

Confidentiality

All of our counsellors are professionally trained. The Service is an Organisational Member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and as such works within its Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy.

Staff in the Counselling Service do not pass on personal information about clients (including information about attendance) to anyone outside the service except in the following situations.

- **Where the counsellor has your express permission to disclose information.**
- **Where the counsellor would be liable to civil or criminal court procedure if the information was not disclosed.**
- **Where the counsellor believes the client, or a third party is in serious danger.**

In these circumstances counsellors would not normally break confidentiality without a client's consent, if at all possible, and only to the extent necessary in the circumstances. These circumstances occur extremely rarely.

The Counselling Service offers an opportunity to think and talk, in confidence. However, counsellors may need to consult with colleagues within the service about our work, and we are professionally required to have our work supervised by a consultant external to the Service and the University. In supervision we DO NOT reveal any identifying details about clients.

Confidentiality is as important in the working practice of Administrative and Reception staff as it is for Counsellors. No identifying information about clients is passed on to anyone outside the Counselling Service unless there has been a clear agreement between the client and the Service to share information

Do I have access to my records?

Under the Data Protection Act 1988, you have certain rights to access records held about you. If you wish to see your counselling records your counsellor will be able to give you information about the University Policy on access to records.

Record Keeping

The Data Protection Act 1998 requires us to obtain your consent for this record keeping, and we ask you to sign your agreement to our practices when you register with us.

Electronic records – Administrative data:

Your personal details (contact details, demographic data etc.) are stored on a password protected database on a secure University virtual server. Access to records is limited to staff within the Counselling service.

Your personal data will only be used to facilitate administrative processes, such as contacting you to arrange an appointment etc., and in an aggregated and anonymous way to produce statistics about the profile of Counselling Service clients. A limited number of IT Services staff have access to the server on which the database is stored but they have this for the sole purpose of system administration. ITS ensure that the server is maintained in line with best security practice.

We also keep notes about our counselling work with clients on this protected database, the sole purpose of which is to help counsellors in their work. These notes are ONLY seen by counsellors working in the service, and are not accessible to other staff. We keep records in line with the advice from the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, which is six years. After the recommended storage periods, records are then confidentially destroyed. The same applies to paper based records that we keep securely within the Counselling Service

Online self help facilities

The Counselling Service has purchased a number of online self help facilities for its clients such as CalmU, Beating The Blues and Big White Wall. These are managed by external providers who are subject to rigorous confidential procedures determined by the Data Protection Act.

Students can access CalmU independently without contacting our service and the service arrangement is that Ultrasis, the provider, will pass on very general details about uptake and demographic statistics .

For students who are guided to use the Beating the Blues programme and Big White Wall, details of confidentiality arrangements with the external providers are discussed with a member of our team before the student accesses the programme.