



Information sheet for Parents and Carers

Counselling Explained

The purpose of this form is to share some important principles which guide the traditional counselling process; so that your decision about seeking counselling for your daughter/son can be based on accurate, informed expectations. Please read this carefully and feel free to ask any questions if you need further clarification.

The Counselling service at Bishop's Hatfield Girls' School aims to offer counselling sessions to those students who are seeking additional support. There will be an ongoing review process between the student and their counsellor with the aim of managing their expectations and making sure the Counsellor has a clear understanding about their thoughts and feelings. Every student's needs when engaging with counselling are different. The number of sessions they attend will depend on individual circumstances. However as the service can only offer sessions during term time, it is important to know that the number of sessions offered could be restricted by the academic calendar.

Counselling can be very rewarding but is not without its challenges. Since counselling often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of one's life. The student may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness and helplessness. Conversely, counselling has been proven to have benefits for individuals who go through the therapeutic process. Therapy can lead to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress and improved self-esteem. But there are no guarantees of what they will experience. Therapy is a personal exploration and may lead to major changes in their life perspectives and decisions. Together the student and their counsellor work collaboratively to achieve the best possible results for them.

Confidentiality

In general one of the most important rights when accessing counselling is confidentiality and this includes young people. What the young person chooses to share within their sessions will be kept strictly confidential and will not be discussed with any other person or agency without written permission. However there are some exceptions:

1. In order to maintain professionalism Counsellors are required to attend Supervision. During these interactions, the anonymity of the young person is respected.
2. Confidentiality does have some legal limitations. Counsellors are obligated to reveal information that has been obtained during a counselling session if the content involves danger to self, danger to others and child abuse. Information of this kind would be shared with the schools' Designated Safeguarding Lead in the first instance. In addition, a counsellor's notes can be subpoenaed in a court of law.
3. In the event of a medical, psychiatric or psychological emergency. It may be necessary that the counsellor has direct contact with the students' Doctor in order to offer more thorough support.

Young People and Confidentiality

Counsellors who work with young people have the difficult task of protecting the young person's right to privacy while at the same time respecting the parent's or carer's right to information.

Counselling sessions are most effective when a trusting relationship exists between the counsellor and the young person. Privacy is especially important when securing and maintaining that trust. An important goal within counselling is to promote a stronger and better relationship between the young person and their primary care givers. However, it is often necessary for a young person to establish a 'Zone of Privacy' whereby they feel free to discuss personal matters with greater freedom. This is particularly important for a young person who is naturally developing a greater sense of independence and autonomy.

When appropriate the School Counsellor may discuss with parents and carers about the status of counselling sessions and provide general information. However this would be under exceptional circumstances. The School Counsellor may highlight what could impact a young person either inside or outside of the home. It may be necessary to refer the young person to another health professional with more specialised skills, this information would be shared with you and your permission sought accordingly.

The School Counsellor will not share with you what the young person has disclosed without their consent; alternatively the counsellor may support the young person to disclose this information themselves should it be appropriate. Once the course of counselling sessions have come to their end, the counsellor and the young person will review the sessions; covering topics discussed, progress made, and any areas that may require intervention in the future.

Therapeutic Relationship

It is helpful to remember that the relationship between the counsellor and young person is professional and not social. Our professional relationship is of utmost importance as both parties work together towards achieving their goals and working towards bringing resolution and understanding to the young person's everyday life.

Appointments

Appointments will be issued on a weekly basis. Student appointment times are issued to have minimal impact on their studies. Great lengths are taken to make sure that the same subject lesson is not missed repeatedly. Students are also encouraged to take responsibility for attending their sessions once they have received a confirmation slip relaying the day and time of a session. Sixth Form students are responsible for checking their school email account for their counselling appointment.

Client Rights and Responsibilities

The young person along with parents and carers are entitled to end their counselling sessions at any time. Although it is preferable that the young person still attends a final session to conclude the work they have done with their counsellor.

The counsellor that supports the young person has been trained to a high standard and follows the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) Ethical Guidelines. However, you have the right to refuse or ask questions about any therapeutic interventions or suggestions you believe are not in the best interest of the young person.

