

# Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

## Social Support and Counselling

**Owner Operator:** Charmayne Payne

**Version:** 1.0

**Review Date:** May 2027

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## Purpose

Social Support and Counselling is committed to protecting the privacy, dignity, confidentiality, and rights of all clients, participants, children, young people, families, carers, workers, and representatives.

This policy outlines how personal and sensitive information is collected, used, stored, disclosed, and protected in accordance with Australian legislation and professional standards.

This policy aligns with:

- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
  - Australian Privacy Principles (APPs)
  - Australian Counselling Association Code of Ethics and Practice
  - NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission Practice Standards and Code of Conduct
  - Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission Aged Care Quality Standards
  - National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
  - Duty of Care obligations
  - Relevant NSW legislation
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## Scope

This policy applies to:

- Owner operator
- Employees
- Contractors
- Volunteers
- Students
- Agency workers
- Any person representing Social Support and Counselling

This policy applies to:

- Face-to-face services
  - Online and telehealth services
  - Phone communication
  - Electronic records
  - Written documentation
  - Emails, messaging, and digital systems
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## **Commitment to Privacy and Confidentiality**

Social Support and Counselling is committed to:

- Respecting privacy and confidentiality
- Protecting personal information from misuse, loss, unauthorised access, disclosure, or alteration
- Collecting only information necessary for service delivery
- Ensuring information is handled lawfully and ethically
- Supporting client dignity, autonomy, and informed consent
- Providing child safe and culturally safe practices

All clients have the right to:

- Know how their information is collected and used
  - Access their records where legally appropriate
  - Request corrections to inaccurate information
  - Make complaints regarding privacy concerns
  - Receive services respectfully and confidentially
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## **Definitions**

### **Personal Information**

Information or opinions that identify an individual, including:

- Name
- Address
- Phone number
- Email address
- Date of birth
- Emergency contact details

- Service information

## **Sensitive Information**

Information regarding:

- Health or mental health
  - Disability
  - Counselling notes
  - Cultural background
  - Religious beliefs
  - Sexuality
  - Trauma history
  - Child protection concerns
  - Criminal history checks
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## **Collection of Information**

Social Support and Counselling may collect information:

- Directly from clients or participants
- From guardians, carers, nominees, or advocates with consent
- From referral agencies or providers with consent
- During counselling or support sessions
- Through forms, emails, phone calls, or online systems

Information collected will be relevant, necessary and limited to what is required for:

- Service delivery
  - Safety and risk management
  - Legal and ethical obligations
  - Billing and administration
  - Coordination of supports
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## **Use of Information**

Information may be used for:

- Providing counselling and support services
- Developing support plans
- Communicating with clients and authorised persons
- Managing incidents and complaints
- Meeting legal and reporting obligations

- Service improvement and administration

Information will not be used for unrelated purposes without consent unless required by law.

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## **Confidentiality**

All information shared by clients is treated confidentially.

Workers must:

- Protect client confidentiality
- Only access information necessary for their role
- Store records securely
- Discuss client information only for professional purposes
- Maintain confidentiality during and after engagement with the business

Confidential information must not be:

- Shared with unauthorised persons
  - Discussed in public settings
  - Left unsecured
  - Posted on social media
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## **Limits to Confidentiality**

Confidentiality may be limited where:

- There is risk of serious harm to the client or another person
- Abuse, neglect, exploitation or child safety concerns are suspected
- Mandatory reporting obligations apply
- Disclosure is required by law, court order, subpoena
- Information is necessary for emergency medical treatment
- The client provides consent

Where possible, clients will be informed before information is shared.

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## **Child Safety and Confidentiality**

Social Support and Counselling prioritises child safety.

Workers must:

- Follow child safe standards
- Protect children's privacy and dignity
- Respond appropriately to disclosures
- Comply with mandatory reporting obligations

Confidentiality will not prevent reporting concerns regarding:

- Abuse
  - Neglect
  - Grooming
  - Exploitation
  - Significant harm
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## **Storage and Security of Information**

Social Support and Counselling will take reasonable steps to protect records and information.

This may include:

- Password-protected electronic systems
- Locked storage for paper records
- Secure devices and software
- Restricted access to records
- Secure disposal of information when no longer required

Workers must:

- Protect passwords
  - Log out of devices when unattended
  - Use secure communication methods
  - Avoid storing confidential information on personal devices unless authorised
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## **Access to Records**

Clients may request access to their information or records where appropriate and legally permitted.

Requests should be made in writing where possible.

Access may be limited where:

- It would pose serious risk of harm
- Legal restrictions apply
- It may breach another person's privacy

- Child protection concerns exist
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## **Record Retention**

Records will be retained in accordance with legal, ethical, and professional requirements.

Records will be stored for Adults: 7 years from the last client contact.

Children/minors: until the client turns 25 years old (or at least 7 years after last contact, whichever is longer).

- Records no longer required will be securely destroyed
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## **Electronic Communication and Telehealth**

Workers using phone, email, messaging, or online platforms must:

- Use professional communication
- Protect privacy and confidentiality
- Obtain informed consent for telehealth services where appropriate
- Use secure platforms whenever possible

Workers must not:

- Share confidential information through unsecured methods
  - Use personal social media for client communication unless authorised
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## **Photography, Video, and Recording**

Photographs, recordings or videos of clients or children:

- Must only occur with informed consent
- Must have a clear professional purpose
- Must be stored securely
- Must respect privacy and dignity

Consent may be withdrawn at any time where lawful and practicable.

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# Privacy Complaints

Individuals may raise concerns regarding privacy or confidentiality.

Complaints may be made:

- Verbally
- In writing
- By email
- Through an advocate or support person

All complaints will:

- Be taken seriously
  - Be managed respectfully and confidentially
  - Be investigated promptly
  - Be addressed in accordance with the Complaint and Incident Management Policy
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## External Contacts

### Privacy Information

[Office of the Australian Information Commissioner](#)

Phone: 1300 363 992

### NDIS Complaints

[NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission](#)

Phone: 1800 035 544

### Aged Care Complaints

[Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission](#)

Phone: 1800 951 822

### Australian Counselling Association

[Australian Counselling Association](#)

Phone: 1300 784 333

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# Breaches of Privacy or Confidentiality

Breaches may result in:

- Supervision or retraining
- Corrective action
- Termination of engagement
- Mandatory reporting
- Notification to regulatory authorities

Serious breaches may be reported to:

- NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission
  - Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
  - Australian Counselling Association
  - Relevant authorities where required
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## Related Documents

- Code of Conduct
  - Child Safe Policy
  - Complaint and Incident Management Policy
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## Review

This policy will be reviewed:

- Annually
  - Following legislative changes
  - Following privacy breaches or incidents
  - As part of continuous improvement practices
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## Approval

Approved By:

**Charmayne Payne**

Owner Operator

Social Support and Counselling

Date: 20.05.2026