

LSE Staff Counselling Service Confidentiality Policy

1. Introduction

The Staff Counselling Service recognises the importance of confidentiality for all those using the service. It is widely recognised within UK law that counsellors owe a duty of confidence to the client because of the special nature of the relationship, and that maintaining the trust and privacy of personal information is a legitimate expectation for the client. This policy sets out the arrangements for storage and access to information held about clients. It is informed by the Ethical Framework of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (www.bacp.co.uk) and complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

2. Confidentiality Principles

i) Confidentiality is maintained within the Team.

Information about the names and contact details of users of the service is kept confidential. The Staff Counselling Service is a separate part of the wider Student Wellbeing Service, but staff confidentiality is maintained within the Staff Counselling Service. Within the staff counselling service we use a team approach in order to provide the best quality services to our clients, and where necessary, staff from the counselling service may need to liaise with other practitioners within the Team in order to work out the best available treatment options. These discussions are specific and limited. All information that is supplied to the teams and/or received by the teams relating to staff is regarded as confidential and is kept securely.

ii) Exceptional circumstances and Duty of Care

- a) As a part of the School, the Staff Counselling Service has a Duty of Care to staff, which includes areas such as standard of care, breach of contract and negligence. There may be exceptional circumstances in which there is a significant concern of a risk of serious harm to a client or another person. In such an event it may be necessary for information to be shared outside of the Staff Counselling Service with other health care professionals (e.g. a Doctor) and/ or a small number of staff within the School; this would be restricted to those with responsibility for the pastoral care and welfare of all members of the University. This would be a most unusual event, but falls within the BACP Ethical Framework and AUCC guidelines (Association of University and College Counselling) or if we are required by law to disclose information. This may be of particular relevance in the case of prevention of terrorism, serious crime or child protection. If we believe that you are a serious risk to yourself or others, in which case we may wish to take action to minimise the risk. We would always try to talk to you about this first.

Wherever possible, the service would seek the client's agreement to any change in the confidentiality arrangements.

3. Audit and Evaluation Data

An Excel programme is used to record general information about the usage of the service. This statistical information allows the service to maintain an overall picture of service activity, such as the number of appointments made and kept each month and very broad categories listing the reason for seeking counselling. There is no link in this data with any material relating to the content of counselling sessions.

The service also collects evaluation data from staff, using electronic evaluation forms. No evaluation information supplied by any individual staff member can be linked up to their personal notes, and neither will it be disseminated in any form that could possibly identify the staff member. Data from both the audit and evaluation programmes may be circulated across the School and in other public documents, such as

annual reports.

4. Counselling Notes

The counselling service keeps brief notes on the content of each counselling session. These notes are confidential to the service, and are used to record themes and details from each session. They are a subjective record of counselling sessions, and are used to log significant information and assist counsellors in their thinking about their work with each client. These notes are kept in a paper folder in a locked filing cabinet, which is only accessible to the staff counselling service.

5. Supervision

Each counsellor is professionally required to have regular supervision, in which they reflect upon their work with their clients with an experienced and appropriately qualified supervisor. This work is governed by the same principles of confidentiality. For further information see www.bacp.co.uk.

6. Access to Records

Clients have the right to see information stored about them. The only exception is if disclosure of information would be likely to cause serious harm to the physical or mental health or condition of the client. If a staff member wishes to have a copy of information stored about them, it is recommended that they should discuss this with the counsellor they have been seeing. Alternatively, requests should be put in writing to the Senior Counsellor. The counselling service will not provide access to client records if requested by other parties, unless this is with the explicit written consent of the client, or unless directed by a court order. Any other request for copies of the counsellor's notes will be refused. In no circumstances will the original copies of notes be provided to the client or any other party, even with the consent of the client. Counsellor's notes will be stored for a period of 6 years, and then will be destroyed within a secure and confidential process.

8. Publicity

This Policy is freely available to any member of staff. It will also be made available as a link through the website for the LSE Staff Counselling Service.

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LSE Staff Counselling Service
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