

One At A Time Session Therapy

Important information for clients

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Relate

Thank you for making an appointment to meet with us at Relate NI. Please read the following information very carefully

Relate NI helps hundreds of clients with their relationships every year. We offer face-to-face, as well as online and telephone counselling/therapy to children, young people, adults, couples and families, throughout Northern Ireland.

Counselling/therapy offers you a safe and confidential space to talk/creatively address any difficulties you are experiencing; with someone who is trained to work with you and help you explore and work toward changes. Everyone's process is different, and for some people as things are brought to the surface, things can feel worse for a while before getting better, but in the long-term it should be supportive and enable you to feel, cope and relate better.

Waiting Room

A waiting room is provided for clients and their families. Relate NI is family friendly, and we welcome children. Our primary focus is to provide an environment suitable for counselling.

We respectfully asked all those in the waiting room to be mindful of other clients and ensure that noise is kept to a minimum.

Individual Sessions

The content of any individual session is confidential between the person attending and Relate NI.

Confidentiality

Counselling/therapy is a private and confidential form of help. We hold information about each of our clients and the services they receive in confidence. Whilst clients have the right to share what they like from their experience of counselling/therapy with whom you choose, Relate NI/your counsellor/therapist will not normally share information with anyone outside the organisation, unless it is agreed with you that it would be helpful to do so.

There are exceptional cases where Relate NI might ethically or legally have to share information with relevant authorities – for example if we had reason to believe that someone is at serious risk of harm, or to prevent a miscarriage of justice. We will discuss any proposed disclosure with you unless we believe that to do so could increase the level of risk to you or to someone else

Supervision

To maintain professional standards the counsellor/therapist will talk about their work in clinical supervision. You/your child's identity will remain confidential.

All Relate NI staff work to Relate NI's, and their individual Regulatory and Professional Bodies' Codes of Practice, Conduct and Ethics.

Reports and Client Records

If you and/or another service ask for information about your/your child's counselling/therapy, we will only release this with permission from you. To request reports, you must attend the Relate NI Belfast office with photographic ID. We do not usually write reports, because of our duty of confidentiality to our clients, and because Relate NI counsellors are not trained in specialist areas of diagnosis, but you can see any report we do write before we send it. You can withdraw your permission at any time.

We do not normally respond to requests from third parties for information unless you are involved in a court case. Occasionally the Court may instruct Relate NI to release information about you/your child's counselling/therapy. We will endeavour to inform you beforehand if this must happen.

Data Protection and Client Records

As part of our service requirements Relate NI holds electronic records of your/your child's contact details and brief factual records of counselling/therapy sessions. These records are maintained in a confidential and secure manner and only accessible to relevant Relate NI staff and our database management service and comply with the Data Protection Act 2018. Records are regularly reviewed for purposes of quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation. Records are retained for a period of 6 years, (for young people under the age of 18 the 6 years starts from their 18th birthday). We may use records to carry out contractual obligations (eg. Informing a referral agent about service commencement / closure). We also use anonymised records for evaluation and research purposes.

In accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 client/s are entitled to request access to their notes. Requests should be made in person and require attendance at the Relate NI Belfast office with photographic ID. You will be responded to within 1 month. This time limit may be extended by 2 months if the request is complex, or a number of requests have been received. Where more than one person attends counselling/therapy both clients need to give permission before notes can be released. When a copy of notes is given to clients, they will be asked to sign a disclaimer notification as Relate NI can no longer be responsible for the confidentiality of content. Attending Relate NI's Belfast office with photographic ID will be required before notes are generated and you will have to attend the office to obtain said notes when completed.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) of children under 12 may ask to see their child's notes. We will always discuss this separately with your child.

You have the right to request that we erase your personal data where we were not entitled under the law to process it or it is no longer necessary to process it for the purpose it was

collected. To do so, you should make a formal request to the Business Operations Lead (email: office@relateni.org).

Mobile Phones

Please switch off your mobile phone during your sessions as it can create an unhelpful distraction and interruption.

Unauthorised electronic recording

In order to work safely and effectively, it is important that the privacy of the work is respected. Please do not record your sessions using any device or app. If it is found that recordings have been made covertly, services for the individual responsible will be discontinued immediately and Relate NI reserves the right to seek legal advice regarding possible further action.

Authorised electronic recording

Occasionally a practitioner, for example one who is undertaking a training course, will be required to record a session with a client or clients; and some practitioners regularly use audio or video recording in their work. In these circumstances, you will be given specific information, and you will be asked to give your written consent for this to happen in advance.

Student practitioners

Relate NI is a trainer of relationship practitioners and provides placements for trainees. All our practitioners in training have been assessed as competent to work with their clients on a wide range of issues, and many are experienced counsellors undertaking additional training. Our practitioners receive regular, ongoing and professional clinical supervision for the work they undertake with Relate NI clients. Clinical supervision supports their work with you to ensure it meets the highest professional standards. If you would prefer not to be seen by a practitioner in training, please let us know.

Cancellation policy

If you need to cancel a session, at least 48 hours notice should be given to avoid cancellation charges. Please call the office on 028 9032 3454.

Evaluation and Feedback

We welcome your comments on our service and would encourage you to take a few minutes to complete and return the evaluation questionnaire provided to you via email on your counselling/therapy.

We also welcome your feedback at any point during your counselling/therapy and you can give verbal/ written feedback to any of our staff. We ask you to do this respectfully.

Complaints

If you have any concerns about the service you/your child received at Relate NI, it is your right to make a complaint. You can tell your counsellor/therapist, or alternatively you can contact the Business Operations Lead (email: office@relateni.org). Our staff will always aim to resolve whatever is concerning you efficiently and courteously and we request that you respond to us in the same way. We do not tolerate abuse towards our staff and Relate NI reserves the right to consider action against anyone who behaves in