

# Open Minds Contract of Service

Open Minds exists to provide counselling to adults and children aged 8 and over, on any issue and for as long as the counselling is useful and necessary.

The client is the first priority of Open Minds, the only exception being where safeguarding issues take precedence.

We appreciate the benefit to Open Minds of our counselling volunteers and provide a comprehensive support service to our counsellors, including administrative support, case-work management, mentoring, academic guidance, training, internal supervision and more.

We recognize that counsellors need client work experience in order to qualify or sustain qualifications but must always put the client first; their vulnerability, availability, gender preference of counsellor, etc. take precedence over the counsellor's need for more client work.

Open Minds aim always to allocate clients to counsellors within 2 weeks of referral (if a counsellor of appropriate competency is available at a time convenient to the client.)

However there may be busy periods or mitigating circumstances in the service in which this is not possible, for which we apologise.

## Open Minds is responsible for ensuring that:

- 1) Counsellors practicing with Open Minds are training or qualified to an appropriate level prior to client work
- 2) Counsellors have enhanced DBS disclosures made prior to commencing client work
- 3) All employees, paid or honorary, follow the ethos and procedures of Open Minds including confidentiality
- 4) Safeguarding issues are dealt with promptly
- 5) UK law and BACP guidelines are followed wherever possible in the work of Open Minds
- 6) Open Minds premises are maintained to a professional standard
- 7) Non-safeguarding concerns about counsellors, clients or others, are dealt with promptly and fairly

## Counsellors are responsible for ensuring that:

- 1) Open Minds' policies and procedures are followed, wheresoever these do not contravene UK laws
- 2) Regardless of the counsellor's personal beliefs or therapeutic modality, the client and the relationship therewith is paramount and primary to the therapy offered
- 3) Clients are informed about confidentiality and its limits, and that this is adhered to
- 4) Safeguarding issues are immediately reported to the line-manager in order for them to be acted upon
- 5) The counsellor has regular external supervision; appropriate to the quantity and intensity of their client work
- 6) Safeguarding issues are also reported at the first opportunity to the external supervisor
- 7) The counsellor's notes are up-to-date and filed away appropriately
- 8) Information on the client is kept up-to-date and office staff informed of any relevant changes (e.g. health issues, contact information)
- 9) The line-manager is informed of obstacles to client work, to facilitate support for both counsellor and client
- 10) The office staff are informed if the counsellor cannot attend, or of any changes to appointment times or frequency
- 11) Clients who have agreed to pay for counselling are reminded of that agreement and encouraged to pay
- 12) Resources used within session are tidied away, including taking cups out of rooms & washing up after yourself

Failure to fulfill these obligations may result in termination of employment, honorary or paid, with Open Minds Counselling Service Ltd.

## Open Minds will support counsellors by ensuring that:

- 1) Counsellors are:
  - a) sufficiently competent to practice client work and case-management at Open Minds
  - b) sufficiently indemnified by Open Minds and the counsellor's own professional indemnity insurance
  - c) supported through safeguarding issues, both with disclosures and with supporting the client
- 2) A contribution is made towards the counsellor's external supervision, wherever the budget allows
- 3) Training opportunities towards continuing professional development are provided
- 4) Internal group supervision is provided, wherever the budget allows
- 5) Administrative support is provided in managing appointments and case-work
- 6) Internal Mentoring support is available where funding allows
- 7) Line-management support is provided in being an effective and responsible practitioner, including:
  - a) Discussion of client work, including concerns the counsellor may have about their practice, efficacy or ethics
  - b) Discussion of academic work, including (where scheduled) support in understanding and complying with criteria
  - c) Discussion of concerns about operational factors at Open Minds

HOWEVER

if you wish to rebook a session, change an appointment time or otherwise discuss scheduling or availability this can be done with any member of the office staff and does not normally require the Managing Director's intervention

Open Minds expect that clients will attend their scheduled sessions, on time.

Persistent, unscheduled non-attendance, i.e. not including holidays or other mutually agreed 'breaks' in therapy:

If clients persistently fail to attend then Open Minds will not contact the client to make future appointments and will reallocate their appointment slot to another client on the waiting list. If the client contacts Open Minds to make future appointments then at the discretion of the Managing Director the client may be accepted as a new referral and placed on the waiting list.

If you have any questions or comments please do not hesitate to contact Open Minds on 07765 224564 or open-minds@hotmail.co.uk

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This section represents an addendum, or additional detail to points 9) and 10) of the 'Counsellors are responsible for ensuring that:' section of the contracts;

- 9) The line-manager is informed of obstacles to client work, to facilitate support for both counsellor and client. This may include:
- a) Where the intensity of a client relationship has become too great for you
  - b) Where the boundaries have changed and cannot be re-drawn
  - c) Where you are unwell or have other mitigating personal circumstances
  - d) Where you do not believe the relationship continues to have therapeutic benefit to the client
- 10) The office staff are informed if the counsellor cannot attend, or of any changes to appointment times or frequency
- a) The counsellor attends all scheduled sessions, on time, except in exceptional circumstances
  - b) That scheduled appointments take into account:
    - 1) The client's vulnerabilities
    - 2) The availability of rooms
    - 3) Open Minds' hours of operation

## HOWEVER MOST IMPORTANTLY;

When you take clients on you are always warned not to overstretch yourself.

1. Clients (including days of working) committed to while counsellors are desperately working towards their hours for qualification should not then be abandoned at the counsellor's convenience once you no longer need them.
2. If the client has developed a reasonable expectation of you being flexible, because you have consistently in the past agreed to change times, days or frequency of appointments subject to your mutual flexibility, then they have a right to continue to expect the same; regardless of your incentive to do so.
3. If you know that you will not in the future be able to be flexible then you have a responsibility to prepare the client for ending, or transitioning to another counsellor. This includes being willing to be flexible in the short term until the client is 'safe'.
4. If you suddenly cannot be flexible due to unavoidable circumstances then we recommend that instead of a sudden withdrawal of services, that you discuss with Open Minds the possibility of an extra session or 2 out of normal working hours with which to come to an ending.
5. To make yourself unavailable (if this is avoidable) with inadequate notice is both irresponsible and unprofessional and does not reflect well on either yourself or Open Minds and is not good practice.

**PLEASE REMEMBER THAT THE CLIENT IS (OR SHOULD BE) INHERENTLY MORE VULNERABLE THAN YOU ARE**