

PRIVACY NOTICE

The Belonging Therapy

Data Controller	Liana McDonald trading as The Belonging Therapy
Contact	info@thebelongingtherapy.com
Version	1.0
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This Privacy Notice explains how The Belonging Therapy collects, uses, stores, shares and retains personal information when you enquire about or receive counselling. It also explains your rights under UK data protection law.

1. Who Is Responsible for Your Information?

Liana McDonald, trading as The Belonging Therapy, is the data controller for personal information processed within the private practice. The Belonging Therapy is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Questions about your personal information or requests relating to your data protection rights can be sent to info@thebelongingtherapy.com.

2. What Information May Be Collected?

Depending on your circumstances and the stage of our work, information may include:

- name, date of birth, address and contact details;
- GP and emergency-contact details where appropriate;
- information provided when you enquire about counselling;
- assessment information, presenting difficulties, goals and relevant personal history;
- health, mental-health and wellbeing information;
- brief therapy/session notes, risk assessments and agreed plans;
- safeguarding concerns, decisions, referrals and related records where applicable;
- appointment, attendance, payment and invoice information;
- communications relating to appointments or the administration of therapy;
- information relevant to online or walk-and-talk work, including your location where necessary for safety.

Counselling may involve health information and other sensitive aspects of a person's life. Some of this is 'special category personal data' under UK GDPR and receives additional legal protection.

3. Why Your Information Is Used

- to respond to enquiries and take steps towards arranging counselling;
- to provide, manage and review counselling safely and appropriately;
- to maintain appropriate clinical and safeguarding records;
- to arrange appointments, communicate with you and administer payments;
- to support clinical supervision and safe professional practice;
- to manage risk, safeguarding concerns and emergencies;
- to meet professional, insurance, legal, tax and regulatory responsibilities;
- to establish, exercise or defend legal claims where necessary.

4. Lawful Basis for Processing

The lawful basis depends on why information is being processed. The principal bases that may apply are:

Purpose	UK GDPR basis	How it applies
Enquiries and counselling arrangements	Article 6(1)(b) - contract	Necessary to take steps at your request before therapy and to provide the agreed counselling service.
Safe and ethical practice, record keeping and professional administration	Article 6(1)(f) - legitimate interests	Necessary for the legitimate interests of running a safe, accountable professional practice, balanced against your rights and interests.
Where a specific legal duty applies	Article 6(1)(c) - legal obligation	Used only where processing is necessary to comply with an applicable legal obligation.
Urgent life-or-death situations	Article 6(1)(d) - vital interests	May apply in exceptional circumstances where processing is necessary to protect someone's life.

Special category information

Therapy commonly involves health and mental-health information. In addition to an Article 6 lawful basis, The Belonging Therapy will identify an appropriate Article 9 condition for special category data. Where applicable, this may include Article 9(2)(h) for the provision of health or social care/treatment subject to the professional confidentiality safeguards in UK law, Article 9(2)(f) where processing is necessary for legal claims, or another condition appropriate to the particular circumstances.

Consent to therapy and data protection

Your agreement to participate in counselling is separate from the lawful basis used to process personal information under UK GDPR. Where data-protection consent is specifically required for a particular use, it will be requested separately.

5. Confidentiality and Sharing Information

Information disclosed in counselling is treated confidentially and is not routinely shared. However, confidentiality is not absolute. Information may be shared where necessary and appropriate, for example:

- where there is a serious or immediate risk of harm to you or another person;
- where there is a safeguarding concern involving a child, young person or adult at risk;
- where disclosure is required by law, court order or another applicable legal requirement;
- with emergency, health, Social Work or Police services where necessary to respond to a serious safety or safeguarding concern;
- with professional advisers or insurers where necessary in connection with a complaint, claim or legal matter.

Where safe and appropriate, I will aim to discuss a proposed disclosure with you first. Only information that is relevant, necessary and proportionate will be shared.

6. Clinical Supervision

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Regular clinical supervision is part of safe and ethical practice. Client work may be discussed with my clinical supervisor. Identifying information will be minimised wherever reasonably possible, and the supervisor is also bound by professional confidentiality.

7. GP and Emergency Contact Information

I may request details of your GP and an emergency contact. These details are stored securely and are not routinely contacted. They may be used where necessary in exceptional circumstances involving serious safety, medical or safeguarding concerns. Where safe and appropriate, I will aim to discuss this with you first.

8. How Information Is Stored and Protected

Electronic client information is stored within secure Microsoft business cloud services used by The Belonging Therapy. Appropriate access controls, passwords and device-security measures are used to reduce the risk of unauthorised access, loss or disclosure. Access to identifiable client information is limited to what is necessary for the running of the practice.

Where practicable, identifying/contact information will be kept separately from therapy notes or records will use a client identifier. Any paper records that are required will be stored securely and disposed of confidentially when no longer needed.

Service providers used to support the practice may process limited personal information on my behalf. Where this occurs, I will take reasonable steps to use appropriate providers and data-protection arrangements.

9. Online Counselling and Electronic Communication

Online counselling and electronic communication involve additional privacy considerations. Clients are encouraged to use a private space and a device/account they consider secure. Email and ordinary electronic communications cannot be guaranteed to be completely secure, so sensitive information should not be sent unnecessarily.

For online sessions, I may ask you to confirm your current location where this is necessary for safety or emergency planning.

10. How Long Information Is Kept

The Belonging Therapy applies defined retention periods so records are not kept indefinitely. These periods take account of professional, insurance, legal and data-protection responsibilities.

Record type	Retention
Adult client therapy records	7 years after the final therapy session.
Records relating to a client who is a minor	Until the client reaches age 25 (7 years after reaching age 18).
Financial / accounting records	For the period required by applicable tax and accounting requirements.
Safeguarding / incident records	Retained with the relevant client record in accordance with the applicable client retention period, unless a specific reason requires longer retention.

At the end of the applicable retention period, records will be securely deleted or destroyed unless there is a legal, regulatory, insurance-related or other justified reason requiring a particular record to be retained for longer.

11. Your Data Protection Rights

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Depending on the circumstances and the lawful basis being used, you may have rights to:

- be informed about how your personal information is used;
- request access to personal information held about you;
- ask for inaccurate or incomplete factual information to be corrected;
- request deletion of information in certain circumstances;
- request restriction of processing in certain circumstances;
- object to processing based on legitimate interests in certain circumstances;
- request data portability where the legal conditions apply;
- withdraw data-protection consent where processing is specifically based on consent.

These rights are not absolute. Information may sometimes need to be retained because of legal, safeguarding, professional or insurance responsibilities, or information about another person may need to be protected.

12. Accessing Your Records

You may make a Subject Access Request for personal information held about you by contacting info@thebelongingtherapy.com. I may need to confirm your identity before releasing information. Requests will be handled in accordance with applicable data-protection law.

13. Concerns and Complaints About Data Protection

If you have concerns about how your personal information has been handled, please contact me first so I can try to address the concern. You also have the right to raise a concern with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), the UK's independent data-protection regulator.

ICO: ico.org.uk

14. Changes to This Privacy Notice

This Privacy Notice will be reviewed periodically and may be updated where the law, professional guidance, insurance requirements or the way The Belonging Therapy operates changes. The current version will be made available to clients.

15. Contact

Liana McDonald
The Belonging Therapy
Email: info@thebelongingtherapy.com

Related documents

[Client Therapy Agreement](#) | [Safeguarding Policy & Procedures](#) | [Safeguarding & Emergency Contacts](#)