Occupational Health Services Counselling Service Guidance

The University acknowledges the benefits both to individual employees and to its operation, of providing a counselling service for University staff in support of its policies on Stress at Work. It is separate from the University’s Student Counselling Service, and is co-ordinated by the Occupational Health Service (OHS), whose purpose is to prevent work-related ill-health.

1. The Staff Counselling Service is co-ordinated by OHS.
2. Access to the service is via an Occupational Health Services Referral Form sent to OHS for work-attributable health conditions, who will then assess whether counselling is an appropriate treatment option and will refer onwards as appropriate. The aim of the service is to give solution-focused advice and support to referred employees to allow them to manage their health and wellbeing whilst at work.
3. The service is not appropriate for the clinical management of mental health disorders and cannot substitute for General Practice input.
4. After a referral is received, OHS will respond to the manager with advice and/or recommendations about the member of staff without breaching medical confidentiality within 5 working days. As with all Occupational Health Referrals, individuals must know clearly why they are being referred to the OHS.
5. As for all Occupational Health Referrals, employees can be referred by Personnel Services as well as line management in cases where relationship issues with management are a contributing factor.
6. Where it is appropriate up to six sessions of counselling will be provided. If the clinical decision is that OHS staff counselling is not appropriate the individual will be directed to their GP, to another member of the OHS, or to another University or external service, as appropriate.
7. The OHS has a team of external, accredited counsellors with a wide range of counselling skills.
8. Each counsellor will normally see staff for counselling sessions in their (the counsellors) usual place of work. If you have a mobility issue which may affect you accessing sessions, please let OHS know this prior to referral to the Counselling Service.
9. The counselling will operate on a confidential basis between the counsellor and the employee. The only exception to this will be where the counsellor believes that the individual may be an imminent danger to themselves or to other people, including presenting a high risk of accidents at work, or potential harm to University staff, students or associates. In such circumstances the counsellor will notify OHS so that any necessary action can be taken.
10. The counsellors will be required to send a final confidential report to OHS which will only contain information on the number of counselling sessions attended, a brief summary of the solution-focused outcomes and any further actions as advised by the counsellor. After the final session individual cases will be reviewed by OHS and individuals will be contacted by OHS for feedback on the counselling service they have received.
11. The Staff Counselling Service will be audited to assess the need for staff counselling as well as obtain feedback on the efficacy of the service provided. The audit will only present anonymised data.
12. Employees who are unable to attend pre-arranged appointments should notify the counsellor as soon as possible and within 48 hours of their appointment. Counsellors will inform the OHS of individual non-attendance when advance notice has not been given as a cost will be incurred. Employees who cancel appointments without notice or valid reasons may forfeit the session missed and access to future sessions.
13. Please contact OHS via email enquiries@uohs.ox.ac.uk for more information about the service.