

PRIVACY POLICY

Purpose of this policy

Charlotte Handford collects, works with and retains its clients' personal information. This information is important in the optimal provision of psychological services. However, it is also important that the information is appropriately managed in accordance with law and ethical guidelines of the profession. This policy outlines how Charlotte Handford handles clients' personal information, in accordance with Australian Privacy Principles.

Relevant Laws and other Documents

The psychological service provided is bound by the legal requirements of the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988, the Australian Privacy Principles 2014 and the Australian Psychological Society – Code of Ethics (2007)

What is personal information?

Personal information is any information which identifies you or could reasonably be used to identify you.

What personal information do we collect and why?

In order to provide optimal psychological services Charlotte Handford will collect information from clients or referrers. As a base, the following information will likely be collected:

- Your name, address and date of birth.
- Your contact details.
- Current and past medical information.
- Your family medical history to the extent that it may inform current services.
- Your educational and occupational history.

In addition, in the provision of psychological services Charlotte Handford will in all likelihood collect the following personal information:

- Responses and results from psychological tests and questionnaires.
- This may be in a 'pencil-and-paper' format, or via a computer.
- Information pertaining to your session notes; treatment plan and your response to treatment.

All of the above material is used to inform accurate assessment, and treatment plans clients of Charlotte Handford. Not having this information may increase the risk that the assessment, and treatment plans subsequently arrived at or generated are sub-optimal.

Information provided by third parties

We will collect information from you where it is reasonable and practical to do so. We may also need to collect information from others who have known you a long time (such as a spouse or parent) or from others involved in your care (such as your GP). We will always endeavour to keep you reliably informed of the information collected and the source of that information, and where appropriate will seek and obtain written informed consent to contact and retrieve that information.

Use and disclosure of personal information

Charlotte Handford will use and disclose personal information for the primary purpose of providing optimal psychological services. This will primarily take the form of a report prepared by the clinician and sent to the referrer or referring agent, plus others involved in the client's care where applicable.

It is noted that in some circumstances Psychologists are required by law to disclose personal information without the consent of the client. Specifically, Psychologists may disclose personal information if a "permitted general situation" exists such as to "lessen or prevent a serious threat to the life, health or safety of any individual, or to public health or safety". This threat does not need to be imminent.

There may be occasions when Charlotte Handford discloses the personal information of a client where there is a serious threat to the life, health, or safety of an individual or the public, or on a rare occasion to assist in the location of a missing person.

Storage and security of personal information

Charlotte Handford will take reasonable steps to protect the personal information of clients from misuse, interference or loss, and from unauthorised modification, access or disclosure.

Paper documents containing personal information listed above will be uploaded and stored electronically, and then destroyed. Electronic information containing personal information listed above will be stored and backed up securely, in accordance with the APS Code of Ethics (2007).

Can you access your personal information?

Clients have a right to access their personal information held by Charlotte Handford. Such requests need to be put in writing for security and recording purposes and to assist in finding the information for you.

Charlotte Handford may refuse the request for such information, or limit the information so provided, where she is legally entitled to do so. We will endeavour to provide reasons for refusal. For example, release of information may be denied or limited where such release may have an unreasonable impact on the privacy of others or is considered frivolous or vexatious.

Psychologists duty of care

Charlotte Handford is guided by the Australian Psychological Society's (APS's) Code of Ethics (2007). Section A.4. of the Code relates to the appropriate collection of private information related to the provision of psychological services. Sections A.5. to A.7. of the Code relate to Confidentiality, the Release of Information to Clients, and the Collection of client information from associated parties. Section B.2. of the Code relates to appropriate record-keeping. The APS Code of Ethics (2007) can be found on the APS website (www.psychology.org.au).

It is noted that under section A.5.2.(c) of the Code that psychologists disclose confidential information obtained in the course of their provision of psychological services, "if there is an immediate and specified risk of harm to an identifiable person or persons that can be averted only by disclosing information" (p.15).

Clients may also refer to the APS Charter for Clients of Psychologists, appended to this policy. The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) is responsible for the registration of psychologists throughout Australia. Through AHPRA, and under National Law, there are requirements



C H A R L O T T E
H A N D F O R D
INDIVIDUAL, COUPLE
AND FAMILY THERAPY

for registered health practitioners to make mandatory notifications to prevent the public from being placed at risk of harm. Revised guidelines took effect from 17th March 2014.

Changes to this policy.

We may from time to time make changes to this policy to reflect changes in the law or professional best-practice guidelines. All clients and referrers are encouraged to periodically review this policy to remain informed.

Complaints

Clients have a right to make a complaint about the handling of their personal information. Complaints can be made to Charlotte Handford by email (chandfordtherapy@gmail.com). Ultimately, if you wish to make a complaint about the use of, disclosure of, or access to your personal information, you may do so with the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner by phone on 1300 363 992 or online at <http://www.oaic.gov.au/provacy/making-a-privacy-complaint> or by post to: office of the Australian Information Commissioner, GPO Box 5218, SYDNEY NSW 2001.

Other agencies to which clients may bring complaints are as follows:

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (ahpra.gov.au)

Australian Psychological Society (psychology.org.au)