

## Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

Help Counselling April 2025

### 1. Policy Statement

Help Counselling is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all clients who access our services. This includes the duty to ensure that all staff, counsellors, trainee counsellors, and trustees are equipped with the appropriate training, support, and guidance to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities.

As a mental health charity and clinical training placement provider, Help Counselling recognises that many of our clients may be considered vulnerable, whether through mental health conditions, past trauma, social isolation, or economic hardship. We also recognise that safeguarding duties extend to the wider impact of our services, including the protection of children and families connected to our adult clients.

We commit to working within the frameworks of the Care Act 2014, the London Multi-Agency Adult Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, and BACP's Ethical Framework. We work collaboratively with statutory agencies, training institutions, and professional bodies to uphold the highest standards of safety, ethics, and transparency.

### 2. Definitions

A "vulnerable adult" is any person aged 18 or over who may be unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation due to age, illness, disability, or circumstance.

"Safeguarding" refers to the action we take to promote the wellbeing of vulnerable adults and protect them from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

"Abuse" may be physical, sexual, emotional, financial, discriminatory, organisational, or may relate to neglect or self-neglect.

### 3. Responsibilities

- The **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** oversees safeguarding implementation and is the first point of contact for concerns.
- All **staff and trainee counsellors** must complete safeguarding training appropriate to their role.
- Supervisors must ensure counsellors are alert to safeguarding risks and know when to escalate concerns.
- The **Chair of Trustees** is responsible for ensuring the organisation's safeguarding duties are met at governance level.

### 4. Safeguarding Principles

We follow the six principles of safeguarding under the Care Act 2014:

1. **Empowerment** – supporting individuals to make informed decisions.
2. **Prevention** – taking action before harm occurs.
3. **Proportionality** – responding in the least intrusive way.
4. **Protection** – supporting those in greatest need.
5. **Partnership** – working with others to safeguard.
6. **Accountability** – being transparent and responsible.

## 5. Procedure for Responding to Concerns

If any adult discloses abuse or a safeguarding concern arises:

1. **Listen calmly and attentively.**
2. **Do not promise confidentiality** – explain that concerns may need to be shared.
3. **Record the concern accurately**, using the individual's own words where possible.
4. **Report the concern immediately** to the DSL or deputy DSL.
5. **Consult your supervisor** where appropriate.
6. The DSL will assess the risk and determine whether a referral is made to the local authority or police.

## 6. Clinical Risk & Safeguarding Interface

Help Counselling distinguishes between clinical risk (e.g. risk to self) and safeguarding risk (e.g. abuse by others). A triage and escalation framework guides staff and supervisors in managing both.

We acknowledge that mental ill-health may impair a person's ability to protect themselves. We adopt a non-judgemental, trauma-informed, and person-centred approach when assessing safeguarding needs.

## 7. Supervision & Support

All counsellors (including trainees) must be in regular clinical supervision. Where safeguarding concerns arise, supervisors must:

- Guide counsellors to follow the safeguarding procedure.
- Liaise with the DSL as needed.
- Ensure safeguarding does not fall solely to the counsellor.

## 8. Training & Communication

All new team members receive safeguarding training during induction and must update this every two years. Regular team meetings and reflective practice sessions promote open discussion of safeguarding themes. An up-to-date flowchart of the triage and escalation process is provided to all counsellors.

## **9. Safer Recruitment**

Help Counselling operates a safer recruitment policy appropriate to a low-cost, volunteer-based counselling service for adults. We:

- Require basic DBS checks for all counsellors.
- Seek verified references prior to placement.
- Ensure all volunteers are over 18 and receive safeguarding training during induction.

## **10. Policy Review**

This policy is reviewed annually, or earlier if required by changes in legislation or internal safeguarding concerns.

**Last reviewed:** April 2025

**Next review due:** April 2026