

Frequently asked questions

We have put together the most common questions we get asked by our clients

How do I make an appointment?

You can email us via the website www.lifeinaction.co.uk or call us directly and either If the office is closed and we are unavailable to take your call, please leave a message on the confidential answer phone and we will get back to you asap. We will then take your details and begin the referral process. If you email us could you, please let us know your contact details as we need to speak to you in order to take your information and we can then contact you.

You have taken all of my details. What happens next?

Once we have filled out a referral form with you (usually over the phone), we will check suitability and match you to a therapist here at the clinic we want to see which one is most appropriate for you to see taking into consideration your specific needs, availability. The counsellor will then ring you directly to arrange your first appointment. Occasionally, you may get a phone call from the office before this happens, possibly to clarify your availability or ask a question that may not have been fully answered at referral stage.

I need to make a difficult decision, will the counsellor tell me what to do?

The aim of counselling is not for your counsellor to tell you what to do, but is rather to help you explore the situation so that you can reach your own decision as to what to do for the best. We work on a basis of the client being able to resolve most of their issues and believe in the autonomy they have in doing so.

I've been to your website and have seen a counsellor I'd like to have sessions with. Can I pick that one?

This will depend on the specific fee and availability; if these meet your needs then we would refer you to your chosen counsellor. It's a good idea to perhaps choose a few counsellors from the website and then the office will aim to refer you to one of these if at all possible. If this does not turn out to be possible then we will do our best to find you a counsellor with a similar approach and specialist area of expertise.

I don't want my GP to know about the counselling I'm having. Does he have to know?

As long as you are seeing a qualified counsellor we would not inform your GP that you are

attending counselling. The only time your counsellor would contact your GP would be if they had a serious concern regarding your physical, emotional or mental well-being but they would aim to gain your explicit written consent first.

What about confidentiality?

Our service is a confidential service and we are registered with the ICO and follow guidance from both the BACP and the ICO in relation to our data policy Confidentiality is really important to us and Life In Action has a Confidentiality Policy to which all counsellors are required to adhere. All of our Counsellors are members of BACP and as such are required to attend monthly supervision where they discuss their client work. However, all clients are presented under a pseudonym and any identifying details are never described.

There are situations where a counsellor may need to breach confidentiality in order to comply with the policies and procedures of Life In Action and BACP . These are as follows:

- If you are considered to be a serious risk to yourself or to other people, then further professional advice could be beneficial.
- Any illegal activities of public interest and acts of terrorism where not to disclose would break the law.
- Any child protection issues where a child could be at risk of harm or neglect must be reported to the appropriate authorities as required by The Children Act 1989.

However, depending on the circumstances, our counsellors would always aim to seek clients consent prior to disclosing any confidential information to the relevant professional person or organisation.

Do I need to ask my GP to refer me?

We operate an open access policy which means you can self-refer to our Counselling Service. However, there may be times we need to talk to your GP first depending on the issues you are facing and any specific medical issues raised.

My relative/friend is seeing a Life In Action counsellor, will I be seeing the same person? Due to confidentiality and in order to maintain good ethical practice you may be advised that this is not suitable. We are not always able to do this and will make the decision with discussion and consideration between you and the counsellor. We have a number of counsellors so it is unlikely we will need to do this but each case is based on its own circumstances.

I have issues with men. Can I ask to see a female counsellor?

We always ask all clients at the referral stage whether they would prefer to see a male or female counsellor, and then we aim to accommodate this preference if we possibly can.

I just found out I was adopted and I need to speak to someone. Do you have counsellors for that?

For anyone who has adoption issues and needs to work through these the law requires that the counsellor is ASA (Adoption Support Agency) Registered. We do not currently work with this issue so we would find an alternative counselling service for you and refer you to them.

I work all week and have children to look after. Do you have any sessions at weekends?

We are open in the evenings during the week and also have some counsellors who work Saturday mornings.

How long will it be before I have my first session?

The centre office always aims to arrange the initial assessment session within a few working days of contacting the service, however this may depend on the counsellor you wish to see.

How long does a session last?

Counselling sessions last 50 minutes. We do offer longer sessions depending on your circumstances. Please discuss this with your counsellor.

How many sessions will I need?

Once you have attended your initial assessment session with your counsellor, if you both decide you wish to continue working together, then you will be offered either a short term contract, usually 6 sessions or an open longer term contract depending on what is most applicable.

What happens if I cancel a session?

Once you and your counsellor agree to work together you will be given a “being a client of Life In Action” Contract which will include a cancellation arrangement. If you are unable to attend at any time then you will need to contact your counsellor and let them know. If you do not give the agreed amount of notice, then you would usually be required to pay a cancellation fee which is generally the cost of one session. The details of this and other cancellations details can be found on the website under [cancellation policy](#).

How do I pay?

Session fees are paid directly to your counsellor at either at the start or end of each session and payment should be by cash, BACS, Euros or Paypal. Depending how you came to us on referral you may need to pay via the referral agency.

Will the counsellor write reports for me?

Your counsellor will write a report for you about the therapeutic work if you need them to for some professional reason. Normally there would be an additional charge for this service.

Your counsellor may keep brief case notes about your sessions however, these will be stored in a secure location and will be destroyed after 6 years.

What if I don't get on with the therapist?

We always tell all clients at the referral stage that if you don't connect with the counsellor that we refer you to then you can contact the office who will arrange an appointment to see a different counsellor. We always do our best to find the right counsellor to suit the needs of each individual client enquiry.

I can't get a babysitter for my 7-year-old son. Can I bring him with me?

Unfortunately we do not have a creche or child-care facilities. Due to the nature of counselling and the need for quiet, therapeutic space it would not be beneficial to bring children to the counselling sessions; unless, of course, it is for child counselling sessions.

I'm in a wheelchair. Is the centre accessible? Do you have disabled parking?

Life In Action has a disabled-friendly policy and we will do our best to accommodate the needs of disabled clients. The building does have access to a disabled ramp at the rear of the premises, and providing the wheelchair is not wider than 27 inches, then disabled access is possible. Disabled parking is not provided; however visitors can be dropped off at the back entrance to the Centre in the car park to Elmer House. We are working on our accessibility for therapy on the ground floor so please do discuss this at the time of your referral and indicate your needs on the form.

Someone will be bringing me to my sessions. Is there somewhere they can wait for me?

Visitors are welcome to wait in the small waiting area on the first floor. We are based in the Town Centre so there are also plenty of cafes and public spaces to sit and relax too.

I've had 6 sessions funded by my employer but I can't afford to pay for any more sessions. Does this mean I have to stop coming?

We have an arrangement with most of the companies we work with to offer a continuation to therapy arrangement should you wish to do so after your agreed sessions have been completed. We will discuss this with you at the time of booking.

What if I have a question that isn't answered here?

Please feel free to phone us and speak to the Clinic Director who will do their best to answer any other questions or concerns that you may have.