

Your right to confidentiality and its limits

In Summary:

- I will not normally disclose any information about clients of any age to anyone without the client's prior consent.
- In exceptional circumstances, I may need to seek advice or disclose information where:
 - not to do so would break the law
 - there is a risk, or potential risk of significant harm to self or others
 - there are indications of risk of significant harm by yourself or others
- I will strive to disclose the least information necessary in the circumstances, ideally with the client's consent and knowledge.

In more detail:

Safeguarding, confidentiality and its limits are complex areas where one decision for one client, or in one instance, may not be appropriate for another. I seek to be transparent in all my work and contact with clients within the confines of building and maintaining a relationship based on trust and mutual respect

There are certain circumstances in which a counsellor may break confidentiality without the client's express permission. No counsellor will do this without a great deal of reflection. To break confidentiality a counsellor must act within the law and have a legitimate objective, such as the protection of life and health, or the prevention of a serious crime. Any decision taken will be with the best interests of the client at its' heart. It is not unusual for a counsellor to consult their clinical supervisor or take independent professional advice before proceeding. Every effort is made to ensure the action is both reasonable and proportional. As a member of BACP, I abide by their professional Frameworks for Ethics and Practice to help to inform such actions. In almost all cases of disclosure the client is aware of it immediately but should that not be the case, I will seek to inform the client in a manner appropriate to the particular situation.

The circumstances in which a counsellor would make such a disclosure include:

- Where the counsellor would be subject to civil or criminal legal proceedings if the information were not disclosed to a court (i.e. a counsellor cannot be required by an employment contract to break the law for you).
- Where the counsellor believes the client or a third party is at serious risk of harm. The most common cause for disclosure is when, in my view, a client is in serious danger of suicide or death from self-harm. However, considering whether life is worth living is a common theme. In these cases, I aim to explore the client's understanding about these thoughts, assess the level of risk and put measures in place to keep you safe. This may include encouraging you to seek additional support which reduces the risk to you and others but I cannot enforce it or insist that you inform others about your thoughts.
- If I believe someone to be in imminent danger or particularly unstable, I will seek to persuade them to see their GP immediately, (or as soon as possible if the danger appears not to be so acute). I may write to or otherwise contact a client's GP in these circumstances to flag up concern. Principles of disclosure are to disclose the least information necessary in the circumstances, to the person most likely to be professionally helpful, whether as an individual or as a gateway to further resources, and someone who is also bound by professional ethics which safeguard the client's interests. The consent of the client to disclose information will not be sought where it is thought that informing them of the intention to disclose would increase the risk to the client or others.
- Misuse of solvents, drugs or alcohol can cause people to act in an unstable or impulsive way and therefore be at additional risk of temporarily losing the ability to take responsibility for their actions. The above would apply.
- I will not usually inform anyone whether a client is or is not attending, unless there is an express wish by the client for me to do so.
- Meeting together with a carer or other significant can be arranged after full discussion with the client
- To ensure best practice, I have an enhanced DBS check.