



## **Counselling Service Policy and Confidentiality Statement**

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### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions requires that counsellors offer the highest possible levels of confidentiality in order to respect client privacy and create the trust necessary for the counselling relationship.
- 1.2 The Arts University Bournemouth Counselling Service is accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), and operates in compliance with the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions, BACP Universities and Colleges Counselling Services guidelines; and with relevant AUB policies.

### **2. Aims**

- 2.1 The Counselling Service aims to provide a confidential service which is accessible to all current students and staff of the Arts University Bournemouth.
- 2.2 Through the provision of impartial, confidential and informed support the Counselling Service aims to help students and staff to manage their emotional and developmental issues during their time at the University.

### **3. Objectives**

- 3.1 To provide one-to-one counselling sessions with fully qualified male or female counsellors who will listen without prejudice in a confidential and private setting.
- 3.2 To provide one-to-one counselling sessions with trainee male or female counsellors, ensuring that students are informed and accepting of the counsellor's trainee status.
- 3.3 To support students and staff to explore and work with their difficult issues and emotions effectively.
- 3.4 To support students' and staff personal development and encourage them to utilise and improve their own resources and resilience to help them resolve their issues.
- 3.5 To refer to other AUB services, safeguarding officers, or outside agencies where appropriate.

### **4. Student and Staff Entitlement**

Any student or member of staff of the University is able to make use of the Counselling Service and in doing so may expect the following:

- 4.1 The Counselling Service is client focused and any student or member of staff can book a single therapeutic counselling session for one hour, booked on a session by session basis. The client is initially informed that the AUB adheres to the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions and the Counselling Service is an accredited organisational member of the BACP.

- 4.2 The Counselling Service adheres to the key theoretical principles of the person centred approach as its foundation; putting the client in the centre of the counselling relationship. The counsellor will be genuine and non-judgemental, use advanced skills in listening and empathy and will be fully accepting of the client and whatever issues they bring to the counselling session. The counsellor may also integrate additional skills and tools from other theoretical approaches in counselling such as Solution Focused Brief Therapy or Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to enable the best therapeutic outcome for the client. The counsellor can also arrange a referral to an external counselling agency if it is decided that this would be more appropriate for a client.
- 4.3 Counselling for AUB staff is available via a dedicated staff counsellor. Staff are also able to access support via the Employee Assistance Programme.

## **5. Student and Staff Responsibilities**

In accessing the Counselling Service clients are entering into a therapeutic relationship and have the following responsibilities:

- 5.1 To book appointments for themselves online or by email, telephone, text or in person at Student Services.
- 5.2 To arrive promptly for any counselling sessions booked.
- 5.3 To give a minimum of 24 hours' cancellation notice.
- 5.4 To engage with the counselling relationship and to accept that it is not the aim of counselling to provide direct advice, but to enable clients to find their own solutions from their own resources and strengths. This is achieved through support and guidance in a confidential, non judgmental and relaxed environment.

## **6. Confidentiality**

- 6.1 Counselling sessions are confidential to both the client and counsellor.
- 6.2 Unless they have the prior consent of the client, the counsellor will not pass on to a third party any information regarding the client's attendance, presenting issues or anything discussed within the counselling session.
- 6.3 Only in exceptional circumstances, the counsellor may take direct action to break confidentiality with or without the client's consent if necessary where, in the counsellor's professional judgement:
- There is a serious risk of harm to the client and/or others.
  - There is reason to believe a risk of harm as defined by Safeguarding legislation.
  - The client is believed to represent a threat under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, or be at risk of radicalisation.
  - Any admission by a client involving illegal drug trafficking as defined in the Drug Trafficking Act 1994.
- 6.4 Direct Action applies when, in exceptional circumstances, the information shared by clients has to be passed to another agency (e.g. Social Services, Police or Health Authorities). However, this will be fully discussed with the client first and they will be involved in the process, so that any resulting action is taken with their full knowledge.

- 6.5 In rare circumstances a counsellor can be required by a court of law to provide information; should information be provided in these circumstances, the client will be informed wherever possible.

## **7. Record Keeping**

- 7.1 The Counselling Service keeps computerised records. These are kept to assist the counsellors in their work with the client. In addition they help to ensure the service is accountable, and monitored and evaluated regularly in order to identify service improvements.
- 7.2 Security and confidentiality are vital and student records are stored securely within a secure AUB folder, accessed only by the AUB Counselling Service and Head of Academic and Student Services. Counselling records are held separately from all other student records held by the Arts University Bournemouth.
- 7.4 Staff records are stored confidentially and information relating to staff counselling is accessed only by the staff counsellor.
- 7.5 The policy on confidentiality and the purpose of record keeping will be explained to all clients using the Counselling Service. The clients' consent to collect and record all information will be obtained at the first initial assessment in accordance with GDPR.
- 7.6 Students and staff who have accessed the Counselling Service may be asked to complete an evaluation questionnaire or some other form of feedback to inform future service development and improvement. This data is anonymous and individual students are not identified in the collection or monitoring of such information.

## **8. General Data Protection Regulations**

- 8.1 The Arts University Counselling Service operates under the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Under this Act clients have the right to see the records that are kept about them at any time.
- 8.2 Individual records of attendance are retained for a period of one year after accessing the service. Student records held are the property of the Arts University and are managed by the Senior Counselling Officer. Staff records are managed by the staff counsellor. The destruction of client data complies with accepted protocols governing the destruction of sensitive information.

## **9. Monitoring and evaluation**

- 9.1 The Counselling Service monitors, prepares and reports in an Annual Service Review. No client records are shared and no individual client is identified in any reporting method.

## **10. Supervision**

- 10.1 All the counsellors within the service receive counselling supervision in accordance with BACP supervision guidelines and current recommendations.
- 10.2 Supervisors adhere to the confidentiality policy and counsellors discuss their caseloads using code names to preserve anonymity of the clients.
- 10.3 The staff counsellor utilises an external supervisor; no staff casework is discussed with other AUB counsellors.
- 10.4 For the purpose of quality assurance, supervisors provide termly reports, confirming that counsellors are practicing in accordance with the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions.

The Arts University Bournemouth is committed to the provision of a working and learning environment founded on dignity, respect and equity where unfair discrimination of any kind is treated with the utmost seriousness. It has developed and implemented an Equalities Strategy and Action Plan to guide its work in this area. All the University's policies and practices are designed to meet the principles of dignity, respect and fairness, and take account of the commitments set out in the Equalities Strategy.

This policy has been subject to an equality analysis to ensure consideration with regard to the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

Date of last EA review: October 2017

Date of last Policy Review: September 2021

