

Bradford Grammar School

COUNSELLING PROTOCOL AND PRACTICE

What is counselling?

Counselling at BGS involves the School Counsellor seeing a student or member of staff (their client) in a private and confidential setting to explore issues of life the client is experiencing. These may be caused by a crisis or a long-term situation, and what is spoken about will depend on the individual, but common themes are relationships, stress, change, loss and distressing, traumatic experiences. The Counsellor helps the client explore their situation to gain awareness and understanding. Choices are discussed and explored and support is offered. The Counsellor will make use of a variety of counselling models as she feels appropriate for the individual client.

Counselling is available to both senior school students and to staff. Staff may also access counselling through the Employee Assistance Programme. Details of this scheme can be obtained from HR or the Counsellor.

Referrals to the School Counsellor and accessing the service

- Students and staff may self-refer
- Referrals for students can be made by any member of staff, though in practice this is usually a member of the Pastoral Team, who will have assessed the student's needs and suitability for counselling first
- Parents can also request counselling for their child.

Counselling can only take place and be successful if the student concerned is a willing participant in the process. He/ She has the final say. Counselling cannot be made compulsory.

Jo Rutter, the School Counsellor, works from the Counsellor's Room, next to the Heads of Year Office or can be contacted by email (counsellor@bradfordgrammar.com) or by mobile phone (07976 985591). Phone calls to her direct landline are discouraged as they can disturb sessions. She will normally view and reply to email or text messages during term time office hours only.

Appointments

Appointments are held in the Counsellor's Room during the school day, usually in lesson time. Students are given a pastoral pass to excuse them from their lesson, and must show this to their teacher before they leave class for their appointment. The Counsellor will always try to avoid taking a student out of the same subject lessons in consecutive weeks.

There is no set limit to the number of sessions a client can have. Some may just need one appointment, others more. A common pattern is a course of six weekly sessions, followed by a review meeting. The decision to continue or conclude is taken by the Counsellor and client together.

If a client's needs are such that long-term counselling is required, the School reserves the right to encourage parents to refer their child on for private therapy, depending on the availability of the Counsellor.

The Counsellor aims to respond to a referral as quickly as possible – emergencies can usually be seen within the day. If the demand for counselling exceeds the time available for sessions, she will prioritise according to need (using YP Core assessment) and may put a student on a waiting list until she is able to see them. They may receive support in the meantime from other colleagues on the Pastoral Team, or from a sixth form mentor. In some circumstances it may be necessary for the Counsellor to refer clients on to other counsellors or services such as CAMHS. This is usually only done with the consent of a student's parents.

Parental awareness that their child is accessing counselling is encouraged, but if the student is aged 13 years or older and does not wish their parents to know that they are seeing the Counsellor, they are entitled to access counselling sessions without their parents' knowledge.

Contracting

The Counsellor will clearly explain during the first session the principles upon which the counselling will take place, and allow the client to decide whether they wish to continue with further sessions. At the second session, both the client and the Counsellor sign a contract agreeing these principles. It will be made clear to the client that anything they share with the Counsellor will be confidential unless they are in danger or at risk. [See *Appendix 1* for the student contract and *Appendix 2* for the staff contract.]

Confidentiality

At the first session, the Counsellor will explain to the client that there is a high level of confidentiality in the relationship but that there are exceptions where there is perceived to be a safeguarding risk. These would include suicidal intent, the risk of harm to oneself or to others and any disclosure of abuse. If confidentiality needs to be broken, an attempt would always be made to discuss this with the client first.

The School accepts that the Counsellor will not share a full list of her clients. She will, however, immediately inform a Designated Safeguarding Lead if she has any safeguarding concerns. This is made clear to the student from the start.

Many students agree at the start of their counselling that they are willing for certain people to be aware that they are having counselling e.g. parents, form teachers, or other members of the Pastoral Team. They are asked to consent to this in writing.

Under the 'Gillick principle' parental consent for counselling is not required for a young person under the age of 16 who is considered to be 'Gillick competent'. Gillick competence is the term used in law to decide whether a young person under 16 years of age may consent to treatment on their own behalf if they have sufficient maturity and intelligence to understand what is involved and the potential consequences. At the Counsellor's first informal session with a student, she will outline what counselling involves and take the opportunity to assess the 'competence' of the young person before they commit themselves to further sessions. Most, but not all, senior school students may be deemed 'competent' under the Gillick ruling to give consent, and counselling is available to all students in the senior school; however, the Counsellor will always seek parental consent for children under 13 years of age. Parents of children under 13 years of age also may withhold their consent for their child to access a formal course of counselling sessions.

The Counsellor regularly liaises with the Nurses and Heads of Year and attends the fortnightly Pastoral Team meeting. The Counsellor will only share information about a student client at this meeting with his/her consent.

Communicating with clients

The Counsellor seeks to be as discreet as possible in all communications, and will encourage other staff to also be discreet. School email addresses are used rather than personal ones, and it is also common for the Counsellor and student to text each other to arrange an appointment. A school mobile phone is used for this purpose, and messages will only be replied to during term time office hours. The Counsellor is normally free during morning break for students to call in to see her. Appointment cards/ pastoral passes may be given to students via a teacher or nurse but these are placed in a plain envelope and marked private and confidential.

During holidays and at weekends, students are signposted to access other sources of help & support such as Child Line, First Response or the Samaritans.

Non-attendance

Clients can choose at any time to discontinue their counselling sessions. If they miss a session this will be followed up with a text or email from the Counsellor offering a further appointment. If two appointments are missed without a communicated reason, the Counsellor will make contact to find out whether they wish to see her again. If the client has decided not to see her again, or does not reply the Counsellor will terminate the contract and inform the referring member of staff that this has happened. If the Counsellor has concerns about a student's wellbeing the school nurse or another member of the pastoral team might be asked to check up on them.

Supervision and Professional Ethics

The Counsellor is a registered member of the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists and is bound by the BACP Code of Ethics. In accordance with BACP Professional Standards Code of Practice requirements, she receives appropriate clinical supervision on a monthly basis. This ensures safe practice, by allowing space for reflection on the Counsellor's work through an external independent supervisor. The supervisor is bound by the same rules as the Counsellor in terms of client confidentiality.

Evaluation

An evaluation form is given to a client at the end of a course of sessions. A summary of the Counsellor's year is given in a report to the Assistant Head Pastoral and included in an annual safeguarding report to the Governors. This contains details of the number of students and staff seen during the school year, a breakdown of gender and year groups, a summary of the main types of presenting issues, the number of sessions delivered in the year and some anonymised feedback/ comments from clients or parents. The Counsellor meets with the Assistant Head Pastoral regularly to review her role and practice.

Sixth Form Mentors

The Counsellor supervises a group of Year 12 and Year 13 students who have been trained to offer support to younger students. They run a drop-in service that students can attend at lunchtime. Students can also be referred by a teacher to be paired one-to-one with a mentor by the Counsellor. The Counsellor will monitor this contact and offer support to individual mentors as required.

Record keeping

In accordance with the School's Data Retention Policy, counselling records are stored securely by the Counsellor, with confidential information coded and anonymised. Past records (for clients no longer

seeing the Counsellor) are archived annually at the end of the school year and kept in accordance with the School's Public Liability Insurance & GDPR guidelines. Records are then securely disposed of, unopened. Email addresses and phone numbers for former clients are deleted at the end of each school year.

Relevant Department for Education guidance and statutory advice

- *Counselling in schools: a blueprint for the future – Departmental advice for school leaders and counsellors (February 2016)*
- *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools – Departmental advice for school staff (March 2015)*
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education – Statutory guidance for schools and colleges (September 2018)*

Appendix 1: Counselling Contract for Student



CONTRACT BETWEEN JO RUTTER, SCHOOL COUNSELLOR, BRADFORD GRAMMAR SCHOOL, & THE STUDENT:

- You can have up to six sessions with your Counsellor. A review after six sessions will help her to decide whether you need any more.
- Each counselling session will last 45 minutes.
- Sessions will be during term time only.
- Whatever you share with your Counsellor is confidential (stays between the two of you).
- You can tell her who, if anyone, you wish to know that you are having counselling (see below).
- To protect the confidentiality of your work together, if you meet your Counsellor outside of counselling, she will not acknowledge you, unless you acknowledge her first.
- You have the right to terminate your counselling at any time, and we ask that you give as much notice as possible.
- If your Counsellor thinks that you or others may be at risk, she will need to inform the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead. Your Counsellor will discuss this with you first, wherever possible.

Your Counsellor is a member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and as such will follow their ethical framework and guidelines for best practice.

Your Counsellor will have regular professional clinical supervision. However, when she shares her caseload, she will never give any identifiable information that would tell her supervisor who you are.

Missed appointments may result in the closure of your counselling contract. It is important that you let your Counsellor know if you are unable to come to a session.

Should you feel that you have any cause for complaint, in the first instance please speak to your Counsellor, and if it cannot be resolved between you, please make an appointment to speak with Mrs Chapman, Assistant Head Pastoral.

If you have to cancel a session please text the Counsellor on 07976 985591. (This number will only be checked/answered during term time school hours.)

Student's mobile number

I give permission for the counsellor to contact me by text/voicemail (delete as necessary).

Who can know that you are having counselling?

Nobody / Head of Year / Form Tutor / School Nurses / Parents

I agree to the counsellor keeping a record of my personal data (in accordance with the School's GDPR Privacy Statement) and for anonymised notes to be made of our sessions. These will be kept in a lockable filing cabinet at all times. I understand that she would only need to break confidentiality if she thinks that I or others are in danger, or she has been ordered by a court to give evidence.

Signed

(Jo Rutter, Counsellor)

Signed

(Student)

Date

Appendix 2: Counselling Contract for Member of Staff



CONTRACT BETWEEN JO RUTTER, SCHOOL COUNSELLOR, BRADFORD GRAMMAR SCHOOL & THE CLIENT (STAFF MEMBER):

Contracting:

- You will initially be offered six counselling sessions, subject to review after six sessions have been completed.
- Each counselling session will normally last 45 minutes as contracted with the Counsellor.
- Sessions will be during term time only.
- You have the right to terminate your counselling at any time, and we ask that you give as much notice as possible.
- If for any reason your Counsellor is unable to continue with this contract, Bradford Grammar School will endeavour to refer you to another suitable Counsellor.

Confidentiality & Ethics:

- Jo Rutter, School Counsellor is a member of The BACP and works to The BACP (British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy) Ethical Framework.
- Your counselling is kept confidential between you and your Counsellor, who will have regular clinical supervision to ensure you receive the best possible service. Your identity will be protected in the supervision session, which is also bound by the ethical code of the BACP.
- If your Counsellor believes a danger exists to you or others, she reserves the right to disclose information. This will be done, whenever possible, in discussion with you.
- Should you meet accidentally outside of counselling, your Counsellor will not acknowledge you. This is to protect your anonymity and the confidentiality of your work together. If you are not comfortable with this arrangement this can be discussed/negotiated on an individual basis.

Client notes:

- In addition to the information that you provide at referral and initial assessment, your Counsellor will make client notes of your sessions which will be kept and stored in accordance with Bradford Grammar School's GDPR Privacy Statement. Client records are kept confidential and may only be disclosed where the public interest outweighs the benefits of confidentiality or when required to do so by law.

Cancellations and missed appointments:

- We request that you give at least 24 hours' notice of cancellation of appointments. If there is a pattern of regularly cancelled appointments, your Counsellor will review the contract with you and (depending on your individual circumstances and the reasons for cancellation) your counselling may be ended. **Counsellor's Mobile Number: 07976 985591.**
- Should you fail to keep your appointment without giving notice (or when you give less than 2 hours' notice) your Counsellor will text to confirm your next appointment. A second failure to attend will result in the cancellation of the counselling contract and no return within six months.

Complaints:

If you have cause for complaint, in the first instance please speak to your Counsellor, and if it cannot be resolved between you, please make an appointment to speak with Jane Chapman, Assistant Head Pastoral.

If you have to cancel a session please text the counsellor on 07976 985591 (This number will only be checked/answered during term time school hours).

If you are on medication please give details:

If you are currently receiving any other counselling or therapy, please give details:

Name and address of GP:

I have read this contract on Bradford Grammar School's terms of counselling. I agree to the terms set out and will work to the best of my ability with my counsellor.

Staff Member's name:

Staff Member's Mobile number

I give permission for the Counsellor to contact me by text/voicemail (delete as necessary).

Signed

Jo Rutter, Counsellor

Signed

Staff member

Date