



COUNSELLING SERVICE POLICY

NUMBER OF SESSIONS

Our Counselling Service offers up to 8 counselling appointments on a weekly basis with a BACP registered counsellor. They are provided via video call e.g. zoom or on the telephone if this is preferred. The counselling appointments are for 50 minutes, available free of charge for all our adult community members, including both affected individuals and family members.

Clients can request a further 8 to 12 sessions by contacting the Counselling Service via the website or by email. Additional sessions will be assessed according to client need and the demand on the service at the time the request is made.

Prior to ending the allocated number of counselling sessions clients will be helped to find ongoing counselling support if this is relevant and in their beneficence. This includes signposting to another appropriate organisation or to Alex TLC's grant programme.

New client referrals who are not already known to Alex TLC will be encouraged to join the Alex TLC community appropriately.

CANCELLATIONS / LATE CANCELLATIONS / MISSED SESSIONS

Clients may cancel a session by contacting info@alextlc.org or phoning 020 7701 4388 option 1. However, if cancelled with less than 24 hours' notice, then the session may be counted as part of the client's allocated sessions. If clients are late, they may be advised that their session will end at the scheduled time and that they will have a shorter appointment.

Where our counsellor is unable to establish contact or loses connection with the client during their session, they will try again using a different medium. Contact preferences will be agreed with the client before counselling commences. A session will be considered a 'missed session' after two unsuccessful attempts to contact the client.

If two sessions are missed without contacting Alex TLC, it will be assumed that counselling is not needed at this time.

If the Counsellor is unable to honour the session, contact will be made by the Counsellor or another member of the Alex TLC Support Team as soon as practicably possible and the session will be rescheduled for the following week.

FUNDING FOR EXTERNAL COUNSELLING SESSIONS

Clients who would prefer face to face counselling sessions will be directed to Alex TLC's grant programme so they can apply for funding for local counselling.

DUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Our counsellor will establish and maintain appropriate professional boundaries with clients. As such, any dual or multiple relationships will be avoided, particularly where the risks of harm to the client outweigh any benefits to the client.

Where a dual relationship is identified, such as where the client has an existing professional or personal relationship with the therapist, or if the client is related to clients already attending counselling, Alex TLC will appropriately signpost beneficiaries to another organisation or to Alex TLC's grant programme.

COUPLES

As there is only one counsellor, couples can be offered counselling sessions together. However should they prefer to have one to one counselling sessions, individuals can apply for funding for external counselling sessions by completing the grant form available via the website. There is also the option for one partner to have sessions via the Alex TLC Counselling Service, whilst the other has counselling sessions with an external counsellor.

CLINICAL NOTES AND PERSONAL DATA

Completed Client Referral forms, signed Counselling Agreements, Initial Assessments, Continuation notes and any other relevant documentation are stored in separate files within a Confidential area of Alex TLC's secure server, with access limited to the Counsellor only. Confidential documents are password protected.

To protect client identity, each referred client is given a number for their paperwork,

The master log contains the corresponding client numbers, this is stored separately in a different file within the confidential file.

A client spread-sheet, which acts as a diary, can be accessed by the Support team in order to review upcoming availability for counselling slots. No personal data is held in this file.

Counselling documents and templates which do not contain personal data are stored on the Alex TLC server.

Once counselling has ended, records will be kept for **6 years** from the end of the Counselling Contract and are then securely destroyed. Please see our Privacy Policy for full details about how information is stored <https://alextlc.org/privacy-policy/>.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Usually, what is disclosed by clients during sessions remains confidential but there are limits to this, for instance, if we think that any of the following are happening:

- The client is at risk of hurting themselves or others
- The client or someone else is at risk of being hurt by other people / another person
- It is in the public interest

We also must tell someone if a client discloses that they, or other individuals, are breaking the law for any of the reasons below:

- Safeguarding (children and young people/ vulnerable adults)
- Prevent Strategy (Terrorism)
- Money Laundering
- Serious crime (As defined by the Serious Crime Act 2007. See also, guidance provided by the Department of Health (DH, 2003a: 35)).

These terms are outlined in our Counselling Contract and will be discussed with clients during their first session.

HARM TO SELF

If a client discloses an intention to end their life or harm themselves in some way, the counsellor will:

- Complete a risk assessment with the client to establish likelihood, intent and history of self-harm and suicidal ideations. This will also be used to establish protective factors.
- Complete a safety plan with the client, identifying coping strategies, support, and resources available to the client, including health professionals, friends and family members.
- Adhere to company policy and procedures.

CLIENT FEEDBACK

Alex TLC is committed to delivering services that provide a positive impact for those affected by leukodystrophy. Many of these services are resourced through grant funding and corporate sponsorships. As such all counselling clients will be asked to provide feedback before and after accessing Alex TLC's counselling service. This feedback will be used to inform our supporters about the impact of our work and help continuous development of the counselling service. The Counsellor will direct clients to the relevant feedback forms. It is not compulsory for clients to give feedback and any feedback given will remain anonymous and stored within GDPR guidelines.

COMPLAINTS

Within the working alliance between client and counsellor there is always opportunity to hear and receive feedback, address problems and make reasonable adjustments within the limits of the Counselling Service and with consideration of client beneficence.

Complaints beyond the limits of the clinical setting should be addressed through the Alex TLC Complaints Procedure:

<https://alextlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Complaints-Procedure-Alex-TLC-Updated.pdf>.

PERSONAL LIABILITY INSURANCE

The counsellor has active Personal Liability Insurance with Holistic Insurance Service, policy reference: HIS81611

ADHERENCE TO THE BACP ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

As a Registered Member of the BACP the counsellor works within the BACP's ethical framework.

BACP Number 386905

<https://www.bacp.co.uk/events-and-resources/ethics-and-standards/ethical-framework-for-the-counselling-professions/>



Registered Member **386905**
MBACP