Glasgow Therapy Practice Wins Scotland's Best Online Service Award

Brain Botanics Therapy, a Glasgow-based practice providing online anxiety and trauma counselling for women across Scotland, has been named Best Online Therapy Service 2026 Scotland at the Women's Health Awards 2026. The awards are organised by Global Health and Pharma and evaluate service quality, patient outcomes, innovation and contributions to women's health. The practice offers confidential one-to-one sessions for women in Glasgow, Edinburgh and the wider Scottish region. It is led by Rebecca Mackillop, who has 12 years of clinical experience and trained at the University of Strathclyde and the University of Edinburgh. The practice supports women experiencing persistent worry, panic attacks, intrusive thoughts, physical anxiety symptoms and avoidance patterns. Its approach draws on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), exposure methods and memory reconsolidation techniques. The announcement was made on November 11, 2026.

Understanding the field of specialist trauma counselling

Specialist trauma counselling is a focused area of mental health support that addresses the lasting effects of traumatic experiences. Unlike general counselling, which may cover a wide range of life issues, this form of therapy is designed to help individuals process events that have overwhelmed their usual coping mechanisms. Trauma can result from a single incident, such as an accident or assault, or from prolonged exposure to stressful situations, including abuse or chronic illness. The effects often manifest as anxiety, flashbacks, avoidance behaviours and physical symptoms like heightened startle responses or sleep disturbances.

Practitioners in this field typically use evidence-based techniques to help clients understand their reactions and gradually reduce the power of traumatic memories. Common methods include trauma-focused CBT, which helps individuals reframe unhelpful thoughts linked to the event, and eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR), which uses guided eye movements to process memories. Other approaches may involve somatic therapy, which focuses on the body's physical responses, or creative therapies such as art or music. The goal is not to erase the memory but to help the person integrate it into their life story without ongoing distress.

Online delivery has expanded access to these services, especially for those who live in remote areas, have mobility issues or prefer the privacy of home. Video sessions allow for real-time interaction, while some platforms also offer messaging or self-guided modules. The effectiveness of online trauma counselling has been supported by research showing that therapeutic relationships can be formed just as well through a screen as in person, provided

the practitioner is skilled in adapting their approach. For many, the convenience and reduced travel time make it easier to commit to regular sessions.

Why the field matters now

Demand for trauma-informed care has grown in recent years as awareness of the prevalence and impact of trauma has increased. Public campaigns and media coverage have highlighted how experiences such as domestic violence, childhood adversity and workplace stress can shape mental and physical health over a lifetime. At the same time, the stigma around seeking help has lessened, encouraging more people to look for support. Health systems, however, often struggle to meet this demand due to long waiting lists and limited funding for specialist services.

Women, in particular, may face unique challenges when seeking trauma counselling. They are statistically more likely to experience certain types of trauma, such as sexual violence or intimate partner abuse, and may encounter additional barriers like childcare responsibilities, financial constraints or fear of not being believed. Online services that offer flexible scheduling and confidential help with trauma effects can address some of these obstacles. The ability to attend sessions from home without arranging transport or childcare can make a significant difference for those with caregiving roles.

Another factor is the growing recognition that trauma is not just a mental health issue but a public health one. Chronic stress from unprocessed trauma has been linked to higher rates of chronic pain, autoimmune conditions, cardiovascular problems and substance use. Early intervention through counselling can reduce these downstream health costs and improve overall well-being. As a result, employers, insurers and government bodies are increasingly investing in trauma-informed programs and training for frontline staff.

How online trauma counselling typically works

Most online trauma counselling services follow a similar structure. An initial assessment helps the therapist understand the client's history, current symptoms and goals. Sessions are usually weekly, lasting 50 to 60 minutes, and take place via a secure video platform. The therapist guides the conversation using the chosen therapeutic model, often incorporating psychoeducation to help the client understand their reactions. Homework between sessions may involve journaling, relaxation exercises or practising new coping skills.

Confidentiality is a core principle. Reputable services use encrypted platforms and adhere to professional standards for data protection. Clients are encouraged to find a private space for sessions where they will not be overheard. Many therapists also offer a free introductory call so potential clients can ask questions and see if the therapist's style feels like a good fit.

One of the key advantages of online counselling is the ability to match with a therapist who specialises in the specific type of trauma a client has experienced. For example, someone who has survived military combat may benefit from a therapist trained in military-related trauma, while a survivor of childhood abuse may prefer someone with experience in attachment-based therapy. Online directories allow clients to filter by specialisation, location and therapeutic approach.

Common techniques used in the field

- Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to identify and challenge unhelpful thought patterns
- Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) to build psychological flexibility
- Exposure methods to gradually reduce avoidance and fear responses
- Memory reconsolidation techniques to update the way traumatic memories are stored
- Mindfulness and grounding exercises to manage acute distress

These methods are often combined in a personalised treatment plan. The therapist monitors progress and adjusts the approach as needed. For many clients, the goal is to reach a point where they can engage with everyday life without being dominated by the past. This may involve reducing symptoms like hypervigilance or intrusive thoughts, improving relationships, and rebuilding a sense of safety in the world.

Specialist trauma counselling also recognises that recovery is not linear. Clients may experience setbacks, especially around anniversaries of the event or when facing new stressors. A skilled therapist normalises this pattern and helps the client develop resilience. The therapeutic relationship itself can be a healing factor, providing a consistent, non-judgemental space where difficult emotions can be expressed safely.

Developments in the field

The field continues to evolve as research sheds light on the neurobiological underpinnings of trauma. Advances in brain imaging have shown how trauma affects the amygdala, hippocampus and prefrontal cortex, which in turn influences emotional regulation and memory processing. This knowledge has informed new treatment protocols that target these brain regions directly, such as neurofeedback and trauma-sensitive yoga. While these are still emerging in mainstream practice, they represent a trend toward integrating body-based approaches with talk therapy.

Another development is the use of digital tools to supplement therapy. Apps for mood tracking, breathing exercises and guided meditation can help clients practice skills between sessions. Some therapists incorporate virtual reality exposure therapy for conditions like post-traumatic

stress disorder (PTSD), allowing clients to confront feared situations in a controlled environment. These tools are not replacements for human connection but can enhance the therapeutic process.

There is also a growing emphasis on cultural competence in trauma counselling. Practitioners are increasingly trained to understand how factors like race, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation shape a person's experience of trauma and their willingness to seek help. Services that offer sessions in multiple languages or that employ therapists from diverse backgrounds can better serve minority communities. The ability to offer confidential help with trauma effects in a culturally sensitive manner is considered a hallmark of quality care.

Regulatory frameworks are also adapting. Many professional bodies now require continuing education in trauma-informed care for licensed therapists. Telehealth regulations have become more standardised, making it easier for practitioners to offer services across state or national borders. As the field matures, it is likely that more standardised outcome measures will be adopted, allowing clients and referrers to compare the effectiveness of different approaches.

The award received by Brain Botanics Therapy reflects a broader recognition of the importance of accessible, high-quality trauma counselling. By focusing on online delivery and a woman-centred approach, the practice aligns with current trends in the field. For women across Scotland seeking support for anxiety and trauma, the availability of such a service represents a step forward in mental health care access.