

**We are
here**

**For
you**

Counselling and Wellbeing

Information for all staff



Welcome to London Fire Brigade's Counselling and Wellbeing service (C&W). This leaflet outlines the services we provide, how to access them, what you can expect from us and what responsibilities you have should you ever need our services.

C&W is the professional counselling service which addresses the psychological wellbeing of staff to help create and maintain a psychologically healthy workplace.

It is recognised that both physical and psychological wellbeing are essential for individuals to function effectively in their personal and professional lives. This is particularly important for the Brigade where issues of safety are paramount.

Counselling

What is counselling?

Counselling provides an opportunity to talk in confidence to a professionally qualified counsellor when usual ways of coping no longer seem to be effective. Counselling aims to help people feel more resourced and responsible for their lives. It can do this in a number of ways, for example by raising self-confidence, improving communication skills, identifying new ways of coping or simply helping to make sense of contradictory thoughts and feelings.

Issues may include:

- Relationship difficulties.
- Feeling anxious or depressed.
- Coping with serious/terminal illness.
- Difficulties at work.
- Harassment and bullying.
- Work or life stress.
- Loss or bereavement.
- Money worries.
- Injury or long-term sickness.
- Issues concerning use of alcohol or drugs.
- Coping with the effects of critical or traumatic incidents.

C&W provides counselling to individuals or couples (where one partner is a member of staff). Generally counselling will be short-term (six sessions), either face-to-face or by telephone where necessary. The type of counselling offered may include interpersonal therapy, psychodynamic, cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) and trauma focused approaches including eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR).

Counsellors are accredited and all adhere to the BACP* Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy which can be found at www.bacp.co.uk/ethical-framework.

* British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

Confidentiality

C&W places great importance on confidentiality, respecting the privacy of those who use this voluntary service and creating an environment that is safe enough for people to talk about problems and issues personal to them. The content of all sessions is confidential within C&W.

Some exceptions to confidentiality exist and if they arise, they will be discussed with you (except in severe emergencies):

- The counsellor has serious concerns that an individual may be a danger to him/herself or others.
- An individual has alcohol or substance misuse issues; C&W will work within the relevant Brigade policies.

Occasionally C&W may be asked to supply a report to a third party (for example, managers, occupational health service (OHS)). This can sometimes be helpful to the client but we only ever do this if we have your explicit permission.

Referring

All staff, FRS, Control and operational, can refer themselves to C&W for counselling. Third party referrals are accepted once the referrer has explicit permission from the individual being referred.

The counselling process

Counselling contract

A case will be opened when you're accepted for counselling and an assessment appointment will be arranged. In the initial counselling sessions, you will agree a counselling contract with your counsellor which is appropriate to your specific requirements. This will include what the counselling will be focusing on, the collaborative nature of the work and the frequency and number of contracted sessions.

Attending appointments

In order to get the most from counselling we ask that you:

- Attend all scheduled appointments and at the time of the appointment (there is no waiting area at C&W).
- Attend appointments free from the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.

- Take responsibility for raising any questions or concerns. Counselling can be challenging but it's best to talk this through with your counsellor so a decision can be made together as to how to proceed.
- Be aware that although we understand and accept that individuals attending counselling may feel angry and distressed at times, physical violence or verbal abuse towards C&W staff is considered unacceptable.

Non-attendance and cancellations

A counselling case remains open for the duration of the contract as long as you:

- Attend the first assessment appointment.
- Attend contracted scheduled sessions.
- Remain in contact with C&W.
- Give 24 hours notice if there is a need to cancel or re-schedule an appointment. Late cancellations or non-attendance are counted as contracted sessions. In the event of repeated cancellations your counsellor may need to discuss with you whether counselling is appropriate at this time.

A case will be closed if:

- The above agreements are not upheld.
- Two consecutive appointments are missed.

Ending counselling and evaluation

- Evaluation forms will be sent to you for unplanned and planned endings.

Record keeping and data protection

Counsellors keep brief factual records of sessions and all contact with the service. All notes and records are the property of London Fire Brigade. If you wish to have access to your records please make a written application to the Head of Service at C&W. In the event of an individual being involved in legal proceedings, the counsellor will discuss the implications for confidentiality, including the rare possibility of the counsellor being subpoenaed by a court.

What you can expect from C&W

- To receive a professional service and be treated with respect.
- To have an assessment and formulation of your presenting issues.
- That a counselling contract is agreed, including a total number of sessions.
- Regular reviews of progress in the counselling and exploration of possible ways forward.
- Counsellors will be available for sessions as agreed. In the case of illness or other exceptional circumstances C&W will make every attempt to contact you prior to the session.
- That counsellors will attend regular supervision as stipulated by the BACP.
- That there is an 'out of hours' service available in the case of emergencies.
- To be given an evaluation form when counselling comes to an end; C&W welcomes feedback to help ensure that the highest standards of service delivery are achieved.

Complaints

If you have any complaints which cannot be resolved in discussions with your counsellor, you are welcome to contact the Head of Service at C&W in writing, by email or by telephone. If your complaint remains unresolved following this then you can address your complaint to the BACP, details of which are on their website.



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Post-critical incident contact

C&W routinely contact staff (also Control Officers) who attend critical incidents (CIs) usually within five days. The aim is to help people process incidents at the time and prevent trauma related problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) developing in the future. Operational and Control staff are contacted by telephone away from work in recognition that individuals will respond to critical incidents in different ways.

The following incidents automatically trigger post-critical incident contact (PCIC) from C&W:

- The death of a child or children.
- Two or more deaths of members of the public, including RTCs.
- The death of, or serious injury to a firefighter on duty.
- Terrorist activity where life has been endangered or lost.
- Any serious RTC involving a Brigade appliance.
- Major/catastrophic incidents.
- Any incident where operational staff are trapped or missing.
- Any incident where the officer in charge considers that C&W contact may be helpful for example, flashovers, near misses, feelings of helplessness, many CIs attended in a short period.

After such incidents it is normal to experience some symptoms such as difficulty in sleeping, changes in appetite and/or mood such as feeling withdrawn or more irritable than usual and to possibly experience intrusive images of the incident. These reactions will usually diminish or disappear of their own accord after a few days or weeks. The call provides the opportunity to assess whether individuals have been affected by the incident and to give factual information about typical post-trauma reactions and how to deal with them.

Other C&W services

Please contact us directly if you require:

- 'Advice to managers', C&W will advise managers who may require assistance with psychological issues involving members of their teams/watches.
- C&W visit to a fire station, watch or team.
- C&W input for example, stress, resilience, dealing with trauma.

For more information

You can also find out about the C&W service on Hotwire. Go to [Hotwire>Health and benefits>Counselling and wellbeing](#)

How to contact us

Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, call 020 8555 1200 x35555 (plus out-of-hours voicemail facility). For emergency out-of-hours, contact Brigade Control on 020 8555 1200 x50606 and ask for the duty counsellor to be paged.

Counselling and Wellbeing
4th floor
69 Euston Square
London
NW1 1DH



Nearest tubes/mainline stations

Euston (Victoria, Northern) or Euston Square (Circle, Metropolitan and Hammersmith and City).