**Remote Counselling Service Agreement**

Currently the counsellors at SGUL are offering a remote counselling service either by phone or Microsoft Teams. Please read this agreement carefully as it clarifies what to expect from counselling, information about data protection and what we need from you to keep counselling as safe and helpful as possible.

**What to expect**

Your first meeting with the counsellor will be why you are wanting counselling now and for the two of you to discuss the next steps. That might mean referral to another more suitable service, no further action, or you may agree another session or series of sessions.

Staff are offered up to 8 sessions. Onward referral may be suggested if further work would be of value. Students are also usually offered up to 8 sessions, and the possibility of further sessions in some limited situations.

Please let us know if you do not wish to have further sessions or need to cancel in good time so we can make the time available to someone else. We may occasionally need to change appointments and will always endeavor to give you as much notice as possible.

You are able to return for more counselling sessions at any time in your course regardless of having seen a counsellor before. The expectation is that you return to the same counsellor, though this may be open for discussion in certain circumstances.

**Remote counselling**

To get the most out of remote counselling please:

* Ask for clarification or let your counsellor know if you are confused about anything they have said.
* Counsellors want you to be comfortable raising anything you want to discuss; please bear in mind you may also feel the inclination to say/reveal more than you usually would because of the remote context.
* Make sure you are somewhere safe, private and where you will be undisturbed and not overheard, and that your counsellor knows where you are.
* Make arrangements with your counsellor about what to do if you are cut off or disconnected.
* If you are using an online platform from your computer, please make sure your virus protections are in place, you have a good connection and are somewhat familiar with the software.
* If you are feeling unsafe or suicidal, please let your counsellor know as remote counselling may then not be suitable. We will support you in finding a more appropriate service.
* Usually sessions are for 45 minutes but sometimes we may contract with you for shorter sessions if it seems this is more appropriate.

Please note that we may not be able to offer remote counselling if you are not living in the UK. This is because some countries, for eg the US and Canada, require practiioners to be licensed within those countries. If you are currently abroad, please be clear on the form below in which country you are currently residing.

**Confidentiality and data protection**

The counsellor will keep your sessions confidential and will not share this with others outside of the counselling team and their supervisor without your permission. Please ensure your own confidentiality when using email, video platforms etc, and that you are in a safe and undisturbed place whilst speaking to your counsellor. Do not record the sessions under any circumstances.

We will keep any confidential information either securely online within the university systems or physically in a secure place where the counsellor is working from. This information can only be seen by the counselling team. Physical notes will be coded so your full name will not be kept with your notes. We are required to keep counselling notes for 6 years after which they will be securely shredded/deleted.

A psychiatrist is part of the counselling team and provides consultation to the counsellors as well as being able to assess students when appropriate. If we think this might be helpful, we will talk with you about this and ask for your consent for this separately.

If we believe you are a serious risk to yourself or others we may have to break confidentiality but we would always try to talk to you this first. We ask for your GP and emergency contact details in the case of this eventuality, but we do not write to your GP routinely/without your permission.

**Feedback and complaints**

All the counsellors are fully qualified either as counsellors, counselling psychologists or psychotherapists and registered and accredited by their professional body (BACP; BPC; UKCP; HCPC). As much as possible, please feedback to your counsellor if you feel the sessions are not going as you wanted or you have any concerns about the counselling you receive. Often these conversations can be very helpful. If this is not satisfactory, please approach the Head of Counselling. Should any matter remain unresolved, you are at liberty to use the University’s complaints procedure, or that of the counsellor’s professional accrediting body. The Counselling Service will also offer you an opportunity to anonymously evaluate the service you received.

**Your information**

Please provide the following information so we can provide you with counselling or support remotely. By providing it, you are consenting to the agreement explained above.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name: | Current Address: |
| D.O.B: | Contact phone: |
| Ethnicity: | Contact email: |
| Gender: | Sexual orientation: |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| GP: | Address and phone no: |
| Emergency Contact: | Relationship and phone no: |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Staff/Student | Job Title/Course and year: |

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| --- | --- |
| Who suggested the service to you or how did you find out? |  |
| Have you used the SGUL Counselling Service before and if so, who did you see? |  |
| What are you hopes for counselling and why now? |  |
| Are you seeing or have you seen any other mental health professionals? |  |
| If you are taking any medication please list names here: |  |