Birkbeck Counselling Service

Counselling Agreement

Welcome to the Birkbeck Counselling Service

This is an outline of your counselling agreement with Birkbeck Counselling Service. If you have any questions regarding the information in this form please ask.

One-off Consultation

Once we have received your Contact Form we will send you a registration form to fill in and send to us, and then offer you a 50 minute **One-off Consultation** by appointment. Here you have the opportunity to talk about your difficulties with one of our accredited counsellors, and to consider what kind of support might be most helpful. This may include directing you to appropriate self-help resources, referral to a workshop, sign-posting and referral to internal and external agencies and specialist services, or referral to short-term counselling. Sometimes a One-off Consultation may be all that is needed to help a student resolve their immediate difficulties.

Once you have been offered a **consultation you need to confirm within 48 hours** before the appointment that you can attend. Due to high demand for the service, if you do not confirm, the appointment may be offered to someone else.

One to one sessions

Your appointments are likely to be scheduled with the same practitioner and the frequency of meetings agreed between you.

Birkbeck Counselling Service operates a short term counselling model under which up to a maximum of six sessions are offered. Some people may require fewer than this, and the number of sessions you have will be agreed between you and the practitioner. Those requiring more than short term work will be supported to access services external to the University. Sessions are 50 minutes in length.

If you demonstrate signs of being under the influence of alcohol or recreational drugs at an appointment, the appointment will not proceed.

Session attendance and cancellation.

Your commitment to the counselling contract is an essential component of the counselling process, and in order for you to get the most out of the sessions it is important that you attend regularly & on time.

If you are unable to attend an appointment for any reason, please inform us as soon as possible by calling the **Counselling Administrator** on 0207 631 6316 (leave a Voicemail message if there is no answer) or email: counselling-services@bbk.ac.uk

If you miss a session without informing your counsellor, s/he will contact you to confirm your next appointment date. You are required to confirm the appointment **within 48 hours**. If
s/he doesn’t hear from you s/he will assume you don’t wish to continue and will close your case.

In the event of the counsellor needing to cancel your session we will give you as much notice as possible. If you do not answer your phone, the administrator will leave a message on your voicemail (provided we have your permission to do this) or send you an email. If the counsellor cancels the appointment then often your counsellor will offer you an additional session at the end of the contract.

If you know you are going to be late for your session please let us know by contacting the Service Administrator. If you arrive late for your session the practitioner will only be able to see you for the remainder of your session.

Appointments cancelled in advance for the following reasons won’t be counted within the total agreed number:

- Exams
- Field trips
- Hospital appointments
- Hospitalisation
- Cancellation by a practitioner

Appointments missed for the following reasons will be counted within your total agreed number:

- Illness
- Lectures/tutorials
- Leave outside of University vacation times
- Conflicting appointments

Failure to attend any two appointments for any of the four reasons (immediately above) without prior notification may result in the termination of further sessions within that episode of counselling.

**Evaluation of the Counselling process**

Throughout the Counselling process you will be invited to fill in a standard online questionnaire in order to monitor your progress. Please note any information that you provide as part of the online questionnaire is securely stored via encryption in a locked file format. At the end of your counselling contract you will also be asked to complete an evaluation form about the service. Both are optional and anonymous.

**Complaints**

If you wish to make a complaint about any aspect of the Birkbeck Counselling Service you should discuss your complaint with your counsellor. If after this you are still not satisfied please submit your complaint in writing to the Counselling Service Manager through
emailing counselling-services@bbk.ac.uk, If you are still dissatisfied after speaking with her, please write to studentcomplaints@bbk.ac.uk

Confidentiality

The counselling sessions are kept confidential within the counselling service however the counsellors may discuss cases with other members of the Wellbeing team (Disability A or Mental Health Advisors) or the Head / Deputy Head of Student Services on a need to know basis. This may include for the purposes of a referral to another Wellbeing Service which would be agreed verbally in advance with a client or due to serious concerns regarding the welfare of a student or their potential to harm others which may not include advanced verbal agreement. All counsellors work to the BACP ethical framework with careful attention to client consent and confidentiality. All counsellors attend supervision where they discuss their work, which is also bound by confidentiality. The counsellors do not communicate about clients with anyone outside Student Services without signed consent from the client. There are rare instances when confidentiality may be breached outside of Student Services without consent which include; if the counsellor perceives a student poses a serious risk to themselves or others, if they are made aware of terrorist activities or information regarding a child at risk of abuse or neglect, or a child who is currently being abused. In such circumstances the client’s consent to change the agreement about confidentiality would be sought where possible and appropriate. By corresponding with us via email, you are agreeing that Birkbeck Counselling Service can respond to you via email. Any personal information sent by us, will not be encrypted or sent in a locked file format. Therefore, Birkbeck Counselling Service cannot be held responsible for the security of your personal information transferred to you by email. However, please note that the registration and evaluation forms that you complete online are encrypted and confidential.

For further information on the Service Confidentiality Policy see http://www.bbk.ac.uk/counselling/confidentiality

Data Protection

The counsellors keep brief confidential case notes on an encrypted database and personal details are stored for the sole use of the counselling service staff. In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA), all counselling records are strictly confidential and kept securely. If you have any queries about any aspect of confidentiality and record keeping, or if you would like to see your counselling notes, please discuss this with your counsellor who will talk you through our procedure.

Opening Hours – please see the counselling website for current opening hours.

Emergency Services The counselling service is not an Emergency Service please consult our website for information on emergency Services

Counselling Service website http://www.bbk.ac.uk/counselling