

Participant Information Sheet

Title of study: Out in Practice: Negotiating Authenticity, Identity and Ethics as LGBTQ+ Therapists

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1. Invitation

You are being invited to take part in a research study exploring the experiences of LGBTQ+ counsellors and psychotherapists in the UK, particularly in relation to authenticity, identity disclosure, and ethical decision-making in therapeutic work.

Participation is entirely voluntary.

This study is being undertaken to complete an MSc Counselling and Psychotherapy dissertation at London Metropolitan University. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what taking part would involve.

Please take time to read the following information carefully. You are welcome to discuss it with others if you wish, and to ask the researcher for clarification or further information at any stage before, during, or after participation.

2. What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to **explore how LGBTQ+ counsellors and psychotherapists in the UK understand and negotiate authenticity, identity disclosure (being “out” or not), and ethical responsibilities in their therapeutic work.**

Research has shown that LGBTQ+ therapists often navigate complex decisions about disclosure, professional boundaries, organisational expectations, and visibility both within and beyond the therapy room. However, there is limited research that centres LGBTQ+ therapists' own perspectives, particularly within the UK context.

This study aims to contribute to greater understanding of these experiences, with a focus on ethical decision-making, organisational and professional contexts, and lived experiences of disclosure and non-disclosure.

The study will run from data collection through to dissertation submission in September 2026. For the purposes of the study, personal data processed may include demographic information (such as professional role and work setting), audio recordings of interviews, and interview transcripts.

3. Why have I been chosen to participate?

You are being invited to take part because you identify as LGBTQ+ and are currently working as, or within the past two years worked as, a counsellor or psychotherapist in the UK.

The study aims to include approximately 8–12 participants, to allow for in-depth qualitative exploration of experiences.

4. Do I have to take part?

No. Taking part in this research is entirely voluntary.

If you decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason and without any negative consequences.

Choosing not to take part, or withdrawing, will not affect any services, support, training, or professional relationships.

5. What will happen to me if I take part?

If you choose to take part, you will be invited to participate in a one-off, individual interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. Interviews will take place online via Microsoft Teams at a time convenient to you.

The interview will be semi-structured and will explore topics such as:

- Experiences of being LGBTQ+ in therapeutic and organisational contexts
- Understandings of authenticity in therapeutic work
- Decisions about disclosure or non-disclosure of sexual and/or gender identity with clients, and any ethical dilemmas that arise

With your consent, the interview will be audio-recorded. Microsoft Teams' automated transcription software may be used to produce an initial transcript, which will then be checked, corrected, and anonymised by the researcher.

Audio recordings will be deleted once accurate transcripts have been produced and anonymised. Anonymised transcripts will be retained securely until dissertation submission on 17 September 2026, after which they will be permanently deleted.

All data will be stored securely on password-protected, secure University cloud storage. Data will not be transferred outside the UK or Europe.

AI-assisted tools may be used in a limited way to support data organisation or thematic exploration, but only with fully anonymised data. All analysis and interpretation will be conducted by the researcher.

No automated decision-making or profiling will take place.

6. What are the benefits of taking part?

There may be no direct personal benefit to you from taking part. However, some participants may find it meaningful to reflect on their experiences and contribute to research that centres LGBTQ+ therapists' voices. It is hoped that the findings will contribute to greater understanding of ethical practice, professional support, and inclusivity within counselling and psychotherapy.

7. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Some topics discussed may feel sensitive or emotionally challenging, particularly experiences relating to discrimination, concealment, or professional risk.

You are not required to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable, and you may pause or stop the interview at any time. If you experience distress during the interview, the researcher will offer to stop and will encourage you to access appropriate support (for example, supervision, peer support, or relevant professional services).

All reasonable steps have been taken to minimise risk, including confidentiality safeguards and participant control over disclosure.

8. Will my participation in this study be kept confidential?

Yes. Your privacy is very important.

- Interviews will be audio-recorded with consent.
- Identifying information will be stored separately from interview data.
- Transcripts will be anonymised, and pseudonyms will be used.
- Only the researcher (and academic supervisors if required for assessment) will have access to the data.
- Audio recordings will not be shared with third parties.
- Anonymised data may be used for other purposes such as academic publication or presentations.

Original audio recordings will be retained in London Metropolitan University's cloud server until after my degree has been conferred. A transcript of interviews in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a further two years after this.

Please note that confidentiality may need to be broken if you disclose information that raises serious concerns about risk of harm to yourself or others, or safeguarding issues, in line with legal and ethical obligations.

9. What will happen to the results of this research?

The findings will be used for the purposes of completing an MSc dissertation at London Metropolitan University. Your identity will not be disclosed in the dissertation, and no identifying details will be included.

10. What do I do if I have any further questions?

If you have any questions or concerns about the study or your participation, please contact:

Researcher: Kirsty Murray

Email: kir0174@my.londonmet.ac.uk

You may also contact the supervisor listed above.

11. What is the lawful basis to use my personal data?

Information will only be used for this research study which aims to develop and improve understanding of ethical practice, professional support, and inclusivity within counselling and psychotherapy in the UK.

The legal basis for processing your personal data is Article 6(1)(e) of the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The legal basis for processing your sensitive personal data is Article 9(2)(j) GDPR.

12. What are my rights in relation to your use of my personal data?

You have the right to:

- Access your personal data
- Receive a copy of your personal data
- Request correction of inaccurate data
- Request restriction or deletion of your personal data

You may object to further processing of your personal data unless it has been anonymised.

Once data have been fully anonymised, it will no longer be possible to identify or remove your data.

The legal basis for processing your personal data is Article 6(1)(e) of the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), as amended by The Data Protection, Privacy and Electronic Communications (Amendments etc) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. If you would like more information about how your data will be processed at London Metropolitan University in accordance with these regulations please visit the following link: <http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/about/policies/data-protection/>

13. Time limit to withdraw from the study

Because the student carrying out the research will leave the university upon graduation and dismantle the study apparatus, you can exercise your right to access/modify/erase your data only until 17th September 2026.

14. Ethics review and approval

This study was approved by the Research Ethics Review Panel (RERP) of the University on Tuesday 24th March and conforms to the British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics and Conduct (2021).

15. Keep this document for your own record

Please keep a copy of this Participant Information Sheet for your own records. If you received this document online, you may wish to save or print it.