



Guidance for schools and other
professionals



INTRODUCTION

Counselling is a therapeutic intervention that helps to support the health, emotional and social needs of children/young people. It is estimated that across the UK one in four children will struggle with their emotional health and so in Argyll and Bute we are committed to supporting our children/young to reach their potential and become; successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective learners.

This school-based approach is in line with the Scottish Government's strategy 'Getting it Right for Every Child' and recognises that each child is unique and may benefit from therapeutic support to meet their potential.

In an educational context, school counselling can improve attendance, engagement and attainment of children and young people and help to create a culture of well-being and emotional health.

Early and easy access to counselling can prevent emotional well-being issues developing or becoming more serious, and can build up trust and confidence to enable young people to access more specialist services if required.

The counselling in schools service will help to develop self-awareness, personal insight and promote the overall wellbeing of pupils. The service will deliver counselling to young people 10 – 18 years across all four areas of Argyll and Bute.

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ROLE OF THE COUNSELLOR

Counsellors can offer a child/young person a safe and supportive environment to talk over difficult issues in confidence and listen to their views, experiences and feelings without judgement and through building a safe and trusting relationship, characterised by empathy and respect.

Counsellors can help the child/young person to focus on their concerns, giving them an opportunity to explore specific problems, make choices, cope with crises, work through feelings of conflict and improve relationships with others.

The role of the counsellor is to:

Provide a counselling service to children/young people in Argyll and Bute

Organise appointments and administer the counselling service, with assistance from school staff

Communicate and liaise with school staff in the best interest of the young person, while within the limits of client confidentiality

Encourage partnership with the child/young person's family when appropriate and beneficial.

Act as a resource to school staff by offering an insight into counselling and promoting the service where possible.

Maintain accurate counselling session records and write reports as required.

Maintain and develop professional practice through regular and ongoing management and clinical supervision and training.

Practice counselling in accordance with the ethical principles, as a member of a counselling/psychotherapy professional body. More information can be found within BACP's Ethical Framework.

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

Schools are well placed to support their learner's emotional health and well-being. Evidence shows that a counselling service which provides support within an overall school strategy can be highly effective in promoting young people's welfare, supporting their learning and achievement as well as alleviating and preventing the escalation of emotional well-being problems.

The school has a responsibility to:

- Treat the counsellor as they would any other external professional.
- Inform the counsellor of any significant events (in school or in the community) that may impact on learners (as individuals or as groups).
- Identify a link person within the school to take responsibility for supporting the provision of counselling to students.
- Ensure the link person is available to meet the counsellor at agreed times on a regular basis.
- Support the referral process as appropriate.
- Provide a counselling room where the child/young person can feel safe and comfortable.
- Support with IT where counselling is online.
- Publicise the counselling service in the school so parents/carers and students are fully aware of what is available.

The link person will liaise with the counsellor about:

- Any concerns regarding the well-being of pupils currently receiving counselling.
- Any relevant child protection issues.
- Referrals and waiting lists.
- Any other issues that may impact on the provision of counselling (i.e. the physical environment used for counselling).

WHY REFER TO SCHOOL COUNSELLING?

Some common indicators for referral to counselling can include:

- Standard of school work dropping dramatically
- Anxiety or excessive worry
- Low mood
- Becoming subdued or over-excited
- Sudden changes, marked mood swings and/or behaviour that appears out of character and/or extreme behaviour
- School refusal/drop in school attendance
- Bullying of others or victim to bullying behaviour,
- Difficulties due to family breakdown
- Peer group difficulties/relationships
- Bereavement, suffering loss or separation
- Low self-esteem
- Changes in appearance/lack of self-care
- Evidence of self-harm, e.g. cutting
- Misuse of alcohol and drugs

- Cyber bullying/phone separation anxiety
- Difficulty in expressing emotions appropriately.

School counselling offers a safe, confidential place for children to talk about experiences that may be confusing, painful or uncomfortable. These experiences may exist within their own home, community or at school. Typically they will be impacting upon the child, their relationships and their readiness to learn.

School counsellors establish a therapeutic relationship with the child through the core values of acceptance, trust, positive regard and empathy. Thus providing children with an opportunity to express and process feelings at their own level and pace.

This positive relationship can then be internalised by the child and help instil:

A sense of competence

Improved ability to form healthy relationships and

Re-align negative patterns of behaviour or thinking.



WHEN IS A REFERRAL NOT APPROPRIATE?

Without prior agreement or consent from the child/young person to engage with counselling process.

Without prior consent from parent or carer (where appropriate).

When the young person already receiving a higher tiers provision or is engaged in another therapeutic intervention.

When timing of counselling is not appropriate e.g. immediately following a bereavement.

Each individual and their needs are unique, referrals will be assessed on the current available information and may be reconsidered if there is a change in circumstances.

WHAT ARE THE REFERRAL CRITERIA?

Children and young people between the ages of 10-18.

Young person freely wishing to attend school counselling.

Young person not in receipt of any other concurrent counselling or therapy (If unclear please detail on referral).

Counselling cannot be a mandatory requirement or implemented as a sanction.

WHO CAN MAKE A REFERRAL?

Children and young people should be able to self-refer to the counselling service. If the child/young person has an

understanding of the counselling process then it may be beneficial for them to self-refer. However, referrals should also be made available for other professionals or adults with a duty of care to refer the child/young person directly into the service. The signposting and referral to counselling should be done sensitively with the child/young person.

Here are some examples where referrals can be received from;

Children/young people can self-refer and should be encouraged and empowered to do so where possible.

Parents or legal guardians are often an important referral route into the service as this could provide an opportunity for a systemic approach to supporting the child/young person.

Guidance staff and Head Teachers

Those working in the community such as social workers, youth workers, voluntary third sector workers, health practitioners such as GPs, health workers, nurses and professionals within CAMHS.

At the heart of the service is confidential one-to-one therapeutic counselling provided for children/young people. Where appropriate, and with the child/young person's permission, the counsellor may liaise and consult with the referrer, or within a school environment, with the named person.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The need of discretion and confidentiality is important to ensure that young person's right of privacy as much as possible. Professionals, school staff or other people involved should take note that discussions with others regarding

the referral should only take place on a need-to-know basis and, importantly, with the young person's permission. Although the referrer will have a general overview of the presenting reason for counselling; the content of sessions will remain confidential, unless the welfare and safety of the child/young person is considered to be at risk. The child/young person should not be questioned about the sessions they attend.

If the teacher/staff member has knowledge that the child or young person is attending counselling, at no point should they discuss this with them, unless the child/young person wished to discuss it.

A young person has a right to access counselling without their parent/carers knowledge, consent or against their parents/carers wishes if they are considered to be 'Gillick' competence (see below).

GILLICK COMPETENCE

When working with secondary school-age children and young people it is not necessary to get parental or carer consent as long as the young person is deemed to be 'Gillick' competent.

When a child/young person requests counselling a judgement needs to be made as to whether they are 'Gillick competent', taking into account:

The maturity of the child/young person

Whether they demonstrate sufficient intelligence and understanding to enable them to understand what is being proposed i.e. counselling

Whether they demonstrate sufficient intelligence and understanding of the consequences of their actions.



SHARING INFORMATION

Counsellors will work in a multidisciplinary way and communicate when appropriate with school staff, other agencies and specialised services.

Counsellors may find it necessary to liaise with, share information, attend multiagency meetings, or refer the young person to another agency for further help. All sharing of personal information should be compliant with current GDPR principles.