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## **‘Counselling/Psychotherapy: Making Safer Choices’**

### **COSCA’s guide for people considering counselling/psychotherapy**

(A glossy publicity leaflet: *Making Safer Choices* – is available from COSCA)

#### **What is Counselling/Psychotherapy?**

Counselling/psychotherapy is a process that provides opportunities for those seeking help to work towards living in more satisfying ways. It involves agreements between the counsellor/psychotherapist and the client(s) and typically takes the form of regular sessions, held in confidence. This provides the chance to explore issues and difficulties in a safe environment. Counsellors are not there to tell you what to do, but to help you work towards living in more satisfying and resourceful ways.

#### **What’s involved?**

Counselling and psychotherapy sessions (which are generally about one hour in length) can be offered for a set period of time eg 6 or 12 sessions. Sometimes the therapeutic work involves a long-term commitment. The session could be for you on your own or with your partners or involve the whole family.

Counsellors may work on a voluntary or paid basis, independently or within an agency. Counsellors and agencies may charge for the sessions or ask for a donation towards covering costs.

#### **Is there a type of counselling/psychotherapy for me?**

Counsellors can work with you on specific issues such as grief or addiction problems or in a more general holistic way. Some counsellors are trained in a way that involves focusing on behaviours and others may work with you to explore the past or your experiences and feelings. It may be helpful for you to ask your counsellor some questions before you start.

#### **What to ask your counsellor/psychotherapist**

- Are you registered with, or a member of, a professional organisation such as COSCA, BACP or UKCP?
- What is the statement of ethics that you work to and can you explain what you mean by confidentiality?
- What training do you have?
- How much experience do you have?
- How much will the sessions cost and how long is a session?
- How many sessions can I expect to come for?
- What happens if I miss a session?

- What records will you keep of our work? Who has access to them?
- Do you carry out assessments or reviews of how things are going?

These frequently asked questions could form the basis of your arrangement with the counsellor/psychotherapist.

### **What to do if you are not happy with the service?**

If you can, discuss with the counsellor how you are feeling. It is worth bearing in mind that often periods of difficulty arise as part of the work and can be valuable to your personal development. However, if you feel that there is substantial cause for complaint, ask for a copy of the complaints procedure. This will tell you who to contact and how to make a complaint.

### **Other Organisations/people who can help you**

Your GP may be a good first point of contact if you feel you would like to speak to someone. However, if you want to refer yourself to an organisation some of the following may be able to help:

#### **COSCA**

**01786 475140**

COSCA, as the professional body for counselling and psychotherapy in Scotland, has a list of its own accredited counsellors/psychotherapists as well as links to other lists. It may also be able to signpost you to specific organisations locally or nationally.

These national counselling organisations may also be able to help you:

#### **CRUSE BEREAVEMENT CARE SCOTLAND**

**01738 444178**

for people who have experienced bereavement

#### **COUPLE COUNSELLING SCOTLAND**

**0845 1196088**

for relationship difficulties/psychosexual problems

#### **SCOTTISH MARRIAGE CARE**

**0141 222 2166**

for relationship difficulties/psychosexual problems

#### **ALCOHOL FOCUS SCOTLAND**

**0141 572 6700**

for alcohol related problems

#### **CHILDLINE**

**0800 11 11 (free)**

for children and young people

#### **PARENTLINE**

**0808 800 2222 (free)**

for parents and anyone caring for a child