

Remote Counselling Contract

- **What happens in counselling?** We won't give advice or tell you what to do. We are a person-centred agency, providing an understanding, safe and confidential place to explore things troubling you. We may use aspects of cognitive behavioural therapy to encourage you to link your thoughts, feelings and behaviours. It should be something you want to participate in. We won't judge you, people come for many reasons. Sometimes it's difficult to talk about things, this is normal. Let your counsellor know so we can support you in a safe way. You will agree reasonable goals with your counsellor, and you may review these as sessions continue.
- **How will my sessions be delivered?** Your counsellor will initially contact you via telephone to arrange your sessions, you can discuss how you would like them to be delivered either via telephone, Video Call or chat service. Your counsellor can advise you on what you might need to do to ensure you are set up for your remote sessions.
- **How many sessions will I have?** Our initial service offer is six to eight sessions. This is reviewed together around the fifth session.
- **How long are the sessions?** Sessions last for 45 minutes.
- **When are the sessions?** You will arrange the day and time of the sessions with your counsellor when they have that initial phone call with you. As with our face to face sessions, the aim will be to keep sessions to the same day and time each week.
- **Where shall I have my session?** We encourage you to find a private, safe, and quiet space where you can have your session. Please ensure you are appropriately dressed. Where possible please do not lay on your bed, if needed, sit upright on your bed.
- **What is the cost?** We are a charity, sessions are free of charge.
- **What is confidentiality?** Anything discussed stays within The Lowdown but there are some exceptions to this when we may need to share information; whenever possible, we will involve you in that decision. Reasons to share information may include: if something is said about terrorism, drug trafficking or money laundering or if there is a safeguarding concern where we think you, or someone else, may be at serious risk of harm. We may also discuss sessions with a counselling supervisor; this helps us think about the work we do with you and does not involve identifying you. For your privacy, if Lowdown staff see you outside of the organisation, they will not acknowledge you and will only briefly respond if you say hello first. We do ask that you don't record your remote session and we do not record it either.

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- **We ask you...** are available for your session at the agreed day/time. Your counsellor will initiate the contact, if you do not respond after 10 minutes it will be marked as a missed session. Your counsellor may try to contact you via alternative platforms if you do not respond on the agreed platform. Your counsellor will still have to finish on time, even if the session begins late. Once you start regular sessions, you are expected to attend every week unless you have already told us about a planned holiday when accepting the regular day/time slot. We cannot usually extend the number of sessions when there are absences.
- **What if there are technical difficulties?** If you have arranged to have video call or online chat, and experience technical difficulties during your session, your counsellor will revert to a normal phone call to complete the session (please ensure your counsellor has your personal phone number/ you have access to the phone we have contact details for). If you are experiencing technical difficulties and cannot access your session, you can call the office line on **01604 634385 and leave message**, our admin staff will get a message to your counsellor immediately. Alternatively, you can text the Lowdown mobile on 07957515677 and the shift manager can get a message to your counsellor.

Please update us if your contact details change.

- **What if I can't make a session?** · If you can't make a session, please call 01604 634385 as soon as you can. If we are not notified of absences for 2 consecutive weeks, we close your file and a new client starts their sessions.
- **What if my counsellor is unavailable?** Your counsellor will let you know in advance if they have planned breaks. If they are unexpectedly absent, we will let you know as soon as possible. You will not lose these sessions.
- **I think I know one of the Lowdown staff?** Please let us know. We will ensure that person does not access any details about you and your sessions.
- **What can I do if I am unhappy with the sessions?** Try and talk with your counsellor first. Be honest and please don't feel embarrassed; it will not put your sessions at risk. If you prefer, you can contact either the shift or clinical manager. Feedback forms are also available on our website. We are an organisational member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and work within their ethical framework. Please see their website for details: www.bacp.co.uk.

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- **Do I need to come to the ending session?** It is important to attend a planned ending with your counsellor so you can review and reflect upon what you have worked on together. It values what you have learned and discovered and can help support changes you may want to make in your life.
- **What qualifications does my counsellor have?** All counsellors delivering remote support for the lowdown are qualified counsellors.
- **How are my records stored and for how long?** Data is stored securely and confidentially and used ethically in line with General Data Protection Regulation guidelines and the Data Protection Act 2018. It is not shared outside of the agency without your consent, except as stated above. You have the right to ask for a copy of your personal information, free of charge, in an electronic or paper format. You also have the right to ask for an amendment should anything be incorrect (see our website for full policy details). Statistics regarding service-use may be required for reporting and funding purposes but are completely anonymised. Brief sessional records are securely stored, separate to identifying personal details, and kept until: 8 years after your last session date or your 26th birthday - whichever is later. Where an issue has been raised and logged as a safeguarding concern (whether just within the organisation or escalated and reported outside of the Lowdown) the safeguarding record will be securely retained for 40 years (or the operational lifetime of the agency, if shorter). However, clients may give written permission for destruction of these records either: 8 years after their last session date or their 26th birthday - whichever is later.