

## **Frequently asked questions & Terms and Conditions of receiving our services**

### **About Serenity Self Care Therapists?**

Thank you for choosing Serenity Self Care. We offer you a safe, confidential space with therapists who are qualified and experienced in their own field. Serenity Self Care therapist and associate therapist are self-employed clinicians working under the Serenity Self Care umbrella. All have provided their qualifications, insurance and DBS checks and they have been verified and checked as part of our quality assurance to you.

### **How do I know we are qualified to do the job?**

As well as the above each Therapist/Counsellor are members of their own governing bodies and will discuss this with you on your first session, they are therefore regulated by their own code of ethical practice.

Each Therapist must adhere to a strict code of conduct and ethics, including having a recognised qualification, the right insurance, regular Continual Profession Development (CPD) training, and for Counsellors having regular supervisions with a regulated and qualified supervisor. To verify this, you can search for your therapist association online and then search its members.

### **What is the General Data Protection Regulations, 2018 (GDPR) and how does it affect me?**

The GDPR replaces the 1998 Data Protection Act to ensure your personal and sensitive, confidential data is kept private and held securely, being processed in the way that you have agreed to. It is there to protect your rights as a consumer of a service or product that might involve your identifiable data, e.g. your name and address or whether you have a specific condition. It also covers any session records, text messages or emails we exchange. For more information you can read the policy documents accessible via your terms and conditions FAQ leaflet and our website [www.serenityselfcare.org.uk](http://www.serenityselfcare.org.uk). The password will be provided at your first session.

### **How long will you hold my information for?**

We will hold your data for 8 years after your final session. Unless you are a child, in which case we must hold your data until your 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, unless you are 17 when treatment ends and then I must keep it until your 26<sup>th</sup> birthday. Therefore, all records will be deleted in the January after the above retention scales. This is in line with NHS regulations for holding data. For members who have not accessed therapy services we will hold your data only whilst you are remain a member.

### **What if I don't want my records to be held for that long?**

Under the GDPR you can make a request in writing to us, for all your records to be deleted. In this case we would need to inform our Insurance company who will make the decision on deletion. Once we have this permission all your paper records would be shredded with a cross shredding machine and any electronic data such as emails or text messages would be permanently deleted from the devices they are stored on. I would have to save the request for deletion and our insurance companies permission but would not save any other data.

### **Why do you need to record this information?**

We collect information about; why you are using the service, a small amount of medical information and a small amount of information about your important others, alongside brief session notes. This information enables us to provide a high quality service to you, ensuring you are matched with the right therapist/counsellor for you. Whilst ensuring our therapist working with you is equipped with the knowledge of your previous discussions prior to each session. Your contact details / address and doctor's details will only be used with your explicit consent.

### **What lengths are made to ensure my information is held securely?**

Hardcopy documents – Are all stored in a locked cabinet in a locked room.

Text messages – Serenity work phone is secured with a 6-digit pin code.

Emails – Our email account requires a user name and password.

Email attachments – Any attachments sent by email to you containing your personal information would be password protected and the password would be sent to you via text message.

Electronic documents – Any electronic documents e.g. A letter to your GP, or an invoice, are password protected and stored on a password protected computer if they contain personal or sensitive information.

### **Is what we discuss kept confidential?**

If you have had an initial assessment provided by a qualified therapist to explore the best support and to match you with the right therapy and therapist for you then this information will be confidentially discussed by them with the therapist allocated to support you, anything you do not wish to be shared with them should be discussed and agreed with the assessing therapist as soon as possible after the assessment but no later than 24 hours following the assessment.

Once you are in therapy everything you talk about during your sessions are strictly confidential between you and your therapist (however see exceptions below).

Any contact, relating to you, with other health care professionals would only be made with your signed consent.

To ensure we are doing our job effectively and that the therapist/counsellor has the right support, they may discuss elements of your sessions with their supervisor. During these discussions they do not disclose any details that may identify you to the supervisor, and that their supervisor/s also adheres to the GDPR.

#### Exceptions:

In order to safeguard you and the people around you, if you were to disclose that you were going to carry out harm to yourself or someone else, then under our “Duty of Care” we are obligated by law to inform the relevant authorities. This is to support you to live well, and we would always aim to discuss this with you prior to contacting anyone.

If we are issued with a police warrant or court order for your information, by law we would also have to provide them with your information.

### **What if I see you outside of the session?**

If we or any serenity therapist see you outside of a session we will smile but will not engage in any further conversation to ensure your confidentiality. You are welcome to share with other people about the therapy you are receiving, but we are obligated by GDPR law to ensure your confidentiality is protected. We would request that in order to ensure the success of your treatment, that you refrain from discussing your treatment with us outside of your sessions.

### **What about other Health and Social Care Professionals?**

If we were to contact/write to your GP or other care professional to notify them of your treatment with us, we would only do this if you were to sign the specific consent for this.

### **How long will each session be and how much will they cost?**

Sessions are usually 60 minutes Sessions will begin weekly at first, and then over time we could – in agreement – spread them out over longer periods, dependent on your individual needs and circumstances. Clinical supervision will be 90 minutes and will be held to meet the requirements of your membership/college/workplace.

Payment is to be made at each session, by cash or card or before the sessions if a block booking is made. please ask for details.

### **What if I'm running late?**

Please do your best to let us know if you are running late. There are some slots we have available that mean we are able to continue with your full session, but often we will have another client waiting and therefore it may mean our session has to be a little shorter.

### **What if I need to rearrange my session?**

If you provide less than 24 hours' notice, the charge for that session is still payable and if you cancel more than two appointments I will have to request that any future appointments are payable in full to secure your appointment slot.

This is a commitment between us both as therapist and client, and the treatment is unlikely to help if you are not committed to your appointments and the work we do together.

If we need to rearrange a session we will let you know at our earliest opportunity and would hope you might approach our sessions with the same ethos. In extreme circumstances, we may choose to waver the cancellation fee e.g. severe disruptive weather conditions.

### **Would your therapist ever choose to end my treatment early?**

If they are subjected to abuse by you, or by someone else acting in your interests, we may end your therapy with no notice.

By coming for this support, you agree to a commitment of weekly sessions. Your commitment to these sessions is essential and if you regularly fail to attend sessions, or regularly cancel and rearrange sessions, your therapist/counsellor will have a discussion with you about whether this is something that is right for you at this time. We do not believe in encouraging people to have sporadic sessions from the beginning as I know it is unlikely you will gain the benefits that come with weekly sessions.

If you are not able to commit to weekly sessions at first then it is best to postpone sessions until you are able to commit to this, this may be approximately six consecutive weeks but can vary dependant on individual progression and circumstances. Any ongoing or top up sessions do not need to be weekly and will be as you need them.