What counselling is and what it is not

Counselling is different for everyone. People generally come to counselling when something happens in their life that they feel they cannot cope with. They do not feel they have the skills or the strategies to cope with the issues alone.

These difficulties can be many different things. It can be a single critical incident like and assault, an event such as a bereavement or the break-up of a relationship. There may be long term symptoms such as depression, self-harming, an eating disorder or a lack of motivation which does not appear to have an obvious cause.

You will be offered a range of approaches, therapies and skills which will help you to feel listened to and understood.

You will be supported to find an understanding of what is happening and the thoughts and emotions this generates in you. This will help you to explore the choices open to you and the consequences of the choices. It will help you to make the best decisions for you.

About this guide

This guide is designed by local counselling services to inform and advise you when thinking about counselling.

This guide will:

- Help you to understand the choices around counselling.
- Help you to know what you can expect from counselling and the counselling process.
- Highlight some of the issues to be aware of when choosing a counsellor and when having counselling.

Who is CASSS?

CASSS is a small charity working to develop and coordinate counselling and therapy services, in Southend and Essex.

Funded by:

SAVS
Southend Association of Voluntary Services

Essex Community Foundation

CASSS

Counselling & Support Services Southend

FACING FORWARDS

What is counselling?

A guide for new clients

What to be expect from counselling and the counselling process

The assessment session

Counselling generally begins with an assessment. This will give you the time and space to start thinking about your issues. The counsellor will help you to identify how you want to approach your concerns. This will give you the opportunity to meet the counsellor and give you a feeling of how the sessions will work.

The assessment may be enough for you to look clearly at the difficulties and feel that you have the skills to move forward on your own.
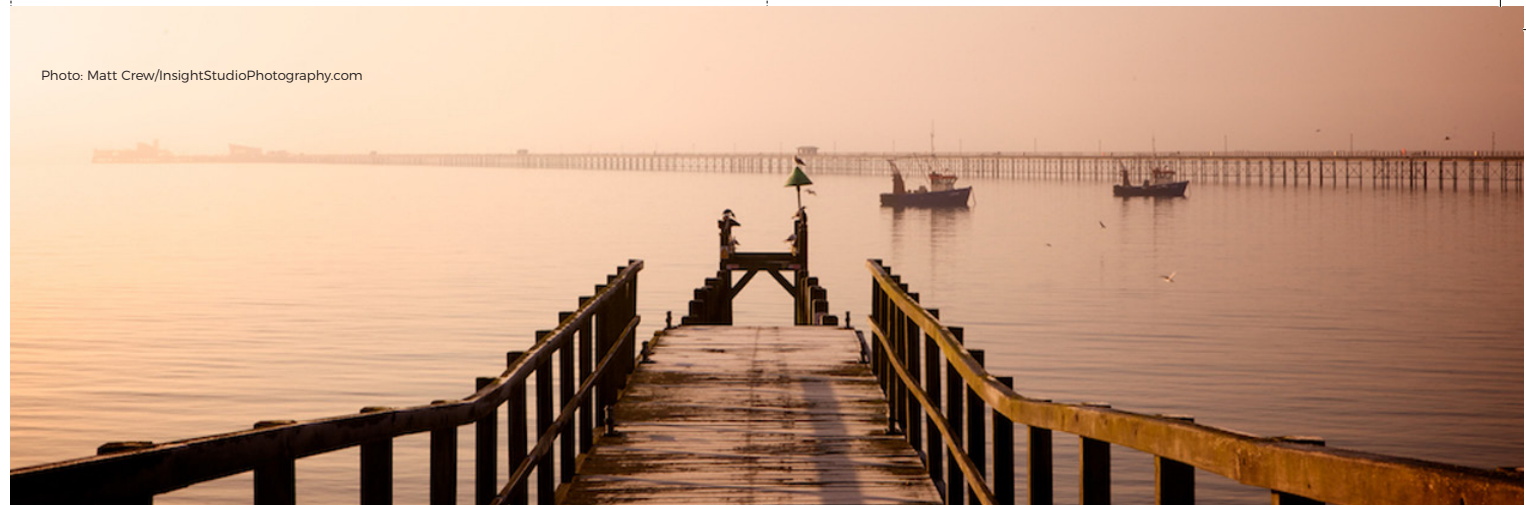
The sessions

These are normally 50 minutes and the counsellor will plan to work with for between 6 and 8 sessions initially. With your counsellor, you will review your issues as you progress and together you can choose whether to continue your sessions or not.

Regular reviews will show you how far you have progressed and the skills and strategies you have developed.

Ending the sessions

This will be decided by you and your counsellor together.

Some people will deal with all their issues. Others will be comfortable with the progress they have made in some areas and feel they do not need the support any more.

For other people they will be comfortable to end. But they may at another time choose to return, to get support with the same or other issues.

Confidentiality

Anything talked about is confidential to your counsellor and will not be shared with anyone else, unless you or a child/vulnerable adult is 'at risk'. You and your counsellor may then agree to share the information with someone else who can support you.

Missing sessions

If you cannot attend a session, please let your counsellor know so a new appointment can be made.

Issues to be aware of when engaging in counselling (Therapy)

When looking for a counsellor always ask for:
- Evidence of their qualifications
- Evidence of their professional insurance.
- Membership of a 'professional body' e.g. BACP, UKCP, NCS, ACC
- Confirm that they receive regular Supervision.

You may find that you are not able to form a positive relationship with your counsellor. This happens occasionally and does not mean either party is at fault.

If you feel this is the case with your counsellor, talk to them about it and see if it can be resolved.

If you feel you are not able to resolve this issue, you may wish to seek support elsewhere.