

Information for Parents/Carers



If your son or daughter is thinking about coming to Youth Talk, the following information may be helpful. Some young people urgently want their parents to help them access the service. Others, depending on age and reasons for coming, may be too fearful to involve mum or dad at the outset or they may just want to retain their privacy.

Why was Youth Talk set up?

Youth Talk was set up in 1997 by a local GP who saw an unmet need in the community. She created an early intervention service for young people, from adolescence into young adulthood, who are struggling and need a safe place to come for counselling and support. Our counselling service is designed to be easy to access and to meet the specific needs of young people. We are a charity and do not charge for our services, meaning that any young person can reach out to us for help.

Young people can refer themselves

Youth Talk was created to provide an 'Open Door' to any young person aged 13-25, living, going to school/college or working in the City and District of St Albans. Uniquely, this means they can ask for help directly. It could mean that your son or daughter seeks help without you knowing about it. Young people must refer themselves to the service because it is crucial to the success of the work that they have opted into the process and do not feel 'sent' by someone else.

A confidential and private service

Our professional counselling service is a confidential one-to-one talking therapy. Young people may share with others what happens in their sessions, but the counsellor and the agency cannot. We appreciate that this can make caring parents feel excluded, but confidentiality is vital for the effectiveness of the work.

What are the reasons for coming to Youth Talk?

Some young people need help with life experiences such as bereavement and loss, the separation and divorce of parents or relationship struggles at school. Timely intervention can prevent the deterioration of distress into mental ill health. Other young people with symptoms such as self-harming and suicidal thoughts may need to work with the underlying issues, and this can take time. Early intervention makes a difference.

Weekly sessions

Appointments last 50 minutes. If you are bringing your son or daughter for their appointment, please be aware that there is no dedicated waiting room at the centre. Parents may wish to visit the nearby town centre and return or arrange to meet at the entrance to the centre. If your son/daughter is using our remote video/telephone service please ensure they have a 'safe' and confidential space to talk, free from interruptions.

How long will the counselling continue?

Young people are offered 4 assessment sessions to establish whether counselling is an appropriate intervention. The number of sessions in total could be as many as 44 (lasting around a year). This is based on individual need. Research shows that the work can have a lasting effect, changing harmful patterns of self-harm and poor self-worth.

Why can't parents talk to counsellors?

For the success of the work, the counsellor is not able to connect with you or share any aspect of the sessions. Young people need to feel 'safe' to talk and to have a sense of trust in the process. In order to create a working alliance, the young person needs to meet with someone they have no previous relationship with or knowledge of in a different context.

Confidentiality

There is a strict confidentiality code of practice. This agreement is the same in all forms of counselling and psychotherapy. If the young person is at risk of significant harm (or likely to harm others), it is the duty of the counsellor to break confidentiality and contact the appropriate agency.

Your role as a parent/carer

Your role remains pivotal. Any support that you can give - even if it means not seeking any information at the present time - will be invaluable.

Active listening - this means attending carefully to what your son/daughter is saying, asking for clarifications but withholding judgement. This can be fulfilling for both parties. If your son or daughter tells you things that alarm you it can be helpful to talk with a professional - perhaps your GP or a reputable helpline such as Young Minds Parents Helpline (0808 802 5544).

Where there is a tendency for reticence in a young person, this may not last indefinitely. It is often a great relief to them when they can begin to talk to their parents. If you think that family therapy would be useful, you can ask your GP for a referral to the Child & Young People's Mental Health Service (CYPMHS) or seek a private therapist.

How can we help parents?

Our reception team are sympathetic to the needs of parents and able to talk about things in general and advise on forms of parent support in the community. They will be able to talk with you about any service you may find useful to access whilst your son/daughter is attending Youth Talk.

Some agencies that can offer support:

- Young Minds for parents/carers - www.youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-helpline/ - 0808 802 5544
- Family Lives - www.familylives.org.uk - 0808 800 2222
- Royal College of Psychiatrists -

www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/parents-and-young-people

- Your GP - your doctor can make a family referral to the Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- Private practitioners in the locality. We can supply a list of practitioners or you can search the BACP website (www.bacp.co.uk).
- If your son/daughter needs help in a mental health crisis contact Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS - Single Point of Access (SPA). Call 0800 6444 101 (open 24/7) or alternatively call NHS 111, selecting option 2 for mental health services.

In the case of serious illness or injury dial 999 for emergency services.

The Youth Talk website (www.youthtalk.org.uk) also provides invaluable information about the services we offer and what to expect from counselling sessions, as well as other helpful information and signposting to useful websites and local and national support services.

Our counselling team

All Youth Talk counsellors and psychotherapists are qualified professionals registered and accredited with a nationally recognised body such as the BACP or UKCP. They come from a range of professional backgrounds including education, health, public & social services and agencies specialising in the development and needs of young people. Youth Talk abides by the Values and Ethical Standards of BACP - The British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (www.bacp.org.uk).

How is Youth Talk funded?

Since 1997 thousands of young people have trusted Youth Talk to provide free, confidential and expert support from a dedicated team of experienced professionals.

Running a high-quality service is expensive. As a charity, Youth Talk relies on support and funding to deliver our services without charge and to help as many young people as possible.

We can only continue to provide our services with the support of our local community. Every donation - no matter the size - makes a difference.

If you are able to make a contribution to the health of a young person, you can donate in a variety of ways: a one-off donation or monthly, online or by post. Visit our website (www.youthtalk.org.uk) and click the red donate button to find out how you can help.

Thank you.