

What is counselling?

Counselling allows people to discuss their problems and any difficult feelings they encounter in a safe, confidential environment.

A counsellor is not there to sit down and tell you what need to do - instead they will encourage you to talk about personal issues that are troubling you and help put together a plan to help alleviate the current situation.

People may choose to speak to a counsellor because they feel they cannot speak to family or friends about personal issues, or they may feel they need to discuss their issues with a professional. To find out more about counselling and the role of a counsellor see NHS information <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/counselling/>

What counselling service is available?

Occupational Health (OH) provide a self-referral service offering confidential counselling up to 6 sessions per employee. If the employee has been referred to OH the Doctor or Nurse can refer the employee from their clinic. Furthermore, a referral can be made by Human Resources (HR) or a manager if they feel the employee needs urgent counselling.

This is a confidential service provided by an independent company and can only be accessed via OH.

What is the counselling process?

Our counselling sessions are conducted 'face to face' or over the telephone. There are dedicated counselling rooms at South Shields Town Hall and at the counselling services' premises.

1. Referral by Self/Doctor/Nurse/Manager/HR telephone **0191 424 6370/1** or email us at Occupational.HealthReferrals@southtyneside.gov.uk
Please note the counselling phone line will not be answered by a counsellor and, therefore, no information regarding your reason for referral should be requested or shared at this time.
2. OH contacts the counselling service with the employees details including their contact telephone number.
3. The Counselling Service will telephone the employee within 48 hours for a standard referral however, if an urgent request has been made the employee will receive a call within 24 hours. The call from the counselling service is an initial assessment to obtain information with regards to the referral this will enable the Counselling Service to assign the relevant counsellor to best suit the needs of the employee.
4. Following on from the initial assessment the counsellor will contact the employee direct to arrange their sessions.

At the end of the initial 6 sessions the counsellor may request additional sessions if they feel the need, they then contact OH to ask for these sessions, where necessary OH will ask managers/HR Advisers to authorise these additional sessions.

Who can access the counselling service?

The counselling service is available to all South Tyneside Council employees. If your school has a service level agreement with the Occupational Health Service, then school employees can automatically make a self-referral to be seen by a counsellor. If your school does not have a service level agreement in place, you can still access the service provided your employer completes a form to verify agreement to fund the counselling sessions.

Managers

We recognise line managers may also require support when they manage challenging situations and support employees through personal and organisational change.

For help or to discuss charges please telephone: **0191 424 6370/1** or alternatively email us on Occupational.HealthReferrals@southtyneside.gov.uk

ACAS provides further help and guidance on [Mental health in the workplace](#)

NB: Every session is charged for unless twenty-four hours' notice has been given to cancel a session, this is shown as "cancelled in good time" on the invoice. If an employee "does not attend" or "cancels last minute" it is classed as one of their 6 sessions and charged the full amount for the session.