

Client Code: []



Octopus Therapy Private Counselling Contract Client Information Leaflet

Please read and retain this information as it is the basis on which we agree to work together.

Please ask if there is anything you do not understand.

Your counsellor is:

Simon Millar B.Sc. (Hons), Dip. Couns., MBACP, MNCPs

What is Counselling?

- A confidential space to explore your feelings, thoughts, concerns, and difficulties
- A chance for you to discover your own answers and feel more in control of life
- A non-judgemental understanding that values your unique experience

About your counsellor

My name is Simon Millar. I am a qualified counsellor, with a level 4 Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling. In my practice I see clients who are struggling with many issues, for example: loss, bereavement and life-changing illness; anxiety and depression; life events such as divorce, redundancy, and separation from people close to them; sexuality and sexual identity; Trauma and Crisis events, and many other difficulties. All my clients are adults, aged 16 or over.

I particularly welcome clients who have to navigate hidden parts of their lives – for example due to religious, social or work situations – as counselling can help to resolve the long-term mental health problems that people frequently experience from having to hide important parts of their identity. I offer a confidential private practice where clients can talk openly about things.

Ethical Practice

During my training and following qualification, I have worked in a variety of settings, and more details are on the website. I am a member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), and of the National Counselling and Psychotherapy Society (NCPS). To ensure the highest standards of work with clients, I adhere to the standards in the BACP *Ethical Framework for The Counselling Professions (2018)*.

How I Work

My main approach to therapy is Person-centred Counselling. In addition, I also select from a range of other techniques according to what is useful for each client, as everyone is different. I have experience in the use of Brief Therapy (where the duration of therapy is limited to a pre-set number of sessions and we would focus on some specific issues for that time) and in longer work (where therapy lasts as long as the counsellor and client agree is appropriate, with regular reviews of how we both feel things are progressing).

Therapy is offered regardless of gender or gender reassignment, race, age, religion or belief, disability or impairment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, sex or sexual orientation.

The Person-Centred Approach fits my own philosophy as it has at its basis an unshakable belief that all people are capable of change and development, and instinctively know what's best for them.

This approach believes that every person can, and will, become a more fully functioning person if given the correct conditions, which include the counsellor being honest, non-judgmental and fully accepting whilst being fully integrated in the relationship and allowing the client to lead and set the pace. I aim to offer these conditions as best as I can during our work together.

Informed Consent

You have the right to make an informed decision whether to start, continue, or stop therapy and what you want (or don't want) to talk about. Therapy can take painful, difficult, or unexpected directions, is not without some risks, and should not be undertaken lightly. Please ask at any time if there is anything you do not understand, and we can talk about whatever it is. I also urge you to let me know, at any time, if you do not want to discuss any issues, events, memories, relationships, either past or present – because you can always change your mind later.

It is important that we work together in an agreed manner.

The First Session

Sessions last for sixty minutes or more, depending on your choices when booking. The First Session is an opportunity for us to decide if we can work together (that is, it is an Assessment Session). If your circumstances are unusually challenging, it might be necessary to take more than one session to perform an adequate Assessment before I could agree to offer therapy, and Assessments are chargeable at the standard session fees.

The purpose of the Assessment is to ensure that I have the skills necessary to work safely and ethically with you – it's not about if you would be a "good client."

In this Assessment, I will need to ask you some questions about yourself, what has brought you to therapy, and what you hope to get out of it. I will check your contact details and ask you to sign some paperwork after we have gone through it thoroughly. You can also ask me any questions about the nature of therapy and what you could expect. We will also try to organise the timing of future sessions and plan for the payment of fees.

Obviously, this first session gives you the opportunity to decide if you feel that you could work with me, or if there's something about me, or my style of therapy, or just something that you just don't like or trust. This is important because, even though I get on with most people, it's just not possible for one counsellor to suit everyone, and the most important factor in whether people find therapy effective is whether they feel comfortable and confident in their therapist.

Session Length and Frequency

If, after the Assessment, we decide to carry on working together we would normally meet for one session per week, although we might also work fortnightly or on an *ad hoc* basis. Occasionally session length and frequency might be varied if there is a need, and it is agreed between us. Available session lengths and locations are shown on the website and are regularly updated.

Cancelled Sessions, Start and Finish Times

Please try to arrive as close as you can to the time we are due to start. Appointments are staggered so that you will not meet another client, either at the start or at the end of your session. For this reason, I ask clients not to arrive more than 15 minutes early. If you were to arrive late we would still normally finish at the pre-scheduled time.

It's important to try to attend arranged sessions. Appointments are much sought after, and I might not be able to re-arrange for some time if a session is missed. If you miss a session with less than twenty-four hours' notice without notifying me, then you will be charged for that session unless the circumstances are genuinely exceptional.

If you need to cancel a session please call or text on 07879 344133. If you call and I do not answer please leave a message. If you inform me more than twenty-four hours in advance that you cannot attend I will try to arrange an alternative time if you ask for this. If you miss a session and do not notify me I will routinely try to contact you to ask after your wellbeing.

Holidays

I will try to tell you as far in advance as possible if I am going on holiday or will be missing a session or sessions for any other reason and I ask that you do the same. No charge is made for pre-arranged holidays that either of us take.

How Much Does It Cost?

Current fees are always available to view on the website, and any changes to fees are advertised with at least 90 days' notice.

How Long Will Therapy Last?

This depends on many factors. Therapy isn't like a medicine, there is no 'standard dose'. Some people feel they need to work for one or two sessions, some people for weeks, some for months, and some for years. People have different needs and aims and work at different speeds.

Will You Get 'Hooked'?

Some people can come to 'rely' on their therapist for a time to varying degrees and for varying reasons. If this happens it is important for us both to monitor and understand this. One of the major goals of therapy is your being able to make your own decisions and govern your own life. If I was ever concerned you were becoming too 'dependent' I would discuss carefully with you why this might be and what we might do about it. If you get concerned you are becoming too 'dependent' please do say so and again we would talk about it carefully. I am contactable in emergencies, but I do not offer 'emergency telephone counselling' and if I feel telephone, text, or email contact is becoming unhelpful we will discuss this.

What's the Difference between Counselling and Psychotherapy?

There's no quick answer to this: experts disagree on the difference or whether there is a difference, given some of the similarities. The information in this leaflet applies equally to what I might consider to be "psychotherapy" as well as "counselling".

After Therapy Has Finished

Please note that we would not be able to see each other on a social basis after the therapy is finished and I cannot accept invitations to social events.

Does It Work? What Happens If It Doesn't?

Therapy is not a 'Magic Wand' or an answer to all problems. Therapists do not advise clients or tell them what to do and there is no guarantee therapy will help, but almost all my clients report that their counselling has had either a positive or very positive effect on them. Good effects can sometimes be quick but often take longer to happen. Sometimes therapy can lead to things feeling worse before they feel better. Therapy is often hard work and might hit problems of various sorts.

If that sounds vague it's because everyone is different, and we all have different backgrounds, experiences, and expectations – so what you might think was OK might be less or more than another client. But, if you asked other clients if, in the main, working with me had been helpful and effective, most would say Yes.

Occasionally someone might question the investment in time or effort and there are various reasons why sometimes therapy isn't helping as much as we'd hoped. These can become apparent early on or sometimes only later in the therapy.

It's important that we monitor together honestly and openly whether the therapy is helping as we go along. Often I will set a specific time to review this to help us monitor if the therapy is helping. It is important that if at any time you feel that the therapy isn't helping, or if there is any kind of problem, that you tell me, and we can try to resolve it. If you decide to finish therapy you are not obliged to tell me why.

If I felt we needed to finish working together because the therapy really wasn't helping or likely to help any further, I would discuss this carefully with you, we would agree a length of time for us to work towards an ending and try to discuss what other assistance might be available.

Supervision

Therapists bound by the BACP *Ethical Framework* are required to have clinical supervision for their work. In supervision I talk with another experienced and qualified therapist about what we have discussed to try to improve my understanding and help me to work productively with you. Your agreement to therapy includes your agreeing to my receiving supervision of my work with you. Any information shared with my supervisor will be about the issues you have brought to therapy, and not about you personally. In supervision, no client names are used, and your identity is not disclosed.

Your Personal Information

You will have been given a separate **Privacy Guide** explaining what, how and why any information about you is stored, shared, and protected. As part of the way I work I will need to make some adequate but non-excessive notes. To work effectively with you I would not normally make any notes whilst in our sessions together, apart from in the Assessment Session(s).

You have a right under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act (2018) to access information held about you on a computer and in any written records. I keep notes purely to assist my work and they are intended for no other purpose (e.g., being used by anyone against anyone else in a Court of Law).

Please be aware that any notes about you can be subpoenaed by a Court of Law, and consequently my notes are factual and kept to the minimum needed for our work together. You will also have received a **Client Consent Form** to record your agreement to me making and retaining this information, prior to us beginning therapy together.

Medication and Medical Opinions

I ask that you to inform me in the first session and at any time afterwards if you are taking any medication of any kind or if your medication changes at any time during the therapy.

You do not have to give me this information and I would only note it so that, if you became ill or incapacitated during our session, and we had to call for assistance, I would be able to advise the paramedics.

It is very strongly advisable to make any changes to medication only after talking to your doctor(s). Please note that I am not a doctor nor a psychiatrist and am unable to offer medical opinions or diagnoses. I request and encourage you to address any concerns about your medication or any potential medical or psychiatric problems with your doctor(s).

Concerns or Complaints

If you have any concerns or complaints about me or the therapy, please tell me so that we can try to resolve these together. I would always bring any complaints to my clinical supervisor for an opinion (but still retain your confidentiality), however, my clinical supervisor is not my 'manager' and it will still be for you and me to deal with any concerns or complaints you might have between us.

If we cannot resolve things between ourselves, and you felt that you wanted to complain formally to someone, then you should contact my professional body, The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, who will advise you further. They can be contacted at: www.bacp.co.uk, or telephone 01455 883300.

Online and Telephone Therapy, and Ecotherapy

If you have chosen Online (e.g., Zoom or Teams) or Telephone / email counselling, or Ecotherapy, please refer to the additional leaflet that you will have received that explains how this works. Refer particularly to the part concerned with Insurance.

As always, I am happy to answer any questions that you may have regarding any of the therapies we provide, both before we begin work and whilst we are working together.

Insurance

I hold Public Liability and Malpractice and Professional Liability Insurance for my work with clients. I practice in England, and any contract for counselling between us is offered solely on the basis that any claims or disputes will be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of courts in England and Wales. It is essential that you agree to this contract term before we begin working together, or we cannot work together since we would not have insurance cover should anything happen (accidents, for example).

My Professional Information

Counsellor – Simon Millar

BACP registration number – 752502 (Registered Member number – 399389)

NCPS registration number – NCS23-00164

Enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) - ask for an access code to verify.