# Faculty of Health and Life Sciences

Counselling and Mental Health Clinic

**Clinic Mission Statement:**

**“Towards wellbeing and resilience in work, life and living”**

**Introduction**

The York St John *Counselling and Mental Health Clinic* offers low-cost, evidence-based counselling, informed through case study research and routine process and outcomes data, to local and regional clients. The clinic provides general counselling, along with specialistcounselling for victims of domestic violence. Other services include group work on anger management.NHS, voluntary and private sector agencies can refer clients to the clinic, and individuals can choose to refer themselves.

Day-to-day clinic management is led by clinic directors Dr Lynne Gabriel, Associate Professor of Counselling and Reader in Counselling, Coaching and Mentoring and Dr Hazel James, Head of Programme for Counselling, Coaching and Mentoring. Both are experienced therapy practitioners, researchers and supervisors and, along with a clinic steering group, oversee strategic development and operational activity. During clinic development, the directors received valuable consultancy support from senior colleagues in the counselling and wellbeing field.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Key aims and objectives of the clinic**

The clinic aims to:

* ***provide affordable and accessible counselling and mental health services to local******and regional communities;***
* ***undertake high quality practice-derived and evidence-based outcome research*** *on client services; this will enable accrual of practice-based case study research and, longer term, will facilitate clinical trials;*
* ***develop research and clinical partnerships*** *with local, regional, national and international partners (including HE sector, private and public sector, and third sector partners);*
* ***offer practice placements*** *for experienced and trainee practitioners[[2]](#footnote-2);*
* ***offer research placements*** *for York St John year 3 and postgraduate counselling, psychology or occupational therapy student;*
* ***provide training, supervision and consultancy*** *on mental health and wellbeing and,*
* ***become a Centre of Excellence for evidence based therapies and psychological interventions to enhance mental health and wellbeing,*** *providing a range of services to the region.*

**Clinical and research activity**

Counselling sessions take place in the Wellbeing suite, located in Holgate reception area. Sessions are scheduled on Wednesdays, 6.00pm to 9.30pm. Opening hours will be reviewed as the clinic grows, with additional evenings offered as need increases.

**Clinical services**

1. **C*ounselling for victims of domestic violence:*** For adult female and male victims of domestic abuse and violence. This is an under-resourced and under-researched area in the UK psychological therapies field. The clinic has a domestic abuse and violence Research Fellow, Dr Jeannette Roddy, a Senior Lecturer at Sunderland University, working to support development of research and evidence-based practice. We are also testing Dr Roddy’s counselling for domestic violence model. The clinic directors have experience of working with domestic violence issues and clients (from a legal, clinical and research perspective).

With ***1 in 4 women*** and ***1 in 6 men*** victims of domestic violence, it is an area of psychological provision that the clinic anticipates expanding over time. Networks with local and regional agencies, as well as local police, are in place and will inform the progression of services for domestic violence victims. Time-limited counselling up to a maximum of 20 sessions will be offered.

1. ***General counselling*:** For adults seeking psychological support with a range of issues or problems (including relationship issues, stress, bereavement and loss). The counselling is provided by trained practitioners. Clients will initially be offered a 10-session counselling contract. Where necessary, the 10-week contract can be extended up to a maximum of 20 sessions, depending upon the clinical circumstances. We are in the process of developing services for loss and bereavement and will be generating a Research Fellow to support that work.
2. ***Group work:*** Anger management for adults. The clinic will work with local voluntary and statutory organizations, to provide evidence-based group interventions for those with anger management issues. Specialist staff will run the anger management group.

**Session fees**

For clients who are self-funding, there is a fee scale of £5-£50 per session, depending upon client income. For commissioned work, the clinic directors will work with the commissioners and HLS accountant to set fees.

**Client assessment**

All potential clients will be seen by a trained counsellor for an initial assessment session. Clinical measures are used to assist with assessment and to ensure clients can be matched with an appropriate practitioner. Where the clinic is able to offer therapy, the client will be allocated a practitioner. If the clinic is not able to provide counselling, the client will be referred to a local agency or provided with information on alternative sources of support, as appropriate.

During assessment, clients will be invited to give permission for their sessions to be audio recorded (for clinic research purposes). Recordings may be transcribed for research projects and will be used in clinical supervision meetings. Recorded data will be securely stored. The research projects require a range of measures to be administered, either at each counselling session, or at particular intervals during therapy and follow-up.

**The clinic’s practitioners**

The clinic is staffed by trained counselling and mental health specialists from the academic team at York St John. Practitioners are required to provide evidence of recent Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance. Practitioners commit to at least one clinic session per week and a minimum clinic commitment of two years. Practitioners from other University Faculties will be involved in delivery of specific projects (including an anger management group). Students can participate in clinic administration and research projects, as either student counselling or mental health practitioners, or involved in UG/PG research projects.

**Professional liability insurance**

All practitioners undertaking clinical work in the HLS counselling research clinic will be covered by professional indemnity insurance.

**Supervision of clinical practice**

The clinic provides group supervision for its practitioners. Frequency of supervision will depend upon case-loads and frequency of client work, consistent with best practice as recognised by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), the British Psychological Society (BPS), the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP), or the British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapists (BABCP). All practitioners working in the clinic will be bound by their relevant Ethical Codes.

**Research supervision**

Researchwill be led by experienced research supervisors in HLS Faculty, in collaboration with external partners where appropriate to the research/project work. Postgraduate students will assist in accruing routine process and outcomes data and will be supervised by the clinic leads or other appropriately qualified senior colleagues. All researchers will work to the research ethics guidelines published by their relevant professional body.

**Clinic and research governance**

Key responsibility for the strategic and operational work of the clinic rests with the clinic directors, with the support of the steering group. Meetings take place every quarter to review clinic operations and its strategic development. Membership of the steering group is drawn from local/regional health, wellbeing and social care sectors, as well as private and public sector organizations and patient/public representation (including the Dean of Health and Life Sciences Faculty at York St John; IDAS Director, local GP, local practitioners, patient/public representation). The clinic receives strategic support from the HLS Faculty Leadership Team. The clinic received formal approval from Faculty Management Group and secured ethical approval from the University Research Ethics Committee. NHS ethical approval was sought but was not required.

**The Clinic’s ‘Return-on-Investment’ (ROI)** The clinic’s *return on investment* benefits clients/patients, students, staff, volunteers and the wider community. There are also returns in relation to staff development and to the formation of a wide stakeholder group and network of professional connections. This will cultivate collaborative work and research opportunities with local/regional partners and other HEIs. Financial return is not a key aim of the clinic. The clinic’s social, mental health and wellbeing, and community facing focus meets York St John’s well placed position as a civic institution and supports YSJ strategic aims for teaching and research. The clinic provides research and work-informed placement opportunities for students. Within 5 years, the clinic aims to break-even through income from counselling fees, consultancy, commissioned work and training, and cross-Institutional research bids.

***Key clinic ROIs:***

1. ***For clients/patients:***  The clinic offers access to low-cost, high-quality, evidence-based psychological therapy, provided by experienced and trained practitioners. For those clients who consent to have their counselling information included in the research database, they will know that they are contributing to the growth and quality of a practice-based evidence-base – one that will benefit them and future clients.

***For students:*** The clinic provides an innovative learning-practice-research nexus for students. The clinic aims to offer clinical placements to trainee psychological therapists from York St John and northern training providers. The clinic provides an excellent professional and educational context for work-based learning. In addition, dissertation students, PGT and PGR students will have access to the clinic setting for dissertation and research placements.

Students’ learning experiences in the clinic will be enhanced and enriched in several key ways, evidenced by:

* the clinic providing an authentic research-informed learning experience;
* the clinic-informed teaching that students will experience whilst in practitioner training (in particular, the HLS PG Diploma in Counselling ) at York St John;
* the curriculum enhancement derived from the clinic’s work that will be evident in counselling and psychology programme curricula;
* the high-quality clinic data and research activity that will inform research methods modules in UG and PG courses;
* the work-related learning opportunities that will enhance student experience and foster exceptionality, *and*
* placements and research associated involvement in the clinic, enhancing students’ employability profiles.

The clinic will cultivate student engagement and promote a learning, development and research community for knowledge generation and exchange. Benefits will be tangible and evidence-based. There will be intangible advantages derived from the positive student-staff engagement, as well as the collaborative, community-focused vision.

1. ***For the wider community:*** The clinic will contribute to enhancing the mental health and wellbeing of the wider community. It will provide access to wellbeing services, offering provision which promotes mental health and resilience across individuals, families, organisations and wider communities.
2. ***For YSJ staff and external volunteer/professional colleagues:*** Benefits include opportunities to work with students and colleagues to generate evidence-based clinical and research outcomes. These experiences and outcomes can be fed back into learning and teaching, and into curriculum enhancement. Working with external colleagues will further knowledge exchange, evidence-based training and consultancy services, interdisciplinary and inter-institution research bids and projects, and the development of evidence-based practitioner supervision. In addition, staff-led research papers and conference presentations will be generated.
3. ***For local and regional employers in the public and private sectors:*** The clinic will be available to the local and regional community and will contribute positively to the general mental health and wellbeing of individuals and, consequently, to the fostering of a wider collective wellbeing in our locale and region.

1. External consultation during clinic development was provided by Sarah Hill, Director, IDAS, Professor Sue Wheeler (Leicester University), Professor Robert Elliott (Strathclyde University), Professor Mick Cooper (Strathclyde University), BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) and Dr Chris Davey (NHS Research and Development department at NHS York). The York St John clinic has links with other higher education institutions (HEIs), that have set up a clinic, or are in the process of setting one up (Professor Robert Elliott, Strathclyde University clinic; Dr David Murphy, Nottingham University; Dr Sheila Spong, University of South Wales clinic), Professor John McLeod, University of Abertay. A new clinic is also in the process of being set up at Newman College. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Once the HLS/YSJ clinic is established, we will offer clinical placements to practitioner trainees, including those undertaking York St John’s British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) Accredited PG Diploma/MA in Counselling. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)