

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/CARERS BEFORE COUNSELLING BEGINS

Dear Parent/Carer,

Thank you for supporting your child as they begin counselling with us. We understand that taking this step can feel significant for both young people and their families.

This guide explains what counselling is, how we work, and how you can support your child throughout the process.

WHAT COUNSELLING IS

Counselling provides your child with a safe, confidential, and non-judgemental space to talk with a trained professional about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Our role is not to tell young people what to do, but to help them better understand themselves, explore their options, and develop coping strategies that work for them. Counselling can support young people with a range of emotional, social, and personal challenges.

CHILD CONSENT AND ENGAGEMENT

Counselling works best when a young person feels ready and willing to participate.

While we recognise how important parental support is, counselling is a voluntary process. We can only continue working with your child if they agree to engage in counselling. If they do not feel able to participate at this time, we may need to close the referral. This does not prevent them from accessing counselling in the future if they decide they would like support later on.

CONFIDENTIALITY


Confidentiality is an important part of counselling and helps young people feel safe enough to speak openly.

This means that what your child discusses during sessions will generally remain private. We appreciate that parents and carers often want to know more about what is being discussed, but maintaining confidentiality helps build trust and supports the counselling process.

We can share:

- Session attendance and practical arrangements
- General information about the counselling process
- Broad themes or progress, where your child agrees
- Information relating to safeguarding concerns

We cannot share:

- Detailed session content
 - Specific disclosures made by your child without their agreement
 - Personal information that would breach your child's confidentiality
 - Counselling notes or records as part of routine feedback or updates
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WHAT HAPPENS IN THE FIRST SESSION?

The first session is an opportunity for your child to meet their counsellor and begin building a comfortable and trusting relationship.

We will spend time getting to know your child, understanding what has brought them to counselling, and exploring what they would like from the sessions. There is no pressure to talk about difficult issues straight away, your child can go at their own pace.

If helpful, parents or carers are welcome to join part of the first session to discuss any questions or concerns and to help the young person feel more at ease. This will always be with the young person's agreement.

UNDERSTANDING THE COUNSELLING RELATIONSHIP

Counsellors are not teachers or people who tell young people what decisions they should make. Instead, we provide a supportive space where young people can explore their thoughts and feelings without judgement. We aim to understand their experiences from their perspective and support them in finding their own way forward.

Sometimes counselling is about making changes in how we think, cope, or respond to situations. At other times, it is about accepting and managing circumstances. Our goal is to help young people build confidence, resilience, and emotional wellbeing.

WHEN WE MAY NEED TO SHARE INFORMATION

Although counselling is confidential, there are times when we may need to share information without your child's consent.

This would only happen if:

- We believe your child may be at risk of harm
- We believe someone else may be at risk of harm
- There are safeguarding concerns that require action
- We are legally required to share information

Where possible, we will discuss this with your child first and involve them in the process.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR CHILD

You can support your child by:

- Encouraging attendance and punctuality
- Showing interest without pressuring them to share details
- Respecting their privacy
- Giving them space after sessions if needed
- Providing a calm, supportive home environment
- Acknowledging and celebrating progress, however small

Often, the most helpful thing a parent or carer can do is simply be available to listen when their child wants to talk.

QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions before counselling begins, please feel free to get in touch. We are happy to discuss the process and answer any concerns you may have.

Warm regards,
Step by Step Counselling

