

## Introduction to Counsellor Placements

January 2012

This paper sets out the basis of the agreement between TCS and counsellors. It includes information for both trainees and qualified counsellors.

### 1 Introduction - TCS

Taunton Counselling Service (TCS) was formed at the end of 2010 and began operating from its Bridge Street premises at the start of 2011. The service is based on the 'Palace Gate Counselling Service (PGCS)' in Exeter, it is however completely independent of PGCS.

### 2 TCS Aims

Although the aims of TCS are clearly benevolent and non-profit making, it is *not* a registered Charity, *nor* a voluntary sector organisation. It is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. As such its operation is governed by Company Law and it is managed and run by a Director. Its Company Registration number is 7358667. Registered office: Somerset House, 6070 Birmingham Business Park, Birmingham, West Midlands, B37 7BF.

The aims of the Company are:

**A not for profit organisation to provide counselling, psychotherapy, support and other therapeutic services, for the alleviation of distress and social exclusion as a result of emotional and psychological difficulties, or other special needs.**

In fulfillment of these aims we endeavor to offer a high quality counselling service to all in need, without discrimination and where possible irrespective of a clients ability to pay (clients make a payment according to their means).

Potential clients refer themselves (often following a recommendation from a GP or some other agency). An initial interview takes place and a counsellor then allocated. Clients then work with the same counsellor on a weekly basis. We offer counselling for both short and medium term work and longer term therapy.

### 3 What does TCS offer?

TCS deals with an almost unlimited range of emotional difficulties: depression, anxiety, stress, childhood & adult abuse, victims of crime, loss, relationships, etc. The service is available to all, without discrimination of race, class, culture, gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation or ability to pay.

We also offer a limited amount of 'couples work' and also provide 'External Supervision' to those needing on-going support in the workplace.

### Counsellors

TCS counsellors are all volunteers (as is the Director). Counsellors offer a minimum of one session (being a morning, afternoon or evening) during which they see up to three clients. Counselling usually takes place at our Bridge Street Offices.

### Therapeutic approach

TCS is committed to the 'Person Centered Approach', as developed by Carl Rogers. Whilst that does not mean that every counsellor practices in a purist person centered way, our choice of counsellors will be affected by someone's commitment to this approach and their embodiment of it. As an organization we also attempt to operate using the same principles. So we strive to run as an organization where respect, acceptance of individuality, lack of critical judgement (even when dealing with complaints) and realness are what can be expected.

### What are TCS offering to trainees?

#### Setting

Firstly an ideal setting, in a professional counselling agency. We have a self contained office suite with 2 pleasant dedicated counselling rooms and an office. We operate on a shoe-string, but the premises are ideally located and the counselling rooms as good as you are likely to find anywhere.

#### Client vetting

All clients are vetted by an experienced counsellor before they would be allocated to you. We do all we can to help trainees through their placement year and do our best to ensure that the clients allocated are appropriate to your current experience level and that your exposure to clients is regulated at the beginning of your placement to help you find your feet at an appropriate rate.

#### Insurance

You will be covered by our insurance for all client work at TCS. This cover is provided free to our counsellors, so you will not need to arrange your own insurance.

#### Supervision

Supervision is provided in house and again is free to counsellors. It is an absolute requirement to undertake this. We offer 1½ hours of supervision a month in a mixture of individual and group. This is offered free of charge. Our aim is to support you as fully as is possible.

#### Professional development

Your supervision group is one important form of ongoing professional development, but in addition we also try to provide some professional development sessions during the year to help us focus on particular areas of interest.

## What do TCS expect from you?

---

### Professional standards

At TCS we do not equate 'voluntary' with 'amateur'. We strive to maintain the highest professional standards in all that we do. When selecting counsellors to work with TCS we look for people committed to working in a professional way and we expect that professionalism to carry on from face to face client work into paperwork and the following of administrative procedures.

### Time commitment

You must be prepared to commit to working with us for a session a week for a minimum of a year. When (if) you leave then you must properly complete work with clients you have already started. You must act in accordance with TCS policies and ways of working and should familiarise yourself with them.

## What counsellors are TCS looking for?

---

### Course

If you are a trainee you must be on (or about to start) an acknowledged Diploma level counselling course. We would usually only take students during their final year of the Diploma, unless there were special circumstances.

### Therapeutic model

TCS is committed to the provision of non-directive client centred counselling / therapy. Whilst some of our counsellors use a variety of approaches, we would be unlikely to appoint counsellors who used a therapeutic model which we felt to be in conflict with our core approach.

### Safe AND effective

We recognise fully that you may be at the beginning of your counselling career and your placement is part of that learning process. At the same time we need to be happy at all times that you are likely to be able to practice in a way that is both 'safe' and may reasonably be expected to be 'effective'. We will support you to the hilt once you are a member of our team, but we always reserve the right to put a pause on the allocation of clients to you, or even to terminate the placement if, in our view, this criteria cannot be met at the time. At the end of your twelve month placement, you can apply to continue working with TCS.

## Making ends meet

---

We struggle to make ends meet at TCS (like most voluntary sector organisations). One of the downsides to an organisation which has the 'feel' of an 'established professional organisation' is that people sometimes assume it is other than what it is. It is, at the bottom line, a group of volunteers, committed to providing good quality counselling to those who otherwise could not access it. You need to be able to enter into and embrace that commitment and the ethos that goes with it, in an organisation where we all pull together to ensure this valuable service continues.

## 6 Some questions we are often asked

---

### Do you pay expenses?

We would love to be more generous than we can afford to be. This is what we do at the moment:

i) for the first 6 months of a trainee placement you get NO travel or car park expenses. You can claim for Postage, phone calls etc .

ii) after 6 months, until you get your Diploma, you will be paid mileage at the rate of 25p per mile for a maximum of 30 miles round trip, together with the least expensive car parking option available (e.g. Park & Ride schemes), or your public transport fare, when you are coming in for your counselling session. You do not receive expenses travelling to supervision or professional development sessions.

iii) Once you get your Diploma, you can also claim expenses travelling for Supervision & Professional development sessions.

### How many clients do you see?

Each volunteer counsellor donates a minimum of half a day a week during which time they see 3 clients.

### What hours do you operate?

Monday to Friday 9.00 to 5.00pm plus four evenings (Mon-Thurs) 5 to 9.00pm.

### Where are clients referred from?

All clients are 'self-referred', in that they make the initial contact with us themselves. We are therefore completely 'open-access'. Most clients at the moment are being referred by their GP or some other statutory health service.

### How long can counselling last?

At the initial interview with the client, it is decided whether to offer **fixed term counselling** or **open ended therapy**. 'Fixed term' in our terms means a limit of 10 weeks. 'Open-ended' lasts typically 6-9 months although sometimes such work can last for eighteen months or more. Some of our referrals are from agencies who recognise that the client they are working with needs longer term work than they are able to provide.

### Can I change supervisor?

It is regarded as perfectly OK to request a change from one supervisor to another. We will accommodate such requests where possible. If you are a trainee however, your training establishment would also have to be involved and agree, as we will have entered into a three way agreement with them. We currently have three supervisors at TCS. We also have an arrangement with PGCS in Exeter where you could receive supervision there (but we only pay expenses to your usual centre).