



**the bridge**  
counselling service

# CLIENT INFORMATION

## 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 Initial Consultation

Once we have received your self referral form and follow up questionnaire, requesting counselling, we will offer you an appointment for an Initial Consultation. We can then consider together whether or not counselling at the Bridge is the most appropriate way forward 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.

### 2 Waiting for your Regular Weekly Appointment

After you have had your Initial Consultation and we have agreed that counselling is going to be helpful for you, we will put your name on our waiting list. We will do our very best to offer you an appointment slot as soon as possible at the times you have indicated you are available. If your availability changes during this period please let us know as this may affect how long you may have to wait.

### 2

#### Waiting for your Regular Weekly Appointment cont.

When a suitable appointment block becomes available we will contact you by phone or email. Please get back to us as soon as possible to confirm that you are able to take up this offer. If we do not hear from you by the date given we will have to offer the appointment to someone else and you will be placed 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.



### 3

#### Counselling Appointments

We will expect you to attend your counselling session at the same time on the same day each week on a regular basis. Each session lasts for 50 minutes and will always be at 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 our Administrator know as soon as possible. We currently offer 12 sessions initially, with the option of extending to longer term work. Any extension would be made in agreement with yourself and your counsellor.

#### 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.

To let us know you need to cancel your appointment please email [counselling@bridgecommunityproject.org.uk](mailto:counselling@bridgecommunityproject.org.uk) or phone the office on 01506 238980.

If two appointments in a row are missed and we have not heard from you, we will try and get in touch 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 are finding it difficult to make your appointments, you should let us know as soon as possible, and discuss this with your counsellor when you next meet.

## Correspondence

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 - including your junk or spam mail folder!

## 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 anonymised 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 above, 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, counsellors' notes are kept for a period of seven years after you finish counselling. After this time they are destroyed by secure deletion.

## Service Cost



We are a registered charity whose aim is to improve everyday wellbeing for people within West Lothian. We are passionate about offering accessible, quality counselling to all members of the community. We recognise that accessing quality therapy can be challenging because of the high cost of private counselling (on average it can cost from £45-£60 per session) along with lengthy waiting lists if waiting to be seen by the NHS.

We are delighted to offer our low-cost donation based service to people throughout West Lothian.

Our counsellors provide their services on a voluntary basis, but we require minimum donations to contribute towards the running costs of the wellbeing hub, counselling supervision, office administration and training.

Donations start at just £20 per session, with a sliding scale dependent on income. The amount you donate will be agreed with you during your initial consultation.

You can give your donation at the Wellbeing Hub through a number of payment options, including all major cards and by cash.

## Gift Aid

The Government's Gift Aid scheme allows us to claim a refund of tax you have paid. It can add 25p of 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 Initial Consultation. 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 and 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 Service Lead. If the Service Lead 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.

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 have been deemed placement-ready by their training providers, and have received all the relative training required before seeing clients.

## 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](http://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. This is confidential, which means your counsellor will not disclose 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 with your counsellor first. If you do not wish to do this, or if you have already done this and are not happy with the outcome, please put your complaint in writing to our Chief Executive Officer. There is a copy of the complaints procedure in the Counselling section of 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 in 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. [www.bridgecommunityproject.org.uk](http://www.bridgecommunityproject.org.uk)

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