



the bridge
counselling service



CLIENT INFORMATION

Service Update

During the period of lockdown when social distancing rules apply, the Bridge Wellbeing Hub will continue to operate remotely and all Initial consultations and counselling will be offered either by telephone or video call using Zoom. All the same practical, contractual and ethical conditions will apply to the online/telephone sessions

About the Bridge

The Bridge Community Project is a charity that seeks to improve the everyday wellbeing of people across West Lothian through providing practical and relational support. The Bridge Counselling Service is an important part of our work that aims to bring affordable talk therapy options closer to home.

We offer all of our clients a warm and supportive welcome and the following information gives answers to the questions that you may have about our service. Please take your time to read through the pack and let us know if you have any questions.

Counselling Process

1 Register of Interest

Due to the level of demand for our affordable service we have introduced a 'Register of Interest' that you can sign up to on our website. This only comes into operation when the counselling service waiting list is closed. If you register your interest at this time, we will then be able to inform you directly when the waiting list is reopened and we have counselling spaces available. We will then provide you with a link to complete a request for counselling form.

2 Initial Consultation

Once we have received your request for counselling, we will offer you an appointment time to come for an Initial Consultation. We can then consider together whether or not counselling at the Bridge is the right thing for you at this time. You will be able to discuss your reasons for wanting to come for counselling and we will give you information about what we can offer. This takes around 50 minutes, is free and will take place at the Bridge Wellbeing Hub.

3 Waiting for Regular Appointment

After you have had your Initial Consultation and we have agreed that counselling is for you, we will put your name on our waiting list. We will do our very best to offer you a counselling slot as soon as possible and will look to offer you an appointment at a time based on what you indicated previously.

When an appointment becomes available we will contact you by email or phone. Please get back to us as soon as possible to confirm that you are able to attend. If we do not hear from you by the date given we will offer the appointment to someone else and you will unfortunately need to go back on our waiting list.

While you are on our waiting list, please let us know as soon as possible if you can no longer come for counselling at the times you said you could, or if you change your email, address, or phone number. This will help us to offer you regular counselling as soon as we can.



4 Counselling Appointments

We will expect you to come for counselling at the same time on the same day each week on a regular basis. Each session lasts for 50 minutes and will always be the same start time and location. If you are not able to continue on that particular day or time, please discuss this with your counsellor, or let the wellbeing hub know as soon as possible. We currently offer up to 12 sessions of counselling.

Cancellations

If you are unable to attend your appointment, please try and let us know at least 24 hours in advance. If you give less than 24 hours' notice, or if you do not attend one of your appointments without informing us, you will still be asked to make your regular financial contribution for the missed session to cover operational costs.

If two appointments in a row are missed and we have not heard from you, we will try and get in touch with you to ask you to confirm the next appointment. However, if we do not hear back from you after this, we will assume that you no longer wish to continue with counselling. If you have a good reason for missing your appointments, you should let us know as soon as possible, and discuss these with your counsellor when you next meet.

Correspondance

We will use email as our main way of getting in touch with you unless you tell us otherwise. This is a confidential and cost effective way for us to communicate with you, so please ensure that you check your email regularly.

Confidentiality

We offer a confidential counselling service. Under normal circumstances, no information about you will be passed to anyone outside the Bridge Counselling Service. This includes your initial enquiry, your attendance at counselling sessions, and anything that your counsellor has learned about you during the sessions.

However, in certain circumstances, the Bridge may pass on confidential information about you. This would only happen if:

- You have asked a member of staff or your counsellor to share the information
- A member of staff or your counsellor would be at risk of prosecution if the information about you was not passed on.
- A member of staff or your counsellor believes that you or another person is in serious danger.

If any of these things were to happen, your counsellor would normally encourage you to pass the information to the relevant person or agency yourself. However, if this situation is critical, the member of staff or counsellor may pass on the information directly. If it is at all possible, we will ask first for your consent.

Record Keeping

Within our strict code of confidentiality at the Bridge we need to keep a record of your name, contact details, GP practice and statistical data on record. We keep a record of all appointments, and of the financial contributions made.

Your counsellor will keep brief factual notes from each therapy session under an identifying code. The notes are held in a secure system and don't have your name on them. You have the right to ask to see any information held about you and you can do this by making a request in writing.



Data Security

As outlined all records and notes are kept securely. The notes that we keep about you are anonymous and other information that we need to keep about you, such as your address and phone number, are kept separately within a secure database. Only authorised members of office staff have access to these.

In line with the best professional practice counsellor's' notes are kept for a period of three years after you finish counselling. After this time they are destroyed by secure deletion.

Service Cost



Counselling is offered on a sliding scale basis. We are a registered charity whose aim is to improve everyday wellbeing and we are passionate about having quality counselling available to all members of the community and for this to be affordable.

Our counsellors and welcome team provide their services on a voluntary basis, but we need donations to cover the running costs of the wellbeing hub, counselling supervision, office administration and training.

We ask everyone receiving counselling at the Bridge to make a financial contribution, starting at £5, for each session.

The amount you are able to give will be agreed with you during your initial consultation. You can give donations at the Wellbeing Hub through a number of payment options including all major cards and by cash. You can also establish a regular donation on our website.

Gift Aid

The Government's Gift Aid scheme allows us to claim a refund of tax you have paid. It can add 25p or income for every £1 you donate.

For example if you donate £20 per session for 8 sessions, Gift Aid will add another £32 to your total donation, at no additional cost to you.

If you would like to help in this way, please read and sign our Gift Aid Declaration Form, at your first appointment. We can then reclaim tax that you have already paid. After signing the form, you do not need to do anything else. Your form is kept securely by us for the sole purpose of proving a record of your declaration so that we can claim Gift Aid. The information given on the form will not be used for any other purpose.

Your Counsellor

The relationship that you have with your counsellor is important to the success of the counselling work you do together. If you have difficulty with this relationship at any point, you should discuss it with your counsellor or, if necessary the Counselling Co-ordinator. If the coordinator agrees, and it is possible, you may be offered to change to a different counsellor.

However, there may be a delay in restarting your counselling until a new counsellor is available. It can be helpful to try and talk about your problems first with your counsellor to see if you can work together on what you are finding difficult.

As well as providing counselling to clients, the Bridge also supports the training of new counsellors. This means that some of our counsellors may be training in the final stages of their diploma. They will usually have received at least two years training and are closely supervised by their training organisation as well as the Bridge.

Professional Ethics

The Bridge is a COSCA (Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland) Recognised Organisation. Counsellors working in the Bridge adhere to the COSCA Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice (available from the COSCA website: www.cosca.org.uk).



Supervision

All our counsellors undertake professional supervision. The purpose of supervision is to help your counsellor think more deeply about the work that you are doing together. This offers extra support and safety for both you and your counsellor. In line with professional requirements and standards, counsellors may discuss their work with you within their own supervision. Supervision is confidential, which means that your counsellor will not share your identity.

Complaints

We hope that your counselling with us will be a very positive experience. However, if you are not happy with any part of our service, please let us know. We will make every effort to sort out any problems as soon as possible. All complaints will be treated seriously and in confidence.

If you are attending counselling sessions, please talk about any concerns first with your counsellor. If you do not wish to do this, or if you have already done this and are not happy with the outcome, please put a complaint into the Counselling Coordinator. There is a copy of the complaints Procedure on the Bridge website, or you can ask for a copy from the office.

Service Evaluation

We will invite you to fill in a short, simple feedback form at the end of your last session with us. We would appreciate you taking a few minutes to fill in this form as your view is important to us. We regularly review our work and the evaluation feedback plays an important part of improving our service.

Useful info and Contacts

The Bridge website has information and resources which you may find useful before and during your counselling. This includes links to self-help material, online CBT and other services.

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