**Phone and Online Counselling Working Agreement**

**Client details:**

Client phone number:

Email:

Emergency contact: GP Surgery name / town:

**Scope**

Online and telephone counselling are different experiences to face to face meetings and they do not suit everyone but can be valuable for support in specific circumstances provided there are clear ground rules and an understanding of limitations as well as potential benefits.

If I consider that phone / online counselling would not be the most suitable means of support for you, I will endeavour to assist you in a referral to a suitable alternative source of support in the area in which you live. Services I use as well as the phone for remote counselling are smartphone or cloud-based applications such as Zoom, What’s App and Facetime.

**About Sue Seager**

I am an experienced qualified counsellor and a Registered Member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). I am bound by its Ethical Framework for good practice and subject to its professional conduct and complaints procedures. I combine the person-centred approach with an integrated model of therapy to offer you an approach tailored to your needs. I provide therapeutic support for a broad range of common emotional wellbeing and mental health issues and have particular experience in working with psychological trauma. I work with teenagers from the age of 13 and with adults of all ages. I also supervise the work of other counsellors. For more information please visit www.life-chance.co.uk

**Process**

I work in a way that is supportive and respectful of diversity and relevant to an individual’s needs. If funding is limited to a specific number of sessions I will work to this number of sessions to the maximum benefit. However, if I believe that more therapy is needed, I will indicate this to you during the work. Session arrangements can be made by phone or email. A regular time can be booked for a phone or video call. Online or phone counselling sessions last for 50 minutes. Sessions are normally weekly but may be fortnightly or at other intervals by agreement.

I will supply my ID information and a password in advance for online Zoom sessions and send you a link to any meetings booked on the platform. Please aim to arrive online a few minutes before we are planning to begin to ensure there is time to trouble shoot any connection difficulties. For phone calls I will contact you on the number supplied unless we agree anything different.

**Confidentiality and privacy**

The content of sessions and our professional relationship is private and confidential. The exception to this confidentiality is; if I have a legal responsibility not to withhold information such as a court order; if I believe ethically that there is a significant risk of harm to you or another person or if there is a public interest relating to the general welfare and rights of the public that should be recognised, protected and advanced. Disclosures in the public interest, based on common law, are made where it is essential to prevent a serious and imminent threat to public health, national security, the life of the individual or a third party, or to prevent or detect serious crime.

If this arises, I will remind you of my responsibilities and include you as far as possible in passing on information and involving others.

In line with my ethical code of practice, from time to time I discuss my work in case consultation with another experienced practitioner to underpin my standards of professional practice. This consultation is also bound by the same confidentiality and I do not use identifiable personal data in consultations or record sessions for consultation.

Should there be a need to communicate about aspects of our work with anybody else, or if I believe that your needs are beyond the boundaries of my professional expertise or scope, for example crisis support or medical intervention, I will explain what information needs to be shared or what additional support I believe is required and seek your permission to act.

In addition, you must not record online or phone sessions or share the content (data) with third parties. This includes not putting anything we do together in an online session on any social media platforms or blogs or circulating it using messaging services or email.

I am not responsible for any breaches of confidentiality, interruptions or intrusions because of your internet connection or lack of privacy in the physical environment in which you choose to hold a phone or video conference session with me.

It is important that you find a safe and private place for our sessions to take place and that you build in adequate recovery time from the sessions should you feel distressed at the close of a session as there will not be the physical presence of a therapist with you. It may be helpful to wear headphones so that anything I say cannot be heard in your environment during a session. I will undertake to wear headphones if there is any risk of your voice being overheard in my counselling room.

I cannot be responsible for any government, security services or provider surveillance of the platforms that we choose to use, however I will endeavor to suggest means of communicating that are fit for purpose and as secure and reliable as possible.

**Insurance:** Counselling is covered by full professional indemnity and public liability insurance. I hold a current enhanced DBS check.

**Data Protection**

I may make brief notes during or after a session to record important points. In these you are not personally identified. My records are compliant with data protection legislation and securely stored in line with the guidance set out by the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) with whom I am registered. The possible exceptions to this non-sharing code for data are if a significant risk of harm has been identified or if I am required to do so by a UK court of law.

Under **General Data Protection Regulation 2018** (GDPR) by signing this agreement, you consent to me holding a limited amount of your personal data which will be used to provide the services on offer but not for any other marketing purpose. More details are available in my privacy policy at [www.life-chance.co.uk](http://www.life-chance.co.uk) and in my Data Protection Notice.

**Cancellation policy**

I require 48 hours’ notice of cancellation so if you miss your time slot or fail to log in to a booked session then I reserve the right to charge for the full session. The only exception will be if a technical failure at my end has prevented the meeting or if I have to cancel a session due to an emergency in which case there will be no charge.

**Technology breakdown arrangements**

Should you experience a technical breakdown which prevents you from attending an online session as agreed, please contact me by mobile (07368 590416) so that we can discuss how to re-arrange our session. I also undertake to contact you by telephone should I experience a technical breakdown. If you are unable to attend a phone session and cannot use the number you have given me to contact you, please inform me on the above number or use 01628 530276.

**Security**

Please ensure that you secure your computer, phone and any relevant messages against unauthorised viewing by third parties. It is recommended that you only use a private computer and not a work or public computer. Please ensure you keep your anti-virus protection up-to-date and I will undertake to do the same. It is recommended that you use a password protected device that is not shared with anyone else and delete cache and email invitations after sessions.

**Fees and payments**

If your therapy is being funded by a third party a separate working agreement will be made with the funder which will cover payment.

**Personal crisis procedures**

I cannot provide a crisis service for clients who require intensive levels of support or promise to respond to ad hoc requests for emergency support particularly after 8pm or at weekends as these times are outside my working hours. Unless we have agreed to correspond by text, phone or email I do not guarantee to extend communication with you between sessions using these methods. However, I will always acknowledge any communication and suggest a method for us to discuss further or signpost another means of support. If you find yourself in a major crisis and/or were considering serious self-harm it would be vital to get immediate help. This could include contacting your GP, going to your nearest hospital accident and emergency department (A & E). You could also call the Samaritans on 0330 094 5717 or free on 116 123 or visit their website [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org).

**What next?**

If you are happy to proceed with online or telephone counselling on this basis please confirm by “signing” at the bottom and email this back to me at [sueseagercounselling@gmail.com](mailto:sueseagercounselling@gmail.com).

Alternatively you can confirm your acceptance by email and provide contact details separately.

Signed: Date: