safeguarding agencies where appropriate.

Allegations Against the Practitioner

Any safeguarding concern, complaint or allegation regarding my conduct will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately. Relevant professional bodies, insurers, safeguarding authorities or statutory agencies may be informed where required.

1. Policy Statement

Gail Ann Counselling is committed to promoting the safety, welfare and wellbeing of all clients.

I recognise that children, young people and adults at risk have the right to be protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation and harm. I am committed to working in a manner that safeguards their welfare and promotes their best interests.

As a member of the National Counselling and Psychotherapy Society (NCPS), I work in accordance with its Ethical Framework and professional standards, alongside relevant safeguarding legislation and guidance.

The welfare of the child is paramount. Safeguarding concerns will always be taken seriously and acted upon appropriately.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Protect children, young people and adults at risk who engage with counselling services.
- Provide clear guidance on recognising and responding to safeguarding concerns.
- Explain how concerns will be recorded and managed.

- Clarify the circumstances in which confidentiality may be limited.
- Ensure compliance with legal, ethical and professional responsibilities.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all counselling services provided by Gail Ann Counselling, including:

- Adults
- Children and young people
- Parents and carers
- Face-to-face counselling
- Online counselling
- Telephone counselling

4. Definitions

Child

A child is any person under the age of 18 years.

Adult at Risk

An adult at risk is a person aged 18 or over who:

- Has needs for care and support; and
- Is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- Is unable to protect themselves because of those needs.

5. Principles

I am committed to:

- Treating all individuals with dignity, respect and compassion.
- Promoting emotional and physical wellbeing.
- Listening to concerns and taking disclosures seriously.
- Acting promptly when safeguarding concerns arise.
- Maintaining accurate and secure records.
- Working within legal and ethical frameworks.
- Sharing information appropriately where safety requires it.
- Supporting the rights and welfare of children and vulnerable adults.

6. Confidentiality and Safeguarding

Confidentiality is a fundamental aspect of counselling. However, confidentiality is not absolute. Information may be shared without consent where:

- There is a serious risk of harm to the client.
- There is a serious risk of harm to another person.
- A child may be suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm.
- An adult at risk may be experiencing abuse, neglect or exploitation.

- Disclosure is required by law.
- Disclosure is required by a court order.
- Professional or ethical obligations require action.

Where appropriate and safe to do so, concerns regarding disclosure will be discussed with the client beforehand.

7. Working with Children and Young People

When counselling children and young people:

- Their welfare and safety are paramount.
- Their right to privacy and confidentiality will be respected wherever possible.
- Information will only be shared when necessary to protect them or others from harm.
- Safeguarding concerns will be managed in accordance with current legislation and guidance.
- Decisions will be guided by the child's best interests.

Decisions regarding consent, confidentiality and information sharing will take account of the young person's age, understanding, competence and legal rights.

Where appropriate and safe, children and young people will be informed if information needs to be shared for safeguarding purposes.

8. Recognising Abuse and Harm

Safeguarding concerns may include, but are not limited to:

Child Abuse

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect

Additional Child Safeguarding Concerns

- Child sexual exploitation
- Child criminal exploitation
- County lines activity
- Grooming
- Online abuse
- Peer-on-peer abuse
- Bullying and cyberbullying
- Domestic abuse within the household
- Female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Forced marriage
- Honour-based abuse
- Radicalisation and extremism

- Trafficking
- Modern slavery
- Suicide and self-harm risk
- Domestic abuse
- Stalking and coercive control
- Online radicalisation
- Missing children
- Harmful sexual behaviour

Adult Safeguarding Concerns

- Physical abuse
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Financial abuse
- Domestic abuse
- Neglect
- Self-neglect
- Discriminatory abuse
- Organisational abuse
- Exploitation
- Modern slavery
- Stalking and coercive control
- Suicide and self-harm risk

9. Responding to Disclosures

Where a safeguarding concern is disclosed, I will:

1. Remain calm and listen carefully.
2. Take the disclosure seriously.
3. Avoid leading questions.
4. Avoid making promises of absolute confidentiality.
5. Clarify facts only where necessary.
6. Explain what may happen next.
7. Record information accurately and promptly.
8. Assess immediate risk.
9. Seek safeguarding consultation, supervision or professional advice where appropriate and where doing so would not increase risk.
10. Contact relevant agencies where required.

10. Responding to Safeguarding Concerns

Where concerns arise, I may contact:

- Children's Social Care Services
- Adult Social Care Services
- The Police
- Emergency Services
- Healthcare professionals

- Other relevant safeguarding agencies

Referrals will be made where there is reasonable concern that a child, young person or adult at risk is suffering, or at risk of, abuse, neglect or serious harm.

11. Emergency Situations

If there is an immediate risk to life or serious harm:

- Emergency services will be contacted immediately by calling 999.
- Relevant safeguarding authorities may also be informed.
- Appropriate records will be maintained.

12. Information Sharing

Information sharing is an important part of safeguarding.

Wherever possible and appropriate, consent will be sought before sharing information. However, consent is not required where doing so would increase risk or where there is a legal or safeguarding duty to disclose information.

Any information shared will be:

- Necessary
- Relevant
- Proportionate
- Accurate
- Timely
- Secure

Only information required to protect individuals or fulfil legal obligations will be disclosed.

13. Record Keeping

All safeguarding concerns, disclosures, decisions and actions taken will be recorded accurately and contemporaneously where possible.

Records will include:

- Dates and times
- Nature of concern
- Information disclosed
- Actions taken
- Advice sought
- Reasons for decisions made

Records will be stored securely in accordance with data protection requirements.

14. Clinical Supervision

Regular clinical supervision forms part of safe and ethical counselling practice.

Safeguarding concerns may be discussed within supervision where appropriate.

Information shared in supervision will be anonymised wherever possible.

15. Online and Remote Counselling

Where counselling is delivered online or remotely:

- Appropriate measures will be taken to maintain confidentiality and security.
- Risk assessments may be undertaken where necessary.
- Emergency contact information may be requested.
- Safeguarding concerns arising during remote work will be managed in accordance with this policy.
- For online and telephone counselling, clients may be asked to provide their current address, emergency contact details and GP information so that appropriate action can be taken if a safeguarding or emergency situation arises.

16. Professional Development

I am committed to maintaining up-to-date safeguarding knowledge and will undertake safeguarding training and continuing professional development as appropriate to my practice.

17. Relevant Legislation and Guidance

This policy is informed by:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Care Act 2014
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (current edition)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (where relevant)
- Relevant NCPS ethical and professional guidance

18. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if:

- Legislation changes
- Professional guidance changes
- Significant safeguarding incidents occur
- Practice requirements change

Next Review Date: June 2027

19. Contact

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