

Safeguarding Policy

Version: 1.0

Effective Date: 01 July 2026

Review Date: 01 July 2027

1. Purpose

Path to Balance is committed to providing counselling and coaching services in a safe, ethical and professional manner.

This policy explains how safeguarding concerns are recognised, assessed, managed, recorded and reviewed. It supports my commitment to protecting children, young people and adults who may be at risk of harm, whilst respecting client autonomy, confidentiality and professional ethics wherever possible.

As a registered member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), I work in accordance with the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions, relevant UK safeguarding legislation and current professional guidance.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all counselling and coaching services provided by Path to Balance, including:

- Face-to-face counselling
 - Online counselling
 - Telephone counselling
 - Walking therapy (where appropriate)
 - Young people aged 13 years and above
 - Adult clients
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3. My Commitment

I aim to provide a safe, respectful, compassionate and non-judgemental therapeutic environment.

Safeguarding decisions will always seek to balance:

- client wellbeing
- client autonomy
- confidentiality
- legal responsibilities
- professional ethics
- prevention of harm

Wherever practicable, safeguarding decisions will be discussed within clinical supervision. Where immediate action is required to protect life or prevent significant harm, appropriate action will be taken without delay.

4. Decision-Making Principles

Every safeguarding concern is unique.

When making safeguarding decisions I will aim to:

- place the safety and wellbeing of the client and others at the centre of decision making;
 - use the least intrusive intervention appropriate to the level of identified risk;
 - work collaboratively with the client wherever possible;
 - seek informed consent before sharing information unless doing so would increase the level of risk or prevent appropriate safeguarding action;
 - clearly document the rationale for safeguarding decisions;
 - seek supervision whenever practicable;
 - review safeguarding decisions as circumstances change.
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5. Confidentiality and its Limits

Everything discussed within counselling is treated as confidential.

However, confidentiality may need to be broken where I believe there is a serious risk of harm to:

- the client;
- another person;
- a child;
- a young person;
- a vulnerable adult.

Confidentiality may also be broken where required by law or court order.

Wherever possible, I will discuss this with the client before sharing information unless doing so would increase the level of risk.

6. Recognising Safeguarding Concerns

Safeguarding concerns may include, but are not limited to:

- suicidal intent
 - significant self-harm
 - abuse
 - neglect
 - domestic abuse
 - coercive control
 - sexual abuse
 - child abuse
 - exploitation
 - trafficking
 - stalking or harassment
 - honour-based abuse
 - female genital mutilation (FGM)
 - radicalisation
 - significant deterioration in mental health
 - substance misuse affecting safety
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7. Risk Assessment

Where safeguarding concerns are identified, risk will be assessed using the Path to Balance Risk Assessment Framework.

Risk will normally be considered as:

Low Risk

No immediate safeguarding concerns identified.

Continue therapeutic work and monitor.

Moderate Risk

Some identifiable safeguarding concerns.

Consider completing a Personal Support Plan.

Increase monitoring.

Discuss within supervision.

Consider involving other professionals where appropriate.

High Risk

Immediate or significant risk of harm.

Take immediate safeguarding action for vulnerable adults and under 18, and provide referrals and crisis management where appropriate.

This may include contacting:

- Emergency Services (999)
 - Police
 - GP
 - NHS Mental Health Crisis Team
 - Children's Services
 - Adult Social Care
 - Other appropriate safeguarding agencies
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8. Safeguarding Procedure

Where safeguarding concerns arise I will normally:

1. Assess immediate safety.
 2. Explore protective factors.
 3. Assess risk.
 4. Complete a Risk Assessment where appropriate.
 5. Develop a Personal Support Plan where appropriate.
 6. Record safeguarding concerns accurately.
 7. Seek supervision where appropriate.
 8. Make referrals where required.
 9. Continue reviewing risk throughout therapy.
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9. Safeguarding Concerns Raised Outside Therapy

Safeguarding concerns may occasionally arise before a therapeutic relationship has begun or outside scheduled counselling sessions.

This may include contact through:

- Website enquiry forms
- Website live chat
- Email
- Telephone
- WhatsApp Business
- Social media messaging

Path to Balance is not a crisis or emergency service and these communication channels are not continuously monitored.

Where an enquiry indicates an immediate or significant risk of harm, I will respond as soon as reasonably practicable by directing the individual towards appropriate emergency or crisis services.

Where sufficient identifying information is available and there is reason to believe that an individual or another person is at immediate risk of serious harm, I may contact emergency services or other appropriate safeguarding agencies even where a therapeutic relationship has not yet been established.

Safeguarding-related communications received outside therapy will be recorded where appropriate and reviewed as part of clinical governance.

10. Working with Young People (13–17 Years)

The welfare of the young person will always be the primary consideration.

Confidentiality is an important part of counselling but it is not absolute.

Where safeguarding concerns arise, I will assess the nature and level of risk and take appropriate action.

Where appropriate, I will involve the young person in safeguarding decisions and explain why information may need to be shared.

Where there is a safeguarding concern involving a young person, I will normally inform the trusted adult identified on the Registration Form.

However, this may not occur where:

- informing that person would place the young person at increased risk of harm;
- the trusted adult is believed to be the alleged perpetrator;
- there are reasonable safeguarding grounds to involve Children's Services or the Police before informing the trusted adult;
- legislation, safeguarding guidance or professional advice indicates that a different course of action is required.

Where appropriate, advice may be sought from Children's Services, safeguarding professionals or my clinical supervisor before sharing information.

Where there is immediate risk of significant harm, appropriate safeguarding agencies will be contacted without delay.

The rationale for all safeguarding decisions involving young people will be clearly documented.

11. Record Keeping

Path to Balance maintains clear, accurate and proportionate safeguarding records.

Depending on the circumstances, safeguarding documentation may include:

- Registration Form
- Counselling Agreement
- Initial Assessment
- Risk Assessment
- Personal Support Plan
- Session Notes
- Review Forms
- Ending Summary
- Safeguarding Record
- Clinical Supervision Records (anonymised)
- Client Register
- Incident Register (where appropriate)

All records are stored securely in accordance with the Data Retention and Record Management Policy.

12. Learning and Continuous Improvement

Path to Balance is committed to continuous improvement in safeguarding practice.

Learning arising from:

- safeguarding incidents;
- supervision;
- CPD;
- complaints;
- near misses;
- reflective practice;

will be documented where appropriate and used to improve clinical practice, documentation, policies and procedures.

Relevant learning may be recorded within the Reflective Practice Log, CPD Log, Lessons Learned Register and Clinical Governance Register.

13. Related Policies and Documents

This policy should be read alongside the following Path to Balance documents:

- Privacy Notice
 - Data Retention and Record Management Policy
 - Counselling Agreement
 - Registration Form
 - Initial Assessment
 - Risk Assessment
 - Personal Support Plan
 - Session Notes Template
 - Review Form
 - Ending Summary
 - Safeguarding Record
 - Client Register
 - Client Hours Log
 - Supervision Log
 - CPD Log
 - Reflective Practice Log
 - Complaints Policy
 - Lone Working Policy
 - Clinical Risk Management Policy
 - Clinical Will
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14. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if:

- legislation changes;
- BACP guidance changes;
- significant safeguarding incidents occur;
- learning from supervision, complaints or practice indicates improvements are required.

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Path to Balance