



Online Counselling Policy and Procedures

Version: 0.1 (Draft)

Effective From: To be confirmed before practice begins

Review Date: Annually or sooner if legislation, professional guidance or the way Lauruna Counselling operates changes.

Associated Documents

This policy should be read alongside the following Lauruna Counselling documents:

- Client Agreement
 - Privacy Policy
 - Clinical Records Policy
 - Safeguarding Policy
 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
 - Complaints Policy
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Introduction

Online counselling provides an accessible and flexible way for people to access professional counselling without the need to travel.

Although sessions take place remotely, my aim remains exactly the same as it would in face-to-face counselling: to provide a safe, confidential, respectful and professionally managed therapeutic relationship where clients feel listened to, understood and supported.



Online counselling offers many benefits, including greater flexibility and improved accessibility for some clients. However, working remotely also presents unique considerations, including technology, privacy, confidentiality and safeguarding. This policy explains how online counselling is delivered at Lauruna Counselling and the procedures in place to help ensure sessions remain safe, effective and ethically informed.

Lauruna Counselling currently provides counselling online using **Microsoft Teams**. Should additional platforms be introduced in the future, they will be selected with careful consideration of security, confidentiality and professional standards.

Before online counselling begins, clients will be provided with information about how sessions are conducted, what to expect from online counselling and the practical arrangements that support safe and effective remote working.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to explain how online counselling is delivered at Lauruna Counselling and to outline the procedures that support safe, ethical and effective online practice.

This policy aims to:

- Explain how online counselling sessions are delivered.
- Promote a safe, confidential and professional therapeutic environment.
- Clarify the responsibilities of both counsellor and client during online counselling.
- Support effective communication and therapeutic continuity.
- Outline procedures for managing technology difficulties and emergencies.
- Ensure online counselling is delivered in accordance with current legislation, professional guidance and the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions.

Although the method of communication differs from face-to-face counselling, the professional standards, ethical responsibilities and commitment to providing a high-quality counselling service remain the same.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all online counselling services provided by Lauruna Counselling.

At the time this policy was written, counselling is delivered exclusively online using **Microsoft Teams**.



This policy applies to:

- Initial consultations.
- Individual counselling sessions.
- Adults.
- Children and young people, where appropriate and within my competence.
- Any online communication that forms part of the counselling relationship.

It does not apply to face-to-face counselling, which will be supported by separate procedures should Lauruna Counselling begin offering in-person services in the future.

This policy should be read alongside the Client Agreement, Privacy Policy, Clinical Records Policy and Safeguarding Policy, which provide additional information relating to confidentiality, record keeping, safeguarding and professional practice.

3. Benefits and Limitations of Online Counselling

Online counselling offers an effective and accessible way for many people to engage in therapy. For some clients, it can provide greater flexibility, comfort and consistency than attending sessions in person.

However, like all forms of counselling, online therapy has both strengths and limitations. The suitability of online counselling will always depend on the individual's circumstances, preferences, therapeutic needs and the nature of the issues they wish to explore.

Where appropriate, I will discuss whether online counselling appears to be a suitable way of working before counselling begins and throughout our work together.

Benefits of Online Counselling

Online counselling may offer a number of advantages, including:

- Greater flexibility around work, education or caring responsibilities.
- Access to counselling without the need to travel.
- Increased accessibility for people who may find travelling difficult.
- The opportunity to attend counselling from a familiar and comfortable environment.
- Greater continuity where temporary travel or changes in location might otherwise interrupt therapy.
- Increased privacy for clients who prefer not to attend counselling premises.



For many people, being in their own environment can help them feel more relaxed and able to engage openly in the therapeutic process.

Limitations of Online Counselling

Online counselling may not be suitable for everyone or for every situation.

Some potential limitations include:

- Technical difficulties or interruptions.
- Reduced ability to observe some non-verbal communication.
- Difficulties finding a private and confidential space.
- Distractions within the home environment.
- The challenges of responding to some safeguarding or emergency situations remotely.
- The possibility that online counselling may not feel as comfortable or effective for every individual.

These limitations do not necessarily prevent effective counselling but may require additional planning, discussion or adjustments.

Reviewing Suitability

Suitability for online counselling is not assessed only at the beginning of therapy.

Throughout our work together, I will remain attentive to whether online counselling continues to meet the client's needs.

If I believe that online counselling is no longer the most appropriate way of working, I will discuss this openly with the client and, where appropriate, explore alternative options or referrals.

Similarly, clients are encouraged to raise any concerns they may have about the online format so that we can consider whether adjustments or alternative arrangements would better support the counselling process.

Equality of Therapeutic Relationship

Although counselling is delivered online rather than in the same room, my commitment to providing a safe, respectful and person-centred therapeutic relationship remains unchanged.



The quality of the therapeutic relationship is not determined by the technology used, but by the trust, collaboration and understanding developed between counsellor and client.

My aim is to create an online counselling environment where clients feel listened to, respected and able to explore their experiences openly, regardless of where the session takes place.

4. Suitability for Online Counselling

Online counselling can be an effective way of accessing therapeutic support for many people. However, it may not always be the most appropriate method of counselling for every individual or every situation.

Before beginning counselling, I will consider whether online counselling appears suitable based upon the client's individual circumstances, presenting concerns and ability to engage safely and effectively within an online environment.

Suitability will also be reviewed throughout the counselling relationship, recognising that a client's needs and circumstances may change over time.

Factors Considered

When considering whether online counselling is appropriate, I may take account of factors such as:

- The client's presenting concerns.
- Current level of risk.
- Ability to access a private and confidential space.
- Access to suitable technology.
- Internet reliability.
- Communication preferences.
- The client's understanding of online counselling.
- Any safeguarding considerations.
- Whether online counselling enables safe and effective therapeutic work.

These factors do not automatically determine whether online counselling is suitable but help inform professional judgement and collaborative discussion.



Situations Where Online Counselling May Not Be Appropriate

Online counselling may not always be suitable where, for example:

- There is an immediate risk of serious harm.
- A client requires urgent crisis intervention.
- A person is unable to access a sufficiently private or confidential environment.
- Persistent technology difficulties significantly disrupt the therapeutic process.
- The nature of the presenting concerns indicates that another form of support may be more appropriate.
- I believe I cannot work safely, ethically or effectively within an online environment.

Where online counselling does not appear to be the most appropriate option, I will discuss this openly with the client and, where appropriate, support them in identifying alternative services or sources of support.

Collaborative Decision-Making

The decision to work online will wherever possible be made collaboratively.

Clients are encouraged to discuss any concerns they have about online counselling before or during therapy.

If either the client or I believe that online counselling is no longer meeting the client's needs, we will discuss this together and consider whether adjustments, referrals or alternative arrangements may be appropriate.

Professional Responsibility

As a counsellor, I have a professional responsibility to ensure that the services I provide remain safe, ethical and appropriate.

If I believe that online counselling is no longer in a client's best interests, I will explain my concerns openly and respectfully, discuss the reasons for my decision and, where appropriate, support the client in accessing more suitable services.

Any decision to end or change the way counselling is provided will be made with careful consideration of the client's wellbeing, current circumstances and the ethical responsibilities of my professional role.



5. Creating a Safe Online Environment

A comfortable, private and uninterrupted environment can help support effective counselling.

Although no environment can ever be completely free from distractions, both counsellor and client share responsibility for creating a setting that allows counselling to take place as safely and effectively as possible.

Clients are encouraged to prepare for sessions by considering the following.

Privacy

Where possible, clients should choose a space where they are unlikely to be interrupted or overheard.

If complete privacy is not possible, clients are encouraged to discuss this before the session so that we can consider whether counselling can continue safely or whether alternative arrangements may be more appropriate.

Minimising Interruptions

To help maintain focus during the session, clients are encouraged to:

- Silence notifications where possible.
- Close unnecessary applications.
- Reduce background distractions.
- Inform other members of the household that they should not be disturbed where appropriate.

Technology

Before each session, clients are encouraged to ensure that:

- Their device is adequately charged or connected to power.
- Their internet connection is stable.
- Their camera and microphone are working.
- Microsoft Teams is available and updated where appropriate.



Comfort

Clients may find it helpful to:

- Have a drink available.
- Keep tissues nearby if they wish.
- Sit somewhere comfortable and well supported.
- Allow themselves a few quiet moments before the session begins.

These small preparations can help create a calmer therapeutic space and allow clients to engage more fully in the counselling process.

Professional Environment

I will also take reasonable steps to ensure that my own environment is suitable for counselling by providing:

- A private and confidential space.
- A professional background.
- Appropriate lighting and sound quality.
- A secure internet connection.
- Freedom from unnecessary interruptions wherever reasonably possible.

My aim is to create an online environment that reflects the same professionalism, safety and respect that clients would expect within a face-to-face counselling setting.

6. Technology and Communication

Reliable technology plays an important role in providing safe and effective online counselling. While every reasonable effort will be made to ensure sessions run smoothly, technical difficulties can occasionally occur.

Lauruna Counselling currently delivers online counselling using Microsoft Teams, configured and used with appropriate privacy and security settings for professional remote counselling.

Clients are responsible for ensuring they have access to suitable technology and an environment that supports confidential and uninterrupted counselling.

Should technical difficulties arise, every reasonable effort will be made to minimise disruption while maintaining the safety, confidentiality and continuity of the therapeutic relationship.



Technology Requirements

To participate in online counselling, clients will normally require:

- A computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone capable of running Microsoft Teams.
- A stable internet connection.
- A working camera and microphone.
- A quiet, private environment where they feel able to speak openly.
- Sufficient battery power or access to a charger for the duration of the session.

Where appropriate, the use of headphones is encouraged to improve both privacy and sound quality.

Preparing for the Session

Clients are encouraged to prepare for each session by:

- Logging into Microsoft Teams a few minutes before the appointment.
- Checking that their camera and microphone are working correctly.
- Silencing notifications where possible.
- Closing unnecessary applications that may interrupt the session or affect internet performance.
- Ensuring they are comfortable and unlikely to be disturbed.

Taking a few moments to prepare can help create a calmer and more focused therapeutic environment.

Technical Difficulties

If technical difficulties occur during a counselling session, I will make reasonable efforts to reconnect and continue the appointment where appropriate.

This will normally involve:

- Attempting to reconnect using Microsoft Teams.
- Contacting the client using the agreed telephone number if reconnection is unsuccessful.
- Agreeing whether the session can continue, should be rescheduled or should end early.



Where technical difficulties significantly affect the quality of the counselling session, we will discuss the most appropriate way to proceed.

Communication Between Sessions

Communication outside scheduled counselling sessions is intended for administrative purposes only.

This may include:

- Arranging or changing appointments.
- Confirming appointments.
- Sending Microsoft Teams invitations.
- Providing invoices or payment information.
- Responding to practical questions about the counselling service.

Counselling will not normally be provided through email, text message or other forms of electronic messaging.

If a client shares significant therapeutic concerns between sessions, I will acknowledge the communication where appropriate and encourage these issues to be explored within the next counselling session, unless an immediate safeguarding concern requires a different response.

Email and Electronic Communication

I aim to respond to emails and administrative messages within a reasonable timeframe during my normal working hours.

Lauruna Counselling is not a crisis or emergency support service. Electronic communications should not be used to seek urgent emotional support or immediate therapeutic intervention.

Clients requiring immediate assistance should contact the appropriate emergency or crisis services as outlined in the Client Agreement and Welcome Guide.

Recording Counselling Sessions

Counselling sessions are not routinely audio or video recorded by either the counsellor or the client.



If a client wishes to record a session, this should be discussed with me in advance. Any request will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account confidentiality, the therapeutic relationship, legal considerations and the rights and privacy of everyone involved.

Likewise, I will not record counselling sessions without first discussing this with the client and obtaining their explicit written consent.

Any agreed recording will only take place for a clearly identified purpose and will be managed in accordance with my Privacy Policy and Clinical Records Policy.

Professional Standards

Although counselling is delivered using digital technology, the professional standards governing the therapeutic relationship remain unchanged.

I am committed to providing online counselling that is:

- Safe.
- Confidential.
- Ethical.
- Respectful.
- Professional.
- Person-centred.

Technology is simply the means through which counselling takes place. My commitment to providing a thoughtful, compassionate and professionally managed therapeutic relationship remains the same whether we meet online or, in the future, face to face.

7. Privacy, Confidentiality and Online Safety

Protecting client privacy and confidentiality is fundamental to the therapeutic relationship, whether counselling is delivered online or face to face.

Lauruna Counselling uses **Microsoft Teams** as a secure platform for online counselling. While internet-based communication can never be guaranteed to be entirely free from risk, reasonable steps are taken to minimise these risks through the use of secure technology, appropriate professional procedures and good information governance.

Both counsellor and client have a shared responsibility for helping to create an environment that supports privacy, confidentiality and safe therapeutic work.



Privacy During Sessions

I will conduct online counselling sessions from a private, confidential environment where conversations cannot normally be overheard or interrupted.

Clients are encouraged to attend sessions from a quiet and private space where they feel able to speak openly and honestly.

To help protect privacy, clients are encouraged to:

- Choose a location where they are unlikely to be overheard.
- Minimise interruptions where reasonably possible.
- Use headphones if this improves privacy or sound quality.
- Let me know if another person is present or may be able to hear part of the session.

If either of us believes that privacy or confidentiality has been significantly affected, we will discuss whether it is appropriate to continue, pause or rearrange the session.

Confidentiality

The principles of confidentiality remain the same regardless of whether counselling is delivered online or face to face.

Information shared during counselling will be treated confidentially and managed in accordance with the Lauruna Counselling **Privacy Policy**, **Clinical Records Policy** and **Safeguarding Policy**.

Confidentiality is not absolute. Information may need to be shared where there is a legal obligation, a safeguarding concern or a serious risk of harm. Where possible and appropriate, I will discuss this with the client before sharing information.

Where disclosure is necessary, only information that is relevant, necessary and proportionate will be shared.

Maintaining Accurate Contact Information

Before counselling begins, clients will be asked to provide:

- Their current address.
- A contact telephone number.
- An emergency contact, where appropriate.
- GP details, where appropriate.



Clients are asked to inform me promptly if any of these details change during the counselling relationship.

Maintaining accurate contact information helps ensure that appropriate action can be taken should an emergency or safeguarding concern arise.

At the beginning of a session, or whenever a client is away from their usual address, I may ask the client to confirm their current physical location. This enables an appropriate response if an emergency occurs during remote work.

Clients must tell me in advance if they intend to attend a session while outside the UK. Legal, professional, platform and insurance requirements vary between countries, and I may be unable to provide the session from that location.

Online Safety

If I become aware that another person is influencing, observing or interrupting the counselling session in a way that affects the client's ability to engage freely, I will explore this sensitively with the client and consider whether it is appropriate to continue.

Similarly, if I become concerned that a client is participating from an environment that places them at increased risk or significantly limits their ability to engage safely, we will discuss whether alternative arrangements are needed.

Where safeguarding concerns arise, these will be managed in accordance with the Lauruna Counselling Safeguarding Policy.

Responding to Safeguarding Concerns

If safeguarding concerns arise during an online counselling session, I will respond in accordance with my Safeguarding Policy and my legal, ethical and professional responsibilities.

Where there is reason to believe that a client or another person is at immediate risk of serious harm, appropriate action may include:

- Contacting the emergency services.
- Contacting the client's emergency contact, where appropriate.
- Sharing relevant information with safeguarding agencies where this is lawful, necessary and proportionate.

Where it is safe and appropriate to do so, I will explain my concerns and intended actions to the client.



If an Emergency Occurs During a Session

If an emergency occurs during an online counselling session, I will make every reasonable effort to remain connected with the client while assessing the situation.

If the online connection is lost during an emergency, I will normally:

- Attempt to reconnect using Microsoft Teams.
- Contact the client using the agreed telephone number.
- Consider whether emergency services or another appropriate agency should be contacted if I remain concerned about the client's immediate safety and I am unable to re-establish contact.

Any action taken will be based on the information available at the time and guided by current legislation, the BACP Ethical Framework and the Lauruna Counselling Safeguarding Policy.

Working Together to Create a Safe Online Space

Online counselling works best when both counsellor and client work together to create a safe, respectful and confidential environment.

By communicating openly, preparing appropriately and taking reasonable steps to protect privacy, we can reduce many of the challenges associated with remote counselling and create a therapeutic space that supports honest exploration, trust and meaningful therapeutic work.

8. Professional Boundaries

Professional boundaries help create a counselling relationship that is safe, respectful, consistent and professionally accountable.

Working online does not alter the ethical responsibilities that underpin counselling practice. The same standards of professionalism, confidentiality and appropriate boundaries apply whether counselling is delivered online or face to face.

Maintaining clear boundaries helps protect both the client and the therapeutic relationship, allowing counselling to take place within a safe and reliable framework.

Communication Outside of Sessions

Communication between scheduled counselling sessions is intended for administrative purposes only.



This may include:

- Arranging or changing appointments.
- Confirming appointments.
- Sending Microsoft Teams invitations.
- Providing invoices or payment information.
- Responding to practical questions about the counselling service.

Therapeutic counselling is not routinely provided by email, text message, telephone, social media or other messaging platforms.

If a client shares therapeutic material between sessions, I will consider the most appropriate response. This will usually involve acknowledging receipt where appropriate and inviting the client to explore the matter during the next scheduled counselling session, unless there is an immediate safeguarding concern or another situation requiring a different response.

Availability

Counselling is provided by prior appointment only.

Lauruna Counselling does not provide a crisis, emergency or on-demand counselling service.

I aim to respond to administrative enquiries within my normal working hours. Response times may vary due to weekends, annual leave, illness or other professional commitments.

Clients requiring immediate emotional support or emergency assistance should contact the appropriate emergency or crisis services, as outlined in the Client Agreement and Welcome Guide.

Social Media and Online Contact

To maintain professional boundaries and protect client confidentiality, I do not normally:

- Accept friend or follow requests from current clients on personal social media accounts.
- Engage in counselling or therapeutic discussions through social media or messaging platforms.
- Communicate with clients through personal social media accounts.

Further guidance regarding online interactions is available within the Lauruna Counselling Social Media Policy.



Recording Counselling Sessions

Counselling sessions are intended to provide a confidential space for therapeutic work.

If either the client or I wish to audio or video record a session, this should be discussed in advance. Any request will be considered individually, taking into account confidentiality, the therapeutic relationship, legal responsibilities and the rights and privacy of everyone involved.

No recording will take place without the knowledge and explicit agreement of both the client and the counsellor.

Any agreed recording will be managed in accordance with the Lauruna Counselling Privacy Policy and Clinical Records Policy.

Unexpected Contact Outside Counselling

Although Lauruna Counselling currently operates online, there may be occasions where a client and counsellor unexpectedly encounter one another in public or online spaces.

To protect client confidentiality, I will not normally acknowledge a client unless they choose to acknowledge me first.

If an unexpected encounter affects the therapeutic relationship or raises any concerns, this can be discussed within a counselling session if the client wishes.

Respectful Conduct

A safe therapeutic relationship depends upon mutual respect.

Both counsellor and client are expected to communicate respectfully throughout the counselling relationship.

Behaviour that is abusive, threatening, discriminatory or harassing may affect my ability to provide a safe and effective counselling service. Where appropriate, concerns about behaviour will be discussed openly. In some circumstances, it may become necessary to review, suspend or end counselling in accordance with the Client Agreement and the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions.

Maintaining Professional Standards

Providing counselling online does not alter my commitment to safe and ethical practice.



I will continue to work within:

- The BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions.
- Current legislation and recognised good practice.
- The limits of my professional competence.
- Regular clinical supervision.
- The policies and procedures of Lauruna Counselling.

My aim is to provide an online counselling service that is professional, ethical, respectful and centred on the client's wellbeing.

9. Review of this Policy

Lauruna Counselling is committed to ensuring that this policy remains accurate, relevant and consistent with current legislation, professional guidance and recognised good practice.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, or sooner where there are changes that may affect the delivery of online counselling services.

A review may also take place following:

- Changes to legislation or UK data protection law.
- Updates to the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions.
- Changes to professional guidance relating to online counselling.
- Changes to the technology or online platforms used by Lauruna Counselling.
- Learning identified through clinical supervision, reflective practice, complaints or significant incidents.
- Changes to the services provided by Lauruna Counselling.

The purpose of each review is to ensure that this policy continues to support safe, ethical and effective online counselling while reflecting current legislation, recognised good practice and the needs of clients.

Where amendments are made, the document version, review date and a summary of significant changes will be updated within the document control section.



Appendix A

Preparing for Your Online Counselling Session

Creating a comfortable and private environment can help you get the most from your counselling session. While every person's circumstances are different, you may find the following suggestions helpful.

Where possible, consider:

- Choosing a quiet and private space where you feel comfortable talking openly.
- Ensuring your device is charged or connected to a power source.
- Checking that your internet connection is stable.
- Testing your camera and microphone before the session begins.
- Logging into Microsoft Teams a few minutes before your appointment.
- Silencing notifications and minimising interruptions where possible.
- Having a drink, tissues or anything else that helps you feel comfortable during the session.
- Allowing yourself a few quiet moments before the session to settle into the therapeutic space.
- Where possible, avoiding important commitments immediately after your session so that you have time to reflect and readjust before returning to your day.

There is no expectation that every session will feel the same. Some sessions may feel lighter than others, while some may leave you with more to think about. Giving yourself a little time after counselling can help you process the session at your own pace.



Appendix B

If Technology Fails

Although every reasonable effort is made to provide a reliable online counselling service, technology can occasionally fail.

If this happens, the following procedure will normally be followed.

If the connection is interrupted

1. Wait briefly to see whether Microsoft Teams reconnects automatically.
2. If this does not happen, both counsellor and client should attempt to reconnect to the session.
3. If reconnection is unsuccessful, I will normally contact you using the agreed telephone number.
4. Together, we will decide whether it is appropriate to continue the session, rearrange the appointment or end the session.

If the interruption occurs during a safeguarding concern or emergency

If I am unable to re-establish contact and I believe there is an immediate risk of serious harm, I may take appropriate safeguarding action using the contact information provided before counselling began.

Any action taken will be guided by my professional responsibilities, current legislation and the Lauruna Counselling Safeguarding Policy.

Document Control

Version	Date	Author	Summary of Changes
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0.1	July 2026	Laura Marks	Initial draft
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Policy Information

Policy Owner: Laura Marks

Organisation: Lauruna Counselling

Review Frequency: Annually

Next Review Date: To be confirmed



Associated Documents

- Client Agreement
- Privacy Policy
- Clinical Records Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Social Media Policy

