

# Introduction and Background

The LIFE-FORCE Organisation was first created in 1990 and moved to Oxford Road in September 1994. Nicole Joyce has been running LIFE-FORCE as sole Centre Director since 1998. The Centre relocated to beautiful new permanent premises at East Hill during June 2005. The Counselling Service was established in 1994 and went on to gain BACP Service Accreditation in March 2007 and re-accreditation in March 2012 & 2017. The Centre Director decided not to submit the Counselling Service for BACP re-accreditation in 2022 as this was considered to be the best way forward for the business at the time. In order to maintain professional standards the Counselling Service is run according to the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions and all Team Counsellors are individual members of BACP and as such are subject to its complaints procedure. The Team Counsellor Individual Annual Review Scheme was introduced in January 2000 and has been operational ever since.

Nicole Joyce who is a Senior BACP Accredited Counsellor runs the Counselling Service. Alison Scrutton the Counselling Service Manager holds a Diploma in Counselling and is therefore well equipped to manage the Counselling Service on a day-to-day basis. The Counselling Service Assistant is experienced in dealing with client enquiries and referrals. The Counselling Service also has a Service Support Manager Martin Chester who is able to step in and manage the service if necessary.

The Counselling Service is based on the principle that each individual, if provided with the right environmental conditions of empathy, unconditional acceptance, warmth and safety, will naturally grow towards developing their true potential as a human being. With this in mind the Counselling Service provides a team of professional counsellors who support this philosophy and are committed to embodying humanistic values both professionally and personally within all daily interactions. All Team Counsellors are bound by the Counselling Services policies and procedures as identified in the Team Counsellor Handbook.

The Centre has seven therapy rooms, which include the Emerald, Amber, Coral, Amethyst, Topaz, Sapphire and Play Rooms. All the rooms are purposely furnished and are used exclusively for counselling sessions, meetings or training sessions. All rooms have a "Session in Progress" sign outside the door to ensure privacy and no interruptions. The Sapphire Room is on the ground floor and can be used by disabled clients or therapists who are unable to manage the stairs. The Play Room is equipped with a sink, washable floor and two cupboards full of toys and craft materials that can be used by both child and adult clients. As an organisation we believe a warm and welcoming environment to be very important and hope our clientele can both benefit and respect the Centre's facilities as a whole.

The Counselling Service requires all team counsellors to be listed on a professional register which is recognised by The Professional Standards Authority, be members of a relevant professional body, have related professional indemnity insurance, hold a current DBS Enhanced Certificate, and are registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The Counselling Service additionally ensures that all therapists involved receive appropriate regular supervision according to BACP guidelines and encourages and supports team members to work towards and apply for individual personal BACP accreditation.

The Counselling Service aims to provide team counsellors with client referrals whenever possible. The contracts with clients involve a 3-way agreement between the Counselling Service, the counsellor and the client, all referrals being made by the Counselling Service to the counsellor, with clients being able to refer themselves back to the counselling service at any time should they so wish.

The Counselling Service appreciates client feedback through the completion of an Online Client Feedback Form and aims to make good use of all comments received by implementing changes for the benefit of the Centre as a whole. A Service User Concerns Policy and Complaints Policy are available on our website if required and clients are made aware of this if necessary.

The premises have disabled access at the rear of the property where clients can be dropped off and collected. However blue badge holders who can manage the three front steps in front of the building are permitted to park at the front of the building for three hours.

# Aims

The LIFE-FORCE Organisation aims to offer a Counselling Service which is of the highest professional standard and adheres to the Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions. The Counselling Service also aims to provide equal opportunities to, and promote the emotional, mental and spiritual growth, health, healing and well-being of, any individual who seeks help from the range of services offered.

## Objectives

1. To provide and maintain appropriate premises, which have been purposely chosen and comfortably furnished to create a safe space, which is suitable for the housing of the LIFE-FORCE Counselling Service.
2. To provide and maintain a unique prompt professional Counselling Service in the centre of Colchester which is open to individuals of all ages including adults, children, young people and couples.
3. To provide a wide range of therapeutic approaches including person centred, psychodynamic, integrative, and person centred therapeutic artwork.
4. To manage a three way contract between the LIFE-FORCE Counselling Service, the Team Counsellor and the Client, within which the counsellor pays a referral fee to LIFE-FORCE for each client referral.
5. To offer a range of fees which are negotiable according to the needs of each individual service user enquiry, and where fees are paid directly to the counsellor.
6. To provide a low-cost service to adult clients aged 18 years and older, which is delivered by student counsellors on placement, who are monitored by both the Counselling Service and their training organisation.
7. To offer opening times where appointments can be made during the day, evenings and weekends, in order to be able to meet the specific need of each individual service user enquiry.
8. To give accurate information whether this be verbally or in the form of written literature. See Counselling Service Leaflet, Client Information Leaflet, Service User Guide and also LIFE-FORCE Centre website.
9. To ensure clients' personal and sensitive categories information is collected, processed, handled, stored and destroyed according to the Data Protection Act 2018 and that their explicit consent is gained both at the referral and counselling contract stages of seeking counselling.
10. To provide a service consisting of approximately 20 fully qualified counsellors who additionally have membership of a recognised professional body e.g. BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy), and/or BABCP (British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies) and are listed on a professional register which is recognised by The Authority (The Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care).
11. To ensure professional suitability and standing of all therapists practising within LIFE-FORCE Counselling Service.
12. To ensure all Team Counsellors practising within the Counselling Service provide annual evidence of relevant Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activity, along with up to date renewal documents including; BACP membership, professional indemnity insurance, DBS Enhanced Certificate and ICO Certificate of Registration, and when applicable Child Protection Training.
13. To offer a confidential service to clients according to contractual boundaries. This confidential service is delivered by Team Counsellors who are bound by the policies of the Counselling Service Counsellor Team Handbook / Student on Placement Handbook and who practice in accordance with the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions and the Children Act 1989.
14. To ensure the allocation of counselling client referrals to appropriate counsellors by matching client needs to each counsellor's specific therapeutic approach, experience, availability, specialised counselling focus and fees. The referral procedure incorporates a closure/re-referral system of clients back to the Counselling Service at the end of therapy.
15. To continually improve the professional standards of the Counselling Service offered through the analysis of both completed Team Counsellor and Service User Feedback forms.