

Professional Help Limited
Safeguarding Policy



Date Revised	Author	Classification
December 2022	CB/JW	Company Confidential

Professional Help provides a number of helpline and counselling services on behalf of our partner organisations, supporting clients through challenging life experiences including but not limited to bereavement, work-related stress, and anxiety.

By the very nature of our service, many of the people who come to us looking for support are highly distressed and in some cases may be considering harming themselves or even taking their own lives. In some situations, we may need to tell someone else about our client's needs.

Safeguarding children and young people

Professional Help currently only provides services for people over the age of 18. However, it is possible that in the course of our work, we may become aware that a child could be at risk of harm. In this eventuality, we may need to alert the police or social services. Please refer to the Professional Help Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy for further details.

How we safeguard vulnerable people

When we are worried about a client's safety or that they may be hurt either by their own actions or by someone else, we want to help them to find the best way to keep themselves safe.

When someone may be at risk of harm

Professional Help counsellors are trained in using the safeTALK framework:

Tell: understand the signs that might mean a client is telling us about suicidal feelings or intentions

Ask: ask clients clearly if they are thinking of ending their own lives

Listen: listen carefully to what is being said and respond with empathy

Keep safe: encourage clients to think about ways they can keep themselves safe and who else they might tell about their feelings

Escalating concerns

Most of the time whatever clients tell us will stay between them and their counsellor.

If we believe that a client is not able to make a decision for themselves about their own safety, or if we believe that the client is at imminent risk of harming themselves or another person, we may need to attempt to help the client by contacting other organisations on their behalf. However, we can only do this if the client gives us identifying information. Whilst we do collect this information from clients who enter into a counselling relationship with Professional Help, on occasion, a client using the helpline may not offer this.

Identifying information may include:

- First and second name
- Where someone lives
- Where someone works or studies
- Someone's address
- Someone's e-mail address
- Someone's mobile or home phone number
- Someone's exact location at the time

It is important that Professional Help clients know that they can decide what information they choose to share with us. Even if they have told us this information, it does not mean we will automatically tell someone else. We will also endeavour to make any decisions like this in discussion with the client, if possible. Decisions about whether to contact an external organisation and share client's details must always be made in conjunction with a Professional Help staff member.

We would always want to help our clients to explore their feelings about their situation and to help them to make the decisions that are right for them. If we determine that we do need to tell someone else these are some of the things that might happen:

- Client details may be passed to organisations who will be able to get help to them, like the ambulance service
- If they're in immediate danger of being hurt by someone else, we may ask the police to check or do something to make sure that the client is safe
- If the client has told us that a child is in danger, we may need to get them help. It may be the police that helps us with this

We want clients to be able to contact Professional Help and feel reassured of our confidentiality. There are only a small number of situations such as acts of terrorism, bomb warnings, or threats to life where we would ever consider sharing information with other organisations and these decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis. There are only a small number of exceptions to complete confidentiality and our counsellors have been trained to recognise and discuss these with clients and to seek advice from Professional Help staff where these circumstances might arise.

When a need to contact a Professional Help staff member arises, please call the office on 01524 782910. If you are likely to be working or in contact with clients outside of office hours (9am-9pm Monday-Friday), you must inform a member of Professional Help staff and follow the Lone Working Policy.