

ARAG Counselling Helpline

Q: Who is Vita Health Group?

A: Vita Health Group is ARAG's counselling and wellbeing service provider, delivering emotional support, counselling interventions and clinical assessment.

Q: What does Vita provide?

A: The service includes an emotional support helpline, counselling interventions, clinical assessment and triage, legal information services, clinical oversight and case management, and signposting to specialist services where appropriate.

Q: Is the service confidential?

A: Yes. Information shared during counselling is confidential, subject to safeguarding obligations or circumstances where there is a risk of harm to the individual or others.

General service overview

Q: What service does Vita Health Group provide on behalf of ARAG?

A: Vita Health Group provides both immediate emotional support through a counselling helpline and structured counselling interventions delivered by qualified mental health professionals. The counselling service is supported by clinical governance, safeguarding procedures, quality assurance activity.

Q: When is the counselling service available?

A: In the moment emotional support is available 24/7 365 days a year.

Q: What happens when a customer calls the Counselling Helpline?

A: When a customer calls the helpline, they are met with an Interactive Voice Response system. This routes the customer to either the Emotional Support Line or the Legal and Information Line, depending on the support they need.

Accessing support

Q: Who can access the Counselling Helpline?

A: Policy holders or members with direct access to support under the ARAG provision.

Q: Can under those aged under 18 access the helpline?

A: Those aged 16+ and in employment can access the counselling helpline, our counselling provision is generally limited to individuals aged 16+ where they are in employment and accessing services in an adult context to ensure that support is delivered within the appropriate legal, clinical and safeguarding framework, and that younger individuals can access specialist services designed specifically for their developmental needs.

Q: Why can those age under 18 and not in employment not access the Counselling Helpline?

A: The talking therapies delivered within an adult helpline and treatment service can also differ significantly from those offered to children and young people. Adult services typically focus on approaches such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Solution Focused Therapy, Interpersonal Psychotherapy and counselling aimed at supporting workplace, relationship, financial or life stressors. In contrast, children and young people may require more developmentally appropriate interventions:

such as play therapy, creative therapies, family-based interventions, parent-supported CBT, school-based support and closer involvement of parents, carers or safeguarding professionals.

There are also wider safeguarding considerations. For individuals under 18 who remain in education, their school, college or university retains an important duty of care and responsibility for supporting their wellbeing. Educational settings are often better placed to coordinate age-appropriate mental health support, work alongside families where appropriate, identify safeguarding concerns and ensure a joined-up approach to care.

Q: How do customers access the service?

A: Customers contact Vita directly through the counselling helpline via the number provided within the policy documentation. Vita will complete an initial assessment to understand the customer's needs and determine the most suitable support pathway.

Q: Does a customer need a GP referral?

A: No. Customers can access the service directly via the helpline without requiring a GP referral.

Q: How quickly can support be accessed?

A: Customers receive an initial assessment when they contact Vita. Any subsequent support arrangements are managed directly by Vita following clinical assessment.

Emotional Support Line

Q: Who answers calls to the Emotional Support Line?

A: Calls to the Emotional Support Line are taken by a Helpline Clinician.

Q: What support can a Helpline Clinician provide during a call?

A: During a call, the Helpline Clinician may provide immediate confidential emotional support and assistance. Where appropriate, they may also provide structured mental health treatment that can be delivered over the telephone and may signpost or refer the customer to NHS, voluntary or professional support services.

Q: Can the Helpline Clinician arrange further treatment?

A: Yes. If further support is required, the Helpline Clinician may complete a Clinical Assessment to determine the most suitable follow-up treatment. This may include up to **six** sequential counselling sessions by telephone, video or in person, or access to an Online Self-Guided Course. The most appropriate option is agreed between the Helpline Clinician and the customer.

Counselling support

Q: What types of issues can Counselling help with?

A: The service can support individuals experiencing issues such as stress, anxiety, low mood, bereavement, relationship concerns, workplace-related challenges and general emotional wellbeing concerns. Support is tailored to the individual's circumstances following assessment.

Q: Are counsellors qualified professionals?

A: The service operates under clinical leadership and supervision arrangements, with dedicated clinical and intervention teams responsible for delivering support.

Q: What model does Vita use to support customers?

A: Vita uses an evidence-based stepped-care model. This is designed to support individuals experiencing mild, moderate and, where required, more severe mental health presentations by matching the level of support to the customer's needs.

Q: How can counselling support be delivered?

A: Support can be delivered by telephone, online or video sessions, and face to face where clinically appropriate.

Q: What happens if a Clinical Assessment cannot be completed during the initial call?

A: If the Helpline Clinician cannot complete the Clinical Assessment during the call, they will arrange a call back with the customer so the assessment can be completed.

Q: What happens if the customer is out of scope for the service?

A: If a customer is deemed to require highly specialised support that is outside the scope of the service, Vita Health Group will provide details of an appropriate onward support service. Subject to the customer's consent, Vita may also provide a supported and facilitated onward referral, including relevant clinical outcomes and details of the support required.

Q: What happens if a customer is at immediate risk of harm?

A: If a customer is at immediate risk of harm to themselves or someone else, confidentiality may be overridden where necessary to meet Vita Health Group's duty of care. This may include situations involving customers under 18, vulnerable customers, or disclosures of criminal offences. The customer may be transferred to the Duty Support Team and, where appropriate, emergency services may be contacted.

Q: Where can in-person counselling sessions take place?

A: In-person counselling sessions must be delivered within a 15-mile radius of the customer's home address or workplace.

Q: Is there a limitation on the number of counselling sessions?

A: In any contract year, a customer may receive either up to six counselling sessions or one Online Self-Guided Course. A customer who has received six counselling sessions is not eligible to receive an Online Self-Guided Course in the same contract year, and vice versa.

What the service includes

Q: What is included within the Vita service?

A: The service may include initial assessment and triage, short-term emotional support, counselling interventions, clinical support and guidance, wellbeing advice, legal information support and signposting to external specialist services. The most appropriate support option is determined following assessment.

Q: Does the service provide legal support?

A: If Legal advice is required, please contact the primary provider within your policy documentation. Vita can provide access to **general** legal information services, which are separate from counselling provision.

Q: What happens if counselling is not suitable?

A: Where counselling is not the most appropriate intervention, Vita may signpost the customer to alternative specialist services or support pathways.

What the service does not include

Q: What is not included within the standard ARAG counselling provision?

A: The ARAG counselling helpline arrangement does not provide long-term open-ended psychotherapy, ongoing psychiatric treatment, emergency mental health crisis intervention requiring NHS emergency services, inpatient mental health treatment, medical diagnosis, prescription medication management, secondary care mental health services or specialist services that require referral outside the counselling pathway.

Q: What happens where a customer's needs fall outside the counselling pathway?

A: Where a customer's needs exceed the scope of helpline counselling support, Vita clinicians assess the customer's needs and facilitate onward referral to more appropriate services where required.

Q: Does the service provide emergency mental health treatment?

A: No. The counselling service is not a replacement for emergency services. Customers experiencing a mental health crisis or immediate risk should contact emergency services, NHS 111 or their local crisis team.

Q: Does the service provide psychiatric treatment?

A: No. The service is focused on counselling and emotional wellbeing support and does not provide psychiatric diagnosis or secondary care mental health treatment.

Q: Does the service provide long-term therapy?

A: Vita provides an in the moment emotional support service and **six** structured counselling service. Treatment pathway is determined following assessment, and customers requiring ongoing specialist support may be directed to alternative services.

Q: Does the service provide crisis intervention?

A: While Vita provides emotional support and assessment services, urgent or emergency intervention requirements may be referred to more appropriate emergency or specialist services.

Q: Can customers request a clinician who reflects their stated preferences?

A: Yes. Customers should be offered the option to receive support from a Helpline Clinician or VHG Clinician who reflects their stated preferences where reasonably practicable, including preferences relating to gender, religion or other relevant characteristics.

Safeguarding and risk

Q: Does Vita have safeguarding arrangements?

A: Yes. Vita maintains safeguarding policies and governance processes to support the management of safeguarding concerns.

Q: What happens if a customer discloses a safeguarding concern?

A: Appropriate safeguarding procedures will be followed in line with Vita's safeguarding policies and clinical governance processes.

Q: What qualifications or professional standards apply to Vita clinicians?

A: Vita clinicians hold recognised counselling and psychotherapy qualifications and relevant professional memberships, including accreditation through bodies such as BACP, NCPS, UKCP and BABCP. Counsellors are required to hold a minimum Level 4 counselling qualification or equivalent professional accreditation.

Q: Can Vita provide specialist support for survivors of sexual abuse?

A: This is not a service that Vita is able to offer at present under the ARAG counselling service. Where specialist support is required for survivors of sexual abuse, or for individuals affected by sexual abuse, customers may be signposted to appropriate external organisations such as NAPAC or Safeline.

Legal and Information Line

Q: When does the Legal and Information Line operate?

A: The Legal and Information Line operates between 8am and 8pm, Monday to Friday, excluding UK public holidays.

Q: Who answers calls to the Legal and Information Line?

A: Calls are answered by a Legal and Information Advisor.

Q: What support does the Legal and Information Advisor provide?

A: The Legal and Information Advisor assists customers with legal and financial issues. Where appropriate, they may also signpost customers to other tools, organisations or services.

Q: What happens if the customer needs specialised debt or financial advice?

A: If a customer requires specialised debt or financial assistance and advice, the Legal and Information Advisor will warm transfer the customer to PayPlan.

Additional support capabilities**Q: Is support available for customers with hearing loss or speech impairment?**

A: Yes. Vita Health Group provides a Next Generation Text service to help customers with hearing loss and/or speech impairment access the Counselling Helpline.

Q: Is translation support available?

A: Yes. Vita Health Group provides an immediate translation service through a third-party provider, enabling Helpline Clinicians to communicate with customers in over 240 languages, including Sign Language, during calls.