

Counselling Policy

Signed:

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1. Introduction

Counselling is an intervention that children or young people can voluntarily enter into if they want to explore, understand and overcome issues in their lives which may be causing them difficulty, distress and/or confusion. A counselling relationship has identified boundaries and an explicit contract between the young person, counsellor and where appropriate, parent or carer.

Good mental and emotional wellbeing is an integral part of children and young people's holistic development. When this development is inhibited counselling can be an effective and important resource. The aims of counselling are to assist the child or young person to achieve a greater understanding of themselves and their relationships to their world, to create a greater awareness and utilisation of their personal resources to build their resilience and to support their ability to address problems and pursue meaningful goals.

In-school counselling is always at the request of the client and no one can be "sent" for counselling. Counselling in Schools: A blueprint for the future (DFE 2016) is essential reading for all Counsellors working on behalf of Collective Vision Trust. As well as setting out the ethical standards, it provides an explanation of many aspects of the service provided by the school, to enable counsellors to offer the most effective support.

Counselling is an intervention offered as one of our student social emotional and mental health interventions and this policy should be read in conjunction with our Social, Emotional and Mental Health and Policy and Safeguarding Policy. School counselling is not an emergency service, if immediate help is required this will be signposted by the school Safeguarding Team in line with presenting need and risk.

2. The Role of a School Counsellor

Collective Vision Trust employs a school counsellor directly, Deb Fox, who is based at Chesterton Community Sports College. She can provide services at primary school if required. Individual schools can also buy in counselling services from external counsellors if required. This policy covers both directly employed school counsellors and external counsellors that the school arranges.

As a Trust we employ counsellors to help address the emotional needs that young people can have in response to experiences such as family breakdown, bereavement, loss, family and peer relationship difficulties, anxiety and bullying. Counselling can be an effective source of support for these students, enabling them to function better both in and outside school, enhancing their resilience and giving them resources to manage any future difficulties.

Counselling at Collective Vision Trust is part of the pastoral support within the school and is an onsite response for those students needing the additional expertise that counselling brings. Usually the Counsellor will initially provide 6 one to one counselling sessions, once a week for 50 minutes per client, this will then be reviewed. It may however be more appropriate to offer 30 minute sessions for some individuals with particular SEN needs (eg ADHD) this will be decided on a case by case basis as advised by SEN or pastoral team.

Associate Counsellors

In addition to the School Counsellor, there will be at times a Student Counsellor(s) on placement at the school, who are attending a recognised university or college course in Counselling. They will also be in a position to offer 6 one to one counselling sessions, once a week for 50 mins. They will work to the recognised ethical framework, British Association of Counselling Professionals (BACP) or National Counselling and Psychotherapy Society (NCPS), and they will be mentored and regularly supervised by the School Counsellor. Associate counsellors wishing to use clients for written case studies for university assessments, need to discuss the matter with both the Mental Health and Wellbeing Coordinator and Headteacher before any consent can be given.

Certificates

Counsellors are responsible for providing Collective Vision Trust with copies of renewed certificates of their DBS checks, professional indemnity insurance and membership of their governing body. Copies should be given to the school office manager annually.

Other Professionals

In order to reduce any potential conflicts of therapeutic effort, the School Counsellor and Associate Counsellors will not provide counselling to young people who are currently in receipt of other therapeutic support from another agency, i.e. CAMHs.

Supervision

All counsellors need to engage in regular clinical supervision to maintain and monitor standards and to comply with their ethical code. School counsellors should undertake counselling supervision with a supervisor who has experience and understanding of children and young people and of the school setting. Associates are responsible for making their own arrangements for supervision, in accordance with their governing body's minimum requirements.

Private Work

Where there is a need or wish on the young person's part to move on to private counselling, Collective Vision Trust expects the counsellor to provide signposting to the BACP and NCPS register in order for the parent to select the appropriate counsellor.

Statement of Good Practice and Confidentiality

The counsellor must be a member of a governing professional body, BACP or NCPS and be familiar with and work to the guidelines of the ethical framework. Any breaches will be dealt with through the complaints procedures of the members' governing body. Counsellors must notify Collective Vision Trust if they are the subject of a complaint to their professional body. In the instance of risk to self or other, including disclosure of terrorism, sexual, physical and emotional abuse, confidentiality may be broken and the named Designated Safeguarding Lead shall be contacted. This will be outlined to the young person from the outset.

Our directly employed counsellor complies with this by being a member of National Counselling and Psychotherapy Society (NCPS).

3. Administration

Appointments, cancellations and all relevant paperwork will be organised directly by the school counsellor, or (for external counsellors), the person designated by the Headteacher or Head of School. It will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Counsellors should have in place arrangements for SLT to be notified if they are suddenly unwell/unavailable and they should always be notified when individuals are planning to be away and unavailable to take referrals.

4. Referral

Secondary School

Referral by staff can only come through relevant members of the pastoral team through a counselling intervention referral form. Any member of staff may approach one of the people to request a referral for a student. Students may self-refer, by speaking to their pastoral team, or speak to a trusted adult who will support the student to access support. Where this occurs, the Pastoral Team will be informed. All referrals are triaged fortnightly by Deb Fox and her line manager. During this meeting outcomes may be a counselling intervention agreed, an alternative SEMH intervention is agreed or further signposting to external services. This is dependent on the presenting needs of the student. Consent from the parent/s or carers should be sourced for anyone under the age of 14 by the relevant member of the pastoral team.

On receipt of the consent, once availability allows, the school counsellor will make the first appointment with the child and assess their suitability for counselling.

Parents and carers or outside agencies who feel a child would benefit from counselling should discuss this with their relevant head of year/form teacher and then they would fill in a referral form which would go directly to Deb Fox, SLT and where appropriate, Deryth Machin as DSL.

Primary School

Decisions to refer students for counselling services will be for the Executive Headteacher, Headteacher or Head of School to make for external counselling services. In an extreme event where there was a specific case that the Headteacher or Head of School wished to use the directly employed counsellor they would discuss this with the CEO who would make the decision based around the particular circumstances.

Consent

Consent for students under 14 years old is gained from the parents/carers. Once this has been received, an initial assessment appointment will be made between the School Counsellor and the young person.

For a young person to be eligible to receive counselling, s/he must understand the nature of counselling and be able to make a valid verbal counselling contract, including the ability to understand the principle of confidentiality and the need for this to be overridden where the young person is alleged to be at risk of harm from self or other.

Consent may be given by the child *without* the parent/carers' involvement, if the child is deemed Gillick competent.

As guidance for Gillick competency, the Counselling Service at Collective Vision Trust will take the following into consideration:

- 1. The young person has explicitly requested that their parent/carers have no knowledge about them receiving therapy.*
- 2. The Service has done everything it can to persuade the young person to involve their parent/carers.*
- 3. Documentation clearly states why the young person does not want their parent/carers to be informed.*
- 4. The young person understands the advice/information they have been given and have sufficient maturity to understand what is involved and what the implications are. They can comprehend and process information relating to counselling.*
- 5. The young person can communicate their decision and reasons for it.*
- 6. This is a rational decision based on their own religious belief or value system.*
- 7. The young person is making the decision for themselves and not being coerced or influenced by another person?*
- 8. The service must be confident in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the young person.*
- 9. Without the service, would the young person's physical or emotional health be likely to suffer?*

If the Service is able to answer YES to these questions, then this will enable the Service to believe the young person is competent to make their own decisions about consenting to and taking part in the counselling process.

Initial Assessment

After a referral has been made, an initial assessment will be completed by the school counsellor or other members of the Pastoral team. The school counsellor will then refer the young person if appropriate to an Associate Counsellor, or arrange an appointment to see the young person at a mutually agreeable time in school hours.

In primary schools the parents will also be involved in the initial assessment.

Session Allocation

Appointments are made on a weekly basis for a maximum of 6 sessions. Any extension to these sessions is through discussion between the pupil, the counsellor and relevant pastoral staff. Each session will last for 50 minutes. Appointments will be made to suit the timetable of the young person, so as not have a negative impact on their learning.

Confidentiality

Respecting the young person's privacy and confidentiality are fundamental requirements for keeping trust and respecting the young person's autonomy. The professional management of confidentiality concerns the protection of personally identifiable and sensitive information from unauthorised disclosure. Disclosure may be authorised by the young person's consent or the law. Any disclosures of a young person's confidences should be undertaken in ways that best protect the young person's trust and respect their autonomy.

Client consent is the ethically preferred way of resolving any dilemmas over confidentiality, but exceptional circumstances may prevent the counsellor from seeking client consent to a breach of confidence, due to the urgency and seriousness of the situation, for example, preventing the client causing serious harm to self or others. In such circumstances the counsellor has an ethical responsibility to act in ways which balance the client's right to confidentiality against the need to communicate with others. Counsellors should expect to be ethically accountable for any breach of confidentiality.

Confidential information about clients may be shared within teams:

1. where the client has consented or knowingly accepted a service on this basis;
2. the information can be adequately protected from unauthorised further disclosures;
3. the disclosure enhances the quality of service available to clients or improves service delivery.

Where counselling will take place

Counselling will take place in the allocated Counselling intervention spaces. A member of the office staff will mark the young person present when in attendance with the counsellor; overriding any absence marks a teacher may have made, for not being seen to attend a timetabled class.

Sharing Information

The counselling service will work in a multi-disciplinary way and communicate with school staff, other agencies and specialised services, whilst maintaining an appropriate level of confidentiality. Counsellors may find it necessary to liaise with, share information or refer the young person to another agency for further help. This should only happen with the young person's permission.

Diversity and Additional Learning Needs

Collective Vision Trust is committed to providing services to young people that take account of cultural differences and Additional Learning Needs. This includes disabled young people and lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual young people whose identity and experiences may not have been represented in the school setting.

5. Record Keeping

Attendance records are kept in accordance with the Data Protection policy (Data Protection Act 1998). Records are on school secure safeguarding systems. Statistical data will be collated on an annual basis and no student will be identified within the data collected.

Access to Records

The young person has a general right of access to educational records, as a 'data subject' set out by the DPA 1998, and this includes confidential counselling material. A parent/carer however does not have this right, and in accordance with Section 4(3) 6(1) of the DPA 1998, any disclosure or processing of such material 'is unwarranted in any particular case by reason of prejudice to the rights and freedoms or legitimate interests of the data subject' (i.e. the child concerned). The counselling service would consider any request against the child's wishes, to be undermining the child's own right to privacy and confidentiality.

Counselling records, including process notes, may be requested by the courts during hearings about the welfare of children. If the School Counsellor is given a court order to appear in court or produce their process notes, they may obtain legal advice so that they can make representations to the court in the appropriate manner, to limit disclosure of non-relevant sensitive client information.

Child Protection

If a counsellor has potential child protection concerns, this could lead to a breach of confidentiality in the interests of the child's safety. Therefore as part of the initial assessment, the counsellor will explain the procedures and possible consequences of involvement by other agencies, and seek the client's views and consent. Records kept will acknowledge if a young person is on the Child Protection Register and, therefore, any further disclosures of this nature will be reported on to the Designated Safeguarding Leads within the school.

Evaluation and Reporting

The relevant line manager and the school counsellor will meet regularly to review the service and address any areas of development.

Reporting to Trustees

An annual report outlining the progress of the service will be made available to the Board of Trustees. This will form part of the Headteachers' reports. In the case of the directly employed counsellor – this will be reported through the CCSC Headteacher report.

Complaints Procedure

In the first instance all complaints should be raised with the school following the Trust's complaints procedure which can be found on the school website. If necessary, complaints alleging a breach of professional standards will be dealt with in accordance with the procedures outlined by the NCPS.