

Counselling policy

1 Context

1.1 The primary task of WHY is the provision of free counselling for anyone aged from 4 years upwards, who is:

- diagnosed with cancer or a life threatening condition;
- affected by a cancer or a life threatening condition – family member, carer or friend;
- bereaved by cancer or a life threatening condition.

1.2 Counselling offers an opportunity for individuals affected by cancer or a life threatening condition to talk and be heard in a safe, non-judgemental environment. The expression of fear and anxiety can benefit mental and physical wellbeing. The counsellor's role in this process is to aid the individual in ways that respect his/her values and capacity for self determination. The counsellor will not give advice but will help the individual explore options. The practitioner's role in this process is to aid the individual in ways that respect his/her values and capacity for self determination.

2 Entitlement

2.1 Counselling is available to anyone affected by cancer in Somerset, Wiltshire and BANES.

2.2 Service users are entitled to expect a high-quality therapeutic counselling service which:

- is client focussed;
- is delivered by appropriately qualified counsellors.

As an organisational member of BACP, WHY is bound by its ethical framework for good practice in counselling and psychotherapy and subject to professional conduct procedures for the time being in force.

3 Professional practice

3.1 All counsellors are trained to diploma level and committed to maintaining their competence through ongoing professional development.

3.2 All counsellors and staff have undergone enhanced Disclosure and Barring checks.

3.3 Counsellors have regular supervision with an experienced qualified counsellor who is experienced in supervision.

3.4 Counsellors will not misrepresent their training or experience.

4 Client confidentiality

4.1 The client confidentiality policy is contained in the counselling agreement, a copy of which is given to each client at the first session. The counsellor is required to explain exceptions to confidentiality to each client verbally at the beginning of the first session.

4.2 The BACP ethical framework requires that counsellors offer the highest possible levels of confidentiality in order to respect the client's privacy and create the trust necessary for counselling.

4.3 In exceptional circumstances, the counsellor may take the decision to break confidentiality, with or without the client's consent if necessary where, in his/her professional judgement:

- there is a risk of the client harming themselves or being harmed.
- there is a risk of another person being harmed.
- there are safeguarding issues.

In such circumstances the counsellor will always:

- seek to obtain the client's, or if appropriate the parent/guardian consent prior to disclosure
- discuss with his/her supervisor
- inform the Director/Clinical Manager of any planned breach of confidentiality.

4.4 It is therefore ethically and legally unwise to promise "total" or "absolute" confidentiality. We Hear You offers confidentiality within the law and the BACP ethical framework.

4.5 During counselling, the counsellors must ensure that all client information is stored securely and separate from personal data forms. Once counselling has finished, counselling records and brief case notes are held at the WHY

office and will be kept securely locked away. Please see Data Protection policy/procedure.

5 Service Delivery

5.1 Counselling will be provided in an appropriate, safe and confidential environment.

5.2 Counselling sessions will last for up to 50 minutes and will normally be on a weekly basis, at the same time and day each week.

5.3 Initial appointments will be booked via the office manager and thereafter with the allocated counsellor.

5.4 The counsellor will have access to a list of referral agencies in the area, held by WHY.

6 Monitoring and evaluation

6.1 Evaluation is carried out via evaluation forms offered to each client at the end of their sessions. Clients are informed at the start of counselling that evaluation forms will be offered, but do not have to be filled out.

6.2 WHY uses CORE (Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation) evaluation. Clients are given an information sheet about CORE at the start of counselling and asked if they are willing to complete an evaluation form. If they are willing to participate they are asked to sign a consent form to enable the data to be used anonymously. Clients are asked to complete the final CORE form at the last counselling session.

7 Insurance

7.1 Public liability insurance is held to cover counsellors working at all of WHY's venues.