



‘Preparing the Ground’

Information sheet about Counselling & Psychotherapy

Working together in therapy is an evolving, negotiated, and agreed process that aims to be responsive to your changing and developing needs and wishes. This information sheet aims to clarify **the basis of our agreement to work together**. It is intended to give you confidence that you know what to expect.

Therapeutic approach

Working from a person-centred basis, our work aims to support you to safely and freely explore your issues. Whilst I may on occasion offer information or suggestions, counselling cannot provide ready-made answers; my role is to support you to find the ways forward that are right for you. My website www.simonspence.net provides more detailed information about my approach.

Professional boundaries

Counselling and psychotherapy research appears conclusive that the quality and authenticity of the therapeutic relationship is central to helpful and effective work. Whilst it can often be very significant indeed, it nonetheless remains a professional rather than a social relationship. I therefore generally attempt to avoid unnecessary contact outwith our meetings, ‘dual relationships’, and do not engage with clients through social media such as Facebook or Twitter.

Contact in between appointments

If you need to be in touch with me between appointments, my preferred option is that you email me (simonspence@cooptel.net). Alternatively, you can call me on **07902 620308** (confidential voicemail). I will respond as soon as I am able. I do not offer a crisis or emergency service, so if you require immediate help, please consider contacting your GP, NHS 24, or contacts listed on the ‘Crisis Contacts’ page on my website.

Confidentiality

I hold all that you share with me in the greatest confidence. I do not talk about my work with others nor disclose with whom I am working. I do however have regular professional supervision during which I reflect on my work with an experienced colleague who is also bound by the same commitment to upholding your privacy and confidentiality.

In accordance with my ethical standards and commitments, I reserve the right to break confidentiality if you tell me anything that gives me good reason to believe that someone is causing, or is actively planning to cause, serious harm to themselves or others (a number of laws require me to do so in specific situations). In such - rare - circumstances I may need to contact other professionals. This would be in order to take the steps required to ensure as far as possible the safety of the person(s) concerned.

I would aim to act as discreetly and minimally as possible. I would always inform you of any action I was taking, ideally discussing things with you as part of an agreed plan. I would always seek your permission if at all possible.

Fees and Payment

If you are responsible for paying for your therapy, we will agree the fee in our first meeting. Please ask at any point if you wish to discuss or review this. I review my fees annually and any changes take effect each January 1st. For payment methods please see the [Fees and Payment](#) page on my website.

Frequency and duration of counselling

Sessions will normally take place at my meeting room in Fortrose and last for one hour at times and frequencies suitable to you and negotiated between us. I commit to being ready to begin working at the agreed time. If you are late I am unlikely to be able to extend my availability beyond the previously agreed finishing time. If you neither arrive nor call within 30 mins of the appointment time I will view this as a cancellation.

Cancellations & missed appointments

If you are not able to attend an appointment for any reason, please let me know giving at least 24 hours notice. Without this the session fee may be payable, depending on the circumstances. If I need to cancel a meeting I will give you as much notice as I can. I aim to give you three week's notice of any planned absence or holiday I intend to take.

Record keeping

In addition to administrative information such as your contact details, I make brief session notes, or 'aides mémoires' to keep a record of what we have discussed. These are 'paperless' and kept confidentially. I use a reputable secure hosting platform, vetted by both the NHS and Ministry of Defence for hosting confidential medical information, so you have peace of mind that your notes are stored safely and securely. Please ask if you wish to see these at any point. These notes are deleted three years after our work ends.

Ending our work together

Our work can be short or longer term depending on your circumstances, needs, and wishes. This will be discussed in our initial meetings. It is something that can change over time and is open to negotiation. We will review our work regularly, looking to the time when it can best be concluded. You are of course free to end our work at any point. You do not have to give a reason. I would however prefer and request that you give me notice of this if you are able.

When our work comes to an end, I will invite you to complete an anonymous online review form, in order to support my ongoing professional development. Your responses will be very welcome, whatever they may be.

Professional Will.

I sincerely hope this is not necessary, but if for some reason I am incapacitated and am unable to meet with you or contact you about it, a trusted and experienced colleague will contact you.

Questions, comments, feedback, and complaints

Our work will involve attending to the issues important to you. As this occurs within our relationship it is likely that you will have thoughts, feelings, and responses towards me and our work together. In order to best tailor the work to you, I welcome your comments, questions, and feedback about this, and also your complaints if you are not satisfied in any way. I invite and encourage you to raise any dissatisfaction with me in the first instance and I will do my best to resolve things with you. If this is not possible or you are not satisfied with my response, you can contact my professional organisation The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy at www.bacp.co.uk

Your agreement

Please check through this information sheet to be sure that you are happy with it as a basis for our work together. I will be happy to discuss any aspect of it with you at any point.

Simon Spence
December 2020