

Sue Lambert Trust - Client Contract



Client's Name/File Number: _____

This contract sets out your rights and responsibilities as a Sue Lambert Trust client. By signing this both parties agree to abide by the rules to ensure that these rights and responsibilities are maintained. One copy is for your file, the other is for you to keep.

Confidentiality

Client confidentiality is a priority for Sue Lambert Trust, and we will not discuss any information given to us by you unless in the following exceptional circumstances:

- Our counsellors are all required professionally to discuss their work with our supervisors to ensure that good support is maintained. This is entirely confidential between the counsellor and the supervisor.
- We are legally required to report any situation involving risks to children or to vulnerable adults as soon as we are aware of them. In extreme circumstances where we believe there is a serious risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult, confidentiality may need to be broken – but only to the relevant agencies. We will try to discuss this with you beforehand if we can.
- We will not disclose any information about you to anyone outside our organisation without your consent except for in those situations listed above. We will **never** disclose any information to any private third party (eg. family, friends, employer) without your prior consent.

Your File

We keep a copy of your initial assessment form and ongoing review forms in your file. Our counsellors are not expected to keep additional notes however they may find it useful to keep a record of sessions or process notes. If they want to do so they will seek your permission first.

If you are involved in a court case the police/solicitor may require access to any notes we have kept, although they are required to seek your permission initially before they contact us.

You have a right to see any information about you that we keep at any time. We keep your paper file for 12 months after you have stopped using our service in case you want to make further contact before securely disposing of it. For funding purposes we keep minimal electronic client data for 5 years.

Attendance

There is a high demand for our services so it is important we make the most of sessions. We expect that clients will make every effort to attend all their appointments as agreed. If you cannot attend, it is your responsibility to contact your counsellor at least 24 hours in advance, if possible.

Note that if you miss more than 3 sessions in any 3 month period then the service may be withdrawn – only in exceptional circumstances can we hold a counselling slot open for clients unable to attend on a regular basis.

If you know you are unlikely to be able to attend future appointments for any reason please do contact us to discuss. If you need a break from your counselling we can discuss options with you. Please note that we cannot guarantee that you see the same counsellor if you return.

Gifts

We understand that some clients may wish to express their appreciation to their counsellor or other SLT staff with a card or a small gift up to a value of £5. However please be aware that SLT has a policy which says that counsellors and staff are not able to accept personal gifts from clients. Therefore any gifts will be shared amongst all counsellors and staff, or if this is not possible, raffled to raise funds for SLT.

I agree to abide by these terms.

Signed by Client:

Signed by Counsellor:

Date:

Important information for clients who are either currently going through court proceedings or who may decide to do so at a later date.

Before you give evidence in court you are requested not to discuss your testimony with anyone in any detail so as not to influence the evidence you would give in court. As a result of this, in pre-trial counselling you should not talk about anything that is in your police statement or maybe relevant to the case. If you go over what has happened in counselling it could be argued that you have been 'coached' about what to say in court. This could have an effect upon the way your evidence is viewed by the Court and the outcome of the trial.

This usually means that you should not talk about the event for which you have come to us for support which can feel like the 'elephant in the room'. You and your counsellor will decide in the first session what you will use the counselling for, such as emotional support, so that it can still be helpful for you.

You can talk about what you are thinking and how you are feeling at the moment and work on making changes, for example; to your self-esteem or within relationships.

You can work on coping strategies for dealing with what happened to you and talk about the impact it has had on you, as long as you don't talk about the specific memories.

You can talk about any worries you have about the police or court process.

Pre-trial counselling is often used to deal with emotional distress in day to day life during the criminal justice process. You may reach a point where you feel you cannot make any more progress or feel any better without talking through what happened, when this is the case it may be time to end the counselling until after the trial. You may still access ISVA and Victim Support services to provide more practical support to you through court.

It is possible that we could receive a request from the prosecutor or a court order saying we must disclose your counselling records. Our counselling notes are very brief and factual and will clearly state that it has been agreed not to discuss your evidence during the counselling. Therefore it is possible but unlikely that they would actually be used as evidence in court.

Once the court process has ended you can continue with your counselling for as long as you require it. You can talk about and work through the trauma of what has happened to you if you wish.