

Off The Record

This leaflet tells you about your right to confidentiality and what to do if you're not happy with your counselling here. It also tells you about our attendance policy.

Your Confidentiality

- ❖ We work according to the Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy as specified by the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists and we are also subject to their complaints procedures.
 - ❖ We collect statistical information for our funders. Things like age, gender, postcode, racial group, attendance and so on. You are not identified by name on this information.
 - ❖ We keep what you tell us confidential to the agency. Basically, this means that your counsellor will not tell anyone what you talk about together. However, all counsellors talk about their work with a supervisor, who makes sure that the counsellor is working effectively. Occasionally, a counsellor may also need to speak to someone else within the agency, such as the Counselling Coordinator.
 - ❖ **So, nothing you tell us will normally be passed on to anyone else outside the agency without your written permission.**
- ❖ In the following circumstances, we may talk with you about the *possibility* of talking with someone else:
 - If you are under 16 we may need to ask your parents if they agree to you coming to talk with us
 - If your counsellor believes that you are not able to take responsibility for your own decisions
 - If your counsellor believes you are at risk of serious harm
 - ❖ In the following circumstances, we may *have* to talk with someone else:
 - If someone else seems at risk of serious harm
 - In an emergency situation
 - If ordered to by a court of law
 - ❖ Sometimes, you may want us to talk with someone else, such as a doctor, lawyer or a social worker. This is OK with us and your counsellor will talk with you about what you want and get your written permission to talk with another person.
 - ❖ Most of our counsellors are in professional training and may ask you for written permission to refer to aspects of their work with you. Your counsellor will answer any questions you may have about this and you do not have to give permission if you're uncertain.

If you want to Complain

Sometimes people who use the counselling service may want to complain about someone who works here or someone else who comes here to use our services.

- ❖ If you feel you've been treated unfairly or discriminated against, if you are unhappy about the service you receive from us or have concerns about the confidentiality of our service, then you can follow the following steps:
 1. Talk through your concerns with your counsellor and see whether you're able to sort out your concerns.
 2. If talking with your counsellor doesn't sort out the problem, or if you don't want to talk to them, you can speak or write to the Volunteer Counsellor Coordinator (8394 4836).
 3. If talking with the VCC doesn't sort out the problem, you can speak or write to the Counselling Coordinator (8394 4835). The Counselling Coordinator will arrange to meet with you within two weeks of your complaint to discuss your concerns further.
 4. If the matter cannot be resolved at this stage, it will be referred to a complaints group within the agency responsible for hearing all disciplinary and grievance matters. This group will meet within two weeks of the referral. You will have the opportunity to meet with this group and voice your concerns. You can bring someone with you if you want. You will be informed of the group's decisions.

- ❖ If you are still not satisfied, you can talk to the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (0870 443 5252)
- ❖ We welcome your feedback, whether good or bad. We also have two places on our Management Committee for people who see us, as well as other opportunities for you to get directly involved in our service. Please speak to your counsellor if you are interested.

Attendance

Our service is free. The only thing we ask is that we see you more often than not.

- ❖ If you don't come to your arranged sessions and we don't hear from you, you risk losing your place. You're welcome to call us again if you want to continue, but you'll have to come back in for a meeting and probably go back on the waiting list. It is also unlikely that you'll get to see the same counsellor.
- ❖ We will let you know, usually in writing, if we need to see you about any difficulties you may be having in coming to your sessions. This will happen if;
 1. You miss your session without any notice.
 2. You cancel two sessions in a row.
 3. You cancel more sessions than you come to.
- ❖ Make sure you don't lose your place accidentally – always talk to us about any attendance problems you might have.