

Counsellor

Counsellors help people to talk about and explore aspects of their lives that may be causing them difficulty. You might work with people with a wide range of issues, or specialise in an area such as eating disorders or addiction.

Counsellors do not give clients advice but support them in making changes that could improve their lives.

The Work

You could be:

- creating a safe atmosphere for clients and assuring confidentiality
- setting up a relationship of trust with clients, who could be adults or children
- listening carefully as clients talk about their problems, either face to face or on the phone
- helping clients to explore their feelings, perhaps using art or drama as a means of communicating
- helping clients make their own decisions, not directing them
- running group or family therapy sessions
- referring clients to other agencies if necessary
- keeping records and writing reports
- specialising in client groups, such as victims of abuse or people with alcohol or drug problems.

Counsellors differ from counselling psychologists, as counsellors do not normally have training in psychology.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of the company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

Starting salaries for counsellors are in the range £19,000 to £27,000 a year. Experienced counsellors can earn up to £30,000 a year and managers of Practices or projects can earn £40,000 or more.

If you are self-employed, you charge a fee for each session with a client, which can be between £35 to £70 an hour. You may not have a regular income.

Conditions

- You will probably work normal office hours, Monday to Friday, but this may include some evening and weekend work.
- If you are self-employed, you usually work flexible hours from home, often seeing clients in the evening or at weekends.
- Many counsellors work part time.
- Sometimes you might have to work in a voluntary unpaid capacity for a while before being offered a paid

job.

- For many people, counselling is a second career, and may be on a voluntary basis.

Getting In

Employers and clients look for a counsellor with a recognised counselling qualification, such as those accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland (COSCA).

- It is recommended that this is done in three stages. You would normally begin by doing an Introduction to Counselling at a local college that outlines the basic ideas and skills behind counselling. You would usually undergo some counselling yourself with other students.
- If after doing an introductory course you still think this is the right career for you, you would move on to a certificate level course such as the Certificate in Counselling Skills validated by COSCA. You can get a list of accredited courses from the COSCA website (see Contacts section below).
- The third stage would be core practitioner training. You to complete a minimum level of Diploma in Counselling course accredited by BACP or COSCA. These courses can usually be studied full time or part time. The course must include 100 hours of supervised placements to allow you to practice your skills.
- Alternatively, if you already have a degree you can study on a COSCA or BACP accredited postgraduate course.
- In Scotland, Abertay University offers a Postgraduate Masters (MSc) in Counselling, three years part time and the University of Strathclyde offers the MSc Counselling and Psychotherapy full time. These are both BACP accredited.
- The University of Aberdeen offers a PgDip in Person Centred Counselling and the University of Edinburgh offers a PgDip in Counselling, which are both COSCA accredited.
- For entry to these postgraduate diploma courses, you require a degree in any discipline and an interest in or experience in a related job such as nursing or social work, depending on the course.
- For accreditation as a counsellor with COSCA you must have completed a BACP accredited course in counselling/psychotherapy and have been in practice for more than three years. You should have completed 450 hours of supervised practice over 3-6 years with at least 150 of these after completing your practitioner training and been supervised for at least 1.5 hours a month throughout. Further details can be found on the [COSCA website](#).
- You will require a satisfactory criminal record check from Disclosure Scotland to show that you are suitable for this type of work. Contact [Disclosure Scotland](#) for details on the type you would need.

You could work in advice centres, schools and colleges, counselling organisations, charities, GP practices and hospitals. You can also work on some telephone helplines. Jobs are advertised in the press, through Jobcentres and on the COSCA and BACP websites.

What Does It Take

You need to be:

- interested in people
- a good listener
- non-judgemental

- patient and tolerant
- supportive and responsive
- trustworthy
- able to switch off from your client's problems
- able to respect confidentiality
- able to use your initiative.

You need to have:

- an insight into your own attitudes and reactions
- a belief that your clients can make positive changes in their lives.

Training

- At certain levels of membership with COSCA, you must complete a specified amount of continued professional development (CPD).
- You can train while working as a volunteer for a voluntary counselling agency, such as Relate or Cruse, which provides courses for its volunteers.
- You can do further short specialist courses for example in bereavement counselling.
- Throughout your working life as a counsellor, you will have ongoing supervision from a colleague, to support you in your work.

Getting On

- There is a great deal of voluntary counselling work and you might get valuable experience through this.
- You can then move on to further training and paid employment or self-employment.
- With experience, you may wish to become self-employed, either working from home on your own or with colleagues.
- As people become more aware of the benefits of counselling, the demand for counsellors is growing.

Contacts

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

Tel: 01455 883300

Email: bacp@bacp.co.uk

Website: www.bacp.co.uk

X: @BACP

COSCA (Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland)

Tel: 01786 475140

Email: info@cosca.org.uk

Website: www.cosca.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/coscacounselling

Statistics

Employment Status : Not available this career.

Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

Predicted Employment Statistics : Not available this career.