

REFUGEE THERAPY CENTRE

What will happen when you see a therapist for the first time at the Refugee Therapy Centre?

Assessment

The first one or two meetings are for you and the therapist (assessor) to talk about the problems you are having, how they have arisen and how they affect you in your day-to-day life. Once the problems have been identified, you and the assessor can decide on the next step forward, which the assessor will report to the team at the Refugee Therapy Centre. To enable the therapist / assessor to form as clear a picture of your difficulties as possible, you might sometimes be asked a lot of questions. Please feel free to let the therapist know if you don't want to answer any of them or you don't feel comfortable answering the questions. The assessment appointment usually lasts for 1 to 1½ hours, and if a second appointment is required it will generally take place within two weeks of the first. It is likely that you will have to wait a few weeks for an appointment. Whilst we recognise that everyone referred to us needs to be given serious attention and care, we cannot usually respond immediately. However, if you feel that your problem is particularly urgent, then it would be helpful if you could discuss this with your General Practitioner (GP) or the person who has referred you to clarify that the situation you are in would get worse without our help – then we will consider this. Unfortunately we do not have the resources for a drop-in Centre for people to come to whenever they feel they need to talk to somebody or if they need help urgently.

Confidentiality

During the assessment meetings, the therapist will be happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have about confidentiality. It is usual for us to send a copy of the letter we send you to the person who referred you, to let them know about our assessment. At some time, we may need to contact your General Practitioner if we feel you need their help. This will be done with your knowledge and agreement, and we will ask you to sign a consent form at the assessment. In most circumstances, your wish for any matter to remain confidential will be highly respected. Only in special circumstances must the therapist, counsellor or support worker pass on information to the Clinical Director and the Clinical Director will act on this – for example, where there is crime involved, or risk to yourself or others that you may not have the strength to handle. This will be discussed with you in the session, and again it will be done with your knowledge and agreement.

The Process of Therapy

There are many different types of therapy, but all therapy is a joint effort between you and the therapist you see to bring about change. You will have to take an active role yourself to participate in the process. Our main approach is the psychodynamic approach and all our therapists are interculturally trained or receive intercultural supervision. We have a high regard and respect for people's culture and differences. You will decide with your therapist what your main concerns are. We usually ask you what three main concerns you would like to focus on. Some people might be concerned about how their thinking is affecting the way they feel and behave. Some people want to focus on ways of changing particular behaviour which is seen as being a problem. Some people want help to be a better parent or better partner, or to find friends. Some people feel homesick and want to share this feeling in a safe and peaceful space. Others want to look at their past experiences and the trauma they have been through and how that may influence their current life. Your therapist will decide with you which issue you want to focus on in the process.

What Sort of Problems Do People See Therapists or Counsellors For?

Therapists help people with a wide range of difficulties. Here are some examples of common reasons why people are referred (but there are many other types of problems that therapists can offer help with):

1. Depression
2. Stress and tension
3. Anxiety
4. Panic attacks
5. Phobias
6. Obsessions
7. Difficulties with individuals and families
8. Coping with physical illness, disability or chronic pain
9. Social confidence, self-confidence, self-esteem
10. Memory, concentration and attention problems
11. Personality changes
12. Coping with the effect of past experiences
13. Coping with the process of integration into new society
14. Eating problems, such as under or over-eating
15. Difficulty in coping with life events, such as bereavement or divorce
16. Difficulty falling asleep, or waking up early without wanting to
17. Addiction to alcohol or other drugs
18. Difficulties with a sexual relationship
19. Adjustment problems arising from traumatic childhood or adult experiences
20. Difficulties in coping with family relationships or intergenerational relationships in the new environment
21. Anger management

How might a Therapist Help You?

A therapist will listen carefully and take your difficulties seriously. He/she will try to understand what you say and help you make sense of your difficulties. Sometimes, therapists will offer guidance by asking you questions, rather than giving you a magic answer or advice. However, a therapist will not offer you help unless he/she believes it is the most suitable option for your particular needs at the time, and has agreed this with you. Therapists are not able to read your mind. You choose what you want to tell your therapist.

The Refugee Therapy Centre aims to make help available on an equal basis to all refugees and asylum seeker young people, children and their families who are referred to our service. If you have any special needs, we will try to tailor our approach to be suitable for you. For example, if because of your religion or cultural beliefs you do not wish to focus on a certain area of your difficulties or find it hard to talk about it, your therapist will pay total respect to your wish.

We would be very grateful to you for your regular attendance and will ask that you do not miss therapy sessions without giving your therapist notice. If you cannot attend your scheduled appointment, please notify your therapist well in advance so that a new appointment can be arranged.

If you have any other questions in mind, please feel free to contact the office. We will be happy to answer your questions. If you have any concerns that you would like to discuss with somebody in confidence, please feel free to contact Aida Alayarian, the Clinical Director in charge of the service, on 020 7561 1587. You may need to leave a message, but she will get back to you as soon as possible.

If you have been referred to our service and you change your address or telephone number, please notify us so that we can contact you when we are able to offer you an appointment.