

Vale Counselling Privacy Notice

Last updated: 29/06/2026

This privacy notice explains how I collect, use, store and protect personal information in my therapy practice.

I am Bernie Ashton, a Counsellor working online. I am the data controller for personal information I collect through Vale Counselling.

This means I am responsible for deciding how personal information is used and for keeping it safe.

If you have any questions about this privacy notice, or about how your information is handled, you can contact me at:

Email: Bernie@valecounselling.com

Phone: 07513914154

Website: [about-me](#)

This privacy notice applies to people who contact me about therapy, current and former clients, and visitors to my website.

Information I collect

I may collect and use the following information.

When you contact me, I may collect:

- your name
- your email address
- your phone number
- the information you choose to share in your enquiry
- any preferences around contact, availability or therapy format

If we arrange an initial call or begin therapy, I may also collect:

- your address
- your date of birth
- your GP details
- emergency contact details, where appropriate
- brief clinical notes
- attendance, payment and appointment information
- correspondence between us

Some of this information may be classed as special category data under UK data protection law. This includes information about health, mental health, sexuality, ethnicity, religion or other sensitive areas where these are relevant to therapy.

I only collect information that is necessary for providing therapy safely, ethically and professionally.

How I use your Information

I use your personal information to:

- respond to enquiries
- arrange initial calls and appointments
- provide therapy
- keep appropriate clinical records
- manage payments, invoices and appointments
- communicate with you about sessions
- meet legal, professional and ethical responsibilities
- manage risk, safeguarding or emergency situations where necessary
- maintain insurance, tax and accounting records
- respond to data protection requests or complaints

I do not sell your personal information.

Lawful Basis for Using your Information

Under UK GDPR, I need a lawful basis for using personal information.

For different parts of my work, I may rely on different lawful bases under Article 6 UK GDPR. For example, I may rely on the contract where processing is needed to arrange or provide therapy, legitimate interests where I need to run my practice safely and keep appropriate records, and legal obligation where I need to keep or share information to comply with the law.

- contract: where information is needed to arrange and provide therapy
- legitimate interests: where I need to use information to run my practice safely, respond to enquiries, keep appropriate records and protect both you and me
- legal obligation: where I need to keep or share information to comply with the law

Where I process special category data, such as information about health or mental health, I must also identify a separate condition under Article 9 UK GDPR before I begin that processing and reflect this in my privacy information. Depending on the reason for processing, I may also need to meet additional conditions and safeguards under the Data Protection Act 2018.

Where I ask for your consent for something specific, I will explain what I am asking for and whether you can withdraw that consent. Consent is not the only lawful basis available under data protection law, and I will only rely on it where it is appropriate to do so.

Confidentiality

Therapy is confidential, but confidentiality is not absolute. I will not share what you tell me unless there is a lawful, ethical or safeguarding reason to do so, and where possible I will limit any sharing to the minimum information necessary.

There are some limits to confidentiality. I may need to share information if:

- I believe there is a serious risk of harm to you or someone else
- there is a safeguarding concern involving a child, vulnerable adult or person at risk
- I am required to do so by law, court order or legal process
- disclosure is necessary to prevent or detect a serious crime
- there is a medical emergency and information is needed to protect life
- I need to consult my clinical supervisor, while protecting your identity as far as possible

Where possible and appropriate, I would aim to discuss this with you before sharing information. However, I may not be able to do so if this would increase risk, prejudice safeguarding action, undermine the purpose of the disclosure, or would otherwise not be possible.

Supervision

Like other ethical therapists, I use clinical supervision to support safe and effective practice.

In supervision, I may discuss aspects of client work to support safe and effective practice. I aim to minimise identifying detail where possible and appropriate, and my supervisor is also bound by confidentiality and professional standards.

Clinical Notes and Records

I keep brief clinical notes to support safe and ethical therapy. These are usually factual, proportionate and relevant to the work.

Clinical records may include:

- session dates
- brief themes discussed
- relevant risk, safeguarding or clinical information
- agreed actions or important decisions
- contact and administrative information

I do not aim to keep a full transcript of sessions.

How long I keep information

I keep information only for as long as necessary for the purpose for which it was collected. Retention periods may vary depending on the type of record, the nature of the work, legal and professional requirements, and whether the work involved a child or young person. As a general guide:

- enquiry information may be deleted if we do not begin therapy, usually within 3 months
- client records may be kept for 5 years after therapy ends
- if the work involved a child or young person, a different retention period may apply
- financial records may be kept for the period required for tax and accounting purposes
- emails, messages and administrative records are reviewed periodically and deleted when no longer needed

There may be times when I need to keep records for longer, for example where there are safeguarding, legal, insurance, complaint-related or professional-body reasons. I keep my retention periods under review and aim to make sure they remain justified and proportionate.