

# Counselling Policies Handbook

**Version : V1.0**

**March 2026**

## **Young Persons Counselling Service**

**Counsellor:** \_\_\_\_R Douglas Pearson\_\_\_\_\_

**Professional Registration:** \_\_\_\_BACP\_\_\_\_\_

**Service Area:** Central Scotland

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**Policy Review Date:** \_\_\_\_01/04.27\_\_\_\_\_

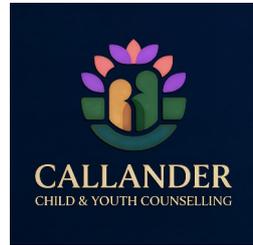
## **1. Introduction**

This handbook outlines the policies and procedures governing the counselling services provided by this project. It explains how counselling is delivered safely, ethically, and in compliance with relevant UK and Scottish legislation and professional guidance.

The counselling service is committed to supporting the emotional wellbeing of young people while ensuring that safeguarding, confidentiality, and data protection responsibilities are upheld.

This handbook is provided to ensure transparency for:

- young people accessing counselling
- parents and carers
- referral agencies
- schools and partner organisations



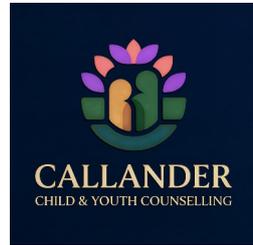
## **2. Legal and Regulatory Framework**

This counselling project operates in accordance with relevant UK and Scottish legislation and guidance including:

- **UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)**
- **Data Protection Act 2018**
- **Children (Scotland) Act 1995**
- **Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014**
- **Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act 1991**
- **Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007**
- **National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021)**
- **Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) framework**
- **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**

Professional practice may also align with ethical standards such as those published by:

- **BACP - British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy**
- **COSCA - Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland**



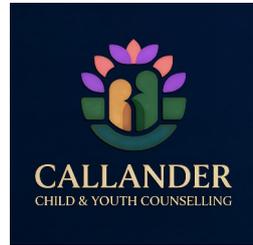
### **3. Counselling Services**

Counselling provides a confidential and supportive space where young people can explore their thoughts, emotions, and experiences.

Counselling may help young people with:

- anxiety or stress
- emotional wellbeing
- school pressures
- relationships
- bereavement
- confidence and self-esteem
- family challenges

The counsellor provides a safe and respectful environment where young people can talk openly without judgement.



#### **4. Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**

The welfare and safety of children and young people is the highest priority.

The counselling service operates in accordance with National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021) and the GIRFEC framework.

Safeguarding refers to protecting children from:

- abuse
- neglect
- exploitation
- harm

Forms of abuse may include:

- physical abuse
- emotional abuse
- sexual abuse
- neglect
- online or digital exploitation

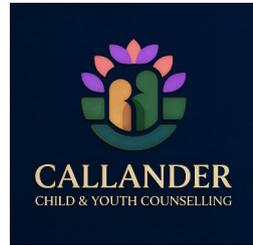
If a safeguarding concern arises, the counsellor has a duty to act to protect the child.

Concerns may be reported to appropriate agencies including:

- Local Authority Social Work Services
- Police Scotland
- health or education professionals

Where possible, the young person will be informed before information is shared unless doing so would increase risk.

All safeguarding concerns will be recorded appropriately.



## **5. Confidentiality**

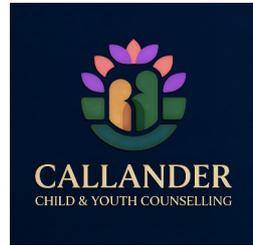
Confidentiality is essential to counselling and helps young people feel safe to speak openly.

In most circumstances, information discussed in counselling will not be shared with parents, schools, or other professionals.

However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if:

- a young person is at risk of harm
- another person is at risk of harm
- there are child protection concerns
- information is required by law or court order

Where disclosure is required for safeguarding reasons, only the minimum necessary information will be shared.



## **6. Young Person Confidentiality Statement**

Young people will be informed about confidentiality in clear language.

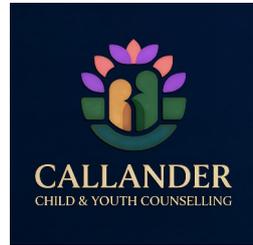
Confidentiality means that what is discussed in counselling normally remains private between the counsellor and the young person.

However, if the counsellor believes someone is in danger or being harmed, information may need to be shared with professionals responsible for keeping children safe.

Young people have the right to:

- be listened to
- be treated with respect
- ask questions about counselling
- understand how their information is used

These rights are supported by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).



## **7. Consent for Counselling**

Where counselling is provided to a young person, consent arrangements follow the Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act 1991.

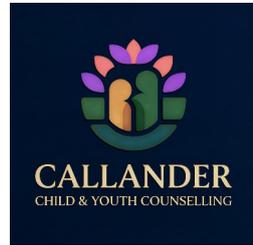
Young people under the age of 16 may consent to counselling if they demonstrate sufficient maturity and understanding.

Where appropriate, parental or guardian consent may also be obtained.

Before counselling begins:

- the counselling process will be explained
- confidentiality limits will be explained
- consent will be documented

Consent may be withdrawn at any time.



## **8. Data Protection and Privacy**

The counselling service processes personal information in accordance with:

- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018

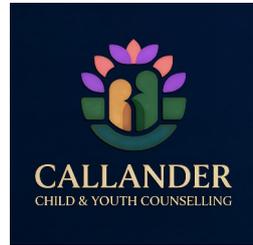
The counsellor acts as the Data Controller, responsible for determining how personal data is collected and used.

Personal data may include:

- names
- contact details
- date of birth
- emergency contact information
- counselling records

Counselling records may contain special category data, such as mental health information, which receives additional legal protection.

Information is processed only for the purpose of providing counselling services and meeting safeguarding responsibilities.



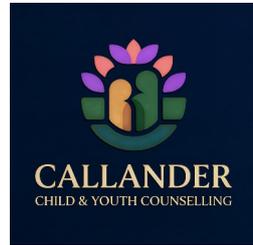
## **9. Storage and Security of Data**

Personal data is stored securely to protect confidentiality.

Security measures may include:

- password-protected devices
- encrypted digital files
- secure cloud storage
- locked storage for paper records

As a sole practitioner, access to records is restricted to the counsellor.



## **10. Data Retention**

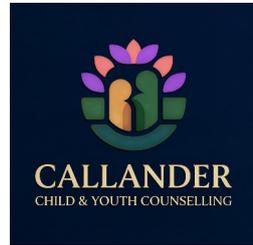
Counselling records are retained only for as long as necessary.

Typical retention periods follow professional practice guidance:

- 7 years after the final counselling session
- for young people, records may be retained until the client reaches age 25

Financial records are retained for 6 years in accordance with HMRC requirements.

After the retention period expires, records will be securely destroyed.



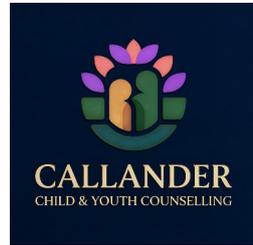
## **11. Sharing Information**

Personal data will not normally be shared with third parties without consent.

Information may be shared where:

- safeguarding concerns arise
- disclosure is required by law
- necessary to protect a child or another person

Only the minimum necessary information will be disclosed.

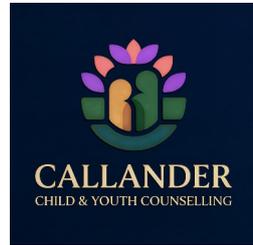


## **12. Online Counselling and Communication**

Where counselling is delivered online:

- secure platforms will be used where possible
- steps will be taken to protect privacy
- sessions should take place in a private environment

Email communication may be used for administrative purposes but cannot be guaranteed to be fully secure.

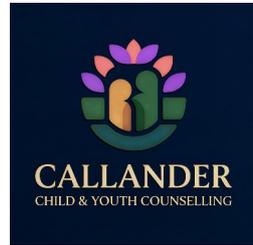


### **13. Data Breaches**

A data breach occurs when personal data is lost, accessed, or disclosed without authorisation.

If a breach occurs:

1. the breach will be assessed immediately
2. steps will be taken to contain the incident
3. the breach will be recorded
4. the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) will be notified where required
5. individuals whose information was involved will be promptly informed

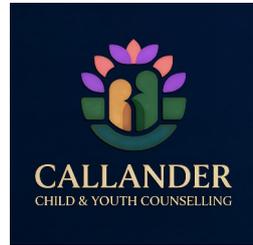


## **14. Individual Rights**

Under UK GDPR, individuals have the right to:

- be informed about how personal data is used
- access personal data
- request correction of inaccurate information
- request deletion of data where appropriate
- restrict processing of data
- object to data processing
- complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)

Requests should be made in writing.



## **15. Complaints**

If concerns arise about counselling services or data protection, the counsellor should be contacted in the first instance.

Individuals also have the right to complain to the:

### **Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)**

Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

Website: **[www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)**

## **16. Policy Review**

This handbook will be reviewed:

- annually
- when legislation changes
- when professional guidance is updated
- when counselling services change

**Counsellor Name:** R Douglas Pearson

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_