

Information guide for Online Counselling

This guide should help you with any problems or queries you may have about using the Online Counselling service.

What is Online Counselling?

Many of us experience times when it's hard to stay positive and cope with everyday living. Some people find it easier to communicate online with a counsellor about personal issues rather than talk about them and if you are away from the campus, for example during vacation or on a work placement, you may find it inconvenient to come in for a face to face counselling session. Online Counselling gives you the opportunity to access counselling support at a time and in a place which is convenient to you.

What does the service offer?

We will initially offer you up to six sessions of counselling, exchanged by email. When your ongoing counselling commences, you will be given a weekly day and time by which we need to have received your online session and also a time for when you will receive a reply from your Online Counsellor.

Please attach your session as a word document to your email, as this keeps things private.

Being responsible for the privacy of your online communication

When you construct your session, please give yourself time, space and privacy to think about and reflect on your issues and how you feel about them. You can create your entire session document in one go, or do it in stages over the week, before sending it in.

We do ask that you keep your session document to approximately 1,000 words.

What sort of issues can I contact you about?

Online Counselling may be able to help with a wide range of issues, including anxiety, stress, depression, loneliness, relationship problems, bereavement, self-esteem, sexual orientation, discrimination and many more. Not all types of issues can be dealt with through Online Counselling and your counsellor will advise you if face to face counselling or some other form of support might be more suitable for you.

Examples could be:

- Serious risk of harm to self or others
- Eating disorders that are seriously affecting health
- Recent suicide attempt
- Addiction requiring specialist support

Will my online communication be kept confidential?

Online Counselling is confidential to Wellbeing services. It is independent of academic assessment procedures and no information is passed onto tutors unless you request it

On occasion (and usually with your consent), the information that you give us may be shared with other members of Student Support Services in order for us to be able to provide you with the best support available. We will not pass on information about you to others outside of the service without your expressed permission, except in exceptional circumstances, where there appears to be a serious risk to your own or others safety

In order to offer a professional service, we need to keep relevant records of your contact with us and these are kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. These will remain confidential within Student Support Services, except in the unlikely event that there is a legal obligation to disclose the information.

You have the right to access your records which will be destroyed after 6 years

The counselling service adheres to the BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy (www.bacp.co.uk/ethical_framework/).

Who are the Online Counsellors?

All of our Online Counsellors are part of the University's Student Counselling Service. They are fully qualified and experienced in face to face counselling and have had additional training and experience in providing counselling by online.

Guidelines for emergency contact

Online Counselling does not provide an emergency service and the counsellors cannot reply to an emergency email that arrives outside a scheduled session time.

If you need support immediately, please consider the following options depending on your level of urgency:

- See a GP at a university [Health Centre](#) or your local practice,
- Visit the [NHS urgent care centre](#),
- Call the [111 NHS phone line](#),
- Visit your nearest [Accident and Emergency Services](#),
- Or call an ambulance on 999.

Or you could contact the **Samaritans on 116 123** or email jo@samaritans.org.

If you are out of the UK

Please be aware that if you wish to have Online Counselling sessions, and are out of the UK, you will need to make sure that you have put into place medical or psychological support. This support should be available for the duration of the counselling sessions.

If you are on a student placement and feel that you are at risk, please contact your placement tutor and let them know your situation.

Also, this web site will provide you with information and help:

www.befrienders.org - **Befrienders** is a worldwide organisation that provides emotional support, to reduce suicide.

If there appears to be a serious risk to your own or to others safety, the Online Counsellor reserves the right to widen confidentiality. In these circumstances, we would normally communicate this decision to you before contacting anyone else.