

Children's Support Service Counselling Policy

Updated – January 2022

Counselling provision 'enables children and young people to gain a better understanding of themselves and situations, as well as developing strategies to manage change.' (*Guidelines for Counselling in Schools. BACP 2002*).

The Counsellor is concerned with the emotional development of the young person and the development of positive mental health. A student's mental health and wellbeing are very important to their success. Young people face problems e.g. anxiety, bullying, relationship difficulties, loss, bereavement, personal and sexual identity, eating problems, self-harm, and anger management and they do not always have the emotional maturity or expertise to deal effectively with them.

It is recognised that the pressures on young people can affect their mental health and wellbeing, and that young people in education can experience high levels of stress and change and be extremely vulnerable (BACP 2010).

Counselling will involve a meeting, or a series of meetings, between a person holding approved qualifications and a student, in a private location. Students can only benefit if they want counselling; it is voluntary and takes place with the agreement of the young person.

OBJECTIVES

- To complement our tuition service by providing support for those pupils who need the additional expertise that counselling brings.
- To nurture within our students, self-esteem, self-confidence, a sense of personal responsibility and independence.
- To build resilience.
- To explore feelings, understand and manage them better.
- To help students recognise unhelpful thought patterns and adopt new ones
- To increase level of self-awareness
- To support in managing themselves and their relationships more effectively.
- To assist students in taking responsibility for their physical wellbeing.
- To help pupils to understand relationships better and improve them.

The Referral Process

Referrals are usually made by the Head of Centre or Engagement Mentors at CSS LABS meetings but requests for counselling support may be made by students, staff or parents/carers. Personal tutors can be encouraged to take an active part in the referral process as they foster good home/school relationships with weekly parental contact and can often become aware of issues before they escalate.

Parental consent is required for primary aged students, but older students deemed Gillick Competent, are able to consent to access counselling. The student must understand the nature of counselling and be able to make a verbal counselling contract, which is then backed up by a written contract to outline boundaries and expectations for both parties.

Confidentiality

All young people are entitled to confidentiality as outlined by the BACP Code of Ethics. The information they bring to the session will be held in confidence between themselves and the Counsellor. Information will not be

shared unless the young person has agreed to it. The Counsellor will, however, state that they may need to break confidentiality should they deem the young person at **significant risk** to themselves or others or there is a risk of a serious crime being committed. At this point information may need to be shared with another party, either within the service (usually the Designated Safeguarding Lead for the centre), or with an appropriate referral to an outside agency. The Counsellor is aware of Child Protection procedures and adheres to those as appropriate. The Designated Child Protection Officer is the Leader of the Centre to which the student is assigned.

The confidentiality policy is explained to the student in their initial session and the nature of any disclosures which may need to be reported to safeguarding persons or agencies.

Duration

Initially, six weeks of counselling will be offered. This will be reviewed after four weeks with the possibility of a further period being offered, if required. Relevant people will be informed of any extension to the initial period.

Recordkeeping

Records on each counselling session must be kept in a secure place, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. The Counsellor is ultimately accountable to the young client but the nature of their work for our service also means that the Counsellor will be accountable to the Children's Support Service. The Counsellor must be fully aware of the risks of litigation arising from claims of negligence or breaches of confidentiality and make sure they have appropriate professional indemnity insurance cover that can provide access to expert legal help and separate legal representation if necessary.

Confidentiality of all information kept about a student is of paramount importance. All counselling records and case notes are kept securely in locked drawers at the Langdon Hills Centre.

Student records and case notes will be destroyed by the Head of Service should the Counsellor leave the service and be unable to undertake this duty.

Case notes will be safely destroyed within 3 years of ending counselling and all other records will be destroyed within 5 years of the student leaving CSS. Records of counselling will not be passed on to another school should the student transfer. This will be verbally explained during the initial counselling session when they will be asked to give explicit consent and sign the Counselling Contract.

Counsellor Supervision

To ensure safe practice, the Counsellor monitors and develops their work through regular supervision with an appropriately trained professional and attends relevant training to keep up to date with current practice.

Referral to Other Services

After the initial assessment, or during the agreed counselling sessions, it may become necessary to refer the young person to specialist services.