

Thinking about making a self-referral into Relate NI. What do you need to know before you refer?

Relate NI's specialism is working relationally with people. By that, we mean we understand the connected nature of people, and the impact relationships might have on our lives and well-being.

Our services aim to support people and their relationships throughout Northern Ireland; by making expert information and support for healthy relationships available for everyone. One of the ways we do this is through our therapeutic relationship counselling services.

If you have decided [you are ready for counselling](#), you may wish to refer yourself, you and your partner, your family or your child to relationship counselling with one of our expert practitioners. Indicators for successful relationship counselling would be a commitment to a successful outcome by all engaging in the process.

If this is the case, it's important to know Relate NI does not automatically accept all referrals received. We will look at your situation, and what you are experiencing, and decide whether our relationship counselling services are the appropriate intervention to support you. If we feel another means of support would be more suitable, we will signpost you to what that may be and how you can access it.

Below are some of the criteria we use in this clinical decision-making process. Referrals that are not appropriate for our service may include:

Complex Mental Health Related Diagnoses

Our relationships are inextricably linked to our mental well-being. Relate NI counsellors and therapists are trained to work with mild to moderate symptoms of mental ill health. For those presenting with what is known as Step 3 symptoms, it would be more appropriate to seek support via your GP. (Examples of this would be severe depression, unstable mental health, bipolar disorder.)

Suicidal Ideation

Where an individual may have suicidal intent at the time of seeking referral, including to the extent where they may have an active plan to do so, a crisis management approach would be a more appropriate intervention. If you feel like this might be you, please contact Lifeline 0808 808 8000.

Ongoing Domestic Violence / Abuse (DVA)

Relate NI cannot work with individuals or couples, where DVA is coercive in nature. Victims of Domestic Abuse should contact the 24 hour Domestic & Sexual Violence Helpline (Northern Ireland) 0808 802 1414.

Substance abuse & addiction

Ongoing and/or untreated substance abuse and addiction impacts the effectiveness of relationship counselling. We would recommend seeking support for this prior to engaging in relationship counselling.

Parental consent for younger clients.

The process for determining if a young person can access counselling without parental consent is assessed by the counsellor to determine that a young person has sufficient maturity and understanding of what is involved to be regarded as 'Gillick Competent'. Fraser guidelines ask the therapist to consider whether clients under the age of 16 have sufficient understanding to make an informed decision about undertaking therapy. Therefore, young people requiring counselling, who have sufficient intelligence and understanding of the proposed action and its consequences, do not require parental consent to engage in the process and are regarded as 'Gillick competent'. Usually this is around the age of post primary school pupils.

In the case of "non-Gillick" clients who do require parental consent, details relating to parental responsibility is sought from all persons with parental consent from the referrer to support this assessment. Please speak to your counsellor about this if you require further details.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

Currently Relate NI do not provide CBT. If you require a CBT intervention, we recommend checking the BACP website for an accredited provider. <https://www.bacp.co.uk/>

Court Ordered Counselling Services

While Relate NI may work with clients who have on-going court cases, we do not do case work *FOR* the courts or which is mandated by the courts.