

Safeguarding Adults Policy & Procedures

Jenny Poirier Counselling

1. Purpose and Scope

This policy applies to adults receiving counselling with Jenny Poirier who may be at risk from harm, abuse, or neglect. It applies to all therapeutic work undertaken with individual adults (aged 18 and over), whether delivered face-to-face in Muswell Hill (London N10) or online UK-wide. The objective is to balance a client's autonomy, safety, and right to confidentiality against statutory duties to protect vulnerable individuals.

2. Core Principles (BACP Ethical Framework 2026 Alignment)

In accordance with Section 2.4 ('Act appropriately to protect people from harm') of the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions (2026), this practice operates under the following safeguards:

- **Autonomy & Consent:** The client's right to control their life choices will be prioritized wherever possible. Actions will be taken with the client's explicit consent unless doing so increases immediate risk to life or safety.
- **Proportionality & Non-Maleficence:** Interventions will be proportionate to the level of risk identified, aiming to minimize distress and preserve the therapeutic alliance.
- **No Investigation Clause:** As a therapist, I am not an investigator. If abuse or neglect is suspected or disclosed, I will focus entirely on supporting the client's current safety, grounding, and making the correct referral. I will not ask leading or investigative questions.

3. Defining an 'Adult at Risk'

In line with the Care Act 2014, an 'adult at risk' is any individual aged 18 or older who:

- Has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs),
- Is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and
- As a result of those care and support needs, is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse or neglect.

4. Recognizing Types of Abuse and Neglect

Safeguarding indicators may present in person or during online/phone therapy sessions. I remain vigilant to signs of:

- **Physical, Emotional, or Sexual Abuse:** Unexplained injuries, fearfulness, severe self-blame, or coercive control.
- **Neglect or Acts of Omission:** Self-neglect, failure to access vital medical care for chronic conditions, or failure of a designated carer to provide basic needs.
- **Financial or Material Abuse:** Coercion regarding finances, or unauthorized use of a client's funds or property.

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- **Discriminatory or Institutional Abuse:** Targetted mistreatment relating to a client's neurodivergence, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

5. Confidentiality and Its Limits

Confidentiality is fundamental to counselling and therapy. However, absolute confidentiality cannot be promised.

- **Explicit Boundaries:** Limits to confidentiality are clearly communicated during the initial consultation and detailed in the working contract.
- **Breaching Confidentiality:** Confidentiality may be broken without consent if there is a legal obligation (e.g., Terrorism Act), if a client indicates clear intent to cause serious, imminent physical harm to themselves or others, or if an adult at risk is disclosing active abuse and lacks capacity to protect themselves.

6. Suicide and Self-Harm Crisis Protocol

While the core safeguarding policy focuses on abuse, exploitation, and neglect from external sources, this practice recognizes that clients may experience acute mental health distress, self-harm, or suicidal ideation.

- **The Distinction Between Self-Harm and Safeguarding:** In line with the London Safeguarding Adults Procedures, self-harming behavior without fatal intent does not automatically trigger a statutory safeguarding referral if the client possesses the mental capacity to advocate for themselves. It is instead managed therapeutically within the session.
- **Risk Assessment Framework:** If active suicidal ideation is disclosed, I will immediately assess the severity using a collaborative, non-judgmental approach to evaluate intent, plans, and immediate access to means.
- **Collaborative Safety Planning:** For non-imminent or managed risk, I will work with the client to co-create or update a Suicide Safety Plan, identifying coping mechanisms, community support, and crisis hotlines (e.g., Samaritans on 116 123, or Shout text line 85258).
- **Imminent Risk & Emergency Procedures:** If a client presents with imminent, life-threatening risk, the crisis protocol overrides the standard confidentiality policy. I will attempt to gain consent to contact their GP, but if withheld, I will contact emergency services (999) or the client's local NHS mental health crisis line directly.

7. Safeguarding Procedures & Action Plan

When a safeguarding concern arises during a session, the linear procedure is: Assess Risk -> Discuss with Client (if safe) -> Consult Clinical Supervisor -> Escalate to Local Authority Safeguarding Team.

- **Immediate Risk Assessment:** Determine if there is immediate, life-threatening danger. If yes, call emergency services (999) immediately.

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- Client Collaboration: Unless it explicitly puts the client or others at further risk, discuss the concern transparently with the client. Explore their views on safety and attempt to gain their consent to contact external support.
- Consultation: Bring the dilemma promptly to a Clinical Supervisor or consult professional bodies via the BACP Ethics Advisory Service.
- Referral Pathway: If escalation is required, contact the relevant local authority Safeguarding Adults Board based on the client's physical location.

Region	Service / Contact Details	Out of Hours / Emergency
National / Universal	Emergency Services: 999 Metropolitan Police: 101	999 / 101
Haringey Borough	Haringey First Response Team Tel: 020 8489 1400 Email: firstresponseteam@haringey.gov.uk	020 8489 0000
Barnet Borough	Barnet Social Care Direct / Adults MASH Tel: 020 8359 5000 Email: socialcaredirect@barnet.gov.uk	020 8359 2000
Online (UK-wide)	Locate specific local authority via client's postcode using the Gov.uk council directory.	Contact the local Emergency Duty Team (EDT).

8. Online Therapy & Digital Safety Safeguards

- Verification of Location: At the start of online/phone work, the client's current physical location (address) and local emergency contact/GP details must be collected and verified.
- Environment Safety: Confirm at the start of each session that the client is in a private, secure, and physically safe environment where they cannot be overheard.

9. Professional Maintenance & Training

- Completing comprehensive safeguarding adults training (minimum Level 2/3) every 2–3 years.
- Maintaining an Enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check.
- Securing robust Professional Indemnity Insurance that explicitly covers both face-to-face and online therapeutic delivery.

10. References

- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). (2026). Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions. Lutterworth: BACP.
- Care Act 2014, c. 23. London: The Stationery Office.

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- London Safeguarding Adults Board. (2024). London Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures. London: LSAB.
- Haringey Council. (2026). Safeguarding Adults in Haringey. Haringey Council website.
- Barnet Council. (2026). Safeguarding Adults Hub. Barnet Council website.