

***brainstrust's* counselling agreement with you...**

In addition to being our agreement with you, this outlines in more detail what our service looks like. It lays out our expectations of the service both in regards to what your counsellor's commitment would be to you and what your commitment would be in using the service.

Counselling agreement

Aims of the Service: The service provides emotional support for individuals who have a brain tumour or whose lives are affected by someone with a brain tumour. If it is considered that other agencies may provide you with more appropriate support, we will try to put you in contact with them.

What it looks like: *brainstrust* aims to provide access to a network of suitably qualified counsellors who are, or are working towards becoming, members of counselling and psychological professional bodies such as BACP, COSCA or the BPS. Where you are unable to pay for counselling, *brainstrust* may provide financial support for six sessions of counselling for people who have been referred by support specialists. Counselling may be provided by telephone, face-to-face or by using electronic means such as Skype. The aim of these sessions is to provide a safe, confidential space to talk about feelings and fears. It is hoped that counselling will help individuals better manage their current situation and begin to develop some strategies to manage their future.

Sessions will be at a regular time each week, although there will be some flexibility depending on the needs of both counsellor and client.

We reserve the right to withdraw the service if it is being used inappropriately.

Policy on confidentiality: *brainstrust* takes confidentiality very seriously. Sessions will be considered as confidential between the client and counsellor. The exception to this will be if it is felt that someone is at risk of significant harm if information is

not shared more widely. All efforts will be made to obtain consent if sharing, and the decision to share will not be taken lightly. The only other reason to share information will be in the unlikely event of a court order.

All personal information about the caller will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and on a password secure computer.

Discussions will be held in a private environment away from others.

All counsellors are required by the BACP & COSCA code of Ethics and Practice to attend regular supervision where they discuss their casework. Counsellors always protect client's identities when discussing cases, but please feel free to ask more about this when you talk to your counsellor.

Record keeping: We keep details that identify you (name, address, phone number) in a locked cabinet. The notes made at the initial introductory appointment, brief on-going records your counsellor writes, and a closing summary are kept in a separate locked cabinet, in line with BACP guidelines. These records are identified only by your initials and a code number. *brainstrust* has a system of open recording with its clients (Data Protection Act (1998)), and your counsellor will review with you any records that are being made on your request.

Professional development: At any time some of our counsellors may be studying for an advanced qualification in counselling. They will explain to you that they are students doing further training. They are, however, considered to have the necessary training and experience to be allocated your case.

Missed/cancelled appointments: Given that *brainstrust* is a charity with limited resources, we ask that you give as much notice as possible where you need to cancel a call with your counsellor. A minimum of 24 hours notice would normally be expected and some counsellors may ask for more. Where this is not provided you will be asked to pay for the missed

appointment. We understand that in exceptional circumstances you may miss an appointment and be unable to contact your counsellor (or in their absence, your specialist support worker) in advance, but please do let us know of any problems you might be encountering with regard to the appointments as soon as you can. If you wish to stop having sessions please let your counsellor know so that he/she can discuss this with you. This will enable your counsellor to be available to support others more quickly if you do stop your sessions

Change of counsellor: We hope we have chosen the best counsellor for your particular needs. If however you do not feel at ease with this counsellor please phone 01983 292405 and ask to speak to Helen. We will discuss this and try to arrange for you to have another counsellor.

Compliments and complaints: We hope you find your counselling helpful and we welcome your constructive feedback, both positive and negative, as this will help us to ensure that we continue to develop and improve our service to meet the needs of our clients. Feedback forms will be sent to you three months after your counselling finishes (available from *brainstrust*) which we ask you to fill in and return to us. In addition, if you wish to raise a complaint about a counsellor you may do so by contacting Helen Bulbeck who will aim to resolve your complaint with you within 5 working days. If this is not possible then your complaint will be sent to the Board of Trustees which meets once a quarter.

Payment: Counsellors have their own financial arrangements which they will discuss with you before you start your counselling. We know that some people living with a brain tumour diagnosis incur considerable financial loss. If you have real financial hardship then please contact Helen at *brainstrust* (helen@brainstrust.org.uk or 01983 292405) and we may be able to provide some support.

Next steps:

1) Return the completed referral form by email to helen@brainstrust.org.uk or by post to the address below. We will use this information to match you to an appropriate counsellor. The counsellor will arrange a time to make initial contact by telephone. At this initial contact you will arrange a mutually agreeable time for the first and subsequent sessions. Use this as an opportunity to ask any questions you might have about the service your counsellor offers.

- 2) If you feel that you may need some financial support for counselling please contact Helen at *brainstrust* (helen@brainstrust.org.uk or 01983 292405).
- 3) If you decide that you would like to use *brainstrust's* counselling services please indicate your agreement to the following commitments by signing and dating this form and emailing or sending it to *brainstrust*.

- I agree to be available/attend at the planned time and place (where face-to-face)
- If I am receiving telephone counselling I agree to be away from disturbances and interruptions
- I recognise that talking about my feelings may be painful, but I agree that I will try to continue with my counselling session until it ends (whatever time is agreed)
- I understand and accept the confidentiality policy of the service
- If I am unable to take part in a counselling session I will try to give a minimum of 24 hours notice by email (or as agreed with the counsellor). If appropriate the counsellor will email alternative slots
- I understand and agree that given the limited resources of the charity, I may have to pay for sessions where I have not provided sufficient notice.

Signature:	<i>brainstrust's</i> initials
Date:	Date:

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