

VICTORIA WILLIAMS COUNSELLING

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Privacy Policy

Counselling Professional Body

I follow the Codes of Ethics and Practice of the British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy (“BACP”). A copy of the code can be accessed here: <https://www.bacp.co.uk/events-and-resources/ethics-and-standards/ethical-framework-for-the-counselling-professions>

Any personal data provided by you to Victoria Williams Counselling through any means (verbal, written, in electronic form, or by your use of the website) will be held and processed in accordance with the data protection principles set out in the Data Protection Act 1998 and the General Data Protection Regulation for the purposes for which you have given consent and to provide the services you have requested.

What your information is used for?

- To provide clients with the professional counselling and psychotherapy service requested.
- To offer suitable counselling and psychotherapy appointments.
- To notify you about changes to your appointments and other changes to the service.
- To seek feedback from you on your experience of counselling and psychotherapy with Victoria Williams Counselling.
- To improve the service to ensure that it is provided in the most effective manner.
- To administer the service, including the arrangement of appointments, for financial control and data analysis.
- To keep in touch with those who consent to this, for the purposes of service.
- To fulfil administrative, legal and contractual obligations.

As a client, when you attend an initial consultation with me, we begin by setting a working agreement that explains my commitment to client confidentiality and data protection, as well as when confidentiality may be breached. You will need to sign this agreement before we commence therapy.

Client personal information: GDPR

Your personal information is stored securely and confidentially, either electronically, using codes with password or biometric protection or in paper format, which is stored in a locked cabinet, coded for protection. The data collected is used to enable effective communication during the therapeutic process, it is used in a safe and ethical manner in accordance with the BACP Ethical Framework and

the EU General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018. I will only store any personal information which is relevant to the therapeutic relationship.

Your Rights under GDPR

- To be informed what personal information I hold (i.e., this document).
- To see the personal information, I hold about you (free of charge for the initial request, please provide one month's notice).
- To rectify any inaccurate or incomplete personal information.
- To withdraw consent to me using your personal information.
- To request your personal information be erased. Though I can decline if the information is needed for me to practice lawfully and competently
- To receive the personal information which you previously provided, and the right to transfer that information to another party.

Confidentiality

It may become necessary to share your data with a third party if I feel you, or someone else is at risk of significant harm including children and vulnerable adults. Unless the risk is imminent, this will be discussed with you before appropriate disclosure. I would only do this in extreme circumstances and would try to discuss it with you first before taking any action.

I have a legal obligation to break confidentiality in compliance with a court order, drug trafficking, money laundering or acts of terrorism.

From time to time, I will discuss our work with my clinical supervisor. This is standard practice for counsellors and psychotherapists at all levels of experience and it supports me to work as well as I can with you. My clinical supervisor is bound by the same confidential and ethical practice as I am.

Personal information I hold.

You have the right to know what personal information I hold, why I hold it, how it is stored, who has access to it, and for how long I hold it. I will keep the following personal information so that I can work safely and professionally with you, in line with the guidelines of the BACP.

Your name, address, and pronouns - I keep this information password protected, only I will see this information. These are kept separate from my personal process notes. I will keep this personal information for seven years. After that time, it is destroyed. This is required by my professional liability insurer and by my professional organisation (BACP).

Your phone number and email address - This information is needed in case I must contact you (for example for rescheduling sessions or sending an invoice). I also keep your email address in case we agree to work therapeutically via email, either as a regular arrangement or occasionally. I will delete emails once I have read them, unless necessary to keep for a period (examples could be if I am on holiday or sick and unable to check emails). I may add what I perceive as relevant information from emails to my personal process notes for our therapeutic work. I may access emails on my mobile phone which is locked with a passcode (and has face recognition ID.) when I am not using it. Your email address is held in my Outlook account, which is password protected. When reading or writing emails on my laptop computer, I use a password to be able to access it. I will keep your email address and telephone number stored in a password protected computer file document, separate from any clinical notes, where a unique code is used to identify you. If I save your telephone number into my mobile telephone, I will use your unique client code in order to maintain confidentiality.

Emergency contact name and phone number - I keep this information password protected with your name and contact details. It is unlikely that I would ever use this information, but I offer to hold it in case I become concerned for your welfare and I cannot contact you. You and I may agree together for some other reason that I might contact this person, based on your best welfare. When we finish working together, I will delete this personal information. Only I will see this information.

Relevant medical information/GP details (if you choose, or if discussed in sessions) - I keep this personal information in password protected electronic form or paper form along with your name and contact details. It may be relevant to keep or share certain medical information if you have any health conditions such as seizures, diabetes, etc which may impact a session, or you have any allergies that I should be aware of. Only I will see this information and I will delete this personal information when we finish working together.

Clinical session notes - notes may include dates and times of attendance and brief notes on important themes from the session. I do not keep detailed session notes. I keep these brief session notes in hardcopy which is store in a locked filing cabinet. I may reflect on my own experience, which is confidential to me. Your name or other identifying details are not kept with your session notes; only a code is used. Notes are used to remind me of important points I want to be sure to remember and/or to discuss in supervision. The notes will be destroyed five years after our work finishes. Only I will see this information.

How information is dealt with and held

Phone: I use a personal mobile phone. Please consider this in the information you leave in the voice message. All messages will be played and deleted daily, except in holiday or sick periods. I keep a calendar on my mobile phone to manage my appointments, and you will be referred to within this only by your initials. My mobile phone is biometrically locked.

Therapeutic email/instant messaging work: anything written by myself within therapeutic email exchanges is considered confidential to me. I request you do not share my writings with anyone or on any type of platform online, in hard copy or any other format. I do not store these therapeutic exchanges.

My emails, texts, and WhatsApp messages to you, and yours to me - I may delete emails/texts/WhatsApp messages after I have noted the contents (for example, emails around scheduling). Electronic correspondence will also be held by the corresponding application (Outlook, Phone's SMS, WhatsApp as examples). I may keep emails/texts/WhatsApp messages if I consider them necessary to our work. I will delete emails/texts/WhatsApp messages when our work ends and only, I will see the information.

Online voice/video/instant messaging - You may choose to work with me online with voice/video/instant message, where we will use Teams or Zoom, a cloud platform using mobile devices. Please check directly on their terms of services from time to time as they may make updates to their polices. I will not record any of our work and request that you do not either.

iCloud - I use a laptop computer, which uses iCloud, a cloud storage and cloud computing service from Apple Inc. iCloud provides the means to wirelessly back up iOS devices directly to iCloud.

Website - my Wix website does not contain any personal information about clients. If you click on the email link to contact me, the website will momentarily collect and send it to my Outlook account for the purposes of our initial contact. If you choose to make contact with me on my 'contact me' page this is via 'Wix Forms'

an automated email with its content is sent to my Outlook email account.

an automated message is sent by Wix with the Form content to my Wix message Inbox.

I will delete this Wix Form message after reading it. Please do not include personal information and/or sensitive information in the Wix Form as an additional security measure.

Client feedback/testimonials - to me via my Wix website is confidential unless you tick the box consenting for me to use your client feedback/testimonial for promotional materials, including my website. Your name is not requested in the form and will not be used in any type of promotional materials.

Payment information and invoices

I may make a note of payments you have made and invoices on a financial spreadsheet for my private practice and in my paper diary. Your unique client reference code is used. Bank statements will show your name if you pay by bank transfer. I am required by law to retain certain financial information for tax purposes. I keep financial information for 7 years as advised by HMRC. Payment by BACS or cash will be processed by my bank, transactions may be viewed by employees of the bank, tax HMRC and/or my accountant. When payment is made via BACS, your account name or reference (or the name of the person who is paying) may show up on my online or paper bank statements. You have the right to discuss alternative payment options with me.

Therapeutic Will

I have appointed a Therapeutic Executor to attend to my clients in the event of my demise or incapacitation. This Executor is a qualified therapist and is also a member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, and therefore committed to client confidentiality. Her name is Claire Basil and she is also my supervisor. She will contact you to let you know of my demise or incapacitation and to offer you support where appropriate. My Executor is also responsible for the shredding of all case notes and personal details in this event.

If I become aware of a situation where your personal information may have accidentally or maliciously been obtained by a third party, I will notify you within 3 days.

All electronic records are stored on a password protected computer in platforms that require password-protected authentication. Unfortunately, the transmission of information via the internet is never completely secure. Although Victoria Williams Counselling uses industry-standard protocols and encryption, there is no guarantee of the security of your data transmitted via email; any transmission is at your own risk. Once your information has been received, Victoria Williams Counselling will use strict procedures and security features to try to prevent unauthorised access. When you request counselling with Victoria Williams Counselling you will be asked to consent to the processing of your data under the terms of this policy.

I am based in the UK and governed by UK jurisdiction.

This policy may be updated from time to time, please check my website for updates.