

Forest Hill School Counselling Service

Code of Practice – Confidentiality and Data Protection

This leaflet outlines the counselling service's responsibilities and practices in terms of information on clients and explains our policies on confidentiality and data protection. Please read it carefully and discuss anything you are concerned about or don't understand with your counsellor.

Confidentiality

Everything you tell your counsellor is treated as confidential. This means she will not discuss anything you have told her with anyone else, apart from the following exceptions:

- where you have given her your express consent to disclose information
- where she believes that you or someone else are at risk of serious harm if information is not passed on
- where she would be liable to civil or criminal court procedure if the information was not disclosed

In any of these cases, the counsellor would normally encourage you to pass on information yourself. You would always be informed if she felt she had to break confidentiality.

Record-keeping and data protection

It is essential for counsellors to keep brief notes on their sessions. These help the counsellor and are kept in a locked cabinet, quite separate from other student files and are seen by no one else. These are kept for the duration of your time at either Forest Hill School or SFH6, and then shredded one year after you leave the school/college. Under the data protection act, clients have a right of access to all notes kept on them. If you wish to see your file, you should ask your counsellor, giving a week's notice in writing. She will be present to explain what the file contains and why. Notes may not be taken away or photocopied. If a file contains any additional information such as a letter from a doctor, consent would have to be obtained from that person.

Code of Ethics

Colette is a Registered member of the BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) and works to their professional code of ethics and practice. For more information, please visit www.bacp.co.uk

Supervision

In line with their professional code of practice, counsellors may discuss counselling sessions with a supervisor (who is not a member of school staff). The purpose of this is to help counsellors reflect on their work and the supervisor will not know the clients concerned.

Statistics

The counsellor keeps anonymous statistics to help prepare reports on the use of the service.

Evaluation

From time to time, we may carry out an evaluation exercise to help us improve the service. This would take the form of an anonymous questionnaire to students who have used the service.

Complaints

If you are not happy with the counselling you are receiving, you should discuss this with your counsellor first. If this is too difficult or does not resolve the matter, you should speak to Mr Haresign, Deputy Head teacher.

Colette Rhodes

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