

VOLUNTEER COUNSELLORS – PLACEMENT GUIDELINES

Background to Mind in Croydon

Mind in Croydon was established in 1967 and is at the forefront of developing ways to work with people with mental health problems and their families in the Croydon area. It aims to increase understanding of the difficulties faced by those with mental health problems and to express the views of its members on mental health issues and service. Mind in Croydon is working to promote good mental health. It seeks to empower people to lead a full life as a part of their local community.

The Counselling Service aims to promote good mental health by providing a high quality professional service in a confidential and safe setting. Counsellors offer clients weekly appointments, each one lasting 50 minutes. Counselling takes place at the Mind in Croydon premises: 26 Pampisford Road, Purley. The service is managed by the Counselling Manager.

Minimum Training Requirement

Counsellors must be at an advanced stage of training i.e. as a minimum they must have completed the one-year counselling foundation course (or equivalent) and have commenced the second year of a Diploma in Counselling (or equivalent).

Personal Therapy

Counsellors are expected to be in regular therapy throughout the duration of their course. Qualified counsellors are expected to attend personal therapy if a need is identified by their supervisor.

Duties and Responsibilities of the Volunteer Counsellor

Counsellors are expected to see a minimum of 3 clients per week. Each client will generally be offered up to 12 weekly sessions. Counsellors are expected to continue in the placement for a period of two years minimum, offering counselling for at least 40 weeks per year, with breaks or holidays of no longer than 3 weeks. Longer breaks need to be negotiated with the Counselling Manager. When counsellors are accepted by the Counselling Manager, times of sessions and use of rooms are agreed. If for any reason, counsellors or clients wish to change their regular 'slot' discuss this with your supervisor and/or the counselling services manager and make sure a room is free. If counsellors wish to change their 'slot' permanently, this needs to be negotiated with the Counselling Manager.

Administration

On an administrative level, counsellors are responsible for:

- Attending their predetermined weekly counselling sessions
- Booking on-going appointments with clients
- Keeping the main office diary up to date with appointments made.
- Ensuring that sufficient notice is given for the booking of counselling rooms (4 weeks ahead)

- Notifying clients if for any reason the counsellor will not be present and also notifying office staff of any relevant changes or absences.
- Completing summary forms detailing sessions provided (statistics) and submitting them to the Counselling Administrator at the end of each month as directed.
- Letting the Mind in Croydon office and the Counselling Manager know, in advance, if the counsellor intends to take an extended holiday or other break.

In-house Supervision/Monitoring

Group supervision is compulsory at Mind in Croydon. This supervision helps to ensure that Mind in Croydon can monitor the quality and safety of the service to clients. Each group will meet fortnightly for one and a half hours and have up to 4 members. More supervision may be required for reports. Each counsellor must take responsibility for negotiating and booking any other sessions. Any other supervision, outside of Mind, must be negotiated with the Counselling Manager.

Security

Counsellors must ensure that rooms are left clean and tidy after use. All electrical appliances and lights must be switched off, windows closed and furniture returned to its normal place.

Support

The Counselling Manager is available to discuss any issues that might arise with clients and if necessary to offer support on counselling matters.

Accountability

Counsellors are responsible to the Counselling Manager.

Personal Qualities

Prospective counsellors are assessed in an interview with the Counselling Manager and two other people. We hope that counsellors will possess the following qualities:

- Relaxed, confident disposition
- Good self awareness, reliable, approachable and responsible
- Strong interpersonal skills
- Clear thinking, and an objective approach
- Good listening skills
- An awareness of mental health issues
- Good time management and organisational skills

It is also extremely useful if counsellors can demonstrate knowledge of other services available to people with psychological and emotional problems, both statutory and voluntary.

Ethics

The Mind in Croydon Counselling Service is an organisational member of BACP and all counsellors are expected to abide by the BACP ethical framework.

Confidentiality

All volunteers and employees of Mind in Croydon are expected to respect the right of clients to privacy and confidentiality as far as possible within the constraints of legal requirements and the safety of other people. Copies of the Confidentiality Policy are available from the Counselling Service Administrator.

Expenses

Reasonable travelling expenses will generally be reimbursed by Mind in Croydon. It may not always be possible to reimburse in full the expenses of counsellors who have to travel from some distance beyond the boundaries of the Borough of Croydon. In these cases Mind in Croydon will agree an appropriate rate of reimbursement with the Counselling Manager. Claim forms and Mind in Croydon's guidelines on expenses are available on request from the Counselling Manager.

Insurance

Public liability and professional indemnity insurance are provided. The full insurance policies are held by the Chief Executive of Mind in Croydon, and are available for inspection.

Notice

Once a commitment has been given, counsellors have a responsibility to bring counselling to a satisfactory conclusion where possible. If this were not possible we would ask counsellors to give maximum notice so that alternative provision can be made.