

Counselling and bereavement service for parents and carers

We know that it can be a very difficult time for you and your family when your child is in hospital, whether it's because of a life limiting or life-threatening condition, or for palliative care.

Many parents and carers tell us about the confusion, and sometimes uncertainty, they experience during stages of treatment, or following the death of their child.

This leaflet explains more about our counselling and bereavement services.

Counselling is a form of support that encourages people to reflect on and build ways of managing challenging situations and their emotions. Counselling is not about giving advice or telling you what to do.

Instead, counselling offers a safe and consistent space for you to talk about concerns and things you want to change. Counselling also offers a space to begin to accept the things that cannot be changed, while working towards ways of coping.

The counselling service is free, and includes parents and carers whose children are seen as outpatients.

About the service

We are a small team of qualified and registered counsellors and psychotherapists.

Appointments are for 50 minutes, on weekdays from 9am to 5pm. They can be in person, by video call or telephone and at a regular frequency that suits you. During major holiday periods we offer a remote service.

Our role

We are here to:

- help you make sense of your thoughts and feelings
- listen to and hear you
- talk with you about possible consequences and challenges that may be ahead
- support you in saying the things may seem impossible, so you can begin to make sense of them

Counselling sessions are based on your needs and are flexible, we call this a Person-Centred Approach. You might prefer to talk with us on your own, with your partner or with someone else. We work with you to offer personalised counselling to suit your needs, and we will review our counselling together every 12 sessions.

Making contact

You can:

- call us, **phone:** 020 7188 4538 (leave a message and we will return your call as soon as possible)
- ask your child's nurse or doctor to refer you

Email: parentcounsellingservice@gstt.nhs.uk

Confidentiality

We work with your child's medical team but will talk with you first before sharing anything. As a team we follow safeguarding processes. This means we need to ensure your safety and that of anyone you talk to us about.

Your data

Your personal data is kept securely and we will only look at it for use within the counselling service. Brief factual notes are made after sessions. Your data is held in line with the Trust's data practices, which you can read online;

www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/about-us/your-health-records

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