



Patient Information Sheet **Counselling Information**

This leaflet provides information about counselling and how this may help you during and after your fertility treatment at Chelsea and Westminster's Fertility Centre.

It aims to answer some of the common questions people ask about counselling and what services are available to you.

If you have any further questions or would like to talk to someone then please speak to a member of the Unit team.

What is counselling?

Counselling can address immediate issues in your life that may cause you confusion, uncertainty or anxiety, such as infertility, providing you with a reflective space where you can explore and consider the things that are worrying you.

How does counselling work?

Essentially, the process of counselling enables you to explore your thoughts, feelings and beliefs in order to develop a better understanding of your present situation.

You may discover ways of coping and living more satisfactorily and begin to feel more in control of your life and the direction in which it is going.

You may decide to make changes to your life or come to terms with things that cannot be changed.

Counsellors are not there to judge you or give advice. What they do provide is a secure, confidential environment in which to explore any problems you feel you have and to help you to deal with situations.

Your discussions with the counsellor will remain confidential at all times and they will only divulge what you have discussed with them if you give permission for them to do so. However, there are boundaries to confidentiality with regards to safeguarding and the risk of harm to yourself or others. If this is disclosed during a counselling session, the counsellor will in the first instance raise any concerns with you, if this is safe to do so or the counsellor may seek advice from their supervisor, as they would be legally and ethically obliged to involve others but would always try to talk to you about this first.

Who may it help?

There are times when many of us may feel unable to cope and there are many reasons for seeking help. In the context of infertility the prospect of childlessness together with all the investigations and treatment, frequently leads to feelings of anxiety, stress and depression. Tensions and conflicts within close relationships are common.



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Counselling may also be helpful if you are uncertain at any stage about the options open to you. These may include specific considerations such as continuing or postponing treatment, use of donated eggs or sperm or withdrawing from any further treatment. Sadly, not everyone who starts this journey will end up with a positive outcome.

For some individuals letting go and moving on can bring a profound sense of relief but for others the experience may evoke a complicated range of emotions. A skilled counsellor can support you through this period of grief and major emotional adjustment and will be able to explore alternatives with you when you feel ready to do so.

Will the counsellor be able to give me information about my treatment?

The counsellor will discuss issues such as ways of coping with your work whilst undergoing treatment or with the stress related to particular stages of your treatment.

If you need detailed medical information this will be provided by the doctor or nurses at the Unit at consultation. However, the counsellor will be able to discuss emotional considerations and implications of some of the proposed treatments e.g egg freezing, fertility preservation, donation and surrogacy.

The Human Fertility and Embryology Authority (HFEA) is the body responsible for licensing Assisted Conception centres in the United Kingdom. It states in their Code of Practice that counselling should be clearly distinguished from giving of information and should consist of three types:

Implication counselling: to enable individuals to understand the implications of any proposed treatment/course of action for themselves, their family and any children born as a result. This also extends to implications of long-term storage or use of gametes or embryos.

Support counselling: to give emotional support at times of particular stress, such as when there is a failure to achieve a pregnancy, or to help people feel more able to cope with any stresses associated with treatment.

Therapeutic counselling: to help individuals cope with the consequences of infertility and treatment and resolve the problem these may cause, and to help deal with specific emotional problems of continuing treatment such as significant anxiety.

At the Unit we regard the provision of counselling, covering all three types, as a vital and integral part of the overall service we offer.

How long does the counselling last?

A single session lasts approximately one hour. You may feel a single session will meet your needs but sometimes a further one or two sessions may be beneficial. These will usually be made at the end of your initial session. You may use the counselling service as often as you feel you need during, or after your treatment has finished.

How to book an appointment?



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Appointments are made by contacting the Fertility Centre reception on 020 3315 8585. The first three appointments are free, but consecutive appointments will be charged at £115 per 1hour session.

Patients have access to counseling via virtual consultation on Zoom or FaceTime; appointments are still booked through the admin team.

Counsellors: Caroline Spencer and Debbie Howe

The Fertility Centre counsellors are accredited members of the British Infertility Counselling Association (BICA). They also hold a more general counselling/psychotherapy association accreditation e.g. accredited members of the UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP), accredited member of the British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP), accredited member of the Association for Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (AREBT) and accredited member of British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).