

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Douglas Pearson

Policy Review Date: 01/04/2027

1. Policy Statement

Douglas Pearson is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare, safety, and wellbeing of all children and young people who access counselling services.

The counselling practice recognises that children and young people have the right to be protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and harm. Safeguarding is a fundamental responsibility and is embedded within all aspects of professional practice.

This policy ensures that all safeguarding concerns are identified, recorded, and acted upon appropriately in accordance with Scottish child protection legislation and guidance.

The practice operates in line with the principles of GIRFEC (Getting It Right For Every Child) and recognises the importance of multi-agency collaboration when safeguarding concerns arise.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All counselling services delivered to children and young people under the age of 18
- Any contact with children during the course of counselling services
- Any safeguarding concerns arising during therapeutic work

As a sole practitioner, the counsellor holds full responsibility for safeguarding within the practice.

3. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is informed by the following legislation and guidance:

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

Professional practice also adheres to ethical standards set by recognised professional bodies such as:

- **British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)**

4. Definition of Safeguarding

Safeguarding refers to the actions taken to protect children and young people from harm and ensure their wellbeing.

Abuse may include:

Physical Abuse

Deliberate physical harm or injury to a child.

Emotional Abuse

Persistent emotional maltreatment affecting emotional development or self-worth.

Sexual Abuse

Forcing or enticing a child to participate in sexual activities.

Neglect

Failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs.

Additional Risks

Safeguarding concerns may also include:

- Domestic abuse exposure
- Exploitation
- Online abuse
- Radicalisation
- Self-harm or suicide risk
- Substance misuse within the household

5. Safeguarding Principles

The counselling practice is guided by the following principles:

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- Children have the right to be heard and taken seriously
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility
- Concerns must be reported promptly and appropriately
- Information will be shared proportionately when necessary to protect a child

6. Safer Practice

To ensure safe practice the counsellor will:

- Maintain current PVG Scheme membership
 - Hold appropriate professional insurance
 - Undertake regular safeguarding training
 - Follow recognised professional ethical frameworks
 - Maintain professional boundaries at all times
 - Keep accurate and secure records of counselling sessions
 - Maintain appropriate supervision arrangements
-

7. Confidentiality and Safeguarding

Confidentiality is an important part of counselling; however it cannot be guaranteed where a child may be at risk of harm.

If a safeguarding concern arises, information may be shared with:

- Social Work Services
- Police Scotland
- Health professionals
- Education services

Information will only be shared when necessary to protect the child or comply with legal duties.

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

8. Identifying Safeguarding Concerns

Concerns may arise through:

- Direct disclosure from the child
- Observations of behaviour or emotional distress
- Information shared by parents, carers, or professionals
- Concerns relating to self-harm or suicide

All disclosures will be taken seriously.

9. Responding to a Disclosure

If a young person discloses abuse or harm, the counsellor will:

1. Remain calm and listen carefully

2. Reassure the child they have done the right thing by speaking
 3. Avoid asking leading questions
 4. Explain that confidentiality cannot be maintained if they are at risk
 5. Record the information accurately as soon as possible
 6. Seek advice or report concerns to the appropriate safeguarding authority
-

10. Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

If a child is believed to be at risk of harm:

The counsellor will contact:

- **Local Authority Social Work Child Protection Team**, or
- **Police Scotland (101)**
- **Emergency - 999**

Where appropriate, concerns may also be discussed with the Named Person or school safeguarding lead in line with GIRFEC guidance.

A written record of the concern and any actions taken will be maintained.

11. Record Keeping

The practice will maintain secure and confidential records of:

- Safeguarding concerns
- Disclosures
- Decisions taken
- Referrals made

Records will be stored securely in accordance with UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.

12. Professional Supervision

As a sole practitioner, safeguarding concerns may be discussed within professional supervision, ensuring confidentiality is maintained wherever possible.

Supervision supports:

- Ethical decision-making

- Safeguarding risk assessment
 - Professional accountability
-

13. Online or Remote Counselling

Where counselling is delivered remotely:

- Secure platforms will be used
 - Privacy and safeguarding risks will be considered
 - Emergency contact information will be obtained prior to sessions
-

14. Complaints

Any safeguarding concerns or complaints about the practice may be raised directly with the counsellor.

If the counsellor is registered with a professional body (e.g. BACP or COSCA), concerns may also be raised with that organisation.

15. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if:

- Legislation changes
 - Professional guidance is updated
 - A safeguarding incident occurs requiring review
-

Signed:

R Douglas Pearson

Date: ___09/03/26_____