

## **PRIVACY STATEMENT**

Living Life Counselling respects your right to privacy and to the protection of your personal information. The purpose of this privacy statement is to explain how we collect and use personal information to deliver our service. We are committed to collecting, using and disclosing personal information responsibly and only to the extent necessary for the service we provide. We also try to be open and transparent as to how we handle personal information.

### **Purpose**

The primary reason for collecting your personal data is so that we have enough information to be able to provide a safe counselling space for you. Personal information means any information relating to you which allows us to identify you.

### **What we collect**

When you call our service to book an appointment the reception team will ask for some basic information such as your name, date of birth, home address, phone number and email address. At your first appointment, we will ask you for some further information such as relationship status, employment status, GP & psychiatrists name and address, next of kin, any medication that you may be taking as well as a mental health history and any prior counselling services received. If you begin counselling with us, your counsellor will also make brief clinical notes that will be coded and will not identify you.

### **What we do with the information that we gather**

You may be aware of the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that came into effect on 25 May 2018. As an organisation we comply with this EU directive. The service stores data in accordance with the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003. Counselling records/notes are held securely and confidentially for seven years in accordance with legal requirement, after which they are destroyed. The service also stores basic information about each service user on a secure and confidential database. This information is used to compile aggregate data and monitor the service as a whole. No information that can be traced back to individuals will be released by Living Life Counselling.

### **Confidentiality and limits to confidentiality**

As we operate a confidential counselling service. We will not discuss or share anything about you without your written consent. There are some exceptional circumstances where we may have to break confidentiality and written consent will not be necessary. Under the Children First Act 2015, Living Life Counselling is legally mandated and has a statutory obligation to report any concern or allegation of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect of a minor to the HSE both current and retrospective. Also, if there is a risk of serious harm to yourself or others, or if your behaviour may pose a threat or a risk to others. In these circumstances we would have a duty to inform relevant personnel i.e. next of kin, doctor, Gardaí, social worker, or hospital personnel.

### **Security of your personal information**

We understand the importance of protecting personal information. For that reason, we have taken the following steps:

- Paper information is under supervision or secured in a locked or restricted area.

- Electronic hardware is either under supervision or secured in a locked or restricted area. In addition, passwords are used on computers.
- Our staff are trained in the collection, use and disclosure of personal information in accordance with our privacy statement.

### **Retention and destruction of personal information**

We are legally required to retain client files for a period of seven years. In the case of a minor, files are retained until the age of 18 plus seven years. We destroy paper files containing personal information by confidential shredding.

### **Your data protection rights**

Under certain circumstances, by law you have the right to:

- Request information about whether we hold personal information about you, and, if so, what that information is and why we are holding/using it.
- Request access to your personal information (commonly known as a "data subject access request"). This enables you to receive a copy of the personal information we hold about you and to check that we are lawfully processing it.
- Request correction of the personal information that we hold about you. This enables you to have any incomplete or inaccurate information we hold about you corrected.
- Request erasure of your personal information. This enables you to ask us to delete or remove personal information where there is no good reason for us continuing to process it. You also have the right to ask us to delete or remove your personal information where you have exercised your right to object to processing.
- Withdraw consent. In the limited circumstances where you may have provided your consent to the collection, processing and transfer of your personal information for a specific purpose, you have the right to withdraw your consent for that specific processing at any time. Once we have received notification that you have withdrawn your consent, we will no longer process your information for the purpose or purposes you originally agreed to, unless we have another legitimate basis for doing so in law. It may not be possible for us to provide a service to you if we are unable to process your information.

If you want to exercise any of these rights, please submit your request in writing to: Anne O'Connor, Data Protection Officer, Living Life Counselling, Madeley, Eglinton Road, Bray, Co Wicklow. We may need to request specific information from you to help us confirm your identity and ensure your right to access the information (or to exercise any of your other rights). This is to ensure that personal information is not disclosed to any person who has no right to receive it.

### **Changes to our privacy statement**

Our Privacy statement may change from time to time and any changes to the statement will be updated on our website.