

Independent Counselling Service for Schools



Practice Standards

March 2009

Independent Counselling Service for Schools **Standards**

Introduction

The Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS) provides access to independent, confidential Counselling for children and young people in schools. ICSS aims to build on existing pastoral support by contributing to the best possible start in life for pupils – reducing stress levels and promoting emotional health and wellbeing.

Counselling is a way of helping people through talking and listening. The young person is provided with the opportunity to express their feelings and thoughts about their problem so they can understand themselves and their situation better and therefore giving new ways of coping.

1. Partnerships with children and young people

- Pupils can only benefit if they want counselling. Counselling is voluntary and takes place with the agreement of the young person. This will be drawn up as an agreement between the young person and the councillor.
- Referrals may be made by the young person, parents or school personnel.
- The ICSS will ensure that all requests for the service receive a response with 5 working days.
- Young people actively work in partnership with practitioners in case planning, decision making, reviewing and evaluation. This will be agreed in a contract at the outset between the counsellor and the young person.
- Young people will be made to feel safe in the counselling session.
- The ICSS complaints procedure will be explained to all young people.

2. Involvement of Parents / Carers

- The involvement of parent / carers is recognised as representing best practice and is promoted in all work with young people. ICSS would encourage the young person to involve their parents.
- Should a young person not wish for information to be shared with their parent / carer an assessment and decision will be made by the service and if appropriate the School based on the young persons safety / well-being and the principles of Gillick Competency.

“As a general principle it is legal and acceptable for a young person to ask for confidential counselling without parental consent providing they are of sufficient understanding and intelligence”

(Gillick v West Norfolk AHA, House of Lords 1985)

3. Role of Schools

- Each school will establish with the counsellor a clear understanding of the purpose of the counselling service, its codes of practice and role within the school.
- Each school will agree its own arrangements for making referrals to the school counsellor, based on these guidelines. These will then be shared with all staff, parents and the young people. Implicit consent from parents must be sought by the school.
- It is the responsibility of the ICSS school counsellor and the Key Contact to work in partnership to meet the needs of young people who avail of the service.
- Schools will provide counsellors with a copy of the Schools Child Protection Policy and any other relevant pastoral care documents.
- Provide practical resources to support ICSS: -
 - Room that meets the specific need of counselling young people.
 - Secure lockable cabinet for confidential case records
 - Pigeon hole/post point as a point of contact between the ICSS and the school.
 - Access to a telephone for confidential calls
- It is appropriate for the Key Contact to keep a record of:
 - Pupils referred to the counsellor
 - Details of parental consent sought or obtained
 - The number of sessions attended up to end of counselling
 - Any further action required / agreed by school or other agencies

4. Confidentiality And Information Sharing

- The Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS) policy on confidentiality will be shared with the young person at the outset of any counselling.
- Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. The welfare of the young person will at all times take precedence over confidentiality.
- Counsellors will only discuss case details outside the service with the Key Contact, their Line manager or clinical supervisor or other

agencies should this be necessary i.e. in relation to a safeguarding issue.

- Counsellor will only disclose information obtained from the counselling relationship in the following exceptional circumstances:-
 - The young person requests that certain information is passed on
 - Where the Counsellor believes that the young person is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm.
 - Where young person's record is required for the purpose of an internal investigation within the Counselling Organisation.
- Disclosure with consent - Signed permission detailing the terms upon which the counsellor may disclose and to whom, will be logged in all instances of disclosure by consent. Where consent is not given this will be recorded.
- Designated Teacher/ Key Contact will be responsible for informing parents/carers if this is required.

5. Data Protection And Access To Personal Records

- The ICSS in partnership with the school need to keep records in order to provide an efficient and effective service to the young person. All records must be kept in a secure place within the school premises.
- All Counsellors must adhere to the Data Protection Act 1998 which covers manual notes kept in a systematic way identifying individuals, as well as those held on computer.
- Young people using the service will be advised of the right to access the papers at the beginning of counselling.
- Counselling session notes remain confidential and the responsibility of the counselling provider.
- It is appropriate for the Key Contact to keep a record of:
 - Pupils referred to the counsellor
 - Details of parental consent sought or obtained
 - The number of sessions attended up to end of counselling
 - Any further action required / agreed by school or other agencies

6. Child Protection Standards

All schools are required to have a child protection policy which complies with the current guidance from the Department of Education (currently Circular 1999/10). The policy sets out procedures to be used when there is a disclosure about child abuse or an allegation against a member of staff. All

ICSS Counsellors are bound by the child protection procedures as set out in DE Circular 1999/10.

- In establishing the ICSS in a school counsellors will be provided with a copy of the Schools Child Protection Policy and any other relevant pastoral care documents.
- Each counsellor will be required to undertake training in child protection facilitated by the Regional Child Protection Support Service for Schools.
- Any disclosure of a child protection issue must be passed to the Key Contact. The respect and dignity of the young person will be upheld throughout the disclosure.

7. Use of Volunteers and Students within the ICSS

- Students and Volunteers must not be used as the core counselling practitioners within the service in any school.
- The provider and the school must set out the process to be agreed if a student or volunteer are working in a school.

8. Line Management and Clinical Supervision

Line Management

- All school counsellors are required to access regular and ongoing line management as required by their employing body. Line managers have responsibility for the organisational aspects of the counsellor's work.
- Line management responsibilities and boundaries must be clear within any contract between the counsellor and employing organisation (DHSSPS Draft Counselling Standards 2006)

Clinical Supervision

- Clinical Supervisors must be experienced practitioners, competent in supervising the approach used by the counsellor.
- Counsellors should receive a minimum of 1½ hours clinical supervision per month, depending on the nature of the cases and experience of the counsellor.