



## SAFEGUARDING POLICY

### Statement

Tilehouse Counselling is committed to providing a safe environment for staff and clients. This policy and procedure relates to the identification and monitoring of people who present a risk to themselves or others, or who are themselves at risk from others. Given the wide variety of clients seen at Tilehouse there is likely to be a number, however small, of clients who are vulnerable or for whom there is a risk of experiencing or causing harm. For the purposes of this policy the terms 'at-risk' and 'vulnerable' can be used interchangeably.

Tilehouse Counselling aim to ensure that our clients are, as far as is practically possible, protected from all forms of abuse, and from harm to themselves. We will seek to ensure that when there is good reason to believe that a child or vulnerable adult is suffering, or at risk from abuse or harm from themselves or others; then the correct and proper procedures are followed in the best interests of the person.

### Process

Identification  
Communication  
Assessment  
Action when necessary  
Monitoring and reassessment

### Policy

Staff and volunteers who will be working with vulnerable young and adult clients are recruited with special regard to child protection issues. Known abusers will be excluded from working at Tilehouse Counselling and it will be made clear to applicants that posts at Tilehouse Counselling are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

- Staff and volunteers undergo disclosure, vetting and barring checks (DBS) prior to working with vulnerable young and adult clients.
- There are clear job description and person specifications for each post.
- Two references are requested, specifically regarding suitability for work with young people and vulnerable adults.
- A signed statement is required of applicants regarding any previous convictions.
- Applicants are interviewed by a minimum of two people.
- Staff and volunteers undergo a three to six month probationary period.
- Staff and volunteers undergo annual reviews with the Tilehouse Director. In addition, counsellors engage in two-way reviews with their clinical supervisors.

- Vulnerable clients who are engaged in counselling and/or therapeutic group work are encouraged to develop a positive sense of themselves. Autonomy and independence are engendered by the provision by Tilehouse Counselling of a non-judgmental, supportive, safe environment in which thoughts, feelings and experiences can be explored. Tilehouse Counselling believes that their clients have a right to be safe and contained in their activities.
- Tilehouse Counselling offer an environment for clients in which bullying, racism, sexism, sectarianism and prejudice of any kind is unacceptable.
- Clients are encouraged to voice concerns about abusive or unethical behaviour without fear of recrimination. Clients and counsellors are offered ongoing support throughout any safeguarding process that is invoked.
- Client issues regarding Safeguarding are recorded in an 'at risk register' and are discussed, monitored and reviewed in regular clinical supervision, with the Tilehouse Director and in the Clinical Governance Group meetings.
- This Policy is under annual review.

## Training

Tilehouse Counselling undertakes Safeguarding training to inform our work. Safeguarding issues are reviewed at six-weekly Clinical Services Meetings and during weekly clinical supervision.

## Responsibilities

### Designated person

The person with key responsibility for coordinating Safeguarding matters is the Tilehouse Director. In the event of the absence of the Director, the Committee should be informed. The Tilehouse Counselling Management Committee is ultimately responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the Safeguarding Policy.

### Clinical Governance Committee

This committee comprises, the Tilehouse Director, a Clinical Supervisor, a clinically trained Management Supervisor and a Trustee. The Committee meets monthly to discuss the risk register and to make informed decisions about extending client contracts when there are risk factors present.

### General responsibility

All staff, counsellors and volunteers are responsible for ensuring that Child Protection is a primary concern, and that the policy procedures are adhered to.

## Procedure and documentation

If any member of staff or volunteer has good cause to suspect that:

- any form of abuse is taking place or has taken place
- a client is at risk of abuse
- a client has disclosed ongoing abuse
- the client is at risk of serious self-harm and suicide

then the following steps should be taken:

- A discussion needs to take place with the client so that the counsellor is as clear as they can be regarding levels of risk and others involved. The counsellor will need to discuss confidentiality issues and boundaries with the client and remind the client of the boundaries of confidentiality as agreed in the first meeting and gently explore whether it's the client's wish that their disclosure is shared. They will also discuss with the client, Tilehouse Counselling's professional responsibility regarding the safety and wellbeing of the client. **Great care needs to be taken in such discussions so as not to undermine the trust in the relationship and to contain, respect and work with the client's anxieties.** The Counsellor must at all times take great care to protect to therapeutic alliance and not undermine the trust of the client. Any disclosures of abuse will be, in the first instance, dealt with in-house and carefully assessed. The best interests of the client are paramount, and in the event that outside parties need to be involved, then this is done with the full prior knowledge and agreement of the client if at all possible.
- The counsellor needs to record any concerns immediately on the 'Client at risk from harm/self-harm/suicide Record'. One copy must be held on the client file and on the locked cabinet in the main office. This will be presented to the Clinical Governance Group.
- A discussion about the issue should then be had with the counsellor's Supervisor and with the Tilehouse Director. These discussions are to be noted on the appropriate record.
- All 'at risk' cases are referred to the Clinical Governance Group (CGG).
- Once the above steps have been followed, and disclosure is considered the best way forward, the person with safeguarding responsibility at the referring agency will be informed (when there is such a person). The GP will be informed, and the CMHT or CAMHS if involved with the client. This will be done by the counsellor, in writing and by telephone if appropriate, and in collaboration with their Supervisor and the Tilehouse Director, or a designated person acting in their absence. Next steps are agreed. This will be done with the knowledge of the client at all times possible.
- If the client is self-referred, then, following the consultative process set out above, if it is decided to be in the best interests of the client, then appropriate contact will be made with Children, Schools & Families, or Social Services. This will be done with the knowledge of the client if at all possible.
- Accurate, clear and dated progress notes must be kept at every stage. Please refer to the Safeguarding Concerns Record form available in counsellors' filing cabinet or from the main office.

## Safeguarding during the Covid-19 pandemic

- Tilehouse adapted its service when lockdown occurred in March 2020. At that time all counselling was undertaken by telephone and Zoom.
- At the time of review of this Policy (August 2021), we are providing a combination of counselling: face- to face, Zoom and telephone, depending on each client's circumstances and preference.
- Each counsellor has been issued with a document with clear guidelines for telephone counselling.
- Parental permission is sought for Zoom counselling with teenage clients.
- Our crisis intervention procedure has been adapted for telephone and Zoom counselling (attached)

## **SAFEGUARDING CODE OF BEHAVIOUR, ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND AWARENESS**

### **Statement**

Safeguarding is at the core of all activities at Tilehouse, from initial contact to final contact with our clients and all who communicate with us. Respect, acceptance and unconditional positive regard is firmly rooted in our ethos and culture.

### **Purpose**

This code is written for absolute clarity about what is expected from all who represent Tilehouse, in any way. The code aims to ensure that vulnerable adults, children and young people are protected from any form of abuse and to reduce the possibility of unfounded allegations being made. Tilehouse ensures that everyone representing it, is fully aware of the contents of this code.

### **Responsibilities**

- All Tilehouse Counselling trustees, staff and volunteers are aware of boundaries, confidentiality and professional relationship issues as set out in the BACP code of ethics to which we work.
- A copy of the BACP code of ethics, and of all Tilehouse Counselling working policies are available in the Staff Handbook. All who represent Tilehouse are responsible for:
  - Being a good role model
  - Ensuring all equipment e.g. sand trays and games are clean, appropriate and fit for purpose, and used safely.
  - Providing a safe, comfortable, clean environment
  - Following all policies and procedures
  - Reporting all concerns, following our safeguarding policy procedures, and adhering to policy
  - Reporting any breaches in the code of conduct
  - Promoting relationships of trust and transparency
  - For those with direct contact with vulnerable clients, to work at their pace and be cautious when discussing sensitive issues

### **The rights of our clients**

Our clients should expect:

- To be treated with respect and without any prejudice or discrimination
- To be treated as unique individuals
- To have any differences understood, appreciated and valued. These might include differences in gender, race, ethnicity, disability, religion, sexual orientation and/or identity issues
- To have their confidentiality maintained, except where there is a safeguarding issue

### **Unacceptable behaviour by anyone representing Tilehouse**

- Failure to report a safeguarding issue – in house
- Failure to behave in any other way than a caring, responsible professional with the welfare of clients always being central
- Any inappropriate in-work behaviour in line with Tilehouse Policies and the BACP code of ethics.