

# Purple Ruler Therapy Confidentiality Policy

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At Purple Ruler, we are committed to maintaining the confidentiality of all our therapy services for children and young people. This policy outlines how we handle personal information, the boundaries of confidentiality, and the circumstances under which information may be disclosed.

## 1. Introduction

Confidentiality is a cornerstone of effective therapy. At Purple Ruler, we strive to create a safe, private, and supportive environment where students can express themselves freely. Our confidentiality policy aligns with UK law, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) Ethical Framework, and safeguarding standards.

This policy applies to all staff, therapists, counsellors, administrative personnel, and supervisors involved in providing therapy services. It governs the handling of:

- Personal and sensitive information shared by students and their parents/guardians.
- Therapy session records, including notes, recordings, and communications.
- Any other data relevant to the provision of therapy services.

## 2. Confidentiality within Purple Ruler

- a. Information shared during therapy sessions remains confidential within the Purple Ruler team, subject to the exceptions outlined below.
- b. All therapists meet regularly with supervisors to ensure high standards of care. Supervisors are bound by the same confidentiality standards.
- c. Non-therapeutic staff, such as teachers, safeguarding officers and administrative personnel, may access information on a need-to-know basis to fulfil their roles more effectively in supporting the student.
- d. The obligation to maintain confidentiality extends beyond the termination of the therapy relationship.

### 3. Boundaries of Confidentiality

- a. **Children and Young People:** Students aged under 18 have the right to confidential therapy. Where appropriate, confidentiality decisions are guided by the student's capacity to consent (assessed using Gillick competence).
- b. **Parents/Guardians/School:**
  - o Parents/guardians will not be given details of therapy sessions unless the student consents or there is a safeguarding concern.
  - o General updates, such as progress reports, may be shared to maintain trust while preserving the student's privacy.
- d. **Internal Communication:**
  - o Information may be shared within the Purple Ruler team to ensure quality and safeguarding but will not go beyond authorised personnel.

### 4. Exceptions to confidentiality

There are circumstances in which Purple Ruler may need to disclose information without consent. These include:

- a. **Safeguarding Children: (following protocols in the Safeguarding Policy)**
  - i. If information is disclosed that a child is at risk of immediate significant harm, the therapist must report this to Purple Ruler's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately.
  - ii. The DSL will assess the situation and, where necessary, contact the child's school safeguarding lead and the relevant local authority children's social care team.
  - iii. If there is an immediate danger, the DSL will contact emergency services (e.g., police or ambulance) without delay.
- b. **Serious Harm to Self or Others:** If a student discloses intentions to harm themselves, the therapist will:
  - i. Notify the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately.
  - ii. The DSL will attempt to contact the student's parent/guardian (if appropriate and safe to do so) and/or inform the school's safeguarding lead.
  - iii. If the risk is imminent, the DSL will contact emergency services and provide all necessary information to ensure the student's safety.

iv. A follow-up plan will be established in collaboration with the school, parents/guardians, and external agencies.

**c. Serious Harm to Others:**

If a student discloses intentions to harm another person, the therapist will:

- i. Report the disclosure to the DSL immediately.
- ii. The DSL will assess the risk and contact the appropriate authorities, including the police, if required.
- iii. Where feasible, the person at risk will be notified, provided this does not escalate the danger.

**d. Legal Obligations:**

- i. Disclosures required by law, such as under the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1989 or court orders, will be acted upon by the DSL.
- ii. Information regarding serious criminal offences may need to be reported to the relevant authorities.
- iii. Whenever possible, the student will be informed before information is shared unless doing so increases the risk of harm.

## 5. Rights to Confidential Records

- a. **Secure Storage:** All student records, including notes and session recordings, written communications with the therapist are stored securely in compliance with GDPR. Access is restricted to authorised personnel, such as therapists and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- b. **Access Requests:**
  - i. Parents/guardians/school do not have an automatic right to access therapy records. Requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis in compliance with legal and ethical guidelines.
  - ii. Students may access their therapy records, provided that such access does not breach safeguarding protocols or professional standards.
- c. **Retention Periods:** Records are retained only as long as necessary. Generally, session notes are deleted at the end of each academic term unless legal requirements necessitate longer retention.
- d. **Court Orders:** Records will only be disclosed to third parties, such as courts, when legally mandated and with prior consultation with the DSL and legal advisors.

## 6. Communication with External Parties

- a. Schools may receive general updates about the student's engagement or safeguarding concerns. Specific details of therapy sessions will not be disclosed.
- b. When necessary, information may be shared with external agencies (e.g., social services or police) to ensure student safety or meet legal obligations. All disclosures will be documented, and the student will be informed unless it increases risk.

## 7. Breaches of Confidentiality

- a. Any breaches of confidentiality must be reported immediately to the DSL.
- b. The DSL will:
  - Notify affected individuals as appropriate.
  - Conduct a review to identify the cause of the breach.
  - Implement corrective measures to prevent future occurrences.
- c. All breaches and subsequent actions will be documented in the organisation's safeguarding records.

## 8. Monitoring and Review

- a. This policy will be reviewed annually or in response to significant legal or organisational changes.
- b. Feedback from students, parents, staff, and external partners will be incorporated into the review process to ensure the policy remains effective and relevant.
- c. Updates to the policy will be communicated to all stakeholders in a timely manner, and training will be provided to ensure understanding and compliance.

## Contact Information

For questions or concerns about this policy, please contact:

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By engaging with Purple Ruler’s therapy services, all parties acknowledge and agree to the terms outlined in this policy.