

Data protection: what every healer needs to know

by Gillian Clark



You may have received letters or emails recently from organisations that send you publicity about their activities, checking that you still wish to receive this information and telling you that the law about how they manage your personal data is changing. You may have been wondering whether this law affects you as a healer, or the Healing Centre that you work in.

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The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) became law on 25th May. It is a positive step towards all of us having more control over our personal data and how we are contacted. Organisations are required to explain why they collect personal data, how they intend to use it and to ask for consent to do so.

Personal data is information that can identify an individual, such as their name, address, and date of birth. Sensitive personal data is information about matters such as their racial origin, sexual orientation, and their physical or mental health.

Individual healers will keep personal data in the form of records of healing sessions and may also keep personal information that is used to contact people about their healing practice, courses, workshops or special events. Healing Centres will keep similar information for similar purposes. GDPR should not involve many changes to the way that individual healers work, or Healing Centres operate, if they have been complying with existing Data Protection law.

This law already requires that only relevant personal information should be kept. This must be kept securely. If it is kept in paper form it should be stored in lockable filing cabinets. If it is stored electronically it should

be password protected. It should be kept confidential and not be passed on to other people, unless there is a legal reason for doing so e.g. the individual is a danger to others. Information must be factual (and avoid opinion), be accurate, be kept up to date, and not be kept for any longer than is necessary.

The main change that GDPR brings is that we need to inform clients why their personal data is required and tell them how it will be used. The client should be asked to consent in writing, or by ticking a box on a form, to their data being held for these purposes.

Refer to The Healing Trust's new Code of Conduct for retention time for records of healing sessions. Further information can be obtained from the Information Commissioner's Office [ICO] <https://ico.org.uk> Gillian Clark is Vice-Chair of the Board of The Healing Trust.