

Counselling at Working Well

This sheet is designed to answer your questions about counselling and other therapies available in our service. If you are unsure about anything, please do ask. Knowing what to expect can help you make better use of your counselling, and lower any anxiety you may have about it.

How do I make an appointment?

Just email us at workingwell@ghc.nhs.uk and say you want to book some counselling sessions. Please include your date of birth so we can find you on our system, and an up to date telephone number. We will let the lead counsellor know that you are waiting for an initial appointment and she will then get in touch with you to arrange that appointment, which will be by phone. Subsequent appointments can be face-to-face or remote.

How long will I have to wait?

The triage appointment should be within a couple of weeks. At that appointment, we will discuss your availability with you. The more flexible you can be over your appointment times, the sooner we will be able to start your sessions. You normally need to commit to six appointments at the same time and day every week for six weeks, although we do offer flexibility for shift workers. We are not an emergency service, so if you are feeling desperate you should contact your GP in the first instance. You can help us keep the waiting list low for others by telling us promptly if you no longer need your sessions.

Will what I tell you be in confidence?

The content of your counselling sessions normally remains just between you and your counsellor. There are, however, important exceptions to this rule. If your counsellor thinks there is a risk of harm, to you or to anyone else, then they may have to break this confidentiality agreement. They will usually attempt to talk to you before taking that step. In addition, it is important that all counsellors have clinical supervision – another counsellor with whom they talk in confidence about everyone they see.

We do not feedback any information about you to your manager or your department, and we don't inform them, or anyone else, that you are attending counselling.

Your counsellor will be able to discuss with you the very minimal notes about you that we keep securely.

What will we do in a session?

We will generally agree an agenda at the start of each session, so that we make sure we talk about the issues you really want to address. It's likely that we'll start the process by looking at how your problems are affecting you. You may not be able to change the problems themselves, but you can perhaps look at them differently and find new ways of managing them. At some point we'll put those problems into the context of the rest of your life, which will mean discussing your past history, but the main focus is on the present.

Will it work?

Most people who use the service do find it helpful. We believe counselling works best if you and your counsellor work together. We don't take the view that you have the problem and we have the solution – our approach is like that of a passenger in a car you are driving – we sit alongside you and help you explore avenues you may not have noticed or taken before; but *you* are always in the driving seat. It may well be that between your sessions there is work that you can do by yourself on the issues, and this will mean that your progress is faster than if you are relying on the sessions alone to make a difference.

How might the process affect me?

You should be aware that, initially, counselling may sometimes seem quite difficult, and even to be making things worse for you. This is because all of us are quite good at not focusing on things we know will bring up uncomfortable feelings for us. In counselling, you are choosing to look at those issues, which can be unsettling. As you continue the counselling, you will normally get beyond that point. Please be aware that if you stop your sessions before they have ended, we will write to you at your home address to invite you to give us feedback about why the counselling didn't work out for you.

How many sessions can I have?

Our standard offer is a 6-session block, to any employee who needs it, or to any member of their immediate family, and you may return for another episode of counselling within the year if necessary.

Occasionally counselling may be extended beyond 6 sessions, but in order for this to be fair for everyone, certain criteria need to be met. If you feel strongly that you need more sessions, your counsellor will be able to discuss this with you.

We can also offer short 15-minute weekly support calls after the end of your counselling if you and we think that ending your sessions is going to be very difficult for you.

Before the counselling itself begins, our first contact with you is an opportunity for you to see if you're going to be able to talk to us, and for us to see if we're likely to be able to help you. There is no obligation on you to continue with the sessions if, after this appointment, you decide not to go ahead.

What if I can't attend an appointment?

Because we try to keep our waiting times short and have a high demand for counselling, we are not able to be very flexible with your appointments. If you miss an appointment for anything other than an unforeseen emergency, it does therefore usually still have to count as one of the 6 sessions available to you. If you let us know ahead of time that you're not available for an appointment, we will try to make that session up to you. If you miss 2 sessions without agreement, your counselling will normally be considered to have ended, but you can get back in touch with us at any point if you want it to pursue it further.

Your counsellor will not normally be available to you outside of your sessions, but our admin team here are very friendly and efficient and will be able to pass on any messages.

Complaints

If there is anything about your counselling that you are not happy about, please do talk to your counsellor about it in the first instance, as we would like to be able to resolve it with you. In the unlikely event that you need to lodge a formal complaint however, you should speak to the Service Director at Working Well. You can also enquire which professional body your therapist belongs to and take a complaint there; we are happy to provide contact details.

