



Matrix College of Counselling and Psychotherapy
Data Protection Policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Data Protection Policy sets out how Matrix College of Counselling and Psychotherapy (“Matrix” or “College”) handles the personal data of our students, applicants, alumni, employees, workers and other third parties. The Policy applies to all personal data we process and all Matrix staff must read, understand and comply with this policy.
- 1.2 The Matrix Director and Administrator (the Data Protection Officer) has day to day responsibility within the College to ensure that data protection best practice is implemented and observed.
- 1.3 The Management Team approves this policy in accordance with Matrix College Policy Approval Processes.

2 Scope

- 2.1 The way in which Matrix College (“Matrix” or “the College”) uses personal data is regulated by applicable data protection legislation, meaning the Data Protection Act 2018, the UK General Data Protection Regulation and any other applicable laws relating to the protection of personal data and the privacy of individuals (all as amended, updated or re-enacted from time to time).
- 2.2 Matrix understands that the correct and lawful treatment of personal data is an important responsibility that we take seriously, and in the event personal data is mishandled, the College may be exposed to potential fines of up to £17.5 million or 4% of total worldwide annual turnover, whichever is higher.
- 2.3 It is important for everyone within the College to understand the principles of the data protection legislation, to enable Matrix to comply with its obligations. This policy sets out the responsibilities of anyone who processes personal data on behalf of Matrix, including staff members, consultants, full and part-time employees, contractors and any other third parties.
- 2.4 Any questions or concerns about the interpretation or operation of this policy should be addressed to the Matrix Director and Administrator.

3 Short Guide to Data Protection Legislation

3.1 What is 'personal data'?

3.1.1 Personal data is information relating to a living, identified or identifiable individual (a “data subject”). A person is sufficiently identifiable by the College if they can be ‘singled out’ within a given environment, including online, either from a given set of data we hold, or where we could do so by combining different data sets the College possesses or can reasonably access. A person can be ‘singled out’ even if we do not know their name.

3.1.2 Matrix processes personal data relating to a number of categories of data subjects, including applicants, students, Matrix members, staff, visitors, suppliers, contractors and service users. For example, personal data includes names, addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers; it may also include images caught on CCTV cameras and recorded telephone conversations.

3.1.3 Personal data is not always factual; it can also include opinions expressed by one person about another.

3.1.4 Data protection legislation applies to all formats of information including information stored on computers and in certain manual (for example, paper) filing systems, provided that they are structured in a way that enables easy access to information about a data subject.

3.1.5 There is a sub-set of personal data called “special categories of personal data” which is information revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or similar beliefs, trade union membership, physical or mental health conditions, sexual life, sexual orientation, biometric and genetic data. Special protection is also given to personal data relating to criminal offences and convictions. Data protection legislation prohibits the processing of this more sensitive and private data except in specific circumstances.

3.2 What does 'processing' personal data mean?

3.2.1 Processing has a broad definition and includes almost anything Matrix might do with personal data, including obtaining, recording, holding, using, disclosing, amending and destroying personal data. Processing also includes the transfer of personal data to third parties.

3.3 What can we do with personal data?

3.3.1 We need to process personal data lawfully, fairly and transparently. The data protection legislation sets out the list of lawful justifications for processing - often referred to as the “conditions for processing” and there is an explicit obligation to tell data subjects the legal basis for processing their personal data.

3.3.2 The choice of lawful basis depends on the purpose or reason for which we are collecting or using the personal data, and the lawful basis we identify then has implications – it affects the extent to which the data subject can limit our use of that data, or even whether they can require us to delete it entirely. Information on data subject rights is included in Section 5 below.

3.4 What are ‘controllers’ and ‘processors’?

3.4.1 A data “controller” determines the purposes for which and the manner in which personal data are processed. Matrix is a controller in respect of personal data it holds relating to staff and students. It is also a controller in respect of certain personal data it holds relating to applicants, Matrix members, visitors, suppliers, contractors and service users.

3.4.2 A data “processor” is any person (not an employee of the data controller) who processes data on behalf of the controller, for example agents and contractors. Processors do not make decisions about how and why data is to be processed – they instead implement the instructions of the controller.

3.4.3 A controller remains responsible for the use of information by a processor in respect of information it has passed to the processor and we must take steps to ensure that these processors are able to protect personal data before providing it. Matrix is required to put in place a written contract with any processors. Anyone wishing to appoint a processor should first speak to the Director.

3.5 What must staff do to comply?

3.5.1 We will adhere to the following principles relating to processing of personal data:

Principle	Requirement and what we will do
Lawfulness, fairness and transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal data shall be processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner in relation to the data subject.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ We only process personal data in accordance with the specified lawful purposes provided under the data protection legislation, which include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ the data subject has given their consent;○ the processing is necessary for the purpose of a contract with the data subject;○ to meet our legal compliance obligations;○ to protect the data subject’s vital interests;○ to pursue Matrix’s legitimate interests for purposes where they are not overridden because the processing prejudices the interests or fundamental rights and freedoms of the data subject.○ We provide the data subject with information about his/her personal data processing in a concise, transparent and intelligible manner, which is easily accessible, using clear and plain language (for example, through our Privacy Notices).○ If we need to transfer personal data outside of the UK, we ensure that it is adequately protected in accordance with legal requirements.

Purpose limitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal data shall be collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible with those purposes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We regularly review the purposes for which we use personal data and will take steps to inform the data subject in advance of any changes to those purposes.
Data minimisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal data shall be adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary in relation to the purposes for which they are processed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We ensure that we collect enough data to achieve our purposes but not more than needed.
Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We take reasonable steps to delete or amend inaccurate or outdated data.
Storage limitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Personal data shall be kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We ensure that data is kept for no longer than necessary, and have in place an archiving policy and review this process annually.
Security, integrity and confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal data shall be processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data, including protection against unauthorised or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction or damage, using appropriate technical or organisational measures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We assess risk, implement appropriate security for personal data and check on a regular basis that it is up to date and working effectively. ○ All data processors appointed by Matrix are assessed against their ability to adequately protect personal data and we have formal agreements in place with them.
Data subjects' rights and requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal data shall be made available to data subjects and we allow data subjects to exercise certain rights in relation to their personal data.
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matrix is responsible for, and must be able to demonstrate compliance with, data protection legislation.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ We maintain records of our compliance and undertake periodic audits to ensure we continually improve our processes and measures to protect personal data. |
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- 3.6** Anyone who is unsure whether they are authorised to collect or disclose personal data in a certain way should check with the Director. In particular, if anyone (including the Police, other officials, or even the spouse of the data subject) requests access to personal data relating to a data subject, staff must first check with the Director **before** making any disclosure.
- 3.7** Data subjects are entitled to ask Matrix to provide a copy of any information that Matrix holds about them, subject to limited statutory exemptions. Accordingly, Matrix should not keep on record any information, opinion or judgement which Matrix would not want to show to the data subject or explain or justify if called upon to do so.
- 3.8** Matrix will provide further training to staff in their responsibilities in respect of personal data, and staff should take up these training opportunities.

4 The Rights of Data Subjects

- 4.1** Data subjects also have a range of rights in relation to their personal data and how we process it namely:
- 4.1.1** The right to be informed of various information about how their data is being used and why.
- 4.1.2** The right to access their personal data we hold, and to have certain data transmitted to another data controller.
- 4.1.3** The right to have any inaccuracies in their data corrected, which may include the right to have any incomplete data completed.
- 4.1.4** The right to have their personal data erased in certain circumstances.
- 4.1.5** The right to have the processing of their data suspended, for example if they want us to establish the accuracy of the data, we are processing.
- 4.1.6** The right to object to any direct marketing (for example, email marketing or phone calls) by us, and to require us to stop such marketing.
- 4.1.7** The right to withdraw consent to processing (in circumstances where consent is the lawful basis relied upon) and to object to the processing of their information in situations where we are processing that data based on the lawful bases known as 'legitimate interests' or 'public task'; and;
- 4.1.8** The right to object to any automated decision making about them which produces legal effects or otherwise significantly affects them.
- 4.2** Requests can be made by any channel (email, letter, over the phone, even via social media). We must respond within 1 month.
- 4.3** If an employee receives a communication from any individual, which appears to be attempting to exercise one of the above rights, it should be immediately forwarded to the Director.

5 Risks to Matrix of breaching Data Protection Legislation

- 5.1** Besides the power to impose fines up to £17.5 million, the Information Commissioner's Office ('ICO') has a range of corrective powers and sanctions to enforce data protection legislation. These include issuing warnings and reprimands; imposing a temporary or permanent ban on data processing; ordering the rectification, restriction, or erasure of data; and suspending data transfers to third countries.
- 5.2** An individual affected may ask the ICO to assess whether an organisation's processing of personal data is being undertaken lawfully. If that occurs, the ICO is required to make an assessment as to whether protection legislation has been breached.

6 Information Security

- 6.1** Matrix has an obligation to ensure that any personal data we hold is kept secure and protected against unauthorised or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction or damage.
 - 6.1.1** Matrix shall ensure that personal data is stored securely using modern software that is kept up-to-date. In particular, software updates issued by the software providers are to be implemented within a short period of their publication.
 - 6.1.2** Access to personal data shall be limited to personnel who needs access and appropriate security should be in place to avoid unauthorized sharing of information.
 - 6.1.3** When personal data is deleted this should be done safely such that the data is irrecoverable. Hardware is to be disposed of securely, only after and data has been erased.
 - 6.1.4** Appropriate back-up and disaster recovery solutions shall be in place.
- 6.2** Every member of staff has a responsibility to enable Matrix to comply with this obligation.

7 Reporting Data Breaches

- 7.1** A personal data breach is a breach of security leading to the accidental or unlawful destruction, loss, alteration, unauthorized disclosure of, or access to, personal data'. This includes breaches that are the result of both accidental and deliberate causes.
- 7.2** Common examples of data breaches are:
 - 7.2.1** emailing and/or posting personal data to incorrect recipients; and
 - 7.2.2** leaving personal data in unsecure locations.
- 7.3** You must report any actual or suspected information security incident/data breach to the Director immediately upon discover. Under the current legislation, Matrix may need to notify the ICO and/or (in certain circumstances) the affected data subject(s) within 72 hours of your discovery of the breach and may need to take swift action to mitigate any potential detriment. Delay in reporting the issue internally may prevent Matrix from complying with its statutory obligations.

8 Handling Requests for Access to Data by Data Subjects

- 8.1** Data protection legislation gives individuals the right to know how we handle their personal data. This right only allows access to the requestor's *own* personal data (with some permissible exceptions).
- 8.2** If an individual requests a copy of their personal data, whether verbally or in writing, staff should immediately pass that request on to the Director.
- 8.3** Under the current legislation, Matrix has a maximum of one calendar month to respond to the request. Matrix may be able to extend the period of compliance by a further two months where requests are complex or numerous. If so, the College must inform the individual within one month and explain why.
- 8.4** On receipt of a request, Matrix will formally confirm receipt to the requestor. Matrix may request proof of identity from the requestor.
- 8.5** Matrix will then conduct a reasonable and proportionate search for relevant material and will disclose the data it contains to the requestor, save to the extent that exemptions under data protection legislation apply.

9 Guidance for Staff on the Use of Their Personal Data

- 9.1** Matrix will process the personal data of our members of staff in accordance with this policy and as set out in the employee privacy notice and contracts of members of staff.
- 9.2** It is the responsibility of each individual member of staff to:
 - 9.2.1** check that any information that they provide in connection with their employment is accurate and up-to-date.
 - 9.2.2** inform Matrix of any changes to information which they have provided e.g. change of address; and
 - 9.2.3** inform Matrix of any errors or changes.
- 9.3** Matrix may publish the names, work telephone numbers and work email addresses of our members of staff on the College VLE, unless the members of staff give notice that they do not want this to happen.

10 Giving References

- 10.1** Nobody should give references in respect of current or past employees of Matrix without prior approval of the Director. Requests for references should be passed to the Director in the first instance. A copy of any reference given should be retained in the staff member's employment record.
- 10.2** All references (whether oral or written) given in respect of a student at Matrix should contain only information that is factual or is an honest opinion or judgement that is capable of being demonstrated as being reasonable by reference to actions or events. Copies must be provided to the College for storage on the relevant student file.

10.3 Referees should be aware that the content of reference may, at a future date, be shared with the individual concerned.

11. In June 2025, the Data Use and Access Act (DUAA) came into law. It amends several areas of UK Data Protection legislation including:

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA)

The Privacy & Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR).

The main points to be noted from this latest legislation is as follows; -

11.1 With regards to penalties under GDPR the maximum fines are £17.5 million, or 4% of worldwide annual turnover. Under the DUAA, this will now also apply to the PECR, increasing from £500,000.

11.2 The DUAA revises cookie regulations. Under the DUAA, there is no longer any prohibition as long as; -

They are used to collect statistical data solely with a view to improve the performance or service provided by a website. It should be noted however companies need a cookie banner with an easy opt-out

The individual is given clear information and consent has been given.

They are necessary and solely for carrying out transmission over a communication network

They are strictly necessary to provide online services and solely to adapt the services appearance or functionality in accordance with an individual's preference.

They are used solely to work out location if an individual requests emergency assistance.

11.3 The next point is regarding handling Data Access Requests (DSARs) and other individual Rights Requests.

The DUAA brings in the following changes: -

Time limits for responding to requests no longer runs from when you receive the request, it now runs from **the latest of**; -

When the controller receives the request

When the controller receives information to verify the requester's identity

When a fee is charged (if permissible and applicable) is paid.

This will give the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) greater powers of investigation.

11.4 The DUA creates a right for data subjects to make a complaint directly to the data controllers in relation to infringements of data protection law. This legislation will exist alongside the existing ability to submit complaints directly to the ICO.

If a data subject wishes to submit a complaint to the College, if they believe the use of their personal information has been infringed, they can do this via an electronic form, which can be found on our website or as per the contact details contained in this document.

The College is required to acknowledge the complaint within 30 days and respond without undue delay.

Further guidance on your rights is available from the Information Commissioner's Office (<https://ico.org.uk/>). You may also wish to contact the College's Administrator (see contact details below) if you are considering how or whether to exercise your rights.

12. Future changes to this privacy notice, and previous versions

We may need to update this notice from time to time, for example if the law or regulatory requirements change, if technology changes, or to make Matrix College's or (as validator of the College's programmes) Middlesex University's operations and procedures more efficient.

13. Matrix College's Contact Details

If you need to contact us about your data, please contact:

The Administrator
Matrix College
6 Griffin Court
Wymondham
Norfolk
NR18 0GU
admin@matrix.ac.uk

Document name	Data Protection Policy		
Owner	Principal	Review Lead	Quality Manager
Approving Committee	Ops Team		
Last review	May 2026	Next review	May 2027
Amendments since last review	Detail of Revision	Date of Revision	Revision approved by
	DUA Act 2025 update & Contact details	March 2026	Ops Team