

ALEXANDER WATSON STUDIO



PRACTICE CLARITY

Room to think, and someone to think it through with.

Helen Calder Counselling & Psychotherapy — integrative counselling for adults, Didsbury and online across the UK

Helen Calder is a fictional practice created by Alexander Watson Studio to demonstrate a website design. No credential, registration, insurance, testimonial or clinical outcome described here or on the website is real.

PORTFOLIO CASE FIVE
SEPTEMBER 2026
PORTFOLIO EDITION

This document was written after the website, and says so.

WHAT PRACTICE CLARITY IS

Practice Clarity is the studio's first deliverable: a written account of a practice — who the practitioner is, who recognises themselves in her, what those people need to understand, and in what tone — from which the messaging, the structure and the design of a website all follow.

It is not a style guide and not a summary of a finished site. It is the argument the site is supposed to be an answer to.

THE REVERSAL, DISCLOSED

For a real client this document is written first. For a portfolio case the order necessarily runs backwards: Helen Calder does not exist, so there was no practitioner to interview and no questionnaire to answer. The website came first.

This document was reconstructed from the site as evidence, used to audit it, and then rewritten to describe the site as it now stands.

EVIDENCE AND INFERENCE

Because the reconstruction runs backwards, the two kinds of statement in this document are kept apart and marked.

E Evidence. Present in the website's own words. Quoted, or cited to the page it appears on.

I Inference. The studio's reading of that evidence. Argued, not observed, and open to correction by the practitioner.

Nothing biographical, clinical or professional has been added. Where the site is silent, this document is silent.

THE DISCIPLINE THE TABLE KEEPS

Every row of the strategic translation on page 12 can be pointed at on the live site. Where a row and the site disagreed, one of the two was changed. Page 14 lists which.

Fictional practice

Helen Calder Counselling & Psychotherapy is a fiction, written and designed by Alexander Watson Studio so that a real therapist can see a complete, resolved website rather than a template.

No registration number, professional membership, qualification, insurer, testimonial or outcome is claimed for her, on the website or here. The telephone number is in Ofcom's drama range; the email domain is the reserved *.example*; the enquiry form has no destination and transmits nothing. Every page is *noindex* and the site is excluded in *robots.txt*.

Where the design needs to show where a real credential would sit, the site says so in plain words rather than inventing one.

Reference site: helen-calder.alexanderwatson.co.uk · Pages cited as Home, About, How I work, What I can help with, Fees & FAQs, Contact.

Everything a prospective client asks before the first telephone call.

Every line below is E evidence — stated on the website in these words or in words equivalent to them.

PRACTITIONER	Helen Calder, integrative counsellor and psychotherapist
IN PRACTICE	Twelve years
TRAINING	Integrative, on a person-centred foundation
WORKS WITH	Individual adults, aged 25 and over
NOT OFFERED	Couples, families, under-25s; diagnosis, medication advice; reports or assessments for courts, employers, insurers or immigration; organisational and EAP work
WHERE	A consulting room in Didsbury Village, M20; secure video anywhere in the UK

SESSION	50 minutes, weekly, at the same time
FEE	£65 · a small number of reduced places at £45, offered without means testing
FIRST STEP	A free conversation of about 15 minutes, by telephone or video
CANCELLATION	48 hours' notice, or the session is charged in full — moderated by judgement
SHAPE OF THE WORK	Open-ended or roughly twelve sessions, decided together; reviewed every few months; endings taken over several sessions
ACCESS	Ground floor; one shallow step at the front door with a handrail; 76cm doorway; the ground-floor toilet is not an accessible one

She is trained in several ways of working and arrives with none of them decided.

WHAT THE SITE SAYS SHE DOES

- E “I trained integratively, with person-centred therapy as my foundation.” “I do not arrive with a method to apply to you.” (*Home; About*)
- E “I will ask questions and say what I notice, including when it is awkward — and I will not pretend to know what you should do.” (*Home*)
- E “There is no technique being applied to you from a distance, and no assumption that I understand your life better than you do.” (*About*)
- E “If I get it wrong, tell me. Being corrected is part of my job.” (*About; Home*)
- E “I might spend one session mostly listening while you find your way into something, and another session more actively — noticing a pattern, slowing a moment down, or asking you to stay with something for longer than is comfortable.” (*How I work*)

WHAT THAT ADDS UP TO

- I Helen's professional identity is not a modality and not a specialism. It is a description of what she does with the hour: she *contributes* — questions, observations, the naming of what does not match — and she declines to convert any of it into an instruction.
- I Integrative training is offered here as the reason she can afford to arrive undecided, not as a list of techniques. The person-centred foundation is doing the load-bearing work: the client is the authority, so the therapist's contributions are material, never verdicts.
- I The unusual claim is the pairing. Plenty of therapists present as warm and non-directive; plenty present as robust and challenging. Helen presents as both at once, and treats the combination as a single position rather than a balance struck between two.

“I do not arrive with a method to apply to you.”

HOME PAGE, SECTION HEADING

Two ways of being a therapist that this practice refuses, in opposite directions.

NOT THE ADVISER

- E “I will not tell you what to do about your marriage or your job.” “I do not diagnose, and I cannot prescribe.” “My job is not to hand you conclusions.” (*How I work*)
- E “I do not promise outcomes. Therapy helps a great many people and it is not a guarantee, and anyone who tells you otherwise is selling something.” (*How I work*)
- I The refusal is not modesty. An adult who has managed a difficulty for years experiences advice from a stranger as a judgement on the competence that got them this far — and has usually had it free from friends already.

NOT THE BLANK SCREEN

- E “I will ask questions.” “Sometimes say something you had not expected.” “I will tell you what I notice — including when what you are saying and how you are saying it do not match. That is not a trick; it is generally where the useful conversation is.” (*Home; About*)
- E “I do not fill silences quickly, because something usually arrives in them.” (*About*) — silence used as a method, not as an absence.
- I This is the fear the site works hardest against: paying £65 an hour to do, out loud, the same thinking that has already failed to get anywhere in private.

The two refusals are not halves of a compromise.

- I They are one principle applied twice. The therapist supplies the work — attention, questions, the awkward observation, the shape of the hour. The client supplies the conclusions. Neither role is allowed to drift into the other’s, which is why the site can be emphatic about what happens in a session and silent about what the client should do afterwards.
- I It is also why comfort is not offered as the product. “Sessions can be quiet. They can also be uncomfortable — not because I am trying to make them so, but because the things people bring to therapy are often uncomfortable.” The practice offers usefulness, and is candid that usefulness is not always pleasant.

Understanding the shape of a thing is usually what loosens it.

“None of this needs to be worked
out before you get in touch.
Making sense of it is the work
itself, not something to finish
beforehand.”

HOME PAGE

NOT A FAULT TO BE REMOVED

E “We would look at what it is protecting you from and what it costs you, rather than treating it as a fault to be removed. Understanding the shape of it is usually the thing that loosens it.” (*What I can help with — anxiety*)

THE CLIENT HOLDS THE AUTHORITY

E “It assumes you are the authority on your own life, that being properly listened to is itself part of what helps, and that my job is not to hand you conclusions.” (*How I work*)

WHAT FOLLOWS FROM BOTH

I Change is treated as a by-product of accurate understanding reached jointly — not as a service delivered to a client. That is the whole reason the practice can commit to a process in detail and refuse to promise an outcome at all, without the two positions contradicting one another.

I It also disposes of the entry requirement. If sense-making is the work rather than its precondition, then arriving without an explanation is not a disadvantage — it is the ordinary starting position, and saying so is a strategic act rather than a kindness.

Adults who have already spent a long time thinking about this on their own.

WHAT THE SITE SAYS

- E “Most people arrive with something that has been going on for a while.” (*Home*)
- E “You might be perfectly capable from the outside and quietly worn out by how much effort that takes. You might have been thinking about therapy for a long time without ever quite getting as far as making contact.” (*Home*)
- E “Sometimes there is no crisis at all. Life is broadly fine and something is not moving, and you cannot say what.” (*What I can help with*)
- E Individual adults, 25 and over. Anxiety, low mood, bereavement, relationship difficulty, self-criticism, life transitions, overwhelm, feeling stuck.

WHO THAT DESCRIBES

- I Someone functional and privately depleted. They hold down work, and usually hold other people up as well. From outside they look fine, and that appearance is maintained at a cost nobody else is counting.
- I It is *duration* rather than severity that qualifies a person here. The site never asks whether the difficulty is serious enough, and it never sorts people by diagnosis; the eight descriptions of ground on *What I can help with* are explicitly “not a menu, and not a list you need to fit yourself into”.
- I Their competence is part of the difficulty. It is what has allowed them to carry this for years without help, and what makes asking for help feel like an admission.

WHERE THEY ARE IN THE DECISION

- I They are not deciding whether therapy exists. They have considered it, sometimes for years, and have stopped at the point of choosing a person. What remains unresolved is not *should I* but *what will this particular therapist actually do*.
- I They are self-referring and self-funding. £65 weekly is a deliberate household decision, which makes the fee, the tram stop and the parking decision inputs rather than administration — and makes hiding any of them an act against the reader.
- I Practically, they are 30s to 60s: old enough for something to have accumulated, established enough to pay for it weekly.

They are not wary of therapy. They are unsure what the therapist will do.

“I WILL BE TOLD WHAT TO DO BY A STRANGER”

I The competent adult's objection. Answered by refusal, in Helen's own voice and early: no advice, no diagnosis, no prescription, no conclusions handed over, no promised outcome.

“I WILL PAY TO TALK TO MYSELF”

I The symmetrical objection, and the more expensive one, because it is only discovered after several paid sessions. Answered by describing what she does in the hour — asks, notices, slows things down, says the thing that does not match.

“I CANNOT EXPLAIN WHAT IS WRONG”

E “Vagueness at the start is normal; part of the early work is finding language for something that has not had any.” (*What I can help with*)

“ONCE I START, I WILL NOT BE ABLE TO STOP”

E “You can stop at any point, including after the first conversation.” Reviews every few months; endings taken over several sessions; “the decision stays yours and stays deliberate”. (*Home; Fees & FAQs; How I work*)

THE PRACTICAL HESITATIONS

I What it costs, whether the room can be reached, whether the wrong therapist can be left without a scene. All three are answered in figures rather than in reassurance — fee, reduced fee, cancellation terms, a 76cm doorway, and “if it turns out I am not the right person, I will say so”.

I Every hesitation on this page is a question about the therapist's conduct, not about counselling as an idea. That is why the persuasive weight of the site sits on Helen's behaviour rather than on the benefits of therapy — and why a page explaining why therapy works would be answering a question nobody here is asking.

One thing to be understood, said in a way that does not oversell it.

Core message

Helen will do something with what you say – ask, notice, name the awkward thing – and the conclusions will still be yours.

I Expressed to the client as “Room to think, and someone to think it through with”, with the second clause carrying the argument and the supporting sentence spelling it out.

SUPPORTING MESSAGES

- 01 You do not have to arrive with an explanation. Making sense of it is the work.
- 02 Nothing is decided by Helen alone – the length, the frequency, the review, the ending.
- 03 The awkward thing gets said, and she can be corrected when she gets it wrong.
- 04 The practical facts are stated plainly, because she is plain in the room.
- 05 She will tell you if she is not the right person, and point elsewhere where she can.

VOICE

First person, present tense, plain British English. The characteristic sentence is a commitment or a refusal – “I will”, “I will not” – rather than an adjective about herself.

Short declarative sentences, with one longer sentence carrying the qualification. Limits are admitted in the same breath as competence: “I know that feels blunt written down. In practice I use judgement.”

The second person describes the reader’s experience and never diagnoses it: “You might be perfectly capable from the outside and quietly worn out by how much effort that takes.”

Dryness is permitted and does the work that warmth signals would otherwise do – “anyone who tells you otherwise is selling something”; “a parked car counts, and is more common than you might think”.

NOT USED, ANYWHERE

Journey · safe space · holding space · empower · transform · unlock · your best self · “you deserve” · exclamation marks · testimonials · client stories · outcome claims · statistics about therapy · urgency · scarcity · stage models of grief · any noun made from a feeling.

Twenty seconds, two minutes, and the decision to pick up the telephone.

FIRST TWENTY SECONDS

Who she is, where she is, what a session costs, who she works with, and what the first step is — without scrolling. Location above the headline; fee, age range and availability under the buttons; one action, not two competing ones.

I This is the arrival that decides most enquiries. A visitor who cannot find the fee assumes it is high; a visitor who cannot find the place assumes it is far.

FIRST TWO MINUTES

What Helen does in the hour and what she refuses to do. The five stages, from the free conversation to a planned ending. Whether their own difficulty belongs here — described as ground, not as a checklist.

I By the end of the home page a reader should be able to picture the hour. That is a higher bar than liking the therapist, and a more useful one.

EVERYTHING AFTER

Fees and cancellation in full. Access in measurements. Confidentiality and its limits. What she does not work with. A privacy notice written to be read.

I Depth is available but never required: the decided visitor should be able to leave from the first screen.

IN THE READER'S OWN ORDER

- Recognised, without being given a category to belong to.
- Addressed as a competent adult who has been managing.
- Told plainly what the therapist will and will not do.
- Offered a step that is small, free and reversible.
- Not sold to at any point.

The two sentences the site is trying to earn: *“I can picture the hour,”* and *“nothing about my life was decided by reading this.”*

I A visitor who is not a fit should reach the same clarity as quickly — the refusals are written to be found, not buried, so that leaving is as well served as staying.

Warm, plain and engaged – a site that looks like it is paying attention.

PRACTICE INSIGHT	DESIGN CONSEQUENCE
Active, but not prescriptive	The page must not read as blank or withholding. Space is generous, and something is always being said in it: every section is headed by a statement in the serif face, never by a label such as “Services”.
Direct in the room	Practical information is set as content, not small print — a fee on the first screen, a fees section with its own display heading, access given in measurements.
Adult, and not clinical	Warm paper ground, ink text, a deep mulberry used structurally rather than decoratively, one clay accent. A book-weight serif for statements; a humanist sans for everything used rather than read.
The room, not the practitioner	Photography is of thresholds, doorways and light in real interiors. No portrait, no people, no props. The arch motif is taken from a doorway, not invented as an ornament.
Restraint under attention	Motion is limited to state changes and disappears entirely under reduced-motion. One repeated form — the arch — carries the identity.

WEBSITE PRIORITY, IN ORDER

- 01 Make the therapist’s role legible before anything else on the page.
- 02 Make the practical facts findable without hunting for them.
- 03 Make the first step small, free and reversible, and word it identically everywhere.
- 04 Make the refusals as visible as the offers.

WHAT THE DESIGN MUST NOT BECOME

Wellness beige with botanical ornament. A large therapist portrait. Stock imagery of hands, mugs, pebbles, forests or empty chairs. Rounded card grids. A modality list. A page of reassurance with the fee hidden at the bottom of it.

PALETTE AS BUILT

Paper #F4F0E8 · Ink #252623 · Mulberry #543747 · Moss #66705C · Clay accent #8E5344 · Oat #DED3C3.
Lora for display, Source Sans 3 for body — self-hosted, no third-party requests.

Every row below can be pointed at on the finished website.

PRACTICE INSIGHT	WEBSITE CONSEQUENCE
She contributes; she does not instruct.	The first paragraph under the headline says what she does in the hour and what she refuses to do, before any credential or training. HOME — FIRST SCREEN
The conclusions stay the client's.	The process is written as a series of joint decisions — “then we decide together”, “we agree it between us” — and ends in a review and a planned ending rather than in a purchase. HOME — HOW IT WORKS · HOW I WORK — REVIEWS AND ENDINGS
Awkwardness is the working material.	“Including when it is awkward” is kept on the first screen, and “if I get that wrong, tell me — being corrected is part of the job” is raised out of the About page onto the home page. HOME · ABOUT
She is direct about money in the room.	£65 and the age range sit under the buttons on the first screen; the fees section is headed “Clear fees, stated up front”; the cancellation rule is stated bluntly and then moderated, in that order. HOME · FEES & FAQs
Clients arrive without language.	Eight descriptions of ground, numbered and written as prose, prefaced “not a menu, and not a list you need to fit yourself into” and ending with “Feeling stuck”. WHAT I CAN HELP WITH
She refuses work she cannot do well.	“What I do not do” and “What I do not work with” are full sections with their own headings and their own place in the page contents — not a line of small print. HOW I WORK · WHAT I CAN HELP WITH
The first step must be reversible.	One call to action, worded identically on every page — “Arrange a free 15-minute conversation” — and every closing band repeats that nothing is committed. ALL PAGES
Access is a fact, not a reassurance.	One shallow step with a handrail, a 76cm doorway, and a ground-floor toilet described as not an accessible one. CONTACT — FINDING THE ROOM
The room is the subject; the therapist is not.	Five photographs — four interiors and thresholds, one Didsbury roofline — and no portrait of the practitioner anywhere on the site. HOME , ABOUT , HOW I WORK , CONTACT
This is not a crisis service, and says so first.	The urgent-help block sits in the footer of every page, above the copyright line and ahead of the studio credit. ALL PAGES

The practice in eight lines, for anyone who reads nothing else.

01 PRACTITIONER	Helen Calder — integrative counsellor and psychotherapist, twelve years in practice, Didsbury and online across the UK.	05 PHILOSOPHY	Understanding reached jointly is what loosens a thing. Change follows from it and is never promised.
02 CLIENT	Capable adults, 25 and over, carrying something long-standing and privately worn out by the effort of managing it.	06 CORE MESSAGE	She will do something with what you say, and the conclusions will still be yours.
03 DIFFICULTY	The ways of coping that used to work have stopped working, and the person cannot always say what is wrong.	07 VOICE	First person, plain and declarative. Commitments and refusals rather than adjectives.
04 WARINESS	Being advised by a stranger, or paying to think alone. Both are questions about the therapist, not about therapy.	08 WEBSITE PRIORITY	The therapist's role first. The practical facts second. A small, reversible step third.

If any line above could be moved to another therapist's website without changing it, it has not been written specifically enough.

I Line 04 is the one that carries the practice. A great many therapist websites answer the first objection — “I will not tell you what to do” — and, in answering it, produce a site so unassertive that it confirms the second. Helen's answers both at once, and the whole design follows from having to.

What the argument changed, and what it left alone.

CHANGED BY THIS DOCUMENT

- The supporting sentence under the headline now states what Helen does in the hour instead of repeating her title and location.
- “Twelve years of sitting with people...” became “I do not arrive with a method to apply to you” — the stance leads, the experience follows in the paragraph.
- “If I get that wrong, tell me” was raised from the About page onto the home page.
- The first screen now carries the fee and the age range instead of repeating the location twice.
- A section on reviews and planned endings was added to *How I work*, where the mechanism belonged.
- The portfolio attribution became a quiet tab on the left edge, so the first thing a visitor meets is Helen's composition.
- Claimed professional registration was removed everywhere and replaced with a plain statement of where a real one would sit.

LEFT ALONE DELIBERATELY

- The headline. Its second clause is the argument, and it is written in Helen's register rather than a studio's.
- The five stages, which are the clearest evidence in the site that nothing is decided by the therapist alone.
- The practical ledger, the access measurements and the cancellation wording.
- The interior photography and the arch motif drawn from it.
- The urgent-help block's position in the footer of every page.

Fictional practice

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Practice Clarity — Helen Calder. Portfolio case five, portfolio edition, September 2026.

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Reference site: helen-calder.alexanderwatson.co.uk

Set in Newsreader and Instrument Sans. Ground #283A38 · paper #F7F4EF · ink #1A2119 · rules #CFCCC4 and #43524F · accent #8E5344, taken from the website's own accent token.

This is the portfolio edition. It describes how one fictional practice was worked out and built, and does not describe the terms of any service offered by the studio.