

By accessing our remote service during the Covid-19 pandemic you are accepting these Agreements.

Counselling and Psychotherapy Remote Sessions Agreement

1. INDIVIDUAL TELEPHONE COUNSELLING/ THERAPY SESSIONS

Telephone counselling sessions are being offered to you as they have been assessed as appropriate to both your needs and situation. Individual telephone sessions are scheduled to last fifty minutes and, wherever possible, will be at the same prearranged time and day each week. Your therapist will agree with you the day and times that sessions will take place. She will also discuss with you the number of sessions you are being offered, based on our initial assessment of your needs.

A. Safety

Your safety is our primary concern and a condition of receiving telephone counselling is that you have ongoing access to a safe, quiet, confidential space where you won't be interrupted. If you become unable to ensure this, we will not be able to guarantee that your therapy can continue. In such instances we will explore different ways we might be able to work together.

When accessing counselling at WCTS it is important that you are not under the influence of alcohol or any prescribed or un-prescribed drugs or medication that limit your capacity to take care of yourself. If you are under such an influence we will not be able to go ahead with the session.

B. Accessing your sessions

Generally, if you are accessing telephone counselling, you will be required to call your therapist at the agreed time on the number provided. If you are late making the call, please be aware that your session will still end at the agreed time. If you are 20 minutes late or more, the session will not go ahead as planned.

In certain circumstances, it might be agreed that the therapist initiates the telephone session, either in the short or longer term. If this is the case, you need to be aware that you are agreeing to the counsellor using your contact details from their home to carry out the sessions. Your counsellor will try to contact you at your usual day and time. Failure to respond will be recorded as a failure to attend.

Unless agreed differently with your therapist, your counsellor will only be available for contact during your session. Generally, if you do need to make contact outside of scheduled sessions, either phone the service on 0113 2455725 and leave a message on the answerphone or text a message to the service mobile 07590 863205.

You and your counsellor will review the sessions regularly. Telephone counselling can offer a great deal of support but it is different from sitting in the same room as your counsellor. Counselling via phone may not be right for everyone. Please feel free to discuss this with your counsellor and express any concerns that you may have.

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C. Considerations for phone counselling

There are some important boundaries which must be maintained. Please read these carefully and ask your counsellor if you have any questions or concerns:

- Before each session begins, make sure that you are in a safe, quiet and confidential space where you won't be disturbed. If this is not your usual agreed space, please ensure that your therapist is made aware of this and agreement reached about its appropriateness for therapeutic work. In some cases, it might be assessed as too unsafe and the session would be discontinued.
- If you are using a mobile phone, make sure that your space has a good mobile signal and that your phone is fully charged.
- If the phone gets cut off, your counsellor will try to reconnect with you up to 5 times before ending the session.
- Please make sure that no other person is in the room with you during your session. If someone else does enter the room, please let your counsellor know that this has happened as the session will need to be paused or suspended until they have left.
- The counsellor has the right to end any session if they feel that safe boundaries around behaviour or conduct are not being followed.
- Please do not record any part of your counselling session.
- You are welcome to bring a non-alcoholic drink with you to the session. Please do not eat, smoke or vape during the session. We also ask that you think carefully before bringing pets in the room as they can be distracting for either you or your counsellor. Please discuss this with your counsellor.
- After each session it is important you plan an activity to help you 'let go' of the counselling and look after yourself – you could go for a walk, do the washing up, Hoover or do a creative activity. This is like when you leave the counselling venue for the bus or to travel to home or work.

Important – consider the following before your first session and discuss any issues you may have with your counsellor

- If you are feeling emotionally overwhelmed or in crisis it is important that you are able to communicate this to your counsellor. Please discuss how you might do this with your counsellor.
- Both you and your counsellor may not be able to pick up on each other's social cues. If you are feeling misunderstood or confused about how your counsellor is communicating with you, please let your counsellor know that you are experiencing these feelings.

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- If at any time during your session you feel overwhelmed, we would recommend that you stay on the phone and share what you are experiencing with your counsellor. They are trained to be able to support and assist you in these situations.

D. Attendance

- Regular and punctual attendance plays an important part in therapy. We ask you to commit to attending at the agreed time. While recognising that non-attendance cannot always be avoided, we ask you to commit to attending *all* scheduled sessions. In most circumstances, lateness will lead to a shorter session and if you are more than 20 minutes, its cancellation.
- On our part, we will try to give you as much notice as possible when sessions cannot be offered due to, for instance, your counsellor's holiday commitments, illness or periods of service closure. We will contact you as soon as possible if a session needs to be cancelled at short notice.
- Please let the counsellor know in advance of any planned breaks. Sessions cancelled in advance after discussion with your therapist will not be counted in the total number of sessions offered to you.
- Unless you have made different arrangements with your therapist, where you need to cancel at short notice (e.g. because of illness), please text WCTS on 07590 863205. If that is not possible, phone the service on 0113 245 5725. Please give as much notice as possible so as we can inform your therapist of the cancellation. Sessions cancelled at short notice will usually count towards the total number of remote sessions offered to you.
- If you miss a session with no notice it will count towards this agreement's total number of sessions. A possible exception to this is where making or receiving a telephone call would raise threats to your safety and you were not in a position to alert us to this. In such a situation, we would obviously not expect you to respond to any phone calls from us but would ask you to inform us of your situation as soon as you are able after the missed session.
- In normal circumstances If you miss two consecutive sessions without making contact, your therapist will regard the agreement as having ended. If you fail to attend a high proportion of your sessions your therapist may discuss with you whether therapy is helpful to you at this time.

E. Confidentiality and its limits

Assessment and counselling sessions are confidential to the client and WCTS. Limits to that confidentiality apply as outlined in the Confidentiality and Consent Agreement.

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F. Concerns and Complaints

If you have any concerns or complaints about the service you are receiving please raise these with your therapist initially. If you do not feel able to do this please contact the WCTS office to speak to a manager. A copy of the complaints procedure is on the website or is available on request.

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2. ONLINE INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING/THERAPY

Online therapy/counselling sessions are being offered to you as they have been assessed as appropriate to both your needs and situation. Sessions normally last 50 minutes and take place at the same time each week. Your therapist will agree with you the day and times that sessions will take place. She will also discuss with you the number of sessions you are being offered, based on our initial assessment of your needs.

A. Safety and privacy

As with all forms of therapy your safety is a primary concern. In online work, this involves both your own personal security and the security of the technology and the online platform that is used.

The online platform we have chosen to use is Zoom. While the total security of any online platform cannot be guaranteed, Zoom is an established, user-friendly platform that aims to provide a high level of security for its users. You can find out more about how they have sought to safeguard your privacy at <https://zoom.us/docs/en-us/privacy-and-security.html>.

In terms of your own personal security, you need to have access to a private, quiet and safe space for your sessions, where you will not be overheard or disturbed. You and your therapist must agree that the space is suitable. If you become unable to ensure this, we may need to stop the therapy and look at alternative ways that we might continue to work together.

To allow the work, you need a stable broadband connection and a device such as a laptop or computer, although a tablet can also work well. You need to ensure the security of the device you use. It needs to be password protected and have an up-to-date anti-virus/hacking security programme installed. If it is a shared device, it is important that you have your own personal password to which no one else has access so as the privacy of any communication between us can be ensured.

B. Accessing your sessions

Please note the importance of joining your sessions on time. If you are less than 20 minutes late, the session will take place but will end at its usual time. If you are more than 20 minutes late, you will not be able to access your session.

You will be sent your invite to meetings via an agreed safe route. Your invite will contain the meeting ID and password. Please ensure that no-one else has access to this information.

Shortly before the time of your session go to <https://www.zoom.us>. Click on 'Join a meeting' and enter the meeting ID and password.

You will enter a virtual online waiting room. This is open for half an hour before the session so you can enter it early to trial your connection and get yourself settled and ready for your session. At the due time, your therapist will invite you into the session.

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As soon as you have joined, your therapist will lock the meeting so that no one else can enter. These arrangements are designed to strengthen security.

Please join the meeting using both the camera and microphone to allow both sound and images. Choose the gallery view setting. Please check how you look on the screen. It is helpful for your therapist to be able to see all of your face and tops of your shoulders. If you're self-conscious and don't want to be able to see yourself, you can select 'Hide self view' by clicking on the three dots in the top right hand corner of your individual screen. Your therapist will still be able to see you.

Your therapist will spend some time in the first session helping you familiarise yourself with the use of Zoom. You can also find out more information about using Zoom by visiting <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/200101697>

C. What to do if the connection isn't working or fails

If you have been unable to make a connection by the time the session starts or meet problems when trying to access the meeting, please contact your therapist on the mobile number provided. If the situation can't be remedied, it can then be whether to reschedule the session or conduct it by phone. Please follow a similar process should the connection fail during the session.

If your therapist has problems with their internet connection or the connection fails at her end, she will contact you by phone to make alternative arrangements

D. General guidelines for online counselling

- Therapist availability

Unless agreed differently with your therapist, your counsellor will only be available for contact during your session. Generally, if you need to make contact outside of scheduled sessions, please phone the service on 0113 2455725 and leave a message on the answerphone or text a message to the service mobile 07590 863205.

- Reviewing

You and your therapist will review the sessions regularly. Online counselling has been shown to be as effective as face-to-face work. However, it is different from sitting in the same room as your counsellor and is not right for everyone. Please feel free to discuss any concerns you might have with your counsellor.

- Childcare

If you have responsibility for the care of children, please ensure that satisfactory childcare arrangements are put in place that will allow you to access the sessions. While in general we think it inappropriate for children to be present, if you are accessing our perinatal service it is agreed that, when necessary, you can have a baby under 3 months old with you in your sessions.

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- Safety

Before each session begins, make sure that you are in the agreed safe, quiet and confidential space where you won't be disturbed. If this is not your usual agreed space, please ensure that your therapist is made aware of this and agreement reached about its appropriateness for therapeutic work. In some cases, it might be assessed as too unsafe and the session would be discontinued.

As with face-to-face and telephone counselling, it is important that you are not under the influence of alcohol or any prescribed or un-prescribed drugs or medication that limit your capacity to take care of yourself. If you are under such an influence we will not be able to go ahead with the session.

The counsellor has the right to end any session if they feel that safe boundaries around behaviour or conduct are not being followed.

- Appearing on screen

You should be dressed appropriately for the call. It is recommended that you consider the view into your home, think about what you would like people to see, or not see. You may be able to use a 'Virtual Background' to hide your room but you would need a green screen and no natural light in the room so as the images don't distort. Also, as it uses a lot of bandwidth, it can lead to a loss of connection and therefore may not prove suitable for use during the sessions.

- Behaviour in sessions

You are welcome to bring a non-alcoholic drink with you to the session, but not food. Please do not smoke or vape during the session. We ask that you think carefully before bringing pets in the room as they can be distracting for either you or your counsellor. Please discuss this with your counsellor.

Activities that might distract you or your counsellor's attention are generally to be avoided during sessions. These include playing on the phone, texting or gaming. Please close other applications and browser windows on your device, and put your phone on silent or turn it off.

- Confidentiality of your space

Please make sure that no other person is in the room with you during your session. If someone else does enter the room, please let your counsellor know that this has happened as the session will need to be paused until they have left or ended. If you cannot alert your therapist to someone else's presence, please exit the session immediately. Contact the service as soon as possible after the session to tell us what has happened.

While not compulsory, wearing headphones can help to keep the content of sessions private, improve sound quality and also minimise distractions.

Please do not record any part of your counselling session.

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- After session care

After each session it is important to build in some time for yourself. You might plan in an activity such as a walk or a creative activity, or simply some quiet time to help you process and 'let go' of the counselling. This is especially important if you have been dealing with difficult issues during your session.

E. Attendance

Regular and punctual attendance plays an important part in therapy. We ask you to commit to attending at the agreed time and lateness will either lead to a shorter session or, if 20 minutes or more, its cancellation. While non-attendance cannot always be avoided, we ask you to commit to attending *all* scheduled sessions.

- Notice

We will give you as much notice as possible when sessions cannot be offered due to, for instance, your counsellor's holiday commitments, illness or periods of service closure. We will contact you as soon as possible if a session needs to be cancelled at short notice.

Please let your therapist know in advance of any planned breaks. Sessions cancelled in advance after discussion with your therapist will not be counted in the total number of remote sessions offered to you.

Unless you have made different arrangements with your therapist, you should text WCTS on 07590 863205 if you need to cancel at short notice, e.g., because of illness. If that is not possible, please phone the service on 0113 245 5725. Please give as much notice as possible so as we can let your therapist know of the cancellation. Sessions cancelled at short notice will usually count towards the total number of remote sessions offered to you.

- Missed sessions

If you miss a session without letting us know in advance, it will count towards the agreed total number of sessions. A possible exception to this is where accessing your session would raise threats to your safety and you couldn't alert us to this. In such a situation, please inform us of your situation as soon as you are able after the missed session.

In normal circumstances If you miss two consecutive sessions without making contact, your therapist will regard the agreement as having ended.

If you fail to attend a high proportion of your sessions your therapist may discuss with you whether therapy is helpful to you at this time.

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F. Confidentiality and its limits

Assessment and counselling sessions are confidential to the client and WCTS. Limits to that confidentiality apply as outlined in the Confidentiality and Consent Agreement.

G. Concerns and Complaints

If you have any concerns or complaints about the service you are receiving, we ask you that your first step is to raise these with your therapist. If you do not feel able to do so, please contact the WCTS office to speak to a manager. A copy of the complaints procedure is on the website or is available on request.

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3. ONLINE GROUP COUNSELLING/THERAPY

Group sessions are being offered using Zoom as an online platform. While the total security of any online platform cannot be guaranteed, Zoom is an established, user-friendly platform that aims to provide a high level of security for its users. You can find out more about how they have sought to safeguard your privacy at <https://zoom.us/docs/en-us/privacy-and-security.html>.

Group members will access their weekly meetings via a link that they will be sent. While meeting on-line can be similar to face-to-face counselling, it is different to sitting in the same room as your group. Counselling via Zoom may not be right for everyone. Please feel free to discuss this with your therapist and express any concerns that you may have.

A. Pre-Group Considerations

The key requirements for clients joining a group online are:

- A safe and confidential space
- A stable internet connection
- A device – preferably a laptop or computer
- Access to childcare for the duration of the session - where applicable
- The willingness to familiarise yourself with the required procedures

B. Accessing sessions

Your counsellor will set up your Zoom counselling sessions at the same time and day each week. You will be given a Meeting ID code and a password.

At the time of your session go to <https://www.zoom.us>.

Click on Join a meeting.

You will then be prompted to enter the meeting ID and password. There is a virtual online waiting room where you can wait if you click on the link too early. From the meeting room, you will be invited by your therapist to join the meeting. When all group members have joined, to increase security the meeting will be locked

For more information about using Zoom visit:

- <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/200101697>

If you don't feel confident setting up your tech, don't hesitate to get in touch with your therapist who can help you through the process.

C. During-Group Considerations

- All group members are required to join in both audio and visual modes, unless there is a group agreement to the contrary.
- In order to see everyone at the same time, click on 'Gallery View' in the top right hand corner. A yellow outline will surround whoever is talking at any one time.

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- Should you wish to, you can 'Hide Self View' by clicking on the three dots in the top right hand corner of your individual screen. This will mean that you cannot see your own image while other group members and the therapist will still be able to do so.
- During groups, the private chat function will be unavailable. The group chat function may be used if it is useful for a designated activity and all group members will be able to see the content of the messages. We will also not be using the reaction buttons, unless they are useful for a designated activity. The facilitator(s) will advise for the use of group chat and reactions.
- The host can see all chats, even the private ones, so we will not be using this function during groups. We will also not be using the reaction buttons, unless they are useful for a designated activity. Your therapist will advise if this is the case.
- Please do not have other devices on or around you during the session, such as phones, iPads, TVs, or fridges as they can create a lot of feedback and interference. However, your therapist will have her phone available during the session in case anyone experiences technical issues. Clients are encouraged to call or text if this is the case.
- In some groups it is ok to have a soft or hot drink with you. Your particular group will make an agreement about drinks. Food is not something that members usually have in groups. Please do not smoke or vape during the session. We ask that you think carefully before bringing pets in the room as they can be distracting for either you or other group members. Please discuss this with your therapist.
- Activities that might distract you or your counsellor's attention are generally to be avoided during sessions. These include playing on the phone, texting or gaming. Please close other applications and browser windows on your device, and put your phone on silent or turn it off.
- If, for any reason, you are unable to join or stay with a group, e.g. due to a technical issue or other reason, then your therapist will try to contact you and keep you in. If you need to leave the screen at any point, then the group will carry on without you until you are able to re-join. If you are unable to stay connected then phone or message the therapist, otherwise she will try to contact you after the group.

D. General Considerations

Safety

As with individual sessions, it is important that you are not under the influence of alcohol, un-prescribed or prescribed drugs or medication that limit your capacity to take care of yourself. If you are under the influence of any of these, you will not be able to go ahead with the session.

Attendance

- Regular and punctual attendance plays an important part in therapy. We ask you to commit to attending at the agreed time. While recognising that non-attendance can at times be unavoidable, we ask you to commit to attending *all* scheduled sessions.

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- On our part, the service will endeavour to give you as much notice as possible of when sessions cannot be offered due to, for instance, your counsellor's holiday commitments or periods of service closure. We will contact you as soon as possible if a session needs to be cancelled at short notice.
- Please let the counsellor know in advance of any planned breaks. If you need to cancel at short notice (e.g. because of illness), please contact WCTS (phone 0113 245 5725 or email info@womenstherapyleeds.org.uk) before the session time.
- If you become aware that you will be late for a session, please let your therapist know as far in advance as possible. It is at the therapist's discretion whether you will be admitted into the group for that session. A number of factors will inform this decision, including the type of group, the amount of notice and extent of anticipated delay.
- If you miss a high proportion of your sessions your therapist may discuss with you whether your participation in group therapy is helpful to you at this time.

Confidentiality

- Assessment and counselling sessions are confidential to clients and WCTS. Limits to that confidentiality apply as outlined in the Confidentiality and Consent Agreement.
- In order to ensure confidentiality, group members should not disclose elsewhere anything that has been said during the session. Should individual group members need to speak to close family and friends about their experience of the online group, such conversations should focus on your own experiences. The words, issues, names or identifying features of anyone else should not be referred to. Where possible, we ask you to bring those conversations back into the group.
- To increase confidentiality, you can wear headphones so no one in your house can hear what other members are saying.
- Zoom includes the facility to record groups and to chat. These functions will not be used during our groups in keeping with our usual confidentiality and boundary arrangements.
- Think about the view other group members will have into your home, and reflect on what you would like people to see, or not see.
- As discussed in your initial assessments, contact with other group members is discouraged for the duration of the group so we can keep the space as confidential and safe as possible.

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4. REMOTE SERVICES CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

WCTS counsellors work within the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions.

Confidentiality

Counselling is confidential but there are times when we do have to share information.

Any information you share in your sessions will be kept confidential to WCTS including WCTS managers and supervisors, except when the information you give leads us to believe that there is:

- a risk of harm to you or others
- a child being harmed or at risk of harm
or
- when there is a legal requirement to pass on information

When it is necessary to pass on information, we will usually discuss this with you first and seek your agreement to sharing the information. If this is not possible, we might have to act straight away if we believe that there is immediate risk of significant harm to you or someone else. Your counsellor will give you examples of situations where this might apply.

Management of personal data

We will collect and use your personal data for the following purposes:

- In order to assess suitability of the service for you (referral form) and in order to contact you during your engagement with WCTS services.
- To help the therapist/counsellor in their work with you: Records are kept of assessment, therapy sessions and communications between us to help the counsellor in their work with you. These records are coded, kept securely and destroyed after seven years.
- For monitoring and evaluating our services: We use different forms to check that the work we are doing is useful and effective. At the start, during and at the end of counselling you will be asked to complete forms to allow WCTS to monitor and evaluate the work done. We provide reports to its funders and other stakeholders about the work we are doing using summarised data.
- As part of reports to our funders and other stakeholders about the work we are doing: This includes general information such as details of the types of problems we are working with, and may include brief, anonymous descriptions of how our work has helped.

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- Creative work and images produced during counselling may be taken away by you at any time during counselling. If they are not taken they will be kept for three months after the end of counselling during which you may come and collect them; if not then will be dismantled.

You may withdraw your consent to the collection and processing of your personal data at any time by reading our Right to Withdraw Consent Procedure and discussing it with your therapist. If you do withdraw your consent we might not be able to provide certain services to you.

WCTS only collect the data required to fulfil your contact with us. All our paper records are kept in locked cabinets with restricted access. During remote counselling records may be kept in locked file boxes in your counsellor's home. Our computerised records are firewall and password protected.

You have a right to request a copy of the information that we hold about you. If you would like a copy of some or all of your personal information, please write, with relevant ID, to us at 5 Portland Street, Leeds, LS1 3DR. If you are unsatisfied with the way we are processing your data, you have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Consent to share information with GP and other professionals

We ask all service users to give us the contact details of their GP and other relevant professionals / services. Your counsellor will agree with you reasons where we might make contact with others. By giving us contact details you are giving us permission to contact your GP and others if necessary.

Emergency Contact

If an emergency occurs whilst we are talking with you, we need to know who to contact on your behalf. We would do this with your agreement if possible but if we are not able to obtain your agreement we may need to contact them anyway. We ask all service users to provide a name and contact details for an emergency contact.

Consent to process personal data

By accessing remote services you are giving us permission to process and use your personal data for the purposes outlined above.