



University of
Salford
MANCHESTER

University of Salford Counselling and Psychotherapy Centre

Client Information Sheet

Introduction

The main aim of the University of Salford Counselling and Psychotherapy Centre is to provide/ offer high quality counselling services. The centre also aims to provide high quality training opportunities for students and to conduct practice-based research into counselling and psychotherapy.

Counsellors work with clients to help them bring about desired changes through the medium of a collaborative client counsellor working relationship. In general, counselling refrains from advice giving, instead encouraging Clients to find their own solutions to their problems or issues and supporting them to achieve this.

The number of sessions will be agreed between the counsellor and yourself during the first couple of weeks of counselling. This agreement will form part of a counselling contract that will be reviewed regularly by you and your counsellor. You will be initially offered up to 10 weekly 50-minute counselling sessions. Where necessary and agreed with the counsellor, it may be possible to extend the contract by up to a further 10 sessions.

The Centre offers counselling face to face in its Counselling Centre in Mary Seacole Building as well as by telephone and using online platforms such as Microsoft Teams. Due to the recent Covid-19 pandemic all our counselling sessions are being conducted remotely until further notice. If you access telephone or online counselling, you will be asked to confirm that you have a quiet space at home, free from distraction, prior to counselling beginning.

How can I become a Centre client?

We accept clients through self-referral, through an online system. You can access the self-referral form through the self-referral link on our website (<https://www.salford.ac.uk/our-facilities/counselling-centre-and-service>). Once you fill out the form and click on submit, you are confirming that you understand what is involved in attending counselling at the Centre and are happy to continue with your application. Please turn to appendix 1 on page 5 to see the full consent document that you will see on submission.

Once you have submitted the form, the Centre administrator will be notified and will check your details before asking one of our counselling assessors (a qualified and experienced counsellor) to contact you to arrange an assessment session. The assessor will contact either by telephone or email and will agree a date and time with you. The assessment will be over the telephone or via an online platform, to suit you.

You will be sent a reminder of the session two days before by email. This email will also contain a link to some assessment forms which you should complete using either your computer or, if you have a smart phone, your mobile prior to the start of the assessment. You will see a link at the end of the assessment form which you can click to donate to the counselling service. Whilst there is no formal charge for the service, we do appreciate donations to help us to keep the service running for people from all walks of life. We suggest that, if you are currently in employment, a donation of £5 or £10 per session would be appropriate, depending on your income.

The data from the forms will be stored securely on a password protected system and the assessor will look at these prior to the session with you. If you cannot fill the forms in electronically for any reason, the assessor will go through the forms with you at the assessment, although this may extend the time required for the assessment. As we are a research as well as a therapeutic clinic, data collection on all our client work is an important part of the service we provide. We do require all clients to participate in routine sessional data collection activities (see appendix 1).

What happens during my assessment?

The assessment will usually last around one hour. The main purpose of this session is for us to make sure that counselling is an appropriate option for you. The assessor will talk to you about the kinds of problems you are currently having which prompted you to approach the clinic; your current relationships and employment details; problems you have had in the past; and your personal and family history, to make sure that we can help you or to suggest referral to another service. We will also need to take the contact details of your GP. You must be registered with a GP to access our services and living in the UK. We will need to refer you to another service if you are going through current severe substance misuse, suffering from an active psychotic condition, or currently living within an abusive family environment as our counselling service would not be appropriate for your needs.

The assessor will tell you at the end of the session whether they feel the Centre counselling would be right for you and if it is not, will offer some thoughts about what other services may be available that are more suitable. If you are accepted for counselling, the assessor will let you know if there is currently a waiting list for the service and if so, how long you might need to wait.

If we can offer you counselling, we will also ask you if you would be interested in being approached about any future research projects being held at the Centre. If you say yes, this simply means you may be invited to participate in a project when you would be given details about the project and subject area. You can then decide whether or not it is something you would like to do. Should you then agree to take part, you will be asked to sign a research consent form specific to that project. If you decided not to participate, or you decided you did not want to be approached about research projects, this would not affect upon your access to counselling in the Centre in any way.

After the assessment, the assessor will update your client record, so that we can see that you are waiting for a counsellor. Once we have a counsellor that can see you at a time you are available and has the necessary experience for your circumstances, we will ask the counsellor to contact you to arrange your first session.

What can you tell me about the counselling?

Once you have agreed a start date and time with your counsellor, the counsellor will confirm this with you. As with the assessment, you will receive an email notification 2 days before **each** appointment, with a link taking you to assessment forms, which you should fill in prior to

appointment. The counsellor will be able to see this information prior to the counselling session and may wish to discuss aspects of this with you. If for any reason you cannot fill in the data before the session, the forms will be completed during the counselling session, which will reduce the amount of time for counselling. There is also a link at the end of the assessment forms for you to donate if you can do so.

You will initially work with a counsellor for up to 10 sessions; the specific number of sessions will be agreed by you and the counsellor. Together you will agree a counselling contract. If you and your counsellor agree, it may be possible to extend your work by a further 10 sessions if necessary. You will normally meet with your counsellor once each week on the same day and time, for 50 minutes.

Your counsellor will explain their approach and how they work in your first session.

The clinic is a placement provider for The University of Salford Counselling and Psychotherapy training programmes. Trainees are required to record their counselling sessions. This is to ensure that you receive the best possible service, as it enables their supervisor to closely monitor their work and for the counsellor to be able to revisit any possible aspects of the work they may have missed. The recordings are confidential, held securely by the trainee and anonymised extracts are used only for course assessment and clinical supervision purposes. This ensures that all trainee counsellors are practicing according to the high standards you would expect of the Centre. All trainees have been assessed as competent to practice by their counselling tutors and have passed all relevant skills assessments prior to starting at the centre. If you are being seen by a trainee counsellor, the counsellor will ask you to sign a form giving permission for the recording to take place.

What happens if I cannot attend a counselling session I have booked?

We do understand that, occasionally, things happen, and it may not be possible to attend the session you arranged. If you cannot attend a counselling session, we ask that you give us 24-hours' notice by emailing the centre at HealthSociety-Counselling@salford.ac.uk or responding to one of the reminder emails you have received in order to let the counsellor know.

If you are unable to give 24-hours' notice, please let us know in any case, as above, as it is helpful to the counsellor in planning their day. You can also arrange the next session with the counsellor at that time. The clinic policy is that if you have two cancellations with less than 24 hours' notice, we will review your counselling with your therapist. Sometimes late cancellations are a sign that an individual is not ready for counselling and, if this seems to be the case, we may suggest that you self-refer into the service when life is a little quieter for you.

If you do not attend a session and you do not let us know, this is more complicated. The counsellor will try to contact you to re-arrange the appointment and:

- a) if you respond, your counselling can continue. However, if you have a second session where you cancel and do not let us know, the counselling will end and we will require you to re-refer back into the service if you feel you would still benefit from counselling.
- b) If you do not respond to the counsellor within 7 days of the missed appointment, the counsellor will discharge you from the service.

What are the potential benefits of counselling and filling in assessment forms?

There may also be some direct and indirect benefits for you, gained through participating in counselling, as well as contributing to research:

1. As a result of the counselling, you are likely to feel better and less bothered by the problems you have been having. Previous research suggests that most clients experience significant improvement through counselling.
2. Clients report that completing assessment forms can help them to track their progress in counselling and get more out of their counselling work.
3. Completing the forms can also help you learn things about yourself.
4. You will be contributing to a better understanding of how well therapies work. This will help counsellors enhance their ways of helping people.

What are the potential risks of taking part in counselling or filling in assessment forms?

Before you consent to take part in counselling, or research interviews, we want you to know of the possible risks of doing so, and how you can reduce those risks.

1. Self-consciousness about being recorded. Most people can disregard the recording equipment during recorded counselling sessions, although some can feel inhibited or self-conscious and find it difficult to talk about deeply personal matters.
2. Getting bored with the forms. There are a few forms to complete before each session and some people find them tedious. However, the forms will only take a few minutes to complete.
3. Feeling worse. Many clients experience temporary emotional discomfort or distress during counselling, including strong emotions. Your counsellor will work actively with you to help you deal with any painful emotions that may surface. It may turn out that counselling is not helping; in such cases it may be necessary to stop, or to refer you to a different agency.
4. Needing further counselling when your sessions end. At the end of your counselling, you may need further help. If this is the case, you and your counsellor can discuss possible options. For example, they may offer you a referral to another counsellor, type of treatment, or agency. This discussion will begin well in advance of your agreed ending date and will not be left until the end, so you will have time to prepare.

Starting counselling can be challenging and we recognise that things can happen that make it seem difficult to carry on with it. You are free to leave at any stage. We do, however, stress that it can be helpful for you to take the chance to discuss any difficulties with your counsellor so we can address any problems that you raise directly. You can raise concerns with us by e-mailing the centre's confidential email account HealthSociety-Counselling@salford.ac.uk.

What research takes place in the Centre?

The Centre undertakes routine evaluation with all its clients, involving completion of brief questionnaires during the assessment session and at each counselling session. Routine gathering of counselling process and outcomes data is regarded as good practice within the counselling field and supports the development of high-quality counselling provision and evidence-based practice. Anonymised data is collected from these forms and added to a database which will allow us to evaluate the effectiveness of counselling and to examine patterns and trends over a period of time.

There may be additional research activity taking place at the centre. You will be notified of any research taking place and invited to take part if you have consented to us approaching you about research projects. If approached you would then be given details about the research and its aims.

You would then be free to decide whether, or not, to participate. All research work is undertaken by research-active practitioners and associate researchers and is supervised by experienced academics. The research is aimed at improving our understanding of the effects of counselling or mental health interventions. There is no obligation to take part in these research projects and you will still have access to your counselling whatever your decision.

How does the clinic deal with confidentiality of client and research data?

There are some situations that can arise during counselling sessions or research interviews in which we may have to take action to protect yourself or others from harm. An example is where information is revealed that a child is being abused by someone. In such cases we may need to disclose some aspects of what you have said to a third party, such as a GP. If such a situation arises, we would limit the disclosure to what is necessary. We would also make every effort to fully discuss it with you before disclosing information to the relevant authority. There are also some specific legal requirements where we are obliged to breach confidentiality, for example, in cases of terrorism or money laundering.

All practitioners working in the clinic are bound by the ethics codes of their professional bodies (including the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP); United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP); British Psychological Society (BPS)) and are required to disclose information in the type of situation noted above. If you would like a copy of the relevant ethics code, please speak to your counsellor.

All counsellors will also keep very brief session notes alongside the assessment form data. These are stored in a secure, password protected IT system and are only accessed by the counsellor as a client record and the Centre Management Team for audit purposes.

Assessment data used in assessing the overall performance of the Centre is fully anonymised prior to being downloaded by the Centre Management and Research Teams.

All counsellors at the Centre routinely record sessions. Segments of these may be listened to by their clinical supervisor. This enables their supervisor to ensure that you are receiving a good quality of care. Furthermore, session recordings may be used for assessment purposes. In such instances, the session would only be listened to by your counsellor and the assessing tutor(s). All recordings are securely stored as described in the consent form provided by the counsellor and deleted when they are no longer needed.

All research projects must receive ethical approval from the University's Research Ethics Committee. Details of how the research will be conducted and how any audio recordings and/or any other data collected will be stored will be contained in the information provided by the researcher prior to your decision to take part in the study. You will also be asked to sign a separate consent form regarding participation in the research study.

Unless you tell us otherwise, client records will be kept electronically for at least 5 years. These will be deleted when there is no longer any therapeutic or research use for this data.

Questions or concerns about your participation in counselling or research interviews

If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of your counselling, in the first instance raise these with your counsellor. If you should continue to have concerns, please contact a member of the centre management team at:

HealthSociety-Counselling@salford.ac.uk

In addition, for independent advice, you may contact the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP) at www.bacp.co.uk.

Practical issues

When the Counselling Centre is open, it is accessed by appointment only and is on the 3rd floor of the Mary Seacole Building in the University of Salford Frederick Road campus. If you want to speak a member of Centre staff, you can email the Centre reception, and someone will respond as soon as they can. However, we are a part-time service, and we may take a couple of days to respond to messages. Please note that we are unable to offer emergency support. If you are experiencing an acute emergency please contact your GP, or call NHS Direct: 111; or contact the Samaritans free helpline at any time, via their 24-hour line 116 123. This line is open all year round.

Appendix 1 CONSENT FORM: PARTICIPATION IN COUNSELLING

- I have studied the information on your website, particularly the frequently asked questions section found at <https://www.salford.ac.uk/our-facilities/counselling-centre-and-service>.
- I confirm that I have understood the information about the counselling service provided on the Client Information Sheet and on the Centre website.
- I understand that my participation in counselling with the centre is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from counselling at any time without giving any reason.
- I understand that anonymised routine session data is collected. The information is statistical only and my personal details cannot be identified. I understand that this data may be used in centre evaluation and research projects, including publications, by members of the research team at The University of Salford Counselling and Psychotherapy Centre and within the University Counselling Clinics Consortium.
- I confirm that I am aged 18 or over and that I am aware of what my participation in counselling involves and any potential risks.
- I understand that confidentiality may be broken if required legally or should it be considered that I pose a significant risk to myself or to others; I also understand that should I disclose sensitive information related to child protection issues, that confidentiality and anonymity can be broken. Should this arise, I understand that my counsellor and / or centre staff will make every effort to discuss the matter with me, so that informed decisions and actions are taken.
- I understand that sessions are normally recorded and that extracts of these recordings will be listened to by my counsellor's supervisor/ tutor for quality control, assessment and training purposes.

- I agree that, should I choose to have counselling by telephone or online methods (like Zoom or Microsoft Teams) I have a functioning computer system or reliable telephone connection and a private space that will not be interrupted. I understand that if any technical errors occur the counsellor will offer an alternative.

- I understand that on completion of this self-referral process an electronic record will be created for me in a secure, password protected environment in order to protect my data.

- I understand that by ticking to indicate my consent and clicking the 'Send' button I'm confirming my understanding of and agreement with all bullet points above.

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