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The 2026 Therapist SEO Checklist

Everything a UK therapist or counsellor needs to be found on Google — without hiring an agency.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- 8 sections · 84 actionable checks
- Built for solo UK therapists & counsellors
- From Google Business Profile to schema markup
- Written by an SEO specialist who only works with therapists

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HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

Read this first.

A two-minute orientation before you dive in.

This checklist is the same one we work through with every new private-practice client at SEO for Therapists. It is written for solo therapists, counsellors, and small practices in the UK who want enquiries from Google without paying an agency a retainer.

Work through it in order. Sections one and two — your Google Business Profile and your directory listings — are where most therapists see results inside 30 days. Sections three to six are the slow, durable wins. Sections seven and eight are the foundations that quietly hold everything else up.

What you'll need

- A Google account (the one tied to your business email is best).
- Access to your website's back end (Squarespace, WordPress, Wix, etc.).
- Your professional registration details (BACP, UKCP, BABCP, NCPS, BPS, or COSCA).
- A clear list of the issues and clients you specialise in.
- About 30 minutes a week for the first eight weeks.

How long it takes

About four hours to set up the foundations end-to-end (sections one, two, seven, and eight). Then about thirty minutes a week for content and reviews. Most therapists see their first measurable lift in enquiries inside 60 days.

> **A note on professional ethics**
>
> Everything in this checklist is compatible with BACP, UKCP, BABCP, NCPS, BPS, and COSCA ethical frameworks. Don't post identifying client information, don't ask for testimonials in a way that exploits the therapeutic relationship, and always lead with honesty over polish.

01 Google Business Profile

Section 01 of 08

The single biggest local-SEO lever a therapist has.

More than half of the enquiries our clients get from Google come through the map pack — that little block of three local results above the normal listings. Your Google Business Profile is what gets you in there. If you only do one section of this checklist, do this one.

01 Claim and verify your profile

Search your practice name on Google. If a profile exists, claim it. If not, create one at google.com/business. Verification by postcard usually takes a week.

02 Use your exact practice name — no keywords

'Sarah Hughes Counselling' is fine. 'Sarah Hughes Counselling – Anxiety Therapist Bristol' is keyword stuffing and will get you suspended.

03 Set the correct primary category

'Counselor', 'Psychotherapist', 'Mental Health Service', or 'Family Counselor'. Pick the one that best describes the bulk of your work.

04 Add secondary categories for your specialisms

Up to nine. 'Marriage Counselor', 'Child Psychologist', 'Mental Health Clinic', etc. — only ones that genuinely fit.

05 Hide your address if you work from home

Switch the profile to a service-area business and list the towns or postcodes you cover. Your home address stops being public, but you stay on the map.

06 Upload at least ten real photos

Headshot, exterior, interior of the therapy room, logo, a couple of detail shots. Real photos beat stock every time. Replace one a month.

07 Write the 'from the business' description in full

750 characters. Mention your modality, your specialisms, your location, your training, and who you work with. Read like a human, not a brochure.

08 List every service you offer

Use the Services section. 'Couples therapy', 'CBT for anxiety', 'EMDR for trauma', 'Online therapy' — each with a short description and your fee where appropriate.

09 Set accurate hours, including evenings if you offer them

Many private clients can only attend after 5pm. If you do evenings or Saturdays, show it — it filters out wasted enquiries.

10 Turn on messaging or add a booking link

Direct booking links convert far better than 'call us'. Acuity, Cliniko, and Power Diary all have shareable booking URLs.

11 Post once a month, minimum

Updates, tips, new groups, articles you've written. Google rewards active profiles. A 60-second post is enough.

12 Aim for 25+ reviews — and reply to every single one

Send a one-line email to clients who finish therapy on a positive note. Don't use review-gating software. Reply within seven days, briefly and warmly.

02 Therapy Directories

Section 02 of 08

Free or low-cost listings UK clients actually use.

Most UK clients search a directory before they search Google. Counselling Directory alone delivers more enquiries than the average therapist's website does in its first year. Directories also give you backlinks, which help your site rank in Google — a double win.

01 **Counselling Directory**

The single most important UK listing. £25/month. Fill in every field — fees, video bio, full client-types list, locations served. Use the same headshot you use on Google.

02 **Psychology Today UK**

Strong international visibility. Around £25/month. Same advice — do not leave fields blank.

03 **Your professional body's register**

BACP register, UKCP find-a-therapist, BABCP CBT register, NCPS find-a-therapist, BPS Directory of Chartered Psychologists, COSCA. Free with your membership. Most therapists fill these in once and never update them.

04 **Welldoing.org**

Free basic listing. Editorial features available — pitch articles to them.

05 **harleytherapy.com directory**

Free-to-list London-leaning directory. Good backlink even if you're not in London.

06 **itsgoodtotalk.org.uk**

BACP-run public-facing directory. Already populated if you're BACP-registered, but check it's accurate.

07 **Niche directories that match your work**

Pink Therapy (LGBTQIA+), ADHD UK, Action for ME, Maternal Mental Health Alliance, Beat (eating disorders), Cruse (bereavement), and so on. Specialist clients search specialist directories.

08 **Local council and community directories**

Most UK councils run a community-services directory. Free, low-effort, decent local backlink.

09 **Keep your NAP identical everywhere**

Name, Address, Phone. Same exact wording on every listing. ‘Suite 2’ vs ‘Suite Two’ vs ‘Office 2’ confuses Google.

10 **Update every directory when something changes**

Fees, address, phone, photo. Inconsistency is the single most common reason a therapist's local rankings stall.

03 Keyword Research for Therapists

Section 03 of 08

Find what real clients are typing — not what you think they should type.

Therapists almost always pick the wrong keywords. ‘Counselling UK’ is impossibly competitive and brings the wrong clients. ‘Anxiety therapist Bristol’ is winnable, has clear intent, and sends people who are ready to book. Here is how to find your version of that.

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01 **List your specialisms in plain English**

Anxiety, depression, trauma, couples, ADHD, autism, grief, addiction, perinatal, eating disorders. Whatever applies. Use the words clients use, not the clinical terms.

02 **Add your location modifiers**

Town, city, neighbourhood, county. ‘Anxiety therapist Reading’, ‘couples counsellor near Clifton’, ‘ADHD assessment Kent’. Most clients search local, not national.

03 **Use Google's autocomplete**

Type ‘therapist [your town]’ in Google and screenshot the suggestions. That is real search data. Repeat for each specialism.

04 **Read ‘People also ask’ on the results page**

Google literally shows you the questions clients are typing. Each one is a potential blog post or FAQ entry.

05 **Use Google Keyword Planner**

Free with a Google Ads account (no need to actually run ads). It shows monthly search volumes — even rough numbers help you prioritise.

06 **Check AnswerThePublic and AlsoAsked**

Both free for a few searches a day. They map the questions people ask around any term.

07 **Map one keyword to one page**

‘Anxiety therapy Bristol’ goes on one page. ‘Couples therapy Bristol’ goes on a different page. Two keywords on one page means neither will rank.

08 **Aim for 20–30 mapped keywords across your site**

Three or four service pages, a homepage, a blog category, and ten to fifteen blog posts will cover most solo practices.

04 On-Page Essentials

Section 04 of 08

The basics that ninety per cent of therapy sites still get wrong.

Page titles, meta descriptions, headings, URLs — none of this is glamorous, but it is what tells Google what each page is about. Get these right and you make every other piece of work twice as effective.

01 **Page title: 50–60 characters, primary keyword first, practice name last**

Example: 'Anxiety Therapy Bristol | Sarah Hughes Counselling'. Edit in your site's SEO settings, not in the page heading.

02 **Meta description: 150–160 characters, benefit + light call to action**

Example: 'BACP-accredited anxiety therapy in central Bristol. Evening and online sessions available. Book a free 15-minute consultation.'

03 **One H1 per page — and only one**

Most site builders use the page title as the H1 automatically. Check by viewing the page source for '<h1'.

04 **Use H2s and H3s to structure the page**

Major sections get an H2. Sub-points under them get an H3. Don't skip levels — H1 to H3 with no H2 is bad practice.

05 **Short, hyphenated, keyword-rich URL slugs**

/anxiety-therapy-bristol works. /services-page-2 does not. Squarespace, Wix, and WordPress all let you edit the slug.

06 **Mention your primary keyword naturally in the first 100 words**

Not stuffed. Once is enough. The same goes for the location.

07 **Internal links between related pages**

Your anxiety service page should link to your blog post on anxiety, your fees page, your about page, and your contact page. Vary the anchor text.

08 **One clear call to action per page**

'Book a free 15-minute call' or 'Contact me'. Not eight options. Repeat the same CTA two or three times down a long page.

09 **Mobile-friendly: real phones, not just simulators**

Open every page on your own phone. Tap the buttons. Read the body text. If anything is fiddly, fix it.

10 **Descriptive alt text on every image**

'Therapy room with two armchairs and a window' — not 'image1.jpg'. Helps SEO and helps blind clients using screen readers.

11 **No popups blocking the first screen on mobile**

Google penalises this. If you must have a popup, trigger it on exit-intent or after 30 seconds.

12

Visible contact details at the top and bottom of every page

Phone, email, booking link. Don't make a stressed client hunt for them.

05 Local SEO Beyond GBP

Section 05 of 08

Tell Google exactly where you work — on your website too.

Your Google Business Profile handles the map pack, but your website also needs to make your location obvious. These are the small things that move you up the normal (non-map) results for local searches.

01 **Address and phone in the website footer**

On every page. If you're a service-area business with no public address, list the towns you cover instead.

02 **Embed a Google Map on your contact page**

Free. Adds local context for Google and helps clients find you.

03 **A separate page per location you serve — only if real**

If you have rooms in two towns, one service page per town is fine. Don't create fake location pages for towns you've never been to. Google detects this.

04 **LocalBusiness or Therapist schema markup**

JSON-LD in your site's <head>. Schema.org has the templates. If you're on Squarespace or Wix, third-party plugins can do this.

05 **List on your local council's business directory**

Search '[your council] business directory'. Free local backlink that Google trusts.

06 **Appear in local mental-health charity referral lists**

Many local Mind branches, bereavement charities, and family services keep referral lists. A polite email asking to be added often works.

07 **Encourage a few location-specific reviews**

'Sarah's Brighton clinic helped me through…' tells Google you operate in Brighton. Don't script reviews — just ask clients to mention what they want.

08 **Make sure your Google profile and website agree on your address**

Same wording, same format, same phone number. Disagreement quietly tanks local rankings.

06 Content That Earns Clients

Section 06 of 08

Pages and posts that answer the questions clients are actually asking.

Content is the long game. A well-written service page can bring you enquiries every month for years. The trick is to write what clients want to read — not what therapists feel comfortable writing.

01 **One service page per specialism**

Anxiety, depression, couples, trauma, ADHD, etc. Each gets its own page. 800–1,500 words. Don't pile everything onto one ‘services’ page.

02 **Each service page covers: what it is, how you work with it, what to expect, fees, FAQs**

In that order. People skim. Use H2s for each part.

03 **A transparent fees page**

‘Therapist fees [town]’ is one of the most-searched local terms in our data. If you don't publish a fee, clients click elsewhere. A range is fine if your fees vary.

04 **An ‘about’ page that earns trust**

Photo, full name, professional registration with link, training, modalities, the kinds of clients you've worked with, why you became a therapist. People hire a person, not a service.

05 **An FAQ page**

How long is a session, what's confidentiality, online vs in-person, what if I cry, how many sessions will I need. Common questions = common search queries.

06 **Blog one to two times a month — questions, not topics**

Not ‘Understanding anxiety’ — too generic. ‘Should I see a therapist or counsellor for anxiety?’ — specific, searchable, useful.

07 **Add the location to blog posts where it fits naturally**

‘Finding an ADHD therapist in Kent: what to look for’ ranks. ‘About ADHD’ does not.

08 **Keep paragraphs short and the language plain**

Two to three sentences per paragraph. No clinical jargon unless you immediately translate it. Read it aloud — if it sounds stiff, rewrite it.

09 **Add an author bio with credentials at the top of every blog post**

Google rewards content with named, credentialled authors — especially in health. Link the author name to your About page.

10 **Internally link blog posts to relevant service pages**

Anxiety blog post → anxiety service page → contact page. That's the journey.

11 Refresh old posts every 12 months

Update stats, add a new section, change the date. Google likes signs of life. Refreshed posts often outrank brand-new ones.

12 Don't paste AI text without rewriting it

Google's helpful-content system catches this, and clients can tell. Use AI to draft, then rewrite in your voice with your clinical experience added.

07 Technical Basics

Section 07 of 08

The plumbing. Boring. Non-negotiable.

You don't need to be a developer for any of this. Most modern site builders handle the heavy lifting — but you have to check that they have, and fix the bits they haven't.

01 **HTTPS enabled — padlock visible in the browser**

Free with every modern host. If you don't have it, your site is flagged 'not secure' to clients before they even read a word.

02 **Page load under three seconds on mobile**

Test at pagespeed.web.dev. The most common culprit on therapy sites is huge unoptimised images.

03 **All images compressed to under 200KB**

Run them through TinyPNG, Squoosh, or your site builder's built-in compressor. WebP format where possible — about 30% smaller than JPEG.

04 **Mobile-responsive layout**

More than half of UK therapy searches happen on a phone. Test every page at phone width.

05 **XML sitemap submitted to Google Search Console**

Most builders generate one automatically at /sitemap.xml. Submit the URL inside Search Console → Sitemaps.

06 **robots.txt isn't blocking Google by accident**

Visit yoursite.com/robots.txt. If it says 'Disallow: /' you are invisible. (This happens more often than you'd think after a redesign.)

07 **UK GDPR-compliant cookie banner and privacy policy**

Required by law. ICO has free templates. Don't auto-load tracking cookies before consent.

08 **ICO data-controller registration**

If you process client information digitally — even just enquiry emails — you need to be registered. £40–£60 a year.

09 **Friendly 404 page**

If a client lands on a missing page, give them a way back: links to your services, contact, and homepage.

10 **Schema markup in place**

LocalBusiness or Therapist schema for the homepage, FAQPage for your FAQ page, Person for your About page. Validate at validator.schema.org.

08 Tracking & Measuring

Section 08 of 08

If you don't measure, you can't improve.

All the tools below are free. Set them up once and you'll have months of data the next time you sit down to plan your SEO. Most therapists never set them up at all — and run blind for years.

01 **Google Search Console**

Shows every search that brought someone to your site, your average position, and your click-through rate. The single most useful free SEO tool.

02 **Submit your sitemap inside Search Console**

Sitemaps → Add sitemap → /sitemap.xml. Tells Google about every page you have.

03 **Google Analytics 4**

Free traffic and behaviour data. The setup is fiddly — Squarespace, Wix, and WordPress all have plugins that handle the install.

04 **Set up conversion tracking for the things that matter**

Contact form submission, booking link click, phone-number tap, email-link click. Without this you can't tell good SEO from lucky SEO.

05 **Bing Webmaster Tools**

Free. Bing handles around 10% of UK searches and almost all of ChatGPT and Copilot's web searches. Worth the 15-minute setup.

06 **Re-submit URLs after major changes**

Search Console → URL Inspection → Request Indexing. Speeds up Google noticing your edits.

07 **Check for broken links monthly**

Free tools: Ahrefs Broken Link Checker, brokenlinkcheck.com. Broken links hurt both rankings and clients.

08 **Review your numbers monthly — not daily**

SEO data is noisy day-to-day. Compare this month to the same month last year. Look at enquiries, not just rankings.

FINAL PAGE

You've got the playbook.

If you work through this checklist properly, you will be ahead of around ninety per cent of UK therapy practices online. It is not glamorous work. It is patient, incremental, and the results compound — slowly at first, then suddenly.

Want a second pair of eyes?

If you'd rather not do it alone, we run a free 30-minute SEO audit for UK therapists. We open your website, your Google Business Profile, and your directories, and we tell you exactly what we'd fix first and what we'd leave until later. No sales pitch, no obligation.

Book a free 30-minute SEO audit

Visit seofortherapists.co/audit or email info@seofortherapists.co

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ben Nuttall runs SEO for Therapists, a UK consultancy that works only with private therapists, counsellors, and small psychology practices. We've built and audited SEO for practitioners across the UK — from solo BACP counsellors to multi-clinician psychology groups.