

24hr Therapy

Safeguarding Policy for Therapists

These guidelines are designed to ensure the safety and well-being of therapists working with 24hr Therapy, particularly in the context of online therapy sessions. They aim to protect therapists and ensure they have the knowledge and support to handle safeguarding concerns effectively. Therapists should refer to the ethical guidelines of their professional body to ensure their safeguarding procedures meet the standards of good practice within a solid ethical framework.

The Five Steps Approach to Safeguarding

The following guidelines consider key points in relation to the interface between the requirements of safeguarding procedure and the role of the therapist. It is important that therapists keep up to date with the statutory regulations pertaining to safeguarding in their part of the UK, as there are different interpretations and processes across the individual home nations.

Step 1: Aware

Therapists should maintain an awareness of potential safeguarding issues. This includes understanding the signs of abuse, neglect, and other forms of harm. Continuous professional development and training are essential to stay informed about the latest safeguarding practices and statutory requirements.

Step 2: Immediate Response

In the event of a safeguarding concern, therapists must respond immediately. This involves listening to the client, providing reassurance, and taking any necessary steps to ensure the client's immediate safety. It may also include contacting emergency services if there is an immediate risk of harm.

Step 3: Think

After addressing any immediate risks, therapists should carefully consider the situation. This includes evaluating the information provided by the client and considering the best course of action. Therapists should refer to their professional guidelines and organisational policies during this process.

Step 4: Act

Based on the evaluation, therapists should take appropriate actions. This might involve reporting the concern to the relevant authorities, seeking advice from safeguarding leads, or making a referral to other support services. Documentation of the steps taken is crucial.

Step 5: Reflect

After the incident has been managed, therapists should take time to reflect on the process. This includes considering what worked well, what could have been done differently, and how similar situations might be handled in the future. Reflection is vital for personal and professional growth and for improving safeguarding practices.

Suicide and Self-Harm

Managing suicide risk involves thorough risk assessment and management techniques, which will differ depending on the assessed level of risk. For instance, if your risk assessment is low, the management techniques will differ from working with a high-risk assessment. Always be aware of suicide risk and:

- Keep good and accurate records.
- Use the FRAMES approach as a therapeutic style to promote contact and change:
 - **Feedback to the client:** Provide feedback on their progress and concerns.
 - **Responsibility for change lies with the client:** Empower the client to take responsibility for their actions and changes.
 - **Advice to change:** Offer professional advice and strategies for change.
 - **Menu of strategies for bringing about change:** Provide a range of options to help the client achieve their goals.
 - **Empathy as a therapeutic style:** Use empathy to build trust and understanding.
 - **Self-efficacy or optimism:** Foster a sense of self-efficacy and optimism in the client.

Reporting Incidents

In the event of an incident where a client may be in crisis or at risk of harming themselves or another, a record of this should be passed to the admin team as soon as is practically possible. Accurate and timely reporting is essential for ensuring the safety of the client and compliance with safeguarding procedures.

Training and Continuing Professional Development

Therapists are required to undergo mandatory safeguarding training annually.

Legal and Ethical Responsibilities

- Therapists must adhere to all relevant UK legislation, including the Children Act 1989 and 2004, the Care Act 2014, and the Mental Capacity Act 2005.
- Ethical guidelines from professional bodies, such as the UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP), must be followed.

By adhering to these guidelines, therapists at 24hr Therapy can help ensure a safe and supportive environment for both clients and therapists, effectively managing and mitigating safeguarding concerns.

This document has been informed by the BACP Information Sheet P7 Working with Suicidal Clients, The UKCP Safeguarding Protocol and The UKCP code of ethics.

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