



# Volunteer Counsellor

**Location:** The Centre for Better Health, 1a Darnley Road, London E9 6QH

**Hours:** 3-4 hours per week and an additional 2 hours per fortnight for supervision

**Our vision is for individuals to lead satisfying and hopeful lives without the stigma of mental ill health.** The Centre for Better Health is a community charity that supports wellbeing and recovery from mental ill health. Our services include a low-cost counselling service; the Better Health Hub, which offers movement, craft and therapeutic courses; and our social enterprise (comprising of Better Health Bikes, Better Health Bakery and Better Health Products), which offers work-skills training placements for individuals that have been distanced from employment owing to mental ill-health.

## Role Purpose

Our Counselling Service provides individual counselling and psychotherapy to adults. We offer weekly, 50-minute sessions, which can be provided for up to one year. We pride ourselves on working with diverse clients who present with a range of issues. You can read more about our Counselling Service here: <http://www.centreforbetterhealth.org.uk/what-we-offer/counselling>.

We run our affordable counselling service with a team of committed volunteer counsellors. As a volunteer counsellor, you will manage a caseload of 3 or 4 clients (depending on whether you volunteer during the evening or daytime respectively). Working in a confidential setting, you will provide one to one counselling to clients to help them make sense of difficult experiences, deal with negative thoughts and feelings and make positive changes in their lives.

## Main Duties

- Provide weekly 50-minute counselling sessions to clients affected by mental health issues using a recognised theoretical model;
- Maintain a caseload of 4 clients (or 3 if volunteering in the evening);
- Build and maintain positive and trusting relationships with clients;
- Maintain a non-judgemental and respectful approach towards clients;
- Maintain client confidentiality appropriately;
- Support clients to develop a deeper understanding of themselves;
- Carry out regular review sessions with clients, at 6-, 12-, 24- and 36- weeks;
- Attend fortnightly supervision at the Centre as well as maintain external supervision;
- A commitment to own personal and professional development;
- Maintain session records and complete paperwork as required by the Counselling Service;
- Comply with the Centre for Better Health's policies and procedures, as set out in the Volunteer Counsellor Handbook, which will be provided to volunteer counsellors on joining.

## Person specification

Each criterion is marked with an E for essential and D for desirable.

<b>Qualifications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trainee counsellor in second year of a recognised counselling course (E)</li> <li>• Counselling diploma, degree or higher (MA, Doctorate) (D)</li> </ul>
<b>Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to use a recognised theoretical model of counselling with clients (E)</li> <li>• Ability to identify difficulties in the work with clients and to seek and use supervision constructively (E)</li> <li>• Ability to demonstrate the core conditions for therapeutic change (empathy; congruence; and unconditional positive regard) (E)</li> <li>• Strong verbal and written communication skills (E)</li> <li>• Strong organisational skills and attention to detail (E)</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of BACP guidelines (E)</li> <li>• Knowledge and awareness of own emotions (E)</li> <li>• Professional knowledge of areas relevant to counselling such as domestic violence, safeguarding or social work (D)</li> </ul>



<b>Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience working one to one with adults affected by mental health issues (E)</li> <li>• 50+ supervised client hours (D)</li> <li>• Maintaining a high degree of professionalism in the face of highly emotive and distressing problems (E)</li> <li>• Lived experience of mental ill health or other relevant life experience (D)</li> <li>• Experience working for a crisis service (e.g. Samaritans) (D)</li> </ul>
<b>Competencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discreet and able to hold confidential information (E)</li> <li>• Sensitive to needs of others (E)</li> <li>• Emotional resilience and stability (E)</li> <li>• Ability to treat clients with respect and dignity at all times, adopting a culturally sensitive approach which considers the needs of the whole person (E)</li> </ul>

Note that in exceptional circumstances, we will make exceptions to the criteria set out above.

### **Commitment**

Please note that a minimum of two years' commitment is required of all volunteer counsellors. We require at least three month's written notice of intention to leave.

### **Why volunteer for us**

The Centre for Better Health is embedded in the local community and has a strong track record of delivering effective services to support wellbeing and recovery from mental ill health. We offer a professional, supportive and friendly working environment and rewarding roles that have a direct impact on the community we serve.

We offer well-regarded and sought-after training placements to counsellors in training. We work with clients for up to a year so can provide trainee counsellors with valuable long-term work experience. We also work with a broad spectrum of mental health issues including the opportunity to work with complex cases once volunteers have gained sufficient experience. These placements offer students the opportunity to not only gain hours for their college requirements but to continue for accreditation.

### **Considerations before applying**

- ✓ You must be at least in your second year of a professionally recognised counselling course or a qualified counsellor and looking to gain experience for accreditation. We particularly welcome applications from ethnic minority counsellors and counsellors with disabilities.
- ✓ We offer fortnightly 2-hour group supervision with a maximum of four counsellors per group. Supervision is generic to accommodate a broad range of counselling modalities.
- ✓ Group attendance of two hours counts as one hour of individual supervision per counsellor (as per BACP guidelines). We cannot guarantee that group supervision will be with a BACP or UKCP accredited supervisor and therefore may not count toward necessary supervision hours. The ratio of client sessions to supervision is 8:1 for daytime counsellors and 6:1 for evening counsellors. Please check that this is sufficient for your course requirements.
- ✓ We also require that you arrange external 1:1 supervision (note that your course supervisor does not count) to ensure adequate focus on your caseload and the appropriate model-specific supervision as required by your accrediting body. Ideally you will meet with your external supervisor once a fortnight, although the minimum requirement is once a month.
- ✓ We have limited capacity to respond to requests from course providers. Our supervisors will not be able to attend training or participate in any meetings with your course supervisor. You will be required to include information on your course requirements in the application form.

### **Application process**

To apply for this voluntary position, please complete the application form on our website, detailing how your skills, knowledge and experience meet the requirements of this role. <http://www.centreforbetterhealth.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering>