Participant Information Sheet

Study: Counsellors' and Trainee Counsellors' Experiences of Self-Care Strategies When Managing Personal Life Challenges Alongside the Demands of Client Work

Researcher: Dave Harrison (student ID: 439968)
Supervisor: Steph Preston
Course: BA top-up degree in Counselling and Psychotherapy
Institution: Accrington and Rossendale College

1. What is the study about?

This study explores the question: **How do counsellors and trainee counsellors experience using self-care strategies to manage personal life challenges alongside the demands of client work?**

2. Who can take part?

You can take part if you are a **qualified counsellor at Level 4 or above**, currently or previously practising. Students studying at Level 4 or above who are completing counselling placement hours are also welcome.

All participants must hold a fitness-to-practise certificate and have experience of managing personal life challenges alongside counselling client work.

You may have worked in private practice, for a charity or within another organisation. You do not need to be seeing clients currently.

3. What will I be asked to do?

You will complete **one questionnaire**, either online through SurveyMonkey or on paper. It takes around **30 minutes**, although this varies. Both versions ask the same questions, with open-ended responses so you can describe your experiences in your own words. All questions are optional; there are no right or wrong answers.

Please read this sheet, the consent form and the support sheet. If you wish to take part, sign and return the consent form. You will receive a unique reference number to use instead of your name. Keep it for withdrawal or access requests.

4. Your wellbeing

Reflecting on personal challenges may bring up difficult feelings. If you feel upset, triggered or distressed, please pause or stop. Your wellbeing comes first. Support is available through the accompanying support sheet, your supervisor or a trusted person.

There is no guaranteed personal benefit, but your contribution may help understanding of counsellors' self-care experiences.

5. Taking part is your choice

Participation is voluntary. You can skip questions or stop at any time, without giving a reason or experiencing any disadvantage. To withdraw submitted responses, contact the researcher **before 31 January 2027**, using your reference number where possible. You may do this in person, by telephone, email or another means you feel comfortable using. After this deadline, removal from the analysis may no longer be possible.

Unfinished questionnaires will be recorded as incomplete and excluded from analysis. Skipping individual questions does not, by itself, make a questionnaire incomplete.

6. Confidentiality and storage

Your responses will be treated confidentially and pseudonymised using a participant reference number. The record linking your name to this number will be stored securely and separately from your responses. Any quotations used in the dissertation or findings will be anonymised.

The electronic questionnaire will be hosted on SurveyMonkey. You will be asked to enter your participant reference number rather than your name or contact details.

Only Dave Harrison and Steph Preston will have access to the research information. Electronic files will be kept in a password-protected, encrypted folder. Paper questionnaires will be locked away, then securely shredded after electronic entry and accuracy checks.

Records will be retained until the project is completed, expected around **May 2027**. SurveyMonkey records and other electronic copies will then be securely deleted, and remaining paper records securely shredded. Research email correspondence will use the college address below.

7. Access to your information

Your information will be handled under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018, as amended. You may request access to, and a copy of, personal information held about you, including responses that can still be linked to you.

Contact Dave Harrison verbally or in writing, quoting your reference number where possible. Requests will normally be answered within one month. You may also request a copy of your completed questionnaire without entering an email address into the survey.

8. Questions or requests

Researcher: Dave Harrison
Email: 439968@eastlancslearning.ac.uk
Work mobile: 07352 960446
Research supervisor: Steph Preston
steph.preston@eastlancslearning.ac.uk

Please contact either person with questions about participation, withdrawal or your information. Thank you for considering taking part.