**Our Counselling Agreement**

If you would like to start online counselling with us, we will ask you to read and agree to our online counselling agreement below. This explains exactly what you can expect from us and what we will ask of you.

We understand the agreement is a bit long, so please choose a time when you have a few quiet minutes to read it carefully – your counsellor will be happy to answer any questions you have about it before you agree to it. If you haven’t read the [‘What is online counselling?’](http://talkofftherecordonline.org/what-is-counselling)section of our site yet, take a look. This will tell you more about the service, how it works and how to register to use it. You can also find more information in our [FAQs](http://talkofftherecordonline.org/faqs) section too

**Choosing counselling:**

When you register for online counselling, you are asked to confirm that you want counselling and that you are not being pressured into doing so by someone else.

We also ask you to read and agree to our[Keeping things Private and Confidential policy](https://talkofftherecordonline.org/confidentiality-policy). Counselling is private and nothing that you share in counselling will be passed on to anyone outside of Off the Record without your permission, apart from in an exceptional circumstance such as:

* Where my counsellor thinks that I or someone else is at serious risk of harm;
* If the counsellor feels I’m not able to take responsibility for my decisions;
* In an emergency or when ordered by a court of law

In these cases, information may have to be shared with someone else even without your permission. Even then, Off the Record will work to involve you in decisions about sharing information wherever possible and will keep you up-to-date with any actions they have taken.

Please check that the device you are using (laptop/pc/phone) does not have pre-installed monitoring software that may compromise your confidentiality. Some schools/colleges/work places have monitoring software on all of their IT equipment.

**Struggling in between sessions:**

Your counsellor is only available to work with you once each week. Once you’re counselling sessions are underway, your counsellor will either write you a counselling message or have a live chat session with you once a week at the same agreed time. If you message in between this time, your counsellor will probably not respond until your next session.

Sometimes when people start counselling, emotions can rise to the surface that may have been hidden for a long time. In online counselling it can feel easier to talk about deep things more quickly than face to face. If you find, at any stage in between sessions or email exchanges, that you are in crisis, feeling suicidal or having thoughts of self-harm, click [here](https://www.talkofftherecord.org/need-help-now/)for more information about what to do next.

**Number of messages/sessions:**

We usually offer an exchange of six counselling messages or live chat sessions. This does not include administrative messages such as emails exchanged about how to use the online support services website.

**Missed Sessions:**

If you have a live chat or message based session and cannot attend, please send your counsellor a message as soon as you know you are not going to be able to attend the session.

If you have not told us you cannot attend your live chat or message session, your counsellor will write to you asking you to make contact. If we don't hear from you within 14 days we will assume no longer wish to continue counselling at this time and will deactivate your counselling contract.

**Ending Counselling:**

We understand that you might go away for a while because things have been getting better, however we ask for you to please let us know that you've decided to end your counselling.

You can always come back to online counselling if things get difficult again. Simply get back in touch by clicking on ‘I need to speak to a counsellor’ on our home page and we will begin processing your request within 48 hours; however, please note we may not be able to allocate you to the same counsellor you were working with before.

**Wellbeing Forms:**

If you tell us you need help, or if we notice from your form that you have been really struggling, we will contact you to provide you with some additional support. This might be through our Online Counselling service, our face to face services, or another service which offers crisis or 24 hour support.

If we become concerned about your safety or the safety of someone else, then we will follow the steps outlined in our [Keeping things Private and Confidential Policy](https://talkofftherecordonline.org/confidentiality-policy). If we are unable to make contact with you on the online support services website, we will try to get in touch using the information you provided on your registration form, so please keep this up to date if you change phone number/ email address or move house.

**Seeing Your Counsellor Online outside your session time:**

Your counsellor will only be able to offer counselling to you once each week. This time will be agreed when you first start work together. Outside this time, your counsellor will not be able to respond to messages. If you are in crisis and need help outside your session, click here for more information about what to do next.

If you log onto the site outside of your agreed counselling time and see that your counsellor online, it may be tempting to message them to ask them to speak to you now. However, your counsellor will not be able to do this as they will be working with other young people and will need to give them the same focus and concentration they will give you during your sessions.

**Seeing your counsellor outside of the Online Support Services website:**

Your counsellor will only be able to communicate with you via the site, so please do not try to contact your counsellor via another websites or social networking sites. Your counsellor will not accept a ‘friend request’ or start to chat to you. This is so that you can maintain the boundaries of your professional counselling relationship together.

**Technical Issues:**

From time to time there may be problems with computer or internet connections, either at your end or with us:

* If we have a technical issue - we will normally contact you via email or phone, using the details you give us when you register.
* If you are having technical issue - and are unable to email us at onlinecounselling@talkofftherecord.orgthen please call 020 8251 0251.

It can be annoying and even upsetting if technical problems get in the way of your counselling, however briefly. It can help to be prepared for the possibility (maybe speak to your counsellor in advance if you think this will stress you out a lot, so you can come up with a plan to manage it together) and remember that we will be keen to keep working with you as soon as we can.

**Feedback and Complaints:**

Feedback is very important to us and we want to hear about your experience of using our services, whether it is good or bad. To give feedback, please use the button on our homepage 'I want to give feedback'.

If you wish to make a complaint, there is more information on our complaints procedure on our website [here](https://www.talkofftherecord.org/have-your-say/).

Please take a moment to check you have read and understood this agreement and the [Keeping Things Private and Confidential](https://talkofftherecordonline.org/confidentiality-policy) agreement fully. If you have any questions, please ask your counsellor

If you have any questions about your contract with Off the Record, you can discuss these by sending your counsellor a message. Alternatively, if you are not signed up for online counselling and want to talk to someone in more detail about how it will work, contact onlinecounselling@talkofftherecord.org for more information.