

OCD Youth e-Helpline Remit

The OCD Youth e-Helpline and Email Service is a confidential and unbiased service offering information and support for young people under 25 affected by OCD. We will treat everyone who contacts us with respect. We aim to respond to all emails/messages within one week. There is no time limit to an e-call. We will not demand contact information from callers.

e-Helpline volunteers can explain to callers and those who email about:

- The different types of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder.
- The different types of treatment available.
- How to access help.

This is done in an unbiased way. This means that:

- E-Helpline Volunteers will not recommend a particular course of action, but will allow the caller to make their own informed decision.
- E-Helpline Volunteers will differentiate between proven / NICE approved treatments, and unproven / untested treatments.
- E-Helpline volunteers will not attempt to diagnose the caller. This must be done by a trained mental health professional.

It is recognised that a crucial part of treatment for OCD is in following it through, which can often be a demanding and distressing process. With this in mind, e-Helpline Volunteers can:

- Offer emotional support, allowing the e-caller the time and space to talk through their feelings and fears.
- Encourage callers to seek treatment.
- Emphasise that treatment can often be demanding and distressing, but that having decided to take a particular course of treatment for themselves, they are most likely to reap the benefits of it by seeing it through to completion.
- Inform callers of the on-going instant messaging support that OCD Action can provide to some people via the OCD Youth e-Helpline and the OCD Action Helpline

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Volunteers on the e-Helpline have personal experience of OCD. Callers often find it helpful to know that they are speaking to someone who has an understanding of the kinds of thoughts and experiences they are going through.

With this in mind, e-Helpline Volunteers can (if they wish) tell callers briefly that they have / had OCD and the nature of their OCD. They must ensure, however, that the focus of the call remains on the caller, and take care not to lead them into making a decision based on their (the volunteer's) own experiences. This disclosure should be used to illustrate the positive value in taking up and following through with treatment.

MISUSE OF THE SERVICE

There are a number of ways in which virtual callers may misuse e-helpline services. These differences should be taken into account when a course of action is being considered. The most common situations are detailed below, with actions for each one.

Personally abusive e-calls: where an e-caller is being rude, swearing, or in any other way aiming their abuse at the e-Helpline Volunteer.

- Action: Give a warning stating that you will have to end the e-call unless they stop (whatever it is that's causing offence). If warning is not heeded, end the e-call.

N.B. the problem isn't the anger/swearing itself, it's that it's directed at the e-Helpline Volunteer.

Sexually inappropriate e-calls: where a caller appears to be using the e-call for sexual gratification.

- Action: End the call, explaining that they are misusing the service.

'Fixated' e-callers: Those that have used the service many times, and appear to have developed an unhealthy fixation on calling the e-Helpline. Indicators that a caller is 'fixated' are:

- They may start to give different names to avoid being recognised.
- They may alter other details when calling.
- They may deny having called before, even when speaking to the same person.
- They may become angry or upset if challenged about calling before.
- Action: The action for each individual should be considered on a case by case basis, to be agreed with the Youth and Young Adults Manager.

N.B: Regardless of how these callers present, e-Helpline Volunteers should treat them in a respectful and sympathetic manner.

'Test' e-callers: Those that call up with an issue that may seem irrelevant or trivial / those that call to intentionally wind up the e-Helpline Volunteer.

- Action: These e-callers, as with any other, should always be treated respectfully. They may be testing the service/patience & professionalism of those who work there, or they may just be calling to mess about. Once an e-Helpline Volunteer is sure they are misusing the service, they should end the call, explaining that it is because the caller is misusing the service.

OTHER TYPES OF E- CALL

Repeat e-callers: Distinct from fixated e-callers. Those who have called many times, are using the service appropriately, and for whom speaking to someone regularly alongside treatment is of use.

- Action: If the e-caller is moving forward and progressing, no limitations will be set on the number of calls they can make. For e-callers that are going over the same ground in each call and not progressing, please consult with the Youth and Young Adults Manager

Multiple issues: E-callers are often facing more than one issue when they call.

- Action: e-Helpline Volunteers should confine the help they offer to OCD. They shouldn't try to offer information in other areas, even if they are qualified in those areas - this is so that the service is as consistent as possible.

Admin / media enquiries: E-callers should be given the office number.

English is 2nd language: If the caller can be understood and understands what the e-Helpline Volunteer is saying, the call can proceed. Otherwise, the call will have to be ended. If the e-Helpline Volunteer speaks the same language as the caller, the conversation should not be conducted in a foreign language. Unfortunately we are unable to provide an interpreter for callers/emailers.

CONFIDENTIALITY

OCD Action provides a confidential service for all callers. There are 6 exceptions to this:

1. If the caller is in a life threatening situation.
2. If the caller is abusing another person physically or sexually (including neglect).
3. If the caller is being abused physically or sexually (including neglect).
4. If there is a threat to the service.
5. Terrorist activity.
6. If the police present a Witness Order or Search Order.

See Confidentiality Policy for further explanations of the above points.