

Counselling Together - Safeguarding Policy

1. BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

- 1.1. This policy is applicable to all Counselling Together (CT) team members and will be made available to outside organisations as required.
- 1.2. It sets out responsibilities and principles for adult and child safeguarding in CT.
- 1.3. CT offers a counselling service for adults (18+). This may be in a 1:1 setting or as couples counselling with either one or two CT counsellors present with the couple.
- 1.4. Section 42 of the Care Act, 2014 specifies characteristics of 'Adults at risk of abuse or neglect' in relation to safeguarding. Such adults are referred to in this policy as 'vulnerable clients' or 'vulnerable adults'.
- 1.5. In all cases where abuse is revealed or suspected (past, present or future), the CT safeguarding policy and procedures must be followed. Situations could include:
 - Abuse of a vulnerable client by a relative or other person(s). This includes institutional abuse.
 - Clients abusing vulnerable adults or children.
 - A counsellor posing a risk to vulnerable clients.
 - A vulnerable adult client seeking counselling with CT who is to be a witness in court.
- 1.6. CT team members may run training courses and workshops for adults. Some attendees could be vulnerable adults, but this is not 1:1 work and therefore, safeguarding arrangements specific to counselling do not apply, although may be used for guidance.
- 1.7. CT counsellors work in rooms provided by churches, who have their own safeguarding policies. CT team members may come into contact with children at host sites, but they do not work in a regulated activity with children.

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1. **All CT team members** have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults in accordance with the relevant legislation. Suggestions for improvements to policies and procedures are welcomed from all the team.
- 2.2. **CT Trustees** set direction for the service, and have responsibility for ensuring the appropriate policies and procedures are in place. They also oversee recruitment.
- 2.3. **The CT Safeguarding Officer and/or Deputy** (contact details in **6.2**) are the first port of call for any safeguarding issues arising within CT. Their respective **Supervisors** are consulted as necessary and where required the Safeguarding Officer will consult with the **Chair of Trustees**.
- 2.4. **The CT Management Team** (overseen by **Trustees**) are responsible for safe recruiting practice. This includes ensuring that DBS checks are conducted and maintained up to date for all team members who require them. The Management Team also work with Counsellors to support good practice and have responsibility to ensure that all Counsellors are aware of the policies and procedures.
- 2.5. **Counsellors** are responsible for implementing CT policies and procedures, and if there is ever any breach in adhering to those policies and procedures, they must raise this with the **CT Management Team** and their **Supervisors** as a matter of urgency. At all times it is a priority to work within the Ethical Frameworks of the professional bodies to ensure safe working in the best interests of the clients, counsellor and the service. In the event of any safeguarding concerns (see **2.6**), Counsellors

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consult with their **Supervisor** as required and notify the **CT Safeguarding Officer** as soon as possible. They also monitor their own wellbeing and fitness to practice.

- 2.6. **The Supervisor** (for each counsellor) will offer support, oversight and where appropriate direction to the counsellor and takes responsibility for this, but the individual counsellor retains responsibility for her/ his actions. The guidance from professional bodies is that supervisors are expected to hold greater levels of clinical responsibility for Trainee Counsellors than for Counsellors who are Qualified, Registered or Accredited.
- 2.7. **Legal advisors:** the CT insurers will be consulted as appropriate and they can offer legal advice.
- 2.8. **The CT Council of Reference** provide guidance and leadership on specific aspects of the CT work and operation. This may include safeguarding where applicable, but only on an advisory basis
- 2.9. **CT team members delivering educational events** are responsible for working according to CT policies and procedures.

3. SAFER RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

- 3.1. CT will ensure that recruitment practices for both volunteers and contracted staff meet legal requirements and include DBS checks and appropriate checks of references and training / qualification status prior to formal appointment.
- 3.2. Risk assessments identify DBS requirements in relation to CT activities (in accordance with the CT Health and Safety Policy).
- 3.3. For Counsellors, DBS certificate searches are at 'Enhanced level, including barred list'. The 'Workforce' type is normally 'Adult workforce' but 'Child workforce' may also be added if required.
- 3.4. Rechecking will take place at appropriate intervals, normally 4-5 years.

4. SAFEGUARDING WITHIN HOST CHURCHES

- 4.1. CT counsellors will ensure that they are aware of the safeguarding policies and procedures of their host church(es) and that the needs of both organisations can be complied with. CT will ensure a copy of this policy is provided to host churches.

5. COUNSELLOR TRAINING AND PRACTICES

- 5.1. Counsellors are trained in working with vulnerable adults. They are also trained in how to respond in relation to any perceived or explicit risk to the safety of their clients. This includes refresher training and updates on safeguarding.
- 5.2. Counsellor working practice is monitored via supervisor reports, regular ethical practice review with supervisors, annual reviews with the Counselling Manager, team meetings, team supervision sessions and client evaluation forms.

6. SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS AND DISCLOSURES OF ABUSE

- 6.1. In an emergency, the police and / or Adult or Child Safeguarding Services will be contacted.
- 6.2. Any safeguarding concern from a person external to CT (including clients) should be addressed to the Safeguarding Officer / Deputy. If a safeguarding concern is initiated via the CT Complaints Procedure, the Safeguarding Officer will also be notified.

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CT Safeguarding Officer: Katherine Stickland (Service Manager)

Tel: 07979 505318

Email: counsellingtogether@gmail.com

CT Deputy Safeguarding Officer: Sue Ingram (Counselling Manager)

Tel: 07983 320450

Email: counsellingtogether@yahoo.com

- 6.3. All safeguarding concerns, whether of external origin, or from CT team members, are addressed following the CT Safeguarding Concerns, Disclosures and Whistleblowing Procedure.
- 6.4. The Safeguarding Officer will refer to the Chair of Trustees as necessary and inform them on any safeguarding concerns, ensuring adherence to confidentiality requirements (see also **Section 2** on responsibilities).

7. CONFIDENTIALITY

- 7.1. Whilst CT is sensitive to the confidentiality of its clients, it has a responsibility to ensure that the welfare of vulnerable adults and children is the primary consideration. CT has a responsibility to assist the local authority, through Adult Services and/or the police, in carrying out their statutory duty to investigate cases where a vulnerable adult or child may be or are at risk of significant harm.
- 7.2. Confidentiality is covered in detail in CT guidance documents and in client contracts.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- 8.1. CT will not discriminate against vulnerable adults in the provision of its service on the grounds of disability, age, race, or any other protected characteristics, some of which may render a client more vulnerable.

9. VULNERABLE WITNESSES IN COURT AND PRE-TRIAL THERAPY

- 9.1. CT counsellors may be requested to support a vulnerable client, who:
 - Is a victim or witness of a crime
 - Learns during the course of counselling that they may be required to be a witness in court
 - Comes to CT for pre-trial therapy
- 9.2. In all the above cases, the counsellor will discuss their experience and competence in this field with their supervisor and will notify the CT Safeguarding Officer. Clients will be referred on if it is considered to be in their best interest.

10. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

- CT Complaints Procedure
- CT Safeguarding Concerns, Disclosures and Whistleblowing Procedure

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