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# HOW TO USE THE COUNSELLING SERVICE FOR REFERRAL AND CONSULTANCY

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## What the Counselling Service can offer to the students

- Free confidential counselling
- A variety of workshops on topics such as, stress and relaxation & assertiveness training
- Referral to other agencies in the community

## What the Counselling Service can offer to staff

- Free confidential counselling
- Introductory training on effective helping skills
- Workshops on request
- Consultancy on issues relating to individual or difficult situations regarding students or colleagues

## What we don't do

- Provide feedback to staff on students or colleagues you refer to the Counselling Service
- Discuss details which might identify a student or colleague
- Contact staff or departments without the agreement of our clients
- Write letters about clients without their knowledge and consent

## Encouraging a student to use the Counselling Service

Staff throughout the University already support many students or colleagues who disclose emotional or personal problems to them. However, you might find that you are not able to offer the time the person seems to need

or

the person is experiencing deep or long standing problems which you feel unable to respond to or cope with

or

you feel that the person might benefit from talking to someone who is not directly involved in the situation

If this is the case you could:

- gently introduce the idea of seeing a Counsellor and give the person one of our leaflets explaining what we offer
- give the person time to think about it
- make as clear as you can the limits on your time and your role as a member of staff

It is easy for someone to feel coerced into coming to the Counselling Service, even if the suggestion to make an appointment has been made with the best intentions.

Sometimes people make an appointment to please someone else. This appointment is often broken or they only come once only, doubting the usefulness of counselling

It is important for people to make an appointment because **they** want it – even if this is just to check out the Counselling Service before committing themselves to any further sessions.

### **How to refer a student or colleague to the Counselling Service**

You could

- discuss the Counselling Service with the person, explaining that it is an option which is available to all students and staff.
- explain why it might be appropriate to seek help from the Service
- reassure the person about your ongoing contact with them but make the limits clear in terms of your experience and the nature of your relationship as a member of staff
- encourage the person to phone or email for an appointment. If this feels impossible you could discuss phoning for them with the person present
- discuss with the person how much information they would like you to give if you make a phone call
- reassure the person that no information about them will be disclosed by the Counsellor unless they specifically request this.

### **What to do if the person appears to be seriously disturbed**

If you have concerns about a student or colleague's mental health a more appropriate referral would be to their doctor or the psychiatric services. Staff at the Counselling Service can explain how this can be done whilst maintaining the person's rights.

### **Consultancy and training for staff members**

The Counselling Service runs a short course for staff in September of each year entitled "Effective Helping". It offers an introduction to counselling skills which might be useful in working with students or colleagues. Contact the Counselling Service for more details.

We can also support individual staff in their work with students or colleagues by offering support or consultancy in specific situations. This is done with respect for the confidentiality of the student or colleague. For more information just get in touch with the Counselling Service.

We are also willing to talk with groups of staff and we would welcome the opportunity for you to visit us at the Counselling Service.

**Counselling Service  
Code of Practice  
Relating to Confidentiality**

All members of the University Counselling Service ascribe to the Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy established by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. A copy of this document is available for reference in the Counselling Service. Our practice is as follows:

1. All clients should be informed about our policy of confidentiality at the outset.
2. The Counselling Service offers the highest level of confidentiality and normally no information will leave the service without the client's permission.
3. Rarely, there may be exceptional circumstances when the Counsellor feels it necessary to act without the permission of the client. At such a time, the importance of preserving client trust and autonomy will be weighed against the importance of reducing the risk of serious harm to the client or to other people.
4. The decision to break confidentiality without client permission will normally only be done in discussion with the client and after consultation with a supervisor or another experienced Counsellor. (The principles underlying such ethical decision making are detailed in the framework document referred to above).
5. If requests for information about a client are made by their family, friends, members of the University or other parties, the Counsellor or Secretary will suggest that the caller asks the client for the relevant information.
6. Personal information held at the Counselling Service about clients is at present restricted to anonymised records on referrals, letters written on their behalf and material entrusted to the Service for 'safe-keeping'. This is kept under lock and key and is returned to the client or kept for at least 5 years and then destroyed when their contact with the Counselling Service has ended.
7. Any communication and liaison with colleagues is always undertaken in collaboration with clients. Clients are given copies of any letters written by Counsellors on their behalf.
8. In discussion with the University on matters of policy and practice no information is given which could identify an individual.