

# Participant Information Sheet



## Experiences of trainee counsellors practising in UK secondary schools.

### Introduction

I would like to invite you to take part in a research project. Before you decide, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve for you. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and ask questions about anything you do not understand. Talk to others about the study if you wish.

### What is the purpose of the study?

The aims of this study will be to understand the lived experiences of trainee counsellors working in UK secondary schools, including their relationships with key staff members, their experiences of ethical issues, and sources of support.

### Why have I been invited to take part in the study?

You have been invited to take part in this study because you are currently a trainee counsellor for children and young people. You are currently completing a college/university course for counselling children and young people, and/or not yet completed 100 placement hours. Also, you are currently or previously have been practising in a UK secondary school for at least 10 hours while on placement. You must also not currently be going through a complaints process (with your accrediting body e.g. BACP, college, university or the school) with regards to your placement. You must also be a member of the BACP or another counselling/psychotherapy regulatory body.

### Do I have to take part?

No, you do not have to participate, and you can refuse to answer any of the interview questions. There will be no adverse consequences in terms of your education, that is, there will be no impact on your assessment or class of degree, if you decide not to participate or withdraw at a later stage. You can withdraw without giving a reason.

You can withdraw your participation at any time. You can request for your data to be withdrawn within two weeks of participating in the interview, without giving a reason and without prejudice. If you withdraw from the study within two weeks of participating, all your data will be destroyed. Please contact the Principal Investigator using the email address provided at the end of this document.

### What will I do in the study?

If you agree to take part, I will then ask you to sign and return a consent form, as well as complete and return a questionnaire before the interview takes place. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and a copy of your signed consent form. Your participation will take up to 90 minutes, which will involve an interview with myself, taking place on Microsoft Teams. This will be audio recorded. During the interview, you will be asked various questions exploring your experiences of practising as a trainee counsellor in secondary school(s). The full interview schedule will be sent to you no later than 24 hours in advance of the interview. After the interview has taken place, you will be sent the transcript of the interview so that you can check that everything that has been recorded is accurate, and that you are happy with it being used in the study. All identifying information will be removed such as names, places of work etc. to maintain your confidentiality.

**What will happen to data I provide?**

Personal data will be handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018 and the UK Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). Data protection legislation requires the University to have a valid legal reason to process and use personal data about you. This is often called a 'legal basis'. In the context of research, the lawful basis upon which your personal information will be processed is usually where "Processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller" (Article 6 of GDPR). The standard University Privacy Policy Statement can be found at <https://www.northampton.ac.uk/about-us/privacy-policy/>

**What will happen to the results of this study?**

The results of this study will be included in a dissertation, a scientific report I am required to write to complete my degree. Brief quotes from your interview may be included in the paper, but without your name and in such a way that others are not able to identify you. The dissertation will be uploaded to the University's web page, but only students and academics at the University will be able to read it. Some of the results of this study may also be published in an academic journal article however your personal information used in research will be pseudonymised before sharing more widely or publishing the research outcomes. In the case of publication, transcripts will be kept for up to 10 years and will be stored securely in encrypted, password protected folders. Interview recordings will be deleted after this dissertation project has been marked, in May 2026.

**What are the risks and benefits of taking part?**

The experiences of trainee counsellors working in schools have not been researched as much as qualified counsellors, and it may be beneficial for their experiences to be heard about. In terms of personal benefits of taking part, you may enjoy expressing your personal views and experiences of practising in secondary schools as a trainee counsellor. In addition, if the dissertation is published, it will add to the limited research in this area and hopefully enhance understanding of trainee school counsellors' experiences and sources of support. Possible risks of participating may include feeling distressed when discussing your experiences. Due to my role as a researcher on this project, I will be unable to support you in a therapeutic way. However, at the end of the interview, you will be signposted to relevant organisations for you to contact, in case you need further support.

**Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

Yes. Your details will be held in complete confidence, and we will follow ethical and legal practice in relation to all study procedures. Personal data (your name, contact details, recorded voice) will be handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations, (GDPR), 2018 so that unauthorised individuals will not have access to them. Your data will be pseudonymised and I will not use your name or any other details that could identify you or other people. Research data in paper format will be stored in lockable filing cabinets in my home, and informed consents will be kept separately to pseudonymised interview transcripts. Data held electronically will be kept in encrypted or password protected folders and devices to minimise any risk, and to prevent unauthorised access or accidental loss. The University policy requires all research data to be securely stored on University cloud servers. Personal data will always be stored in an encrypted separate folder to research data.

I will be in charge of keeping, processing, and deleting your data. The Supervisor of this research project, Psychology teaching staff and perhaps an external examiner will have access to the data, but will not keep copies of personal data. See below the contact details of the Principal Investigator and the Supervisor.

In certain exceptional circumstances where you or others may be at significant risk of harm, the researcher may need to report this to an appropriate authority, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations, (GDPR) 2018. This would usually be discussed with you first.

**What if there is a question or a problem?**

If you have any questions about your participation in this study, please contact the Principal Investigator, Chloe Hill at [chloe.hill23@my.northampton.ac.uk](mailto:chloe.hill23@my.northampton.ac.uk)

If you have concerns or complaints about how the research has been conducted, you may also contact the Principal Investigator's Supervisor, Dr. Louise Spiers, [louise.spiers@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:louise.spiers@northampton.ac.uk), Division of Psychology, Faculty of Health, Education, and Society, University of Northampton, Waterside Campus, Learning Hub, room 301, Northampton, Northamptonshire, NN1 5PA.

As a BACP student member, I must adhere to the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions, the Professional Conduct Procedure and Ethical Guidelines for Research in the Counselling Professions. If you believe these have not been adhered to, and wish to make a complaint, you can email [complaints@bacp.co.uk](mailto:complaints@bacp.co.uk), write to Complaints, BACP, 15 St John's Business Park, Lutterworth LE17 4HB, call 01455 883300 to speak to a customer service officer, or use the BACP's complaints portal: <https://bacp.i-sight.com/portal>

**Who has reviewed the project?**

This study has received approval from the Psychology Ethics Committee at the University of Northampton.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this Information Sheet.**