

Hertford Counselling Services

Data Protection and Privacy Policy

Any personal information provided by you to Hertford Counselling Services through any means (verbal, written, in electronic form, or by your use of our 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, to provide the service you have requested from us, and to meet the legitimate interests of our services.

Introduction

Hertford Counselling Services (the “data controller”, referred to below as “us” or “we”) is committed to protecting your privacy. Please read the following in order to learn more about Hertford Counselling Services’ privacy policy and how we collect and use information you give us.

This policy only applies to data collected by Hertford Counselling Services staff and via our own forms and website. Third party agents and any websites which are linked to ours are not covered by this policy. If you have any queries concerning your personal information or any questions on our use of the information, please contact your counsellor.

When you request counselling with Hertford Counselling Services and provide your personal details to us, you will be asked to consent to our processing of your data under the terms of this policy.

What information do we collect?

- **Counselling requests.**
Registering with us to access our counselling services can be done in person, by phone, email or in paper form. Our request process involves providing us with your name, telephone number and email address. We may also request information about your availability, therapeutic issues and other details which we think relevant to processing your request.
- **Initial Assessment Appointments.**
At any initial assessment we ask about your current personal, social, medical and financial circumstances. We also ask about your family history as well as the issues which are affecting you now. We require this information so that we can decide about our offer of counselling to you, to assign you to a counsellor, and to manage the service we provide to you.
- **Other forms.**
The information you give us on our forms (including all enquiry and assessment forms) may include your name, postal address, phone number and other messages to us.

What do we use your information for?

We use information held about you in the following ways:

- To provide clients with the professional counselling service requested from us.

- To enable us to offer appropriate opportunities and support to our counsellors.
- To offer suitable counselling appointments and to allocate clients and counsellors for counselling.
- To notify you about changes to your appointments and other changes to our services.
- To seek feedback from you on your experience of counselling from us.
- To improve our service to ensure it is provided in the most effective manner for you and for us.
- To administer our service, including the arrangement of appointments, financial control, data analysis and statistics.
- To keep in touch with those who consent to this for the purpose of organisation, service and professional development.
- To fulfil our administrative, legal and contractual obligations to our staff.

What information do we share?

We will **not share** any information about you with other organisations or people, except in the following situations:

- Consent.
Hertford Counselling Services may share your information with professional carers or others whom you have requested or agreed we should contact.
- Serious harm.
Hertford Counselling Services may share your information with the relevant authorities if we have reason to believe that this may prevent serious harm being caused to you or another person.
- Compliance with law.
Hertford Counselling Services may share your information where we are required to by law or by the regulations and other rules to which we are subject or as part of the backups of encrypted data processed and held by professional IT security companies.

How do we keep your information safe?

All information you provide to us is stored as securely as possible. All paper forms and correspondence are kept in a locked filing cabinet, at Prince of Wales House, 3 Bluecoats Avenue, Hertford, SG1 41PB, in a locked office area. All electronic records are stored by reputable providers using secure internet cloud technology.

Your identifiable personal material is kept separately from any session notes and other descriptive material. Client notes and documentation are destroyed five years after the end of counselling. Personal contact details are destroyed after ten years of no contact or updates.

Children

Children need particular protection when collecting and processing their personal data because they may be less aware of any risks involved.

- Only children aged 13 or over are able to provide their own consent. (This is the age proposed in the Data Protection Bill).
- For children under the age of 13 we require consent from whoever holds parental responsibility.
- Children have the same rights as adults over their personal data. These include the rights to access their personal data, request us to correct inaccuracies in the information and have their personal data erased.
- As a matter of good practice, we consult with children as appropriate when designing our processing.

Your rights

You have the right to ask us to provide a copy of the information held by us in our records. You also have the right to require us to correct any inaccuracies in your information. If you would like to do this, please contact your counsellor.

You may withdraw your consent for us to hold and process your data at any time. However, if you do this while actively receiving counselling at Hertford Counselling Services, your counselling would have to end. You can withdraw your consent by contacting your counsellor and requesting our Consent Withdrawal Form.

Changes to this policy

We may edit this policy from time to time. If we make any substantial changes we will notify you by posting a prominent announcement on our website.

Consent

I have read this Data Protection and Privacy Policy and consent to Hertford Counselling Services holding and using my personal information in the ways and for the purposes outlined above.

Signed..... Date.....

Name.....