



MANOR HOUSE
THERAPIES

COUNSELLING WORKING AGREEMENT

Agreeing to having Counselling at Manor House Therapies means you and your counsellor have contracted to meet at a previously arranged and agreed time for a session.

Sessions are offered **In Person**, or on an **Online** platform called Teams, or by **Phone**.

Confidentiality

Your Personal Data, e.g., name, address, phone number, etc., is confidential within the organisation and will be stored in line with Manor House Therapies Privacy Policy available on our website. This means that this information can be seen by staff from the Manor House Therapies Team for the purpose of managing your bookings.

Data Handling and Storage of Counselling Notes

Manor House Therapies adhere to current data protection legislation, including the General Data Protection Regulation (EU/2016/679) (the GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003.

Your counsellor will record brief notes about the content of each session. These will be stored on a specially designed, highly secured online system and kept for six years. The only people who will be able to view your Counselling Notes will be your counsellor and the manager for Manor House Therapies. The manager would only gain access to your notes if there was a clear rationale for doing so, e.g. to investigate a complaint of failure of standards.

The content of counselling sessions is confidential within the organisation apart from:

Supervision– All counsellors are required to have regular supervision of their work by a specifically trained and experienced Counselling Supervisor. The purpose of supervision is to monitor the way the counsellor is working and to safeguard the care of clients. Every care is taken to preserve the anonymity of clients in this process. As well as Individual Supervision, some counsellors also attend small Peer Supervision Groups. All Supervisors and group members are bound by BACP's strict codes of confidentiality, conduct and ethics which can be viewed on the BACP website.

Danger to self or others– if a client leads a counsellor to think that they are seriously planning to hurt themselves or others or if there is a child protection issue, the counsellor must consult with other professionals, such as a GP, or emergency health and social care services in order to consider protective action. In such rare circumstances, there would always be a prior discussion with the client unless for any reason, this was not possible.

Criminal activity – If the client discloses their own or anyone else's serious criminal activity during sessions, this will be reported to the police.

Recording of Counselling Sessions/Reports

There will be no recording of counselling sessions, unless it has been previously agreed and a consent form has been signed.

We do not provide written reports unless requested in a court of law

It is possible to request to see your Counselling Notes, but any Third-Party information would need to be redacted.

Counselling Standards

All our counsellors will work to the *Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions* published by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy or other well-known and established Professional Counselling Body.

Our counsellors have a professional qualification in counselling and are registered with a professional counselling body. Your counsellor will tell you about their qualifications when you meet.

Complaints Procedure

If you have concerns about any aspect of the work, it is hoped that you will feel able to raise these directly with your Counsellor. However, if you don't feel able to do this, please contact the Manager of Manor House Therapies. Their details are available on the website.

If you are not satisfied with the response you get, you can contact the Counsellor's Professional Body and access their formal Complaints Procedure.

Fees

£65 per Individual Session, £95 Couple Session, payable 48 hours before the date of the session via our online booking system.

If Online booking is difficult for you, please let us know in advance.

You will receive a reminder to pay for your session a few days before it is due to take place.

Sessions which have not been paid for will not go ahead.

Cancellations

It is important for you to note that if you cancel an appointment with less than 48 hours notice or fail to attend, the full fee will be charged.

If your reason for cancellation is due to extenuating circumstances, your counsellor may be able to reschedule your session or refund your money. These terms would need to be negotiated by the counsellor and /or the client with agreement from the Manager of Manor house Therapies.

Missed Sessions

If you have not paid for or do not attend your booked session, we will contact you by email asking you how you would like to proceed with the work. If we don't hear back from you within a week or other timescale outlined in this email, we will assume you don't want any further sessions at present. You would still be welcome to return to us, but if the service is busy, you may need to wait until a space becomes available.

Lateness for sessions

Sometimes being late for a session is unavoidable due to traffic etc. If you are running late, please phone reception and advise them of this if possible.

If you have not shown up for your session by 15 minutes after your session was due to start, they will email you inviting you to make contact. You can still join the session at this point.

Initial Intake Session

One of the main purposes of an Intake Session is to make sure that your needs can be safely and effectively met within this service. For this reason, you will be asked some questions about your health, wellbeing and social circumstances. There are also some risk assessment questions included.

An intake session is also a chance to for you to decide if what we are offering you is what you are looking for.

Each Counselling session lasts for 60 minutes.

This time should provide opportunities for you to share and explore the matters which are causing you distress or concern. My role is to use my training and experience to help you to share, explore and understand these difficulties, drawing attention to the less conscious aspects of your experiences both past and present. We can then set goals to help you move towards changes you would like to make. Together we can consider options, but it is not normally my role to tell you what to do. Responsibility for your own decisions rests with you.

Counselling can sometimes bring up difficult feelings. This can be unavoidable. However, if this does happen, your counsellor will do everything they can to support you. If you find the work particularly distressing or difficult, it is perfectly acceptable to discuss this with your counsellor. It may then be possible to alter the pacing or approach the work.

It is also acceptable to say to your Counsellor if there are things that you do not yet feel comfortable, or ready to talk about.

Couples Counselling

If a couple is attending Couples Counselling, both couple members must agree to engage with the work and the terms of this agreement.

The role of the counsellor is to maintain a neutral stance, and you should never feel that they are siding with one couple member or the other. It is commonplace in Couples work to do some individual sessions with each couple member. Both members will be offered the same range of sessions. Not all couples are suited to couples' work, in which case, individual work or referral to a different service may be recommended.

When you are contracted for counselling work as a couple, it is usual for you both to be copied into any emails pertaining to the work.

It will be agreed in advance, which email addresses the appointment confirmation and payment links will be sent to.

Please note that your counsellor cannot keep secrets from either couple member as this could damage the integrity of the work. The only exception to this would be if anyone's safety is seriously at risk. If important information not known to both parties is disclosed in an individual session, or in any other way, the person making the disclosure will be supported by the counsellor to share this information with their partner within the next three sessions. If the undisclosed information is not shared with the partner within these three sessions, the counselling work will need to end, as it would not be ethical for the counsellor to continue working with the couple in this situation.

We do not work with couples who are physically abusive to each other, as specific training is required for this role.

It is understood that couples' work can sometimes be distressing and that couple members may get upset or angry. If this happens, your counsellor will do everything they can to support you. Sometimes it is helpful to take a short break. However, if prolonged shouting, rowing, interrupting, or other disrespectful behavior persists, the session will need to end, and a review of the work will need to take place.

Session Planning

It is usual for sessions to be booked in advance for the same day and time every week or fortnight, however, we realise that this will not suit everyone's lifestyle, so we will try to be flexible where we can. Your counsellor will take a few minutes to discuss the best pattern of sessions for you to suit your needs and fit in with the spaces available in the service diary.

If you would like your session to be on the same day and time every week or fortnight, it is best to plan this ahead considering any holidays or commitments already in your diary, which is usually possible to work around.

Reviews

The progress of the work will be reviewed every 4-6 weeks, or more frequently if necessary or desired.

Feedback

At any stage of the work, your feedback is very important to us. We will ask you to complete an anonymous feedback form when the work is completed. This will be available to you from your counsellor or at reception. These can be handed in at reception or emailed to us.

Online or Phone working

A link for your online session will be emailed a few days before it is due to take place.

Online and phone sessions should take place in a private secure room where there will be no interruption from other household members, children, or pets.

If the counsellor suspects that there is another person in the room with you, they may end the session to protect your privacy. If this happens, you are allowed to rejoin the session once you are alone again.

For the purposes of confidentiality, please ensure that all Siri or Alexa devices are switched off.

It is very important that the session is considered in the same way as a face-to-face session. Dress and behavior should be appropriate, and timekeeping punctual.

There should be no eating in sessions as it causes a distraction.
Bringing a non-alcoholic drink to the session is perfectly acceptable.

At the beginning of the session, your counsellor will note the address you are calling from, if it is not the address you gave us when you signed up to the service. This is in case you become unwell, or an emergency occurs while you are having your session. Your counsellor will also make sure that they have a current phone number which you can be contacted on if there is disruption to the wifi service.

Phone Counselling

It is important to consider that particularly when working on the phone, there can sometimes be a risk that you might inadvertently share too much information too quickly. This can leave you feeling vulnerable. For this reason, it is important to pace yourself. Your counsellor will do what they can to support you with this.

If you do not respond to the initial session phone call, your counsellor will make two further attempts to call you within the first 15 mins of the allotted session time. If you miss these calls and still have at least 30 minutes of your time left, you can call reception, and they will attempt to connect you to your counsellor.

Self-care

Please take extra care to give yourself space before and after sessions. Unlike face-to-face sessions in an office, online work suddenly puts you back in your home environment with little time to adjust. You may want to move furniture back, do some stretches, open a window, light a candle etc. before returning to the other parts of your life. It can often be helpful to go out for a walk.

Communication outside sessions

Your Working Agreement with your counsellor is to work together in regular counselling sessions. It is not possible for them to discuss any therapeutic content or process out-with sessions. Communication outside sessions is limited to practical matters, most notably arranging sessions. There is a list of helpline numbers at the bottom of this document just in case they are needed.

Chance Encounters Outside the Counselling Room

If by chance, you encounter your counsellor in a situation outside the counselling room, it is probable that they will not acknowledge you as someone that they have already met. This is to protect your privacy. If you wish to say hello, that is usually acceptable, but no discussion of session content is allowed, and it is not usual for conversation of any length to take place.

If it is discovered that you and your counsellor have a mutual link in a social or other setting, they will take such a matter to supervision to ensure an ethical outcome for your work with them.

Email Messages

We recommend that email is only used for practicalities such as appointment organising, as it is not the most secure form of communication and can be vulnerable to viruses or human error. When communicating with us by email, please think carefully about how much detail you wish to include.

Social Media and Google

Professional and therapeutic boundaries prevent your counsellor from Googling you or communicating with you via social media.

Accessibility

Our building is fully accessible by wheelchair.

Please let us know if there are any Reasonable Accommodations that we may be able to make for you.

Parking

There is free parking available nearby.

Please note that in working with us, you are agreeing to the terms of this document. If there are any amendments, they will be recorded in your records.

Helplines for clients

Samaritans – 116 123

BreathingSpace – 0800 83 85 87

Edinburgh Woman's Aid - 0131 315 8110

Woman's Aid National Helpline – 0800 027 1234

Scottish Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline – 0800 027 1234

Amis (Abused Men in Scotland) – 0808 800 0024 (7pm – 10pm)

Silverline (for older people) – 0800 4 70 80 90