



# Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS)

## HANDBOOK

September 2020



## FOREWARD

The Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS) is accessible to all post primary aged pupils attending grant-aided post primary schools and special schools. The Education Authority (EA) is responsible for ensuring that the ICSS providers comply with the contract requirements and the service meets the specified standards. It is also responsible for the operational management and ongoing development of the ICSS. The ICSS is funded under the Department of Education (DE) 'iMatter' Programme, which supports the emotional health and wellbeing of young people.

This Handbook sets out how the ICSS should operate to ensure that the best service is provided for pupils. It is intended to support all partners in delivering a service for our young people which is safe, accessible and of a high professional standard.

This ICSS Handbook 2020 is an update of the 2012 Handbook and builds on the original guidance, which drew heavily on the experiences of colleagues who pioneered school based counselling. It reflects the experiences of the DE and the EA in providing an independent counselling service for schools.

While the Handbook has been developed for use by schools in which the ICSS is currently being delivered, it highlights the best practice which can be implemented in any school-based counselling arrangement.

This is not a definitive document and it is subject to review. Amendments will be made, as necessary, to reflect the findings from on-going evaluations, so that an ever improving counselling experience is provided. The counselling support available in schools, incorporates recent and relevant legislative changes so that advice always reflects current best practice.

This version of the Handbook is available for download on both the EA and DE websites.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** There is a strong body of evidence citing the beneficial impact of pupils having access to counselling support when necessary and the significant role schools can play in helping to promote the emotional health and wellbeing of pupils. Pupils experiencing emotional problems may find it difficult to engage with the education process and to reach their potential. Where school staff can recognise and respond appropriately to their needs and reduce the barriers to learning, the educational outcome is maximised.
- 1.2** At any time pupils may need additional emotional support, beyond the normal pastoral care offered by teachers. Pupils who have suffered bereavement, trauma, family break-up or who are young carers may appreciate the opportunity to speak to an adult who is not directly involved with their education. Independent school based counselling provides one such opportunity.
- 1.3** All pupils of post-primary age in grant-aided schools have access to counselling, which is independent of the school. The Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS) is funded by the DE and managed by the EA. It is delivered by counselling providers, who provide the service, under contract, following a public tendering process. Schools are grouped into Council areas and each school is allocated an agreed number of counselling sessions per week based on their enrolment.
- 1.4** The counselling support provided conforms to high professional standards and current best practice for school-based counselling, specifically in respect of counsellor qualifications, supervision requirements, safeguarding practices and continuous professional development.
- 1.5** The ICSS is responsive to pupils' needs; independent from and yet appropriately supportive of school's established pastoral care provision. Delivering an effective counselling service requires a collaborative and co-operative partnership. In the case of the ICSS, the key parties to this partnership are: the School's Senior Management Team, the counselling provider, the primary point of contact within the school staff (Key Contact for Counselling) and the counsellor. All members of this service delivery partnership are supported in their respective roles by the EA Contract Manager, and all parties work within an agreed framework to deliver high standards and best practice.
- 1.6** In the following sections, the roles of the individual partners and the expectations in respect of pupils and parents are described along with current practice and procedures.

## 2. ICSS PROVISION – PRACTICE & PROCEDURES

The practice and procedures used across the ICSS are derived from an agreed set of practice standards and incorporate best practice which has been developed over the period the service has been available.

### 2.1 Initial Referral

Referrals for counselling sessions may be made by the young person, parents or school personnel. User-friendly information will be displayed and distributed to inform the school community of the service.

The mechanisms to be used will be agreed with each school and widely publicised. The ICSS referral form must be completed by the school before the first session with the counsellor (*Appendix 6: ICSS Pupil Referral Form*).

### 2.2 Self-Referral

A 'Post-Box' or other referral system should be used as agreed by the school. Where a post box is used, this should be easily accessed by young people yet sited discretely. Both the counsellor and the Key Contact will hold a key to allow access in the event of a critical incident or unplanned event involving a young person when the counsellor is not on the premises.

### 2.3 Online Referrals

ICSS providers may accept online referrals which when submitted by the pupil or parent, the school contact is also informed about the referral.

### 2.4 ICSS App

During this contract, the EA, in partnership with the ICSS providers, plan to develop an App for pupils to assist them to self-refer outside school hours, provide sign posting information regarding additional support services and a personal notification service.

### 2.5 Referral by Parents/Carers

A parent who wishes to make a referral should seek an appointment through the Key Contact. The procedure should be set out in an information leaflet for parents/carers including the need for the pupil's prior consent to engage in the counselling process explained.

### 2.6 Referral by School Staff

A member of staff who wishes to make a referral must discuss it first with the pupil and seek their agreement. This approach values the pupil and respects his/her right to be involved in decisions. It is important for school staff to consider if a referral to counselling is the most appropriate response to the young person's situation or if alternative support may be more appropriate. Counselling is not compulsory and a pupil may choose whether or not to attend. School Counselling is not a disciplinary measure and must not be used as such. Staff can encourage a self-referral or, with the pupil's permission, seek an appointment via the Key Contact.

### 2.7 Counselling Sessions

A named counsellor is assigned to a school and will be in attendance regularly and at an agreed time. The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) in their

document *Counselling in Schools* (2006) state that:-

*“Individual sessions can vary depending on the style and orientation of the counsellor, the needs of the child or young person and the school's timetabling structure. A session is usually about 40-50 minutes or the length of a normal class period.”*

Sufficient time would be allowed between counselling sessions for the counsellor to record accurate notes and prepare for the next session.

This emphasises the need for any school counselling intervention to be centred on the pupil and their identified issues. It also highlights that the timetabling within each school must also be taken into consideration. Morning appointments provide the opportunity for any issues of concern to be addressed and resolved before the end of the school day. As far as possible pupils will be given appointments which ensure no one subject is repeatedly missed during the counselling process.

Often issues raised in counselling by pupils are complex, and frequently being explored for the first time. Ethical practice requires that the counselling session be sensitively managed with appropriate time allocated to a beginning, middle and end to the session. It is important this is respected by all and sessions should not be interrupted unless there is an emergency.

It has been the experience of those involved in school counselling that, on average, a young person may participate in four to six sessions of counselling. The number of sessions offered must be based on the need and agreed with the young person as part of the review process. A review of the counselling intervention will take place after 6 sessions and a joint decision made on whether it should continue. The Key Contact is an important contributor to this decision as is the counsellor's line manager and clinical supervisor. This review will involve an assessment of the pupil's progress, motivation to continue and whether there is useful work still to be done (*Appendix 7 and 8 – Counselling Evaluation Forms*).

Counsellors should deliver the service according to the 'Ethical Framework for Good Practice' of their professional body. This should cover areas such as supervision; record keeping (within data protection guidelines); evaluation and complaints procedures. Service will also be delivered within the ethical code of the provider's professional organisation, in compliance with GDPR (*Appendix 2*) at all times.

## **2.8 Referral to Other Services**

After the initial assessment, or indeed during any counselling session, it may become apparent that the pupil requires referral to specialist services. No onward referrals should take place without the Key Contact's involvement or prior knowledge. When a referral is required the counsellor should keep the young person informed and seek permission to share information at all stages. Any decision about an onward referral, any relevant consultation and who will take the action must be recorded in the client's notes.

If there is a safeguarding issue then the procedures in the school's Child Protection Policy must be followed.

Counsellors retain the professional responsibility to refer child protection concerns directly to the appropriate investigating agencies e.g. Social Services or PSNI, if the school is closed

or the Key Contact or Designated Teacher for Child Protection is not available.

During these times the EA Child Protection Service for Schools (CPSS) is available to discuss safeguarding concerns and provide appropriate advice. The CPSS will not, however, refer safeguarding concerns to appropriate investigating agencies. If a referral is required the school counsellor will proceed with the referral as necessary and appropriate.

It is important, in this instance, that the Counsellor informs the Key Contact of the referral and any actions taken.

## **2.9 Confidentiality and Information Sharing**

At the beginning of a counselling relationship the counsellor must explain confidentiality and its limitations to the pupil. This should clearly identify what confidentiality means in a way that is relevant to the pupil's maturity and level of understanding. Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, as the welfare of the pupil will, at all times, take precedence. It is good practice for counsellors to regularly re-visit the concept of confidentiality at different stages of the counselling process with the pupil.

The ICSS will treat in confidence all personal information about pupils whether obtained directly or indirectly. Such information includes name, address, biographical details and other descriptions about the pupil's life and circumstances that might result in identification. Information about the pupil's school will also be treated as confidential. Counsellors will not discuss case details outside the service, except for safeguarding and governance purposes.

While the school Key Contact may have a general overview of the presenting reason for referral the content of sessions will remain confidential unless the welfare and safety of the pupil is considered at risk.

## **2.10 Disclosure of Information with Consent**

At times the counsellor may feel it useful to share information with a third party. In such circumstances the rationale for disclosure of the information and any implications must be explained to the pupil and their consent must be obtained. A permission form signed by the pupil and setting out what information can be shared and with whom, must be prepared for all instances of disclosure/sharing by consent. This process sustains the commitment to support the pupil's autonomy and capacity for informed consent at every stage of the counselling process. Any disclosure of information will be made in the pupil's best interest.

## **2.11 Disclosure without Consent**

In some cases it may be necessary to disclose/share information without the pupil's consent. This is permitted under GDPR where it is reasonably considered that an individual's health or wellbeing may be at risk. In such situations the legal basis for sharing will be vital interests rather than consent.

A Counsellor may discuss the reasons for this action with their line manager/clinical supervisor within the service provider. The Counsellor will provide the Key Contact with the relevant information.

However, such discussions should not delay any urgent sharing with required services.

Information must only be shared with those services that can provide appropriate and timely support to the pupil. The information shared must be relevant, specific and not excessive. The counsellor will follow the school's child protection procedure and will remain at the school as long as necessary to support the pupil through the disclosure process.

The counsellor will log all revisions or changes made to the confidentiality agreement with the pupil on the case file. This is necessary to track actions taken, outcomes and implications.

“Where there is a disclosure of abuse, suicide plan or plans to harm self or others, counsellors have a duty of care to the client and others and need to take appropriate action.” (Ref: Counselling Adolescents Geldard - Kathryn, David, Sage Publishers 2004), This will be in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

The Key Contact must be an active partner in any decision making where a pupil's safety or welfare is considered at risk, this includes acts of self-harm or expression of suicidal thoughts / ideation. Where there are differing views and opinions, advice can be sought from the EA Child Protection Support Service (CPSS).

Examples of information disclosure/sharing permitted under the legal basis of vital interests rather than consent include the following:

- Circumstances exist where the counsellor has sufficient grounds to believe that the young person is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, e.g. through neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, domestic violence, drug abuse, etc;
- The young person discloses that they are aware of significant harm of another person;
- Suicidal ideation and or self-harm are being disclosed.

### **2.12 Line Management**

A counsellor is a member of a team which provides a service to schools in a specific area and is line managed by a team leader. The counsellor will have regular meetings with the line manager who has responsibility for the organisational aspects of the counsellor's work.

Line management responsibilities and boundaries with regard to professional practice will be clearly set out in the contract between the counsellor and the service provider organisation. The line manager is responsible for the general welfare and wellbeing of the counsellor and should take any necessary action to address personal support needs. Line managers should be aware of the caseload of individual counsellor at all times.

### **2.13 External Clinical Supervision**

All counsellors must have external clinical supervision in line with the requirements set out for the ICSS. Clinical supervision involves the counsellor meeting with a suitably qualified and experienced practitioner from the same discipline. At these meetings professional practice is reviewed in the context of the counsellor's current caseload and client progress. Clinical supervision is intended to be both supportive and challenging.

Service providers will make the external clinical supervision arrangements for the counsellors they employ. Providers are expected, when appointing external clinical supervisors, to ensure that they can:



- assure the quality of counselling practice and that it meets agreed professional standards;
- develop individual learning and improve practice;
- meet the counsellor's professional support needs; and
- relate counselling provision to the operational context of the ICSS.

External Clinical Supervisors must be experienced practitioners, competent in supervising the approach used by the counsellor. A supervisor of counsellors working within the ICSS should have a background in or recognised knowledge of the various stages of child development. Supervisors will hold or be working towards accreditation as a clinical supervisor.

Counsellors must receive a minimum of 1½ hours clinical supervision per month, depending on the nature of the cases and experience of the counsellor. A list of all on-going cases should be maintained by the counsellor and presented to the supervisor at the outset of the session. During the course of counselling interventions, each case will have been discussed at least once with the Clinical Supervisor and this will be recorded in case notes. The professional practice focus of the session remains a matter for the Clinical Supervisor and the provider.

The Supervisor must report any concerns about a counsellor's continued competence to practice to the provider immediately.

#### **2.14 Monitoring Service Provision**

The EA Contract Manager will meet with providers on a monthly basis to review service usage, emerging issues and possible responses or action needed. These meetings will be informed by the data collected routinely about the service provided in each school. The factual data will include:

- numbers of young people attending sessions;
- gender of young people attending;
- number of sessions per young person;
- numbers who did not keep counselling appointment(s);
- presenting and other issues raised in counselling session e.g. family conflict, bullying, self-harm, suicidal ideation;
- safeguarding issues raised in counselling session e.g. domestic violence, sexual, physical, emotional abuse, neglect and
- nature of any disability, illness or special needs of pupils

In addition to the factual information about service provision, reports will be made on the action taken and response in respect of referrals to other agencies, the immediate impact of counselling for the pupils and the broader impact within the school.

#### **2.15 Evaluation Methods**

The provider must evaluate the service with pupils in an age appropriate way.

The proven tools, which must be used, are:

- Young Person's Child Outcome Results Evaluation (YP- CORE),
- Child Outcome Results Survey (CORS)
- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

As these tools are extensively used the outcome(s) can be used both to evaluate the impact of ICSS and to facilitate comparison across jurisdictions. (*Appendix 7: Counselling Evaluation Form - Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire*).

Providers can use other techniques to evaluate the impact of the service provision, for example, focus group discussions, surveys through questionnaire of members of the wider school community, or actively seek feedback from those who have made referrals, via the ICSS App, when developed. The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) may undertake evaluation surveys of the service provided.

#### **2.16 Counselling Records – For Individual Pupils**

All counsellors must adhere to their providers' record keeping policy which includes a disposal of records policy. Record keeping procedures must be GDPR compliant. In all aspects of data protection and record keeping the child's welfare is paramount and must remain the priority for the counsellor delivering the ICSS provision.

The counsellor must keep notes about what has been discussed in the session(s). These notes are part of the individual pupil's file and must be treated as confidential. Any disclosure of a safeguarding nature will be recorded on the pupil's file together with details of the parties with whom information was shared and any other action taken. Information provided about any relevant change in the pupil's circumstances between sessions, any telephone calls made on behalf of the pupil or other action taken should be recorded. The file should also contain a record of attendance at sessions, record of any sessions missed and a copy of the pupil's agreement to engage in the process. Files must be retained in line with the provider's policy on record retention which must adhere to GDPR requirements.

Pupils' files must be allocated a unique identification number and filed in numeric order in a secure locked cabinet on the school premises. An alphabetical list with the pupil identification number is held separately. The counsellor and Key Contact must have a key to the cabinet. Counsellors must remember at all times that a pupil can request to see his or her case records but cannot see any information from a third party without that person's permission.

The pupil's file is the property of the service provider and it is the provider's responsibility to ensure that it is stored securely until it is destroyed. The individual pupil file should be removed from the school to the provider's premises at the end of the counselling intervention. Files must be retained in line with the providers' policy on record retention which should adhere to GDPR requirements.

#### **2.17 Other Records**

Counsellors will record anonymised statistical information on client gender, age, ethnicity, reason for referral and other details as advised by the provider. This information will be processed in line with the provider's procedures for data collection and will be made available to the EA ICSS Contract Manager each term and annually, or on request in response to specific queries. The statistical data will be made available to schools on an annual basis. Any records passed to the EA or schools must not contain personal identifiers.

#### **2.18 Information Sharing – Special Circumstances**

Where the professional conduct or competence of the counsellor is under investigation it may be necessary to review the individual pupil(s) file. The consent of the pupil(s) will be

sought by the party conducting the investigation. Counsellors may be required to share information about a pupil who is the subject of a Case Management Review (CMR). This will only occur where the pupil was receiving counselling support at the time of death or shortly before. Counsellor should be aware that in the event of a CMR being initiated, all related files and notes recorded by personnel who were involved with the pupil, are 'sealed' and removed for later scrutiny. The ICSS counsellor's involvement in the case will be documented and covered in the Internal Agency Review conducted by the EA.

## 3. COUNSELLING FOR PUPILS

Pupils and their needs are at the centre of the counselling process. Pupils will gain maximum benefit from counselling intervention if they have a sound understanding of the process and how it can help them before they engage with a counsellor. Pupils can only benefit if they wish to engage in counselling.

This section describes the essential information which all pupils should have about counselling. This information should be provided to pupils in the form of an appropriate medium and be reiterated in a variety of ways, such as school assembly, class discussions, 'Drop-in' sessions with the counsellor, posters and leaflets.

### 3.1 Counselling Relationship

The counselling relationship provides the opportunity to talk, in private, about anything that is of concern to a young person. The counsellor is there to assist in exploring issues and to support pupils to make their own decisions. The counsellor will not be judgemental. At the beginning of a counselling relationship, the pupil and the school counsellor will enter into a written agreement. This clearly sets out the boundaries of a school-based counselling service and ensures that the pupil actively works in partnership with the practitioner in case planning, decision making, reviewing and evaluation.

### 3.2 Counselling Approaches

While talking usually forms the basis of most counselling sessions, in the course of a counselling session counsellors may propose to use different strategies, techniques and modalities to explore feelings. A counsellor will always explain what the method is, how it might be of benefit and will seek the agreement of the pupil.

### 3.3 Confidentiality

It is important that the pupil understands the meaning of confidentiality. Whatever has been discussed with the counsellor will be kept confidential - except in very specific circumstances. These circumstances should be explained to pupil at the outset so that they understand why a disclosure of abuse or 'at risk' concerns must be shared with the appropriate authorities.

### 3.4 Referral

Pupils should know that they can self-refer and how they can do that. They should also be informed that school staff or parents/carers can seek help on their behalf, after discussion and agreement with them.

Pupils should be very clear that they can refuse counselling at the outset or at any stage during the counselling process. Pupils should be advised that there are other sources of help and that counselling is available from other organisations outside the school which they can access.

### **3.5 Initial Assessment & Referral**

The pupil can have an initial assessment meeting with the counsellor to determine if counselling would be appropriate for them. The pupil can expect this to be carried out within a reasonable time period, which will not exceed 15 days after a written referral has been received. If a pupil needs to be seen urgently during school hours, the counselling support will be provided within one hour.

### **3.6 Consent**

Before counselling intervention can commence, parent/carer consent may be required. The school's policy on this should be explained and how consent is to be sought. Furthermore, young people should be aware that they can consent to counselling in their own right, if they are sufficiently mature to understand what they are agreeing to. In these circumstances, the young person will be considered 'Gillick' competent.

Consent on the part of the young person is a pre-requisite to the formation of an effective counselling relationship. A counsellor will always confirm with the young person at the outset of a counselling session that they wish to attend counselling.

### **3.7 Involvement of Parents**

Counselling works best when parents know their child is seeking counselling and are supportive of the process. Young people will be encouraged to share their engagement in counselling with parents. If a young person wishes to engage without parental involvement, an assessment will be made to establish if the young person is 'Gillick' competent, and a decision will be made based on the young person's safety and wellbeing. If the young person is deemed to be 'Gillick' competent the parents do not have to be informed.

### **3.8 Assessment of Progress**

At the start of counselling, during the process and at the end, a young person will be asked to assess their state of wellbeing. This assessment is used by the counsellor to plan sessions, determine progress and to evaluate the outcome of counselling for the pupils.

### **3.9 Consultation**

A review of how the service is operating in a school may include the views of young people on all aspects of the provision. From time to time, the ICSS provider may seek the opinions of young people on certain aspects of the service provision common to all schools, such as the information material used, how access might be made easier and ethical issues such as confidentiality and procedures for sharing of information.

### **3.10 Complaints Procedures**

Young people should know that there is a procedure to deal with any complaints about the service provided by the counsellor. This information should be presented appropriately through accessible literature and through awareness raising sessions about the counselling service. The counsellor will also explain the procedure at the outset of the counselling intervention.

## 4 SCHOOL SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM - ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The support of the School Senior Management Team (SMT) is critical to the operation of an effective counselling service in a school. This support can be visible in acknowledging the contribution that counselling can make to promoting the emotional wellbeing of pupils and encouraging pupils, parents and staff to make appropriate use of the intervention. Less visible, yet equally important, is the support given to the Key Contact and the counsellor in timetabling suitable accommodation for counselling and time for both to review pupils' needs.

This section details the roles and responsibilities of the School Senior Management Team and outlines the issues which require the SMT to make decisions or provide the lead in initiating relevant action. As an ICSS partner the SMT will:

### 4.1 Appoint a Key Contact and Deputy Key Contact

This staff member is the counsellor's main point of contact within the school. Some schools have appointed the Designated Teacher for Child Protection or the Head of Pastoral Care to this position. The appointed person should be approachable by pupils and have no direct link to the school's disciplinary processes. A Deputy Key Contact should be appointed to provide cover when the Key Contact is absent or unavailable. The names of the Key Contact and the Deputy Key Contact and an explanation of their role should be widely circulated within the school community.

The Key Contact **must** meet with School Counsellor on a weekly basis. The EA will monitor these meetings to ensure that there is clear communication between both parties.

### 4.2 Define How The Counselling Service Will Operate

The School SMT should work with the ICSS provider to agree how counselling will operate within the school. The agreed arrangements should be set out in an ICSS Information Sheet which will include the names of key personnel, the level of service to be provided, the process for making referrals and the evaluation process (*Appendix 1: ICSS Service Information Sheet*). In developing these arrangements, the service provider should give due consideration to each school's unique culture and contextual setting and adapt standard procedures as appropriate.

### 4.3 Decide Upon A Parental Consent Policy

A decision will be required on how, if and when parental consent will be sought for a pupil to access counselling. Parents should be informed of the counselling service at the outset of a school year. The process for determining that a pupil can access counselling without parental consent must be agreed. This involves an assessment to determine that a pupil has sufficient maturity and understanding of what is involved – the pupil should be regarded as "Gillick" competent (see paragraphs 9.3 – 9.4 for more information).

### 4.4 Inform the Board of Governors About The Service

The Board of Governors (BOG) should be aware that pupils have access to Counselling and how the service operates. A copy of the ICSS Information Sheet should be available to members of the BOG, which includes all relevant information and contact details.

#### **4.5 Provide The Counsellor with Relevant Information on School Policies & Procedures**

The counsellor should be provided annually with copies of relevant school policies, including updated policies on Child Protection, Positive Behaviour & Discipline, Anti-Bullying, Safe Use of the Internet, Mobile Phone Policy and Parental Consent and furnished with contact details of school staff who have responsibility for Pastoral Care, Child Protection and Safeguarding. The counsellor should be made aware of school holidays and planned school closures, so that counselling sessions can be scheduled to make the most efficient use of available dates and times.

Where sessions are wasted due to inadequate planning and poor communication the EA will seek to recoup from schools the costs incurred.

#### **4.6 Introduce the Counsellor to School Staff and Pupils**

The introduction to staff could be facilitated at a general staff meeting or interest group meeting such as the Pastoral Care Team. The staff must include the Principal, the Key Contact, Deputy Key Contact and Designated Teacher (and Deputy) for Child Protection. Pupils may be introduced to the counsellor at assembly, in class meetings or in small groups. Where a school council exists, pupils may be consulted on how to best introduce the ICSS to pupils.

A fundamental requirement under GDPR is to inform data subjects, why their information is being collected, how it will be used and how their privacy will be protected. Often referred to as a privacy notice or fair processing notice, such notices should be made available to pupils to explain the processing of personal data associated with the ICSS. A privacy notice can take many forms but must use simple, clear language and provide a named contact person where further information is required.

#### **4.7 Inform Parents / Carers About The Counselling Service**

A policy explaining parents' involvement in the counselling process is required. This policy should include how parents will be informed about the service, the referral process, and how consent will be managed by the school. Parents may be given the opportunity to meet with the counsellor at open nights. Parental information about the service can be conveyed through school news sheets, social message school app, websites, information leaflets etc. Many schools use a standard letter, at the beginning of the first term, to inform parents of the counselling support available in schools. Parents must also be provided with a copy of, or link to the privacy notice. (*Appendix 3: Sample letter/Information for Parents/Carers*).

#### **4.8 Facilitate the Counsellor with Suitable Accommodation and Resources**

A suitable room should be made available for counselling, which not only respects the confidentiality of pupils but also ensures that safeguarding procedures are adhered to. It is important that the same room is available every week for the continuity of service. The designated room should have a power point as the counsellor may use a computer based system to update records following sessions with pupils. The counsellor will also need access to a secure, lockable cabinet for confidential records and an external telephone line for confidential calls.

A 'Post Box' is required to allow pupils to self-refer. This should be easily accessed by pupils yet sited discretely. Other means of contact such as e-mail, text messaging or online referral can be considered. A designated area for consultation between the counsellor and the Key

Contact should be agreed, during which notes and other relevant information can be exchanged. Consideration may be given to involving the School Council (where applicable) in arrangements concerning the counselling service.

#### **4.9 Review the Operation of the Service Annually**

The operation of the counselling service within the school should be reviewed on an annual basis and any necessary improvements to the service should be made. This review process will be led by the School SMT with contributions from other partners. This process will be initiated following receipt of the annual report from the school's counselling provider.



## 5 ICSS PROVIDER - ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The ICSS Provider is under contract to the Education Authority, following a public tendering process, to make counselling accessible to post-primary aged pupils in mainstream and special school within a defined geographical area. There is a growing knowledge base of professional best practice in supporting pupils, and providers must evaluate and incorporate this knowledge into their service provision, as appropriate.

At the first Contract Management meeting, a senior member of staff from each counselling service organisation must be identified to liaise with the EA ICSS Contract Manager.

This section details the roles & responsibilities of the ICSS Provider. As an ICSS partner ICSS Service Provider will:

### 5.1 **Employ Suitably Qualified and Experienced Counsellors**

Counsellors must be qualified to at least Diploma level or equivalent from a recognised validating organisation e.g. Counselling and Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body (CPCAB). The provider must demonstrate that this qualification is of an equal standard. Evidence of Counsellors qualifications must be provided to the EA when requested. Counsellors must have had a minimum of 150 hours of clinically supervised practice before commencing work in a school which can be accrued as part of their recognised training.

Counsellors must have an enhanced vetting check via Access NI prior to commencing work in schools and must attend child protection training, facilitated by the EA.

Counsellors should have prior experience of counselling children and young people (at least one year) up to the age of 18 and have an understanding of child development and an awareness of issues impacting a young person. This must be an essential criteria when advertising new counselling posts. Counsellors must also have the relevant personal qualities e.g. approachable, good listening skills and a manner which promotes a safe climate for trusting relationships to develop. Counsellors must be practising within the current BACP competencies in counselling 11-18 year olds.

Student Counsellors must not be used in the delivery of the ICSS contract.

Counsellors must hold or working towards the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP), Irish Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (IACP) or Health Care Professions Council (HCPC) accreditation. This must be completed and evidence supplied by or on the date stipulated by the EA.

### 5.2 **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**

It is the responsibility of the service provider to ensure that the General Data Protection Regulations, which came into effect in May 2018 are followed and upheld in all aspects of the management of personal data, relating to their provision of the ICSS.

### 5.3 **Assign a Named Counsellor to Each School**

The presence of the same counsellor every week in a school ensures continuity of the

counselling intervention for pupils and fosters the development of a relationship of trust and confidence. It's important that an understanding of the counselling process is shared with the Key Contact, pupils and staff. In exceptional circumstances, a change of counsellor may be necessary, but this must be first discussed and agreed with the school and the EA Contract Manager must be informed. This change should be formally recorded (in writing) for the benefit of all parties.

#### **5.4 Ensure Operating Arrangements are in Place for Each School**

The ICSS provider will collaborate with the Principal/School SMT to establish how the counselling service will operate and the key details will be set out in the ICSS Information Sheet. The ICSS provider will ensure that all relevant issues are addressed. This information must be available to the EA ICSS Contract Manager, if requested.

#### **5.5 Manage the Allocation of Counselling Sessions in Schools**

ICSS Providers must ensure that they have sufficient number of counsellors to provide counselling in all schools that they are contracted to deliver counselling. This must be confirmed with the EA Contract Manager at the start of each academic year.

The ICSS providers have been allocated a fixed number of counselling sessions for each area based on the number of schools and the school's enrolment. ICSS providers can operate flexibly within that overall number in response to changes in demand across the schools in each area. It is the responsibility of the ICSS provider, at all times, to manage the schools allocation of counselling and ensure that all schools receive their minimum allocation of counselling sessions according to the ICSS contract allocation.

#### **5.6 Provide a School Weekly 'Drop-In' Session**

The 'Drop-In' service should be used for the purpose for which it exists, i.e. an additional one hour drop-in service in each school during lunch breaks or in exceptional cases at another time as agreed by the school.

In exceptional circumstance agreed by all parties, school, EA and the Provider, a drop-in may be used for counselling support related to critical incidents or urgent situations involving pupils. This may include group support. Should safeguarding issues be disclosed in the drop-in sessions the school's child protection guidelines must be applied.

If, and when, a change to the 'Drop-In' service has been agreed between the school and the provider, the EA Contract Manager must be informed in writing. This specific information must also be included in the Monthly Monitoring Reports, which will state clearly the date(s) of the revised agreement, the personnel involved and when the EA Contract Manager was informed.

#### **5.7 Monitor the Counsellor's Professional Practice**

All counsellors must be covered by Professional indemnity insurance and be provided with regular separate external clinical supervision and managerial supervision which must comply with agreed professional practice standards.

All Counsellors must hold a Diploma in Counselling, or equivalent, and hold or be working towards British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP), Irish Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (IACP) or Health Care Professions Council (HCPC) accreditation. This accreditation must be acquired by 28 February 2021. In the event that new counsellors

join the ICSS during the contractual term, they too must complete their accreditation within a school year i.e. 31<sup>st</sup> August.

Each school counsellor must undergo at least one and a half hours external clinical supervision per month.

### **5.8 Ensure a Prompt Response is Made to Urgent Referrals**

In addition to the normal session delivery, the ICSS provider may receive an urgent request from a school. If a pupil needs to be seen urgently during school hours, there should be a response within one hour. If the request is received outside school hours, the response must be provided on the next school day. Any counselling provided must be recorded as one of the school's allocated sessions. Schools should be aware that counselling is not always an appropriate response in an emergency situation and that referral to a General Practitioner (GP) or other external agencies may be required.

### **5.8 Referrals to CAMHS**

An ICSS counsellor can refer directly to CAMHS (Step 1 or 2) as long as both the following conditions are met:

**Condition 1 (basic threshold):** A young person has or is suspected to have a mental ill health or other condition that results in persistent symptoms of psychological stress.

**Condition 2 (complexity and severity threshold):** At least one of the following exists:

- An associated serious and persistent impairment of their day to day functioning or
- An associated risk that the young person may cause serious harm to themselves or others.

#### **Threshold criteria for Step 2 CAMHS**

Step 2 CAMHS will accept referrals for young people presenting with mild to moderate mental ill health and emotional difficulties. Consideration will be given to the complexity of the difficulties, the risk of secondary problems developing, their development, the presence/absence of protective factors and the presence/absence of stressful social and cultural factors.

#### **Threshold criteria for Step 3 CAMHS**

Referrals will be accepted where there is a severe and/or enduring impact on the young person's normal daily functioning (psychological/social/educational). However, where there is severe impairment of functioning or a life threatening condition, a referral should be made immediately and discussed with a senior member of the CAMHS team. Where the impact has been lasting for 3 months or more a referral may be made and discussed with a senior member of the CAMHS team.

### **5.9 Respond to Requests for Emotional Support *During* A Critical Incident**

If a major critical incident occurs the EA Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) may approach the ICSS Provider to request counsellors to assist the CIRT to provide appropriate emotional support for pupils. Such requests will be made via the EA ICSS Contract Manager directly to the relevant ICSS provider. During the critical incident response the ICSS counsellor will be managed by the EA CIRT lead.

The ICSS provider must ensure that their counsellors, involved in a critical incident, are trained in crisis response and are supported by their organisation.

During a critical incident, if school staff contact the ICSS provider or the school counsellor directly, they must be signposted to the regional EA CIRT Helpline number (028 3751 2515) and the EA Contract Manager must be immediately informed.

Where a critical incident occurs in a school, to which the EA CIRT is responding, if this incident coincides with the ICSS Counsellor's scheduled day for counselling in that school the ICSS counsellor should continue to work with the normal client group unless an alternative arrangement has been agreed between the ICSS provider and the EA Contract Manager.

The ICSS support made available during a critical incident is in addition to the contracted sessions.

#### **5.10 Respond to Requests for Counselling *Following A Critical Incident***

The ICSS provider may be asked by the EA Contract manager to provide counselling following a critical incident, after an appropriate length of time.

Where a school contacts the ICSS provider or the school counsellor directly, they must signpost the school to the regional EA CIRT Helpline number (Tel: 028 3751 2515) and inform the EA Contract Manager immediately.

The ICSS support made available as part of the follow up to a critical incident is in addition to the contracted sessions.

#### **5.11 Assist with the Annual Review of the Counselling Service Provision**

An Annual Report on how counselling has operated within the school should be presented to the Principal by mid October each year. This should form the basis of the Annual Review of the counselling service and the provider should work with the School's SMT, the Key Contact and the Counsellor to identify and implement any necessary changes. The date for the Annual Review of service provision should be set out in the ICSS Information Sheet. The EA must also be furnished with copies of the Annual Report.

#### **5.12 Provide Required Financial and Statistical Returns**

All financial and statistical returns required by the EA Contract Manager should be completed and returned within the specified timescales. The Monthly Operational Reports (MOR's) and Monthly Monitoring Reports (MMR's) with the details of sessions delivered and related statistics must be received before payments can be processed. The Monthly Monitoring Reports must be signed by the school, the Counsellor and ICSS Provider to verify that all information is accurate. The statistics are also used to monitor the counselling service provision. Failure to provide appropriately completed monthly monitoring forms (MMF's) by the end of the **third week** on the following month, will result in invoices not being paid in a timely manner.

Monthly Operational Reports for the Contract Management Meetings must be received by the Contract Manager **five working days** before each operational meeting.

#### **5.13 ICSS Service Delivery Plan**

The ICSS providers must ensure that each counsellor provides no more than 20 hours face to face counselling per week. This may change in line with professional guidance.

Providers must ensure that counsellors provide no more than **five** counselling sessions and **one** drop in during a school day.

#### **5.14 Maximising Service Delivery**

Providers must endeavour, in partnership with schools that all counselling sessions and Drop-In's are used and the number of wasted or Did Not Attend (DNA's) are kept to a minimum. Reasons for wasted sessions/DNA's and reuse of sessions must be indicated on the Monthly Operational Report and Monthly Monitoring Reports. Maximising service delivery will be discussed with the EA Contract Manager at the Monthly Contract Management Meetings.

## 6 SCHOOL KEY CONTACT: ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Key Contact and Deputy Key Contact are identified by the School's SMT and, ideally, should be a member of the School's Pastoral Care Team. The Key Contact will be the main contact point for the ICSS within the school and it is important that the person appointed has the trust and confidence of both the staff and the pupils.

This section outlines the roles and responsibilities of the School Key Contact. As an ICSS partner the School Key Contact will:

### 6.1 Act as the Link with the School Community

All contact with the counsellor for staff, pupils or parents should be arranged through the Key Contact. A good working relationship between the counsellor and the Key Contact is essential for counselling support to meet the needs of pupils and also be regarded as an integral part of the school's pastoral care provision. The Key Contact should ensure that the counsellor has contact details (email, phone etc.) at all times.

### 6.2 Promote Awareness of Counselling among Parent/Carers

The Key Contact will work with the counsellor to increase parent/carer awareness of the service and the potential benefits of counselling for some pupils. The Key Contact will deal with specific issues which parents/carers raise regarding consent for counselling.

### 6.3 Manage the Waiting List of Referred Pupils

Waiting lists are retained by the school's Key Contact and are the responsibility of the school at all times. The pupil referrals (Appendix 6: Pupil Referral Form) should be discussed at weekly meetings between the Key Contact and the Counsellor. Waiting lists will also be discussed at Contract Management Meetings between the ICSS provider and the EA ICSS Contract Manager.

### 6.4 Seek Approval to Accept Referrals from External Agencies

External agencies *cannot* make direct referrals to the ICSS. Where such a referral has been received, the Key Contact should seek advice from the EA ICSS Contract Manager.

### 6.5 Schedule Counselling Sessions for Pupils

It is important to manage the schedule of counselling sessions for pupils and liaise with the counsellor to ensure that a pupil does not regularly miss the same lesson and that sessions are sensitive to the school's timetabling constraints. If it is known in advance that pupils will be absent from school, the Key Contact must endeavour to reallocate sessions to other pupils in consultation with the Counsellor.

### 6.6 Inform the Counsellor when Sessions are Not Required

If a school is planning to close or for some reason, pupil does not require counselling, the Key Contact must notify the counsellor in advance to ensure effective and efficient use of the counselling resources. It is important for Key Contacts and Counsellors to maintain regular communication to ensure that sessions are not unduly wasted.

Where sessions are wasted due to inadequate planning, the EA will seek to recoup from schools the costs incurred.

### **6.7 Weekly Key Contact and Counsellor Meetings**

These pre-arranged meetings will normally be a face-to-face interaction, within the school, between the counsellor and the Key Contact. This meeting will take place at an agreed time to discuss new referrals, review the waiting list and to share any relevant information about a pupil's priority for counselling. It also provides the opportunity for both parties to review the waiting list and deal with other issues or concerns, as they arise. Issues emerging from counselling sessions, which require action by the school, will be shared appropriately. If it is known in advance that pupils will be absent from school, the Key Contact will allocate counselling sessions to other pupils in consultation with the Counsellor.

In exceptional circumstances, where a meeting in the school is not possible contact should take place by telephone or email so that updates can be discussed. When using e-communication, a young person should not be named nor should personal details or personal issues be described, in line with GDPR requirements.

The EA ICSS Contract Manager will monitor these meetings of which the details will be recorded on the Monthly Monitor Returns (MMR's) and which are signed by all parties.

### **6.8 Maintain a Record of Referred Pupils**

The Key Contact should keep an individual record for all referred pupils. Individual files will contain referral forms, parental consent details (if appropriate) the number of sessions attended and a note of any follow up action required or agreed by the counsellor, school, pupil or other agencies. Pupil records must be held securely in a locked cabinet in line with GDPR and should only be accessed by the Key Contact and the School Counsellor. Failure to do so will be considered a data breach and may lead to further investigation and potential financial penalties from the Information Commissioner's Office.

### **6.9 Take Appropriate Action on Child Protection Referrals**

The content of a counselling session remains confidential unless a disclosure is made of a safeguarding or child protection nature, or if a pupil's safety or welfare is considered to be 'at risk', which includes acts of self-harm or suicidal ideation. In such circumstances the school's child protection procedures will be implemented. The counsellor must advise the Key Contact of a disclosure or any 'at risk' concerns and this information must be passed immediately to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection. The Key Contact should inform the counsellor when a referral is made to Social Services or PSNI or if another action is taken.

While the decision to make a referral to the investigating agencies rests with the school, the counsellor retains the professional responsibility to refer child protection concerns directly to the appropriate agency if there are continuing concerns.

### **6.10 Safeguarding Concerns during School Closures**

Counsellors retain the professional responsibility to refer child protection concerns directly to the appropriate investigating agencies e.g. Social Services or PSNI if the school is closed or the Key Contact or Designated Teacher for Child Protection is not available.

During these times the EA Child Protection Service for Schools (CPSS) is available to discuss safeguarding concerns and provide appropriate advice. The CPSS will not however, refer directly on the ICSS behalf.

It is important, in this instance, that the Counsellor informs the Key Contact of the referrals and actions taken.

**6.11 Keep the Senior Management Team briefed on Progress**

Each term, the Key Contact should receive a report from the counsellor detailing the number of sessions provided, key issues arising and identifying any recurring themes. This can be used as a basis to brief the School's Senior Management Team about counselling provision in the school.

**6.12 Participate in the Annual Review of the Counselling Service Provision**

At the end of the school year the provider will present a report to the Principal detailing the number of sessions provided, key issues arising and identifying any recurring themes. This will be used as a basis for reviewing counselling service provision. In the event a change of the ICSS Key Contact, the school counsellor should be informed and the EA Contract Manager notified.



## 7 COUNSELLOR: ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Counsellor is assigned to the school by the ICSS provider. The Counsellor will normally be present in a school at the same time every week, which will make the Counsellor accessible to all members of the school community, and help develop relationships and reinforce the fact that counselling is a normal part of a school's provision for its pupils. The same Counsellor is expected to be in place throughout the school year.

This section outline the roles and responsibilities of the Counsellor:

### 7.1 Counsellor Qualifications and Accreditation

The school counsellor must have Diploma in Counselling, or equivalent from a recognised validating organisation e.g. Counselling & Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body (CPCAB). The Counsellor must have prior experience of counselling children and pupils up to the age of 18 (at least one year) and an understanding of child development and an awareness of issues impacting a child or young person.

Counsellors must have minimum of 150 hours of clinically supervised practice before commencing work in schools. This can be accrued as part of their Diploma.

Counsellors must be practising within the BACP competencies in counselling 11-18 year olds. They must also have the relevant personal qualities e.g. approaches, good listening skills and a manner which promotes a safe climate for trusting relationships to develop.

All Counsellors must hold or be working towards British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP), Irish Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (IACP) or Health Care Professions Council (HCPC) accreditation. This accreditation must be acquired by February 2021. In the event that new counsellors join the ICSS during the contractual term, they too must complete their accreditation within a school year (by 31 August).

Counsellors should carry out no more than 20 hours face to face counselling per week. This may change in line with professional guidance.

All Counsellors must have regular line management meetings and External Clinical Supervision of at least 1½ hours per month.

### 7.2 Weekly Key Contact and Counsellor Meetings

These pre-arranged meetings will normally be a face-to-face interaction, within the school, between the counsellor and the Key Contact. This meeting will take place at an agreed time to discuss new referrals, review the waiting list and to share any relevant information about a pupil's priority for counselling. It also provides the opportunity for both parties to review the waiting list and deal with other issues or concerns, as they arise. Issues emerging from counselling sessions, which require action by the school, will be shared appropriately. If it is known in advance that pupils will be absent from school, the Key Contact will allocate counselling sessions to other pupils in consultation with the Counsellor.

In exceptional circumstances, where a meeting in the school is not possible contact should take place by telephone or email so that updates can be discussed. When using e-

communication, a young person should not be named nor should personal details or personal issues be described, in line with GDPR requirements.

The EA ICSS Contract Manager will monitor these meetings of which the details will be recorded on the Monthly Monitor Returns (MMR's) and which are signed by all parties.

### **7.3 Deliver the Service as set out in the ICSS Information Sheet**

The counsellor will be available in the school at the agreed time each week, be contactable for urgent referrals and advise the Key Contact of any changes in contact details. Referrals for counselling will be accepted in line with the agreed process. The counsellor will work with the Key Contact to review referrals, schedule pupils, share information as appropriate and liaise weekly regarding the progress of waiting lists and any current issues.

Counsellors should provide no more than **five** counselling sessions and **one** drop in during a school day and provide no more than 20 hours face to face counselling per week. This may change in line with professional guidance.

### **7.4 Promote Awareness and Understanding of ICSS among School Staff**

An understanding of the counselling process, and how it can best be used to support pupils, will be provided by the counsellor for school staff in partnership with the Key Contact. This can be facilitated through a range of formal and informal approaches e.g. meetings, staff training days or through informal contact in the staff room. (*Appendix 4: Sample Information for School Staff*).

### **7.5 Promote Awareness and Understanding of ICSS among Parents/Carers**

In partnership with the Key Contact, the counsellor will promote an awareness of the counselling service with parents/carers. This may involve attending parents' evenings.

### **7.6 Promote Awareness and Understanding of ICSS among Pupils**

The counselling process will be explained to pupils so that they are informed of how it can help, what confidentiality means, and how the referral system works. This will be carried out with the assistance of the Key Contact and can be delivered during assemblies, class briefings or Drop-In sessions. Leaflets and posters may also be used to promote the service. (*Appendix 5: Sample Questions & Answers for Pupils*). It is essential that these information sessions about the EA ICSS are promoted and delivered.

### **7.7 Provide a Service of High Professional Counselling Standards to Pupils**

All counselling work will be undertaken within the ethical framework of the professional body and the service provided will be in line with the arrangements set out in the ICSS Contract and in this Handbook. While the counsellor's primary responsibility is to the pupil, the context for their work requires accountability also to their employer and to the school. However, the fundamental principle underpinning all action is that the welfare of the pupil is paramount.

Provide a 'Drop-in' session in each school, equivalent to one hour, normally during the lunchtime period. Any potential changes to how the 'Drop-in' sessions are delivered must be discussed in the first instance, with line management. If a change is agreed, the Monthly Monitoring Return Form must be signed by all parties.

### **7.8 Work within the School's Child Protection Policy**

All safeguarding concerns, including suspected or alleged abuse, must be reported to the Key Contact, who will pass it on immediately to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection. While the decision to make a referral to the investigating agencies rests with the school, the counsellor retains the professional responsibility to refer child protection concerns directly to the appropriate agency if there are continuing concerns.

### **7.9 Safeguarding Concerns during School Closures**

Counsellors retain the professional responsibility to refer child protection concerns directly to the appropriate investigating agencies e.g. Social Services or PSNI, if the school is closed or the Key Contact or Designated Teacher for Child Protection is not available.

During these times the EA Child Protection Service for Schools (CPSS) is available to discuss safeguarding concerns and provide appropriate advice. The CPSS will not, however, refer safeguarding concerns to appropriate investigating agencies. If a referral is required the school counsellor will proceed with the referral as necessary and appropriate.

It is important, in this instance, that the Counsellor informs the Key Contact of the referral and any actions taken.

### **7.10 Referrals to CAMHS**

An ICSS counsellor can refer directly to CAMHS (Step 1 or 2) as long as both the following conditions are met:

**Condition 1 (basic threshold):** A young person has or is suspected to have a mental ill health or other condition that results in persistent symptoms of psychological stress.

**Condition 2 (complexity and severity threshold):** At least one of the following exists:

- An associated serious and persistent impairment of their day to day functioning or
- An associated risk that the young person may cause serious harm to themselves or others.

#### **Threshold criteria for Step 2 CAMHS**

Step 2 CAMHS will accept referrals for young people presenting with mild to moderate mental ill health and emotional difficulties. Consideration will be given to the complexity of the difficulties, the risk of secondary problems developing, their development, the presence/absence of protective factors and the presence/absence of stressful social and cultural factors.

#### **Threshold criteria for Step 3 CAMHS**

Referrals will be accepted where there is a severe and/or enduring impact on the young person's normal daily functioning (psychological/social/educational). However, where there is severe impairment of functioning or a life threatening condition, a referral should be made immediately and discussed with a senior member of the CAMHS team. Where the impact has been lasting for 3 months or more a referral may be made and discussed with a senior member of the CAMHS team.

### **7.11 Maintain Accurate Client Counselling Session Records**

An accurate record of individual sessions with pupils must be held on the client's file. These records should be held in accordance with both the provider and minimum professional

requirements, in accordance with GDPR stipulations. The files will include an accurate record of the main issues discussed, key decisions reached, actions to be taken and outcomes. Details of approaches used and any agreement reached with the client must also be recorded. Files must be stored securely and retained in line with the provider's record retention policy. If a counsellor takes process notes, these should be amalgamated with the client's file at the end of the intervention, as these records may be required at a later date for an official inquiry such as a Case Management Review (CMR).

#### **7.12 Complete Required Records and Statistical Returns**

The Counsellor will keep a record of sessions delivered during each visit to the school on the Monthly Monitoring Report (MMR) and ensure that it is countersigned by a member of the school's staff for audit and payment purposes.

#### **7.13 Initial Assessments**

Pupils can avail of an initial assessment meeting with the counsellor to determine if counselling would be appropriate for them. The pupil should not have to wait longer than 15 days for counselling after a written referral has been received.

#### **7.14 Provide Emotional Support During A Critical Incident as Required**

If a major critical incident occurs, the EA Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) may request appropriately trained counsellors to assist the CIRT to provide emotional support for pupils. Such requests will be made to the relevant ICSS provider by the EA ICSS Contract Manager. During the critical incident response, the ICSS counsellor will be managed by the EA CIRT lead.

During a critical incident, if school staff contact the ICSS school counsellor directly, they must signpost them to the regional EA CIRT Helpline number (Tel: 028 3751 2515) and the relevant ICSS provider must be immediately informed.

Where a Critical Incident occurs in a school, to which the EA CIRT is responding, if this incident coincides with the ICSS Counsellor's scheduled day for counselling in that school, the ICSS counsellor should continue to work with the normal client group unless an alternative arrangement has been agreed between the ICSS provider and the EA Contract Manager.

#### **7.15 Provide Counselling *Following* A Critical Incident, as Required**

The counsellor may be asked by the ICSS Contract Manager via the ICSS provider, to provide counselling following a critical incident, after an appropriate length of time. This support is additional to the contracted counselling sessions, and authorisation is subject to a request from the EA's CIRT and approval from the ICSS Contract Manager. Invoices must be signed by the school, the counsellor and the provider's nominated representative before being submitted to the EA for payment.

A report on the follow up counselling as a result of a critical incident should be sent to the EA ICSS Contract Manager. This should identify the number of pupils seen, issues arising and any further action that might be required.

#### **7.16 Provide A Report on Service Usage at the End of Each Term**

A report detailing the number of sessions provided and the key issues arising will be provided to the Key Contact at the end of each term and copied to the EA ICSS Contract Manager.

**7.17 Contribute to the Annual Review on Service Provision**

At the end of the school year the counsellor will contribute to the provider's report on service provision in the school. This report will cover the number of sessions provided, key issues arising and identify any recurring themes. The counsellor may also contribute to the annual review of service provision in conjunction with school personnel.

**7.18 Maintain and Enhance Counselling Skills**

The counsellor will maintain and develop professional practice through regular and ongoing managerial and clinical supervision, appropriate training and continuous professional development.

The EA ICSS Contract Manager is responsible for the operational management and ongoing development of the ICSS on behalf of the EA. They act as the main contact for liaison between schools, counselling providers, professional counselling associations and the EA.

This section sets out the role of the EA Contract Manager and, where appropriate, the action expected in specified situations. As an ICSS partner the EA ICSS Contract Manager will:

### 8.1 Ensure Compliance with Contract Arrangements

The EA ICSS Contract Manager is responsible for ensuring that all ICSS providers comply with the contract requirements and that the service provided meets the specified standards.

The EA Contract Manager will meet with the ICSS providers on a monthly basis or as necessary, to monitor service delivery and contract compliance. The Contract Management Meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss any issues which have been raised with the EA Contract Manager, or any concerns from Counsellors to be discussed with a view to resolution.

The agenda for the Contract Management Meetings will include:

- ICSS Service operational delivery, monitoring of contracts delivery and compliance; monthly financial returns and invoicing;
- the actual utilisation of sessions by individual schools in the context of the overall allocation of sessions and the projected pattern of usage;
- waiting lists (which remain the responsibility of the school) for individual schools and, where appropriate, the scope to reduce waiting times by the re-distribution of sessions;
- the consistency and completeness of data collected by providers and emerging patterns;
- confirmation of continuity of service at individual school level and any necessary contingency arrangements;
- general staffing issues, complaints and safeguarding concerns;
- Any other presenting issues.

### 8.2 Annual Audits

The EA Contract Manager will undertake an annual clinical audit to confirm that the qualifications of the counsellors, their relevant experience working with young people, the clinical supervision arrangements and the standard of case recording to ensure it meets the contract requirements. This assurance, together with the statistical data for the school year and a general assessment of the service provision, is presented in an Annual Report.

The EA, will also conduct unannounced visits to ICSS providers to monitor and ensure contract compliance. The unannounced visit will be conducted by a Senior Officer from the EA Children & Young People's Service and an EA Internal Audit Officer.

### **8.3 Liaison with Schools**

The EA ICSS Contract Manager will engage with school staff, as and when required. Opportunities to meet with Principals and Key Contacts will be facilitated on an annual basis. The EA ICSS Contract Manager is available to discuss any concerns or queries which may arise regarding the service provision.

External agencies cannot make referrals directly to the school based service. In such a situation, the Key Contact should seek the advice of the EA Contract Manager before engaging with the ICSS provider.

### **8.4 Response to Critical Incidents**

The Regional Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) may ask the ICSS to provide counselling for pupils as part of a broader response to a critical incident involving a school. Counselling sessions will be made available by the ICSS as part of the response to a critical incident, in addition to the contracted sessions for any school. When a request is received from the CIRT, the EA Contract Manager must give prior approval to the ICSS providers before any counselling work is undertaken. The EA Contract Manager is required to provide briefing to the EA and DE, as required.

### **8.5 Professional Advice to the Department of Education**

The EA Contract Manager provides advice to the Department of Education on matters of professional practice, with implications for the ICSS including:

- emerging best practice for counselling children and young people, especially in schools based on recently published or on-going relevant research;
- changes in legislation relating to counselling;
- the contribution of counselling to broader mental and physical wellbeing strategies and associated action plans and initiatives; and
- changes in professional practice.

As part of the service development brief, the ICSS Contract Manager identifies any capacity building requirements for ICSS counselling staff and liaises with providers and others to support ongoing continuous professional development.

## 9. COUNSELLING – PARENTS/CARERS PERSPECTIVE

This section outlines the information parents/carers should be given about the counselling process and how it fits into the pastoral care system within the school. Information for parents/carers should be made available by the school in the first instance and it should cover the following topics:

### 9.1 Information about the Counselling Service

Parents/carers should be informed about the counselling process and how the service will operate in the school. The information should include the name of the counsellor, the ICSS provider, the day and time of counselling sessions in the school. Details of the Key Contact or who to speak to about concerns should also be noted.

### 9.2 Referral to Other Services

Parents/carers should know that they can refer their child for counselling support and that it should be arranged in consultation with the Key Contact. Parents/carers should be aware that sessions will only be taken forward if the young person agrees to engage in the process. The wish to continue with counselling will be confirmed by the counsellor at the outset of every session.

Parents/carers should also be informed that school staff may make referrals and that young people can self-refer to the service.

### 9.3 Consent

Parents/carers should be informed about the school's policy on consent and on how and when consent will be sought.

Parents/carers should also know that there are specific situations and circumstances when a young person can decide to seek counselling in their own right. While parents/carers may state that they do not wish their child to access counselling or to have counselling without their knowledge, there is a legal basis for allowing a young person to make that decision.

### 9.4 Legal Position: The 'Gillick' Competent

The legal position was clarified by a judgement in the House of Lords in the case of Gillick versus West Norfolk and Wisbech AHA and DHSS in 1985. The clarification known as the 'Fraser Guidelines' set out the criteria that should be met before a service is offered to a young person below age 16 without parental consent. The key factors which must be considered for access to counselling are:

- maturity of the young person;
- sufficient intelligence and understanding to enable the young person to understand what is being proposed, i.e. counselling;
- sufficient intelligence and understanding of the consequences of the proposed action; and
- the potential deterioration in mental health if access to counselling is not provided



The decision regarding 'Gillick competence' is likely to be made after an initial session to determine if counselling is an appropriate response for the young person, taking into consideration their circumstances. Where a young person is judged to be 'Gillick competent, the ICSS counsellor must respond appropriately.

#### **9.5 Confidentiality**

Parents/carers must be made aware that the content of counselling sessions remains confidential between the counsellor and the young person unless the welfare or safety of the young person is considered to be at risk of significant harm. The counsellor may, with the young person's agreement, provide parents/carers or school staff with a general progress report.

#### **9.6 Complaints**

Parents/carers should know that there is a procedure to deal with any complaints about the service provided and how it can be initiated. This information should be included in an information leaflet provided by the school and should be mentioned in counselling awareness raising sessions with parents/carers.

## 10. COVID-19 GUIDANCE FOR ICSS PROVIDERS & SCHOOLS

*As the COVID-19 situation is ever changing this guidance is subject to review in line with updated PHA, scientific and government advice.*

The ICSS Contract Specification for Post Primary Schools (BSF-18-007) and Post Primary Aged Pupils in Special Schools (BSF-18-019) states that Providers must have a contingency plan in place to ensure continuity of the service.

During the COVID-19 lockdown a contingency plan for the continuity of the ICSS for post primary aged pupils attending mainstream and special schools was developed by the EA in conjunction with the ICSS Providers and implemented in a timely manner.

Counselling sessions were provided for young people via telephone or secure online video calling and Drop-Ins were provided via telephone.

As part of the Education Restart and in preparation for the return of counselling on school premises it is important that the school counsellor and the school key contact meet to discuss the ICSS arrangements for counselling young people and the completion of a risk assessment. This meeting can also allow for the planning of weekly meetings between the counsellor and key contact which must take place as part of the ICSS contract.

ICSS Providers/school counsellor and school key contact must ensure that the following guidelines are followed:

### **10.1 Adherence to Public Health Guidance**

Ensure that all school counsellors are aware of the current PHA advice [public health advice](#) and as the lockdown guidance changes, update any procedures as appropriate.

### **10.2 Complete a risk assessment of the counselling facilities and arrangements**

The school counsellor in partnership with the key contact should conduct a risk assessment of the counselling room and create a procedure checklist to mitigate the risk of infection before, during and after seeing pupils.

### **10.3 School Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of the school that:

- The counselling room allows for social distancing of two metres or at least one metre with mitigation i.e. wearing of face visors;
- The counselling room has, if possible, a window which can be opened to air the room during and between counselling sessions;
- Soft furnishings are avoided where possible as all surfaces will need to be wiped down in readiness for the next counselling session;
- If the counselling room is a shared space ensure that other people are applying appropriate measures and there's no risk that any of these will be compromised;
- ICSS providers have their own policies and procedures for maintaining the hygiene of their equipment e.g. computer, laptops, mobile phones etc;

- Even if the two metre distance is maintained, both the counsellor and pupil may be at increased risk due to the face to face position and prolonged exposure of a counselling session. The School Key Contact and Counsellor could consider:
  - Can social distancing be maintained?
  - If social distancing can be maintained, could the risk to both the counsellor and pupil be reduced through the use of face coverings? However, consideration must be given regarding the possible effect on the therapeutic relationship of wearing a face covering.
  - If social distancing cannot be maintained would the safest option be to continue to work remotely by telephone or online? If this option is considered the ICSS Providers should share their safeguarding procedures with the school.

#### **10.4 School Counsellor Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of the school counsellor to:

- Not present at a school if they feel unwell;
- Sign in on arrival to the school at all times;
- Leave all unnecessary bags, coats and other materials not essential to the counselling session in their car;
- Wash or sanitise their hands on entering the school premises and before and after each counselling session;
- Carry their own wipes and hand sanitiser;
- Use hand sanitiser if there are no handwashing facilities near the counselling room;
- Avoid hand-shaking or any physical contact with pupils;
- Ensure that the pupil washes or sanitised their hands before, during and after counselling sessions as appropriate;
- Have their own tissues so they can practice the recommended routine “catch it, bin it, kill it”;
- Practicing social distancing. Keep at least two metres away from pupils or at least one metre with mitigation, i.e. wearing of face covering (particularly during extended periods, i.e. over 10 minutes);
- Leave time between counselling sessions to air the room (open door and window if available) and clean objects and surfaces that are touched regularly particularly in areas of high use such as door handles;
- Follow their ICSS Providers policies and procedures for maintaining the hygiene of their own equipment and resources e.g. wipe down all materials, equipment and resources before and during the counselling session as appropriate.

#### **10.5 Guidance for Pupils**

It is the responsibility of the school key contact to inform pupils about the points below and the school counsellor to remind pupils as appropriate:

- Inform pupils about their responsibilities to ensure that the counselling environment is safe by:
  - Washing their hands before and after the counselling session;
  - Using hand sanitiser if there are no handwashing facilities near the counselling room;
  - Avoiding hand-shaking or any physical contact with the counsellor;
  - Having their own tissues so they can practice the recommended routine “catch it, bin it, kill it”;
  - Practicing social distancing. Keep at least two metres away from the counsellor (particularly during extended periods, i.e. over 10 minutes) and

- Not attending a counselling session if they feel unwell. Inform the school key contact who will keep the counsellor updated.

## **10.6 Hygiene Routines – School Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of the school to:

- Ensure, if possible that there are handwashing facilities near the counselling room for the pupils and counsellor to wash their hands before and after the counselling session;
- Provide hand sanitisers in any area where hand washing facilities are not readily available;
- Ask pupils to supply their own tissues;
- If tissues are being provided by the school for pupils, the school should provide small packets as one central box of tissues has the potential to spread infection;
- Ensure that there is a bin in the room and that it is emptied on a regular basis;
- Frequently clean objects and surfaces that are touched regularly particularly in areas of high use such as door handles.

## **10.7 Nature of Counselling Provided by the ICSS Providers**

Whilst it is intended that face to face counselling will resume this will be agreed in line with the risk assessment. A blended approach (both face to face and remote counselling) for counselling may be considered in some schools to meet the needs of the pupils.

The Education Authority must be informed, in writing, by the ICSS Provider, of such arrangements.

## **10.8 Confirmed COVID-19 Cases**

In the event that there is a confirmed positive COVID-19 case in the school or in the ICSS Providers organisation both the key contact and the school counsellor will:

- Inform the other party of the confirmed case;
- Follow the PHA's advice and contact tracing process.

The Education Authority must be informed, in writing, by the ICSS Provider if this occurs.

## **10.9 School closures due to COVID-19 outbreaks**

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues there is a potential for the development of clusters of cases in the community and positive cases in schools. If a school closes the Education Authority in conjunction with the ICSS Providers will continue to provide counselling for pupils. To ensure the continuity of the counselling service, remote counselling will be provided via telephone and online video calling for pupils.

In order that there is a seamless approach to school closures it is important to plan ahead and ensure that the ICSS Provider has the following information from schools:

- Name, email address and telephone contact details for the following school staff:
  - ❖ Principal
  - ❖ School Key Contact
  - ❖ Designated Teacher for Child Protection
- Schools will be obliged to inform pupils and parents of the changes to the counselling arrangements during school closures via social media, school app or texting service.

## 11. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS) endeavours to provide a service which meets high professional standards. Ensuring that standards are maintained and revised, when appropriate, requires an effective and responsive system for dealing with any concerns or complaints from pupils, parents or schools' staff.

All providers are required, as part of their formal contract, to have a complaints procedure and to make this available to those schools where they are responsible for making counselling provision. The complaints procedure should be part of the arrangements agreed with a school. All specimen information leaflets about ICSS for use with pupils, parents and schools' staff make reference to a complaints procedure. At the outset of a counselling intervention the procedure will be explained to a pupil.

### 11.1 Complaints about Service Provision

The contract for counselling services between the EA and providers establishes the requirements for provision at school level. The ICSS Information Sheet for each school sets out the details of the service which will be available and the procedure to be followed if there is a complaint about any aspect of the agreed provision. The Plan should include a named person who will deal with complaints and their contact details. This will normally be the School Principal or the Key Contact and the ICSS Provider.

### 11.2 Procedure

Complaints should be raised directly by either the Principal/Key Contact with the ICSS Provider's named contact.

The ICSS Provider Contact should deal with the complaint and report back to the Principal/Key Contact within 5 working days of receipt.

If the response is unsatisfactory or the matter is not resolved within 5 working days, the Principal/ Key Contact should refer the complaint to the ICSS EA Contract Manager for action. The focus for action at this stage will be on compliance with the contract.

### 11.3 Complaints about Professional Practice

All counsellors are required to practice within the standards set by their professional body. The Provider has a responsibility to ensure these are maintained, through supervision, line management and continuous professional development. The Provider also has a responsibility to ensure that strategies and techniques used by their counsellors are appropriate for use with young people. Regardless of the following procedure, anyone who has a concern or complaint about a counsellor's professional practice can raise it directly with the relevant professional body.

#### **11.4 Procedure**

If a pupil, parent/carer or member of staff makes a complaint about the counselling practice or behaviour of a counsellor the Key Contact will explain the complaints procedure and confirm that a formal complaint is to proceed. The Key Contact will prepare a written statement of the complaint and seek consent from the person making the complaint before proceeding.

The Principal should be advised of the complaint. Where the complaint is made by a named pupil(s) then the parents should be informed of the position by the Principal, in line with the school's consent policy and the wishes of the pupil.

The Principal/Key Contact should send the written complaint to the Provider and copy it to the ICSS Contract Manager. The parents of the pupil should be advised of the position as appropriate.

The Provider will carry out an internal review in line with their complaints procedure. The nature of the complaint and the facts will be established from both the complainant and the counsellor.

A written report should be prepared by the Provider and issued within 20 days of receipt of the complaint to the Principal/Key Contact and copied to the EA Contract Manager.

#### **11.5 Independent Review**

If the outcome of the report from the Provider is not satisfactory, then the EA Contract Manager should be contacted. The EA Contract Manager will meet with the Principal, Key Contact and the complainant to clarify the grounds for the dissatisfaction and to establish if an independent review of the Provider's investigation is required. Advice will be sought from the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) or other professional body if required.

The Terms of Reference for an independent review will be agreed with the complainant.

The EA will appoint a person to conduct the independent review.

#### **11.6 Complaints of Child Abuse**

If an allegation of child abuse is made against the counsellor, it should be treated as a complaint against a member of staff and reported to the Principal immediately, in accordance with Child Protection Policies.

The Principal should establish the facts of the alleged behaviour and determine whether a referral should be made to the police/social services or the allegation treated as a disciplinary matter such as poor professional conduct.

A referral to the police/social services should be made in line with agreed procedures. The Principal when making the referral should tell the police/social services that the counselling provider will be advised and the facts of the allegation will be passed on. The decision to suspend the counsellor from working in schools is a matter for the provider and will be made in consultation with the police/social services.

If the complaint is considered to be of a disciplinary nature, the counselling provider should be advised as soon as this decision is made and the Principal should provide the details in written form.

### **11.7 Monitoring Complaints**

The EA Contract Manager, as part of the overall arrangements for quality assuring service provision, monitors complaints made about counsellors. Providers are asked to furnish details of any complaints received how they were dealt with and the outcomes.

If at any time an individual is unhappy with the response to his or her complaint they can approach the EA Contract Manager directly.

Where a school or counsellor receives a complaint relating to data protection this must be forwarded to the EA Contract Manager:

**Sheila Gamble**  
**EA Contract Manager**  
**Independent Counselling Service for Schools**

**Email: [sheila.gamble@eani.org.uk](mailto:sheila.gamble@eani.org.uk)**

## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1**

**ICSS Information Sheet**

### **Appendix 2**

**General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)**

### **Appendix 3**

**Sample Letter and Frequently Asked Questions For Parents/Carers**

### **Appendix 4**

**Sample Information For School Staff**

### **Appendix 5**

**Sample Questions & Answers For Pupils**

### **Appendix 6**

**ICSS Pupil Referral Form**

### **Appendix 7**

**Counselling Evaluation Form (Strengths & Difficulties)**

### **Appendix 8**

**Counselling Evaluation Form – YP CORE**



# ICSS Information Sheet

APPENDIX 1

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel No: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Role	Nam	Telephone	Email Details
Principal			
Key Contact			
Deputy Key			
Designated Teacher			
Counsellor			
Counselling Provider			
Out of Hours Contact Details			

### Counselling Service Availability

Agreed Day	
Time	
Room No	

### Referral Arrangements

Referral Source	Agreed Procedure
Self-Referral	
School Referral	
Parent/Carer Referral	
Other	

### School Policies/Information Provided To Counsellor

Policy Documents	Received
Child Protection	
Discipline/Anti Bullying	
Use of Internet/Mobile Phones	
Parental Consent	

Information Provided	Received
School holidays	

### Review of Service Provision

The operation of the counselling service within the school should be reviewed annually. A report from the counselling provider will be made available in \_\_\_\_\_ each year to facilitate this process.

### General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

In May 2018 GDPR became legislation. This regulation does not represent a fundamental change to many of the rights that children had over their personal data under the Data Protection Act 1998. The same underlying key data protection principles apply albeit enhanced and amended.

GDPR applies to personal data in the counsellor's notes and records. Personal data is any information that relates to an identified or identifiable living individual. Whilst pseudonymised data can help reduce privacy risks by making it more difficult to identify individuals, it is still personal data. GDPR is therefore also relevant to all other systems and types of notes and records including those linked by a reference code. Only information which is truly anonymous is not covered by GDPR.

When processing personal data, each ICSS provider must ensure that counsellors comply with their obligations under any data protection legislation from time to time in force in the UK including the Data Protection Act 2018 (or any successor legislation) and GDPR (or any other directly applicable European Union regulation relating to privacy).

Counsellors have an opportunity, when complying with GDPR, to demonstrate fundamental ethical principles such as transparency and openness (1). Use of a privacy notice at the contracting stage of ICSS provides an opportunity to ensure that anyone accessing school counselling is aware of their rights in relation to data held on them including the right to be forgotten. Each ICSS provider must ensure that their staff understand and can apply GDPR as is appropriate.

In the event that there is a breach of confidentiality, school counsellors must be open with their young clients and do their best to minimise any risk to clients or others arising from their actions (2). Each ICSS provider must ensure that they have appropriate data breach internal reporting, investigation and assessment procedures in place and that their staff understand and can apply such procedures so that personal data breaches are reported to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) when required under GDPR.

Under Data Protection law there is reference to consent being required from an individual with parental responsibility, if a child is under 13, but it is important to note this refers to online services and that GDPR also states that the consent of the holder of parental responsibility should not be necessary in the context of preventative counselling services offered directly to a child (3). This response is reinforced by the ICO in its guidance on children (4).

Where children have the capacity to give consent to counselling, the Gillick criteria will continue to apply, resulting in consent from those with parental responsibility not being required.

It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that pupils and parents are provided with a privacy notice which explains the extent to which personal data will be collected and processed in the delivery of counselling services, and the measures in place to protect privacy.

Counselling providers must provide schools with support in the creation of privacy notices where required.

Where a school or counsellor receives a complaint relating to data protection this must be forwarded to the EA Contract Manager.

There are still elements of GDPR which are not clear and full clarity will only evolve over the next few years as more guidance is produced by the ICO

School counsellors must always be mindful that the welfare of the child remains their priority at all times.

References:

1. British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions, Lutterworth, BACP 2018.
2. British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy, Private Practice Journal, March 2019, Lutterworth.
3. European Parliament and Council EU General Data Protection Regulation (Recital 38 and Article 8) (Online) EUR-Lex 2016.
4. Information Commissioner's Office, Children and the GDPR, ICO 2018.

**NB: The Information Commissioner's Office provides further guidance on children and GDPR 2018.**

## APPENDIX 3

### SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS/CARERS

Dear Parent,

Young people today are faced with many pressures as they continue to develop their coping skills and preparation for the adult world. Pupils experiencing stress or emotional problems find it difficult to engage with the education process and to reach their full potential.

Here at *(name of school)* we are committed to providing your son/daughter with every opportunity to reach their full potential during their time with us. While the support given through our pastoral care staff and heads of year is of the highest standard we are very conscious that some young people appreciate the opportunity to speak to an adult who is not directly involved with their education. Independent school based counselling provides this opportunity.

The Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS), is managed by the EA and funded by the Department of Education, The counselling support provided conforms to high professional standards and current best practice for school based counselling. Our current provider is *(provide details of counselling provider / name of counsellor)*.

A list of the frequently asked questions relating to school based counselling is attached to this letter. *If the school is hosting information sessions for parents/carers provide details.*

The counselling service will be responsive to pupils' needs and will operate as an integral part of the school's pastoral care provision. We will work with the counselling providers to deliver this service.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

## **INDEPENDENT COUNSELLING SERVICE FOR SCHOOLS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – PARENTS AND CARERS**

### **What is counselling?**

Counselling provides an opportunity to talk in confidence to a qualified Counsellor about any issues/concerns. The issues raised will depend on the individual, but common themes are stress, relationships, bereavement or traumatic events.

### **Who are the Counsellors?**

They are a team of professionally qualified and experienced people who have experience working with children and young people. Counsellors are trained to listen without judging and to help people sort out their thoughts and feelings about whatever is concerning them.

### **Why do we need a Counsellor in school?**

Few of us are able to work well when we are stressed or unhappy. The impact of distressing or difficult situations can be felt even more acutely by young people than by adults. If pupils are able to receive emotional support from a qualified professional they will have greater opportunity to fulfil their potential.

### **Where and when does it take place?**

A small, private room is made available in school during the day. Sessions can last up to fifty minutes and appointment times are varied so that time is not lost from any one subject. Counselling may last for just a few sessions or be longer term. The need is reviewed regularly between counsellor and pupil.

### **Is it confidential?**

A key feature of the counselling service is that information is treated confidentially. Counselling is a time when it is alright to talk about concerns without fear of them being discussed elsewhere. This includes not discussing the counselling work with parents, unless the pupil requests or gives consent to this. This can be hard for parents/carers to accept at times, but ensuring the confidentiality of the work is crucial for establishing trust so that pupils feel confident to speak openly and freely about what is concerning them.

However, if a pupil appears to be at risk of significant harm it may be appropriate to seek help from other agencies to keep them safe. The Counsellor will discuss this with the pupil first.

All Counsellors receive supervision of their work to ensure the quality of their practice, and these sessions involve the anonymous presentation of casework. At no time will the pupil's name appear on paperwork.

### **What if I don't want my child to receive counselling?**

If your child requests counselling and is able to understand what is involved in the process, then they have the right to access counselling. You cannot deny them this right. The Counsellor, however, would prefer to have your support for the work and is always happy to talk with you about any concerns that you may have about the idea of counselling.

### **What if my child refuses to have Counselling?**

The decision about whether or not to take up the offer of counselling is entirely voluntary for young people just as it would be for an adult.

### **Can I support the Counselling work?**

Yes, and this is welcomed. Experience shows that the most helpful thing a parent or carer can do is to show an acceptance of counselling as a normal and useful activity, and to show an interest if their child wishes to talk about it, but not to press them if they do not. Counsellors acknowledge that this is not an easy task, and it is quite natural for parents/carers to feel anxious about what may be being said in the sessions.

It is hoped that talking with a Counsellor will lead to greater openness, but you may need to allow a little time for this to happen.

### **If my child wants to see a Counsellor does that mean I am failing as a parent?**

Absolutely not! We all experience occasions when it feels hard to speak to those closest to us about things which are bothering us. Often this can be because we do not want to worry those we love best, or because we want help thinking things through with someone unbiased and removed. The Counsellor will not be judging you or your child, but looking to help them find their way through whatever is troubling them.

### **How are referrals made to the Counselling Service?**

Referrals are made through the school's pastoral care system but the request may come from you, your child or a teacher. If a teacher makes the request we expect them to speak with the pupil first about why it may be a good idea. An initial session can be held with the young person to determine if counselling is an appropriate support in their circumstances.

### **Evaluation and Feedback**

After the counselling has finished your child will be encouraged to give feedback. If there is any cause for complaint, you or your child are welcome to contact the Counsellor, the Counselling Provider or the ICSS Contract Manager who will try to resolve any issues of concern.

Counselling is not compulsory and a pupil may choose whether or not to attend. School counselling is not a disciplinary measure and must not be used as such.

### **Professional standards and Data Protection**

All personal information will be held securely and managed in line with GDPR requirements. ICSS counsellors deliver the service according to the ethical framework for good practice of a professional body such as the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and the Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC). Supervision and record keeping (within data protection guidelines), evaluation forms and complaints procedures are all within the code of their professional organisation.

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **SAMPLE INFORMATION FOR SCHOOL STAFF**

The Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS) operates as an integral part of a schools' pastoral care provision to support the emotional health and wellbeing of the pupil. This requires a collaborative and co-operative partnership from all areas within the school.

A named counsellor is assigned to each school and should be available at the same time each week. The Senior Management Team will introduce the nominated Counsellor to staff. The Counsellor will promote an understanding of the counselling process and how it can be used to support pupils. This may be done at general staff meetings, in small groups or through informal contact in the staff room.

At the heart of the counselling service is one to one therapeutic counselling provided for pupils. If you feel that a pupil could benefit from the service you should discuss this with them. The approach values the pupil and respects his/her right to be involved in decisions.

If you are unsure whether to refer a pupil for counselling it may be helpful to discuss concerns with the school Counsellor in order to clarify the most appropriate way forward. Once you are clear that a referral is appropriate, please speak with the Key Contact in your school.  
Contract Manager.

If you want to know more about the service, a copy of the ICSS Handbook is available from the Key Contact.

## APPENDIX 5

### SAMPLE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS FOR PUPILS

#### **What's counselling about?**

Sometimes we all have problems that are worrying. Think of a confusing jigsaw when all of the pieces are difficult to match together. Talking about a problem in counselling is like sorting out the pieces so that we can build a picture that makes more sense to us.

#### **What happens in counselling?**

Counselling gives you the opportunity to talk in private about anything which is worrying you. The counsellor will not take sides or tell you what to do or how to live your life, but they will help you to look at choices and encourage you to make your own decisions.

#### **Who are the Counsellors?**

They are a team of professionally qualified and experienced people who have experience working with children and young people. Counsellors are trained to listen without judging and to help people sort out their thoughts and feelings about whatever is concerning them.

#### **Where will counselling take place?**

Counselling will take place in a room set aside by the school. This room will be a safe place where no one will be able to listen in to what you are telling the counsellor.

Sessions can last up to 50 minutes and appointment times should be varied so that time is not lost from the same subject.

#### **When is counselling available?**

Your counsellor is \_\_\_\_\_ and he/she will be in the school on \_\_\_\_\_ mornings.

#### **How do I get to see the counsellor?**

You can see the counsellor by talking to one of your teachers, self-referring by using the post box in the reception area or asking your parent or carer to arrange an appointment.

#### **Is counselling Confidential?**

What you say in counselling is not repeated to others without your permission, unless there are very serious concerns about your safety or another person's safety. This will be explained to you at the initial meeting with the counsellor.

#### **Do my parents/carers need to know?**

Counselling works best when you are able to tell your parents and they can support you. If you want to have counselling without your parents knowing your school will decide if you can do this. This decision is based on how well you understand what counselling is about and the consequences of not telling your parents. This is known as being 'Gillick' competent.



CONFIDENTIAL

Independent Counselling Service for Schools  
Pupil Referral Form

**Section 1: Pupil Details**

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Referral: \_\_\_\_\_

Pupil's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age/Year Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Pupil ID No: \_\_\_\_\_ Male/Female: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 2: Referral Details**

Has this pupil been referred to counselling before? Yes/No: \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please give details: \_\_\_\_\_

Key Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of referrer if different: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for referral: \_\_\_\_\_

Has this referral been discussed with young person? Yes/No: \_\_\_\_\_

Are they happy to attend counselling? Yes/No: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 3: Background Information**

Details of action already taken by school, if applicable:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parents/Carer informed of referral? Yes/No: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Does pupil have a statement of special education need? Yes/No: \_\_\_\_\_

Other agency involvement: e.g. CAMHS; GP; Social Service?

Any other relevant information: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please note information on this form may be shared with the pupil.

CONFIDENTIAL

**Counselling Evaluation Forms - Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire**

For each item please mark the box for Not True (NT), Somewhat True (ST) or Certainly (CT). Please give your answers on the basis of the child's behaviour over the last six months or this school year. To be completed at beginning and end of counselling process.

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Male / Female \_\_\_\_\_

	Not True NT	Somewhat True ST	Certainly True CT
Considerate of other people's feelings			
Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long			
Often complains of headaches, stomach aches, sickness			
Shares readily with other children (pencils, treats etc.)			
Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers			
Rather solitary, tends to play alone			
Generally obedient, usually does what adults request			
Many worries, often seems worried			
Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill			
Constantly fidgeting or squirming			
Has at least one good friend			
Often fights with other children or bullies them			
Often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful			
Generally liked by other children			
Easily distracted, concentration wanders			
Nervous or clingy in new situations easily loses confidence			
Kind to younger children			
Often lies or cheats			
Picked on or bullied by other children			
Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers, etc)			
Thinks things out before acting			
Steals from home, school or elsewhere			
Gets on better with adults than with other children			
Many fears, easily scared			
Sees tasks through to the end good attention span			

Do you have any comments or concerns? \_\_\_\_\_

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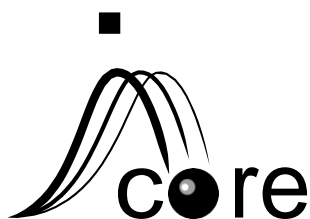
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CORE-YP

Assistance given?   
(If yes, please tick)

Site ID	<input type="text"/>	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>
Client ID	<input type="text"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
Therapist ID	<input type="text"/>	Age	<input type="text"/>
Sub codes	<input type="text"/>	Stage Completed	
Date form given	<input type="text"/>	S Screening	
		R Referral	
		A Assessment	
		F First Therapy Session	Stage
		P Pre-therapy (unspecified)	<input type="text"/>
		D During Therapy	
		L Last Therapy Session	Episode
		X Follow up 1	<input type="text"/>
		Y Follow up 2	

These questions are about how you have been feeling over the last week. Please read each question carefully. Think how often you have felt like that in the last week and then put a cross in the box you think fits best.

*Please use a dark pen (not pencil) and mark clearly within the boxes.*

**Over the last week...**

	Not at all	Only Occasionally	Some times	Often	Most or all of the time
1. I've felt edgy or nervous	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I haven't felt like talking to anyone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I've felt able to cope when things go wrong	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I've thought of hurting myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. There's been someone I felt able to ask for help	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. My thoughts and feelings distressed me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. My problems have felt too much for me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. It's been hard to go to sleep or stay asleep	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I've felt unhappy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I've done all the things I wanted to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Thank you for answering these questions**

