The Listening Path - Professional Boundaries Policy

(a service within Best Foot Forward)

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear and safe professional boundaries within counselling relationships.

Boundaries help to:

- Create a safe and consistent environment
- Build trust and clarity
- Protect both the client and practitioner
- Maintain ethical and professional standards

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2. Scope of Practice

The Listening Path provides:

- Counselling and emotional wellbeing support
- A safe space to explore thoughts and feelings
- Support for emotional regulation, confidence, and resilience

The Listening Path does not provide:

- Clinical diagnosis
- Educational assessments or EHCP assessments
- Crisis intervention services
- Medical or psychiatric treatment

Clients will be referred to appropriate services where needs fall outside this scope.

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3. Professional Relationship

The counselling relationship is a professional relationship, not a friendship.

This means:

- Sessions focus on the needs of the client
- The practitioner maintains appropriate emotional and professional distance
- Contact outside sessions is limited and appropriate

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4. Contact Outside Sessions
Contact is limited to:
- Arranging or rescheduling appointments
- Administrative communication

The Listening Path does not provide:
- Ongoing support via text, messaging, or social media
- Emergency or out-of-hours support

In emergencies, clients are advised to contact appropriate services (e.g. GP, NHS 111, or emergency services).

5. Social Media and Online Boundaries
- The Listening Path does not accept friend or follow requests from clients on personal accounts
- Communication via social media is not used for counselling
- Professional accounts (if used) are for information only

6. Physical and Emotional Boundaries
- Physical contact is avoided unless appropriate and clearly agreed
- Sessions are conducted in a safe, respectful environment
- The practitioner maintains a consistent, non-judgemental approach

7. Session Boundaries
- Sessions start and end at agreed times
- Regular attendance is encouraged
- Missed or cancelled sessions are managed according to agreed terms

8. Dual Relationships
The Listening Path aims to avoid dual relationships where possible.
This includes:
- Not working with individuals where there is a prior personal relationship
- Managing any potential conflicts of interest appropriately

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9. Gifts and Payments

- Small tokens of appreciation may be accepted at the practitioner's discretion
- Payments and fees are agreed in advance and handled professionally

10. Ending Support

Counselling may end when:

- The agreed goals have been met
- The client chooses to end sessions
- The practitioner determines that support is no longer appropriate

Where possible, endings are planned and discussed to support a positive transition.

11. Supervision and Ethical Practice

The Listening Path:

- Engages in regular professional supervision
- Works within recognised ethical frameworks (e.g. NCPS)
- Reflects on practice to ensure safe and effective support

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