

Confidentiality and Data Protection Policies

Client Information (Website)



Your right to privacy and data protection is important to us. This document outlines our responsibilities and practices in respect of information on clients and other contacts arising from the work of the Light House and explains our policies on confidentiality and data protection with respect to website users and client information.

A leaflet will be available containing the information below when you attend our office for counselling and will be explained at your initial appointment, and you will be required to sign an agreement indicating that you accept these policies and other associated conditions before counselling can commence.

1. Information about you

To fulfil our responsibilities as counsellors we will need to record personal information about you. This information includes your name, address and contact details, and GP practice. Under an identifying code we will also take notes of 'assessment information', that is relevant medical information and aspects of your personal social and family history that you choose to share with your counsellor. We will also retain data entered on questionnaires relating to your wellbeing and your comments about our services. This information will be retained in separate locations (keeping your name and contact details apart from the assessment notes) as paper client packs, held securely in locked cabinets.

Your contact details will be only be used to contact you in connection with our counselling services. Other personal data such as your name, address and/or date of birth may be used to verify your identify if there is a need to contact other agencies or a request for access to personal data from yourself or your representative or legitimate legal instrument such as a court order. In these cases information will only be requested after your explicit written permission is given for this purpose. In the same way, we will only disclose information about your counselling to third parties if your explicit written permission is given for this purpose.

Your contact information will be held for a period of three years after the last counselling session, except where there is a mutually agreed decision to retain it for

longer. Your contact details alone will be shared in exceptional circumstances with the Light House management in the event that your counsellor is incapacitated so that they can contact you to explain the situation. *Please note: If you make an initial enquiry via our website, your contact information entered in the enquiry form is not stored in the website but is converted into an email and sent to our administrators for processing. The data is transferred to a card index system and the email copy is deleted.*

2. Information about counselling sessions and our work together

Also your counsellor will record notes on paper of each therapy session under an identifying code. These notes will be a brief factual record of the session. This set of notes will include any agreements made with regard to for example, cancelled sessions or changes to the way the therapy is conducted. The notes are also held in your client pack.

These notes will be held for a period of six months after the cessation of counselling except where we agree with you to retain them for longer or where we believe that it is in our best professional interests to do so.

Your counsellor may make information from these notes available to legitimate third parties under the following conditions:

- On receipt of a request from you or your representative, and where the release of the notes is not judged by your counsellor as likely to cause you significant harm or harm to another person
- Where there is a specific legal requirement to do so
- Where there is an ethical duty to do so, for example to avoid serious harm to yourself or another person, including the safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults. Wherever possible you will be made aware of and your permission will be sought before disclosure in these circumstances.

Some anonymous data will be held longer than six months for statistical purposes only, such as demographic and wellbeing data. This data will be held on a computer database with restricted access, but under identifying codes, where entries will not be traceable to individuals after the three year period.

3. Records of contacts with your counsellor

As previously described, we will hold your name and telephone number on our records until three years after our counselling relationship ends. This extended time is required in case we get external enquiries from you or others about your attendance here for counselling. During this period we may also retain summary records of text messages made to or from your number for six months. This data is

held on a Third Party computer system, Text Anywhere, used for sending and receiving text messages. As such that organisation is a Data Processor working on our behalf and we have reviewed and accepted that their Data Protection policies are acceptable for our purposes.

We may also hold records of your attendance/non-attendance under an identifying code for statistical purposes longer than three years. This data will not be personally identifiable after that period.

4. Financial Information

If you give a cash/cheque donation, normally this will be anonymous and no record will be kept except the amount given. However, if you register in the Gift Aid scheme, we will keep your name and address as well as the amount given, in order to submit this information to HMRC to reclaim the tax paid.

Personal information for those registered for Gift Aid will be kept electronically in spreadsheets that are password-protected and restricted access, and donation data is passed electronically to HMRC each quarter. All this data has to be kept for seven years as part of our financial records, this is a legal requirement for all company financial data. You may request the total amount given to the Light House under the Gift Aid scheme to be provided on request, e.g. to help complete your Tax Return.

If you give donation(s) via direct Bank Transfer, whether or not you are registered for Gift Aid, your details will appear on our Bank Statements and these have to be retained for seven years as described above. Personal information in this case will be limited to the bank reference code you enter when setting up the bank payment, normally your name, and the amount given. Bank statements are stored as paper copies held in locked filing cabinets, and transactions are also stored on our electronic accounting system, which is password-controlled and access limited to the Light House manager, the Administrator and our Accountant.

5. Your Rights

You have the right to ask to see any information held by your counsellor about you. To do this please either ask your counsellor, or submit a request to the Light House office in writing. You also have the right to ask for information that you believe to be incorrect to be rectified. We will endeavour to provide you with the information requested within four weeks.

If we become aware of a situation where your personal information may have accidentally or maliciously been obtained by a third party we will notify you within three days.

If you are concerned about the way that your information is being held please discuss this with your counsellor. If you are still unhappy you have the right to

complain to the Information Commissioners Office.

6. Agreement

When you sign your Agreement to Counselling, you will need to indicate on the form that we have discussed and agreed how your personal information will be held for the purposes of counselling. Without your agreement to our holding your personal information it will not be possible to proceed with counselling.

If you are reading this on our website, submission of your details via the enquiry form signifies your acceptance of the information in this policy.