

## CCHH Counselling Agreement

In this document we want to help you understand the counselling that you will be receiving and our commitment to you.

### **Description of biblical counselling**

The person who counsels you will be using biblical principles and will be using a biblical worldview. You may well be a Christian but you don't have to be a Christian to receive biblical counselling. You will be meeting with a member of the church's Biblical Counselling team. They have either completed the Certificate in Biblical Counselling Course or substantially through it. The course is run in collaboration by Biblical Counselling UK (BCUK) and Oak Hill Theological College using materials from Christian Counselling and Educational Foundation (CCEF). The person who counsels you is NOT a trained Psychiatrist or a licensed counsellor.

The Biblical Counselling team receives supervision in their work through the church and a local peer support with other BCUK counsellors. Please do discuss with your 'counsellor' any questions or concerns you might have about what they can and can't do.

Each session is normally 1 hour, and an initial 6 sessions will be offered after which you and your counsellor will discuss next steps which might include further sessions being offered.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is a matter that is taken very seriously by the church, the elders and the Biblical Counselling team. It would not normally be appropriate from a biblical perspective to release confidential information that you have shared *without your consent*.

However, as the counselling forms part of the pastoral care of CCHH, the Elders are made aware that an individual is receiving counselling, but the details are not shared. When wider information is shared with another Elder or the Elders your consent will be sought and they will keep that information confidential unless there is a specific reason (as outlined below) to share that information.

There may also be times where to best care for you, it would be helpful to share information with CCHH Advocacy team, if this is needed, your permission will be sought.

Exceptional circumstances where consent to share your information (With elders or external bodies) may not be required is where there is significant risk to yourself or others. Examples of situations (but not exclusive) where confidential information is shared may include:

1. When there are concerns that the person receiving counselling is at risk of harming themselves or harming others (Prov 24-11-12)
2. When we believe there is ongoing abuse taking place that requires the information be shared with statutory authorities and shared with safeguarding officers within the church as per the church safeguarding policy (Rom 13:1)
3. When a minor (a person aged under 18) receiving counselling shares information that the Counsellor believes needs to be shared with the parents/guardians/authorities in the best interests of the minor and/or to safeguard the minor.
4. When there is a legal requirement to share information with authorities (for example a court of law requests the information is shared).
5. When the Counsellor receives guidance and regular supervision in order to better care for those they are counselling (Prov 11:14; 15:22). When supervision and guidance is sought either from the BCUK mentor, other BCUK counsellors, peer supervision group usually the information shared will be anonymised.

### **Principles**

Counselling will be with those of the same sex.

At the outset clear expectations and goals for your time together will be discussed and agreed upon between yourself and the Counsellor.

All counselling will be aimed to be done, reflecting the Father's love and compassion, seeking to follow the example of Jesus in manner and tone and dependent on the Spirit for guidance and transforming work.

One to one Meetings with adults at risk and children should ideally be in a public place or in a room with a window with others around. Where a child is involved the parents will be present or nearby and kept informed of what has taken place.

Abusive behaviour - (whether verbal, physical, psychological or sexual) by or towards our counselling team will not be tolerated.

### **Cancelling appointments**

If you need to cancel your appointment please phone or email your counsellor ideally at least 24 hours in advance unless that is not practically possible.

### **Help between sessions**

Although each of the team are part of the church family, they will not usually be able to provide emergency help outside of sessions and the church office would probably not be able to get hold of them in an emergency. Generally we would recommend dealing with an emergency situation in the same way you would if you were not currently receiving counselling. So if you are in an emergency medical situation the appropriate course of action would usually be to phone your GP or out of hours GP service. If it is an emergency a friend within the church could help you with then contact that friend. You can phone the church office or an Elder direct if you feel this might be appropriate, but this may not be immediately possible either.

### **Communicating Concerns**

If you feel that your counsellor has failed to abide by this agreement or you have any concerns about their conduct and you cannot or believe it is inappropriate to, resolve the matter directly with them - please contact the Elder in charge of biblical counselling - **Mark Ventham** - [markv@cchh.org.uk](mailto:markv@cchh.org.uk) or if he is implicated then Colin Strudwick, Trustee responsible for Safeguarding, [colin@cchh.org.uk](mailto:colin@cchh.org.uk)

If you are in agreement with these arrangements please sign, date and return this document.

**Signed:**.....**Date:**.....

### ***OPTIONAL (Can be signed ahead or as needed)***

I give permission for wider information to be shared with another **Elder/ Elders** as necessary

**Signed:**.....**Date:**.....

I give permission for wider information to be shared with the **Advocacy team** if needed

**Signed:**.....**Date:**.....