



*Specialists in domestic abuse counselling*

*Online counselling, counsellor training and supervision, and research support*

## Dactari Client Information Sheet (Version 3 – January 2023)

### Introduction

Dactari brings together qualified counsellors with expertise in domestic abuse counselling to offer a counselling service remotely for those people aged 18 or over who cannot, or choose not to, attend specialist counselling in their own area. This may be due to travel difficulties, a lack of available services locally, or problems with finding available session times that suit your calendar.

We have chosen the name Dactari to represent our interests in Domestic Abuse, Counselling, Training and Research, together with the Innovation that we strive towards. In addition, many years ago the series Daktari on television told the story of a medical and veterinary compound in the middle of the jungle that provided a place where both animals and humans could feel safe whilst they healed from their wounds. Similarly, we would like to offer a haven of peace and safety for our clients, whilst they work through whatever needs to be said or shared, in the midst of what are often complex and busy lives.

All our counsellors have specialist training and counselling experience in working with domestic abuse. We are all trained in and deliver counselling according to a model of practice generated from client experiences of counselling after domestic abuse, which has been published and cited internationally. We understand the issues that living with abuse can bring and will work with you on whatever it is that is most important for you to resolve immediately. If there are further issues you want to bring, you can extend the counselling until you feel you have covered everything you want to cover. Whilst we will not offer advice we may, from time to time, offer some insight from our observations and/or knowledge of abuse which can be useful in helping you to understand situations more clearly.

The number of sessions is entirely up to you, as we have no fixed minimum or maximum number. After the first session, where also take some personal details from you, you can discuss with your counsellor whether you want to continue. If you do want to continue you can then arrange further sessions with your counsellor.

Our research suggests that it can take 4-8 sessions to feel completely comfortable with counselling and would recommend continuing with at least 4 sessions before making further decisions, but if you would prefer to leave before that, that is absolutely. You can always re-refer back in at a later date if you wish to do so.

Counselling sessions are 50 minutes long and can be accessed by video link (Microsoft Teams or Zoom) or by telephone, as agreed with your counsellor. You will need to confirm that you have a quiet, confidential space to access during the counselling session, free from distractions or interruptions from, for example, other family members, housemates or pets.

## How do I become a Dactari client?

Initially, if you would like more information before you decide, you simply need to contact us. You can do this by email ([info@dactari.co.uk](mailto:info@dactari.co.uk)), by using the contact form on our website ([www.dactari.co.uk](http://www.dactari.co.uk)) or by telephoning us (Tel: 0333 335 5896). If it would be helpful, you can have a short chat with your therapist before starting counselling, free of charge. This would allow you to see if you the two of you have the right 'fit' to work together. Simply choose a time which you think you will have available for counselling and select the free option for 15 minutes from the 'Book now' section of the website. The counsellor available for counselling will then give you a call and see whether you would like to then book a session. The counsellor can agree session times and dates with you, so you don't have to book via the website again. We can arrange to have a chat with you for around 15 minutes, free of charge, if you would like to see whether the service might be right for you. This can be booked on our website or via email, whichever suits you.

If you feel you have information to decide to go ahead with counselling from the website and the information sheet, simply book a session at a time that suits your schedule and the counsellor will contact you to confirm the session. Once the session is confirmed, we will email an invoice to you which you should pay 48 hours before the session. This can be paid via PayPal, credit card or bank transfer, whichever suits you best. Please note that the session cannot go ahead until payment is received.

If you have any difficulties using the website booking service, you can call or email us and we can book an appointment for you. Please choose a time when you would normally be available as this is likely to become your normal counselling time if you decide to continue.

When your counsellor contacts you to introduce themselves, they will initially try to telephone, but if they cannot get through for any reason, they will email you instead. It is important that you respond to the email when you receive it, so that the session can be confirmed with the counsellor. A couple of days before the session, you will receive a reminder email confirming the date and time of the session. Once the session has taken place, you have become a Dactari client.

## What happens during my first counselling session?

The first session provides an opportunity for you to share some of what brought you into counselling and what you hope to gain from the session. It is also the beginning of your work with your counsellor and a chance to see how you get on together. It is important when you work with someone that you feel that you can talk to them openly. Very occasionally, there may be times where you may feel that the 'fit' is not quite right. If that is the case, it can be useful to talk this through with your counsellor. If you still feel it is not quite right, you can ask to be seen by someone else. For example, you may prefer to be seen by a counsellor of a different gender or have preferences around sexuality or faith. In these cases, please let the counsellor know your preference for a counsellor. We will try to accommodate you where we can, although this may mean waiting for the counsellor to become available and/or moving the appointment time. If there will be a delay, a change in appointment time see a counsellor, or we cannot accommodate your preferences, we will let you know.

At this session, the counsellor may have some specific questions for you. This allows us to get a better feel for your current environment and why you have decided to access counselling. We may not explore anything in depth at this session, it is more to get a feel for where you are and what you are looking for. Occasionally, when we hear more about why you want to have counselling, we may decide that Dactari is not the best fit. In this case, we will provide links to other organisations that we feel may meet your needs better.

At the end of the session, the counsellor will check in with you about how the session has gone and ask if you want to continue with the counselling. If you want to continue and Dactari still seems to be the right fit for you, the counsellor will agree a time and date for the next session. Generally, this will be the same time and day each week. Any changes to this will be discussed and agreed with your counsellor.

We will also ask you if you want to participate in weekly data collection which measure your well-being and symptoms of anxiety and depression. There is no obligation to do so, although many clients do find this helpful when they can see scores improving as the therapy progresses. All data is collected directly onto a secure server and only accessed by your counsellor and, potentially, by the clinical lead for counselling at Dactari, hence it is confidential to the counselling. Of course, the best person to know how the counselling is going is you. This simply provides some additional data.

Finally, we will also ask you if you would be interested in being approached to participate in any future research projects that Dactari are involved with. There is no obligation to do so and your answer will not affect your counselling in any way. If you did say yes, this simply means you may be invited to participate in a research project sometime in the future. If this were to happen, you would be given details about the project and subject area and asked whether you want to take part. Again, it would be completely up to you whether or not you agreed to participate and would not affect your access to counselling in any way. We ask the question as we are keen to continue to improve our knowledge of this area of counselling and our service delivery, and client-based research is most helpful to us in doing so.

### **What can you tell me about my counselling after the first session?**

After your first session you continue your counselling as discussed with your counsellor. Each counselling session focuses on what you need to bring to the session and the counsellor will work with you on those areas. There is no set pattern of sessions where we cover certain things at certain times as you would with, for example, a support group. Instead, we will bring things into the session that are appropriate for you at a time where it would be useful for you. Some of this might be knowledge about domestic abuse, other aspects might be ways to reduce anxiety or to look at things differently. We believe that working with your current concerns is better than providing generic information that is not relevant to your situation.

Before each session, you will receive a reminder of your appointment (with a link to the forms if you have opted into this). The counselling can continue for as long as you feel it is useful. For some clients that may be 6 sessions, others may feel that they need longer. If you go on to 10 sessions, we will review with you how you are feeling and what more you want to do. We appreciate that some people with particularly difficult past experiences may benefit from longer term therapy, and we can provide that for you. However, we also want people to be independent, hence checking with you the rationale for continuing therapy every 10 sessions.

### **Do I have to come to counselling every week?**

Counselling usually works best if you attend sessions weekly as you can build up some momentum in addressing complex issues, so that there is not too big a gap between sessions. However, we recognise that weekly therapy can be expensive and therefore not open to everyone. For that reason, we can offer fortnightly sessions if that meets your needs. However, we recognise that progress does tend to be a little slower because of the additional time to catch up and settle each time due to gap in between sessions.

We do not currently offer monthly sessions, unless you are coming to the end of counselling. In that case, we can offer up to 3 monthly sessions if you feel it would be useful to check in with our counsellor as you stop the routine of weekly or fortnightly sessions.

### How much does counselling cost?

We to provide access to counselling for clients in all walks of life. To do so, we offer two tiers of counselling fees. These are:

1. Normal sessional rate           £50/session
2. Concessionary\* rate           £30/session

\*The concessionary rate is for those people currently receiving some form of benefit, for example Universal Credit, or who are over 18 and in full time education.

We also recognise that some people would like the security of knowing that future sessions were already booked. If this would be of interest to you, please ask your counsellor for more details about block booking.

We reserve the right to review our fees, but we will maintain the price per session of anyone starting counselling for at least 12 months, whilst they continue therapy.

All sessions must be paid for by PayPal or bank transfer at least 2 days in advance. If payment is not received, it is our policy that the counsellor cannot work with you until the payment is made. We will of course notify you if we have not received payment in case there has been error somewhere.

### What happens if I cannot attend a counselling session I have booked?

We understand that, occasionally, things happen that can prevent you from attending. If this is the case, please provide us with 24-hours' notice by emailing your counsellor and copying in [info@dactari.co.uk](mailto:info@dactari.co.uk). In this situation, the session will be rearranged with the counsellor without charge.

If you cancel with less than 24-hours' notice, then the cancelled session will still need to be paid for. This is because the therapist has set aside time to see you and cannot, with such short notice, fill that space in their schedule. We will, of course, review this charge in the case of serious accident or serious illness where notice could not be given.

If you have two cancellations with less than 24-hours' notice, we will review your counselling with you. Sometimes late cancellations are a sign that counselling is not right for you at that time. If that is the case for you, we may suggest that you take a break from counselling and come back again once life is a little quieter, but this is something we will discuss with you.

If you do not attend a booked session and do not let us know, we will treat this the same as not providing 24-hours' notice. The counsellor will then try to contact you by telephone or email to see if you want to arrange another session. If you did not respond to the counsellor within 10 days, we would then discharge you from counselling. You would be welcome to contact us again if you felt that you wanted to resume counselling sometime in the future.

### How confidential is counselling?

All our counsellors are Registered Members of BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) and undertake to abide by the BACP ethical framework for the counselling professions. You can download copy here if you wish (<https://www.bacp.co.uk/events-and-resources/ethics-and-standards/ethical-framework-for-the-counselling-professions/>). In this, we undertake to keep everything that happens in session confidential, except in exceptional

circumstances, such as where we believe there may be harm to you or to others around you, or if we are legally obliged, for example, if you report acts of terrorism or money laundering or where we have been asked by the courts for testimony or notes.

All our counsellors keep notes of sessions, although these are brief and factual. The notes, and any data collected before each counselling session, are stored on our client management system, Pragmatic Tracker, which is a secure cloud-based specialist records system (assessed and approved by the NHS and many universities for its security). The notes and collected data are seen only by the counsellor on a regular basis and by the clinical manager where necessary, for example, for auditing purposes.

Counsellors also undertake supervision individually and within Dactari. All client work brought to supervision is anonymised and the focus is on how the counsellor is working with you. All supervision sessions are also confidential in line with BACP requirements. Counsellors may seek guidance from the Dactari clinical manager and/or their supervisor should they have any concerns about your safety.

Sometimes clients, particularly those involved in court cases, will ask us to write a letter to their solicitor outlining their attendance at counselling. Whilst we are happy to do so, we will first check with you that you are aware of what will happen to the information once released and that you are happy with this happening. We will also require written authority from you to release the information. It is worth noting that we will only offer to complete a letter for clients who have had at least 6 sessions as it is important that we write any information to the courts based on our experience of working with you.

Occasionally, we may receive a request to confirm that someone is accessing our service. We would not answer that question, neither yes nor no, although we may ask some questions about why the question was being posed. If this happened, we may then advise you of the request for information if we had enough data from the call to share and enquire what you would like us to do.

Finally, we do routinely download anonymised data collected from clients to look at the overall performance of the counselling service. This data is part of the overall clinic data set. No individual client data would be downloaded, and no individual data can be identified from the dataset.

### **Are there any people who would not be suitable for Dactari counselling?**

We do have some groups of people that we would not usually work with as we feel they would be better working with other organisations. The groups are as follows:

1. Anyone currently in an abusive relationship and at risk. In these cases we would recommend contacting Women's Aid; Refuge; ManKind; or The Men's Advice Line. These organisations can advise on safety aspects of living in an abusive relationship much better than our organisation.
2. Anyone with severe mental health difficulties, such as paranoia or psychosis, or under the regular care of a mental health team. We would recommend completing your existing treatment plan before starting counselling.
3. Anyone who is currently seeing another counsellor. Working with one counsellor means that you both have a shared experience which can help put together the pieces of what happened. If you are working with another counsellor, important aspects of your story could be shared with one counsellor and not the other. This can make both sets of counselling ineffective, as the counsellors are working from limited data on your situation. Hence, we ask that you finish one set of counselling before starting another.

4. Anyone who has a current addiction issue. We are not experts in addiction, and we would recommend seeking specialist support to address these issues prior to starting work with us. Organisations such as [www.Rehab4addiction.co.uk](http://www.Rehab4addiction.co.uk) may be a more useful service for you. Once you are in recovery (more than 6 months) we would be happy to work with you.
5. Anyone who is currently living outside the UK or who is not registered with a GP in the UK. As we do not have contacts outside the UK, we would not be able to enact any necessary safeguarding for such clients. From a safety perspective we therefore restrict our clients to those currently living in the UK and who have a GP who could be contacted should there be a need to do so. Should you move outside the UK during counselling, we would have to end counselling at the point of the move. However, your counsellor would work towards an ending with you once you know the date of your move.

### **Out of hours contact**

The Dactari admin team are available on 0333-335-5896 during working hours, 9am to 5pm. Outside of these hours you can leave a voice message or send a contact message via our website. We will respond to you once we have picked up the message.

Please note that we do not offer a crisis service outside of our working hours. If you feel you need additional support alongside your counselling, please contact your GP; or call NHS 111; or contact the Samaritans free helpline which is available 24 hours a day on 116 123. If you feel you are in crisis and need a physical presence to support you, please go to your nearest A&E department.

### **Letting your counsellor know of any changes to your situation**

If you need to access additional support outside of working hours, please do let your counsellor know. It could form an important part of your counselling going forward. Also, if your circumstances change during counselling, such as changes to your home situation, starting medication, or beginning work with a mental health team, please also let your counsellor know as this can impact counselling.

### **Any other questions?**

We hope the information on this sheet is helpful to you. We aim to be as clear and transparent as we can about what we can offer. If you have any additional questions, please feel free to email [info@dactari.co.uk](mailto:info@dactari.co.uk) and we will be happy to provide any information that we can.