



**Independent Counselling Service for Schools**  
**Operating Handbook**

**MARCH 2009**

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## **FOREWORD**

This Handbook has been designed to provide a road map for all those involved in developing independent counselling within their school community. Rather than being a definitive document it is one that will evolve as our school counselling service develops, new guidance / legislation is introduced and counselling becomes a regulated discipline.

The handbook draws on the experience of colleagues in England, Wales, Scotland and internationally from Australia and USA where counselling is an integrated part of school provision.

We are indebted to colleagues who have pioneered school counselling. This handbook reflects much of the experience of those working on the ground in the provision of independent counselling for pupils and reflects the views of young people and school's personnel who shared with us what they believe works best.

The following legislation, guidelines and documents underpin the information and guidance contained in this handbook:

- **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989**
- **The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003**
- **The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995**
- **The Children's Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1995**
- **Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Northern Ireland) Order 2003**
- **Co-Operating to Safeguard Children DHSSPS May 2003**
- **Safeguarding Board Regional Child Protection Guidelines (previously ACPC guidelines)**
- **Various reports from NICCY**
- **A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006 – 2016**
- **The Bamford Report**
- **Every School a Good School**
- **BACP 4<sup>th</sup> Edition Counselling in Schools 2006**

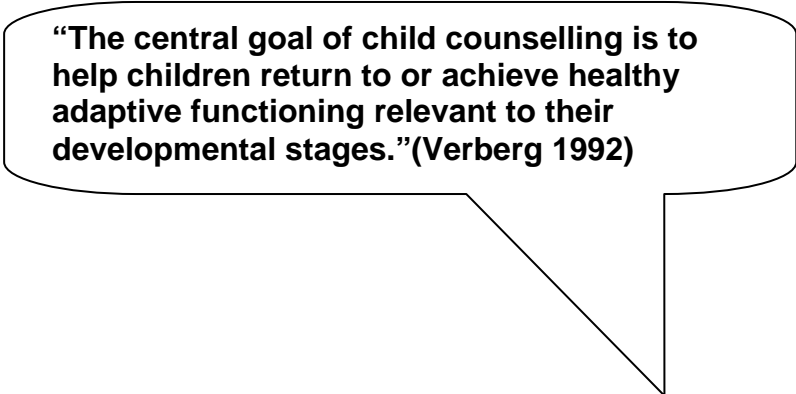
## 1. Background to the Service

Independent counselling support has been available to all grant aided post primary schools that choose to use it from the beginning of September 2007 on the basis of a half day per week. The service is funded by the Department of Education. Young people are able to self refer or may be referred by the school or a parent. Some 220 schools make regular use of the service.

The Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS) provides access to independent, confidential counselling for young people. It 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 well being. The ICSS compliments the Pupil and Emotional Health and Well Being Programme (PEHAW) currently being developed within our schools.

The counselling support provided conforms to the current best practice and professional standards for school based counselling, specifically in respect of counsellor qualifications, continuous professional development, supervision policy and safe working practices.

Counselling is a way of helping our young people through a process of talking listening and empowerment. The young person is provided with a safe place to express their feelings and thoughts about what they perceive to be an issue in their life. Counselling can help a young person to understand themselves and their situation better. It can give them new ways of coping with issues that cause them upset therefore increasing their capacity for learning.



**“The central goal of child counselling is to help children return to or achieve healthy adaptive functioning relevant to their developmental stages.”(Verberg 1992)**

The ICSS is provided under contractual arrangements by organisation(s) that have undergone a public tendering process. The service is delivered using standards and protocols based on good counselling practice within the organisational context of the school.

This handbook should be read alongside the Practice Standards for the Independent Counselling Service for Schools that issued with the tender documents dated February 2009. As the service develops this operating handbook will evolve and require amendments for example in the event of legislative changes ,counselling becomes a regulated profession and as we allow our provision to be influenced by the young people themselves.

**Appendix 1 contains a detailed rationale for the service.**

## 2. Operating Arrangements for Counselling Service in Schools

2.1 Counselling in schools is not a substitute for the existing pastoral care systems which operate in schools. Rather it is a service which compliments that which is already taking place in school.

2.2 The counselling service is independent, confidential and young person centred. Independence is an important aspect of this service, particularly when dealing with those pupils who may feel alienated from school. This does not prevent the service being seen as a supportive part of the school community.

2.3 Successful counselling is based on trust, self-motivation and commitment. It must be a voluntary activity and is therefore not part of the disciplinary procedures of schools.

2.4 While the counsellor is ultimately accountable to the young person, the nature of their work means that the counsellor will be accountable to the organisation which employs them, and to the school system in which they work. It is imperative to have in place operating arrangements, which are based on the welfare of the child being paramount.

2.5 In his book "Counselling Supervision, Theory Skills and Practice" Carroll points out that counsellors employed in organisations have responsibilities to those organisations that employ them as well as to individuals and the contextual situation in which they work. <sup>[2]</sup>

2.6 The BACP Good Practice Guidelines for counselling in schools 4<sup>th</sup> edition states that a school counsellor needs to be:

*"Aware of and sensitive to the different needs and demands that a school community imposes on clients and those who have responsibility for them."*

### What do we mean by counselling?

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<sup>[2]</sup> Carroll. C 1996, Counselling Supervision, Theory Skills and Practice. London: Cassell

2.7 It has been said that counselling is one of those words that everybody understands but no two people understand in precisely the same way. It is therefore necessary to emphasise certain conditions if counselling is to be effective as a helping process for pupils experiencing difficulties.

- Counselling is a specific activity

***The task of counselling is to give the client an opportunity to explore, discover and clarify ways of living more resourcefully and towards greater well-being.”<sup>1</sup>***

<sup>(1)</sup> British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy – Good Practice Guidance for Counselling in Schools 2006

- The counselling relationship by its nature is confidential
- The foundation of the counselling process is the relationship between counsellor and client in which the element of genuineness or authenticity is most basic to a relationship.
- Counselling is understood as a professional activity, the purpose of which is to help pupils with social, emotional and behavioural problems.

2.8 Counselling may be concerned with developmental issues, addressing and resolving specific problems, decision-making, coping with crisis, developing personal insight, working through conflict and improving relationships with others, whether at school or at home.

2.9 The peripatetic structure of the counselling service gives all school 's access to a flexible service which can adapt to the needs of individual schools.

### **3. Schools Responsibilities – See Standard 3**

3.1 The counsellor's main point of contact in the school will be an individual known as the **Key Contact**, this can be the designated teacher for child protection, the head of pastoral care or other teacher. Each school will nominate this staff member. It is important that the individual who carries out this role is seen as approachable by the young people and does not have any direct linkage

to the schools disciplinary policy. The ICSS Schools counsellor and the Key Contact will work in partnership to meet the needs of the young people who avail of the service.

3.2 Each school will work with the ICSS to establish a clear understanding of the purpose of the counselling service, its codes of practice and role within the school. It is good practice to set this information out in an Operating Plan with the school. Consideration will be given to each school's unique culture and contextual setting.

3.3 Each school will agree its own arrangements for making referrals to the school counsellor, based on these handbook guidelines. These will then be shared with all staff, parents and the young people. Implicit consent from parents must be sought by the school.

3.4 To ensure an effective service the school will need to provide:-

- Suitable facilities for the counsellor :
  - Room suitable for counselling young people, taking account of confidentiality, and safeguarding issues.
  - Secure lockable cabinet for confidential records
  - Post box - a point of contact between the ICSS and the school
  - Access to a telephone for confidential calls
- Access to the Key Contact to ensure he / she is available to meet the counsellor at an agreed time;
- The name of an individual to be the substitute Key Contact in the event of long term absence (more than a month).
- Notification and details of the number of sessions required should be given in advance to the counsellor by the Key Contact

3.5 The school and the counsellor will work together to establish:-

- a clear understanding of the purpose of the counselling service, its codes of practice, and how it might function in that school;
- a clear procedure for referring pupils;
- a respect for inter-professional boundaries;
- the need for on-going assessment through regular meetings with Key Contacts and as appropriate pastoral staff/year heads, class teachers;

### 3.6 Counsellors working to ICSS standards will:

- work within the school's child protection guidelines as set out in the relevant legislation and guidance;
- respect the ethos of the individual school;
- report all incidents of suspected or actual abuse to the designated child protection teacher.
- Work with and alongside other agencies in a collegial manner whilst maintaining appropriate levels of confidentiality

3.7 School staff will be introduced to the counsellor through an agreed pathway in each school. This may involve, but is not limited to, staff meetings and/or pastoral care meetings. Such meetings are ultimately determined by the school and agreed in consultation with school personnel.

## **4. Access to the ICSS**

All schools will be notified of the Independent Counselling Service for Schools by the Department of Education when new service providers are appointed. Service Providers will be expected to contact schools in their area to establish if they wish to avail of the service.

### **4.1 Partnerships with children and young people (See Standard 1)**

4.1.1 Pupils can only benefit if they want counselling. Counselling is voluntary and takes place with the agreement of the young person. This will be referenced in the contract established between the young person and the counsellor.

4.1.2 Referrals may be made by the young person, parents or school personnel.

4.1.3 User-friendly information will be displayed, and distributed as agreed to inform the school community of the service. A specimen information leaflet for children and young people is at Appendix 2.

4.1.4 A post-box or other referral system may be used as agreed by the school community. Where a post box is used, 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 pupil when the counsellor is not on the premises.

4.1.5 It is important that there is dialogue and agreement in respect of forms or other mechanisms used for referral with school staff.

4.1.6 The ICSS will ensure that all requests for the service receive a response within 5 working days. In the case of an emergency request from a school regarding an individual there should be a response within that school day.

4.1.7 Good practice dictates that at the beginning of a counselling relationship the young person and the school counsellor enter into a contract. This clearly sets out what boundaries exist in the context of a school-based counselling service. Young people actively work in partnership with practitioners in case planning, decision making, reviewing and evaluation. The young people will not be offered levels of confidentiality that cannot be kept. <sup>[3]</sup>

## **4.2 Parental / Carers Involvement (See Standard 2)**

4.2.1 If a parent/carer wishes their young person to seek counselling support this will happen in consultation with the Key Contact or head teacher, the child and the

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<sup>[3]</sup> Butler-Sloss-E 1998 Report of the Inquiry into Child Abuse in Cleveland 1987. CM 412 London HMSO

counsellor. A young person still retains the right to engage or not engage in counselling. A specimen information leaflet for parents/carers is attached.

4.2.2 A question constantly raised and which can present many ethical dilemmas is that of parental right to know their son/daughter is accessing counselling in the school environment.

4.2.3 While it is acknowledged that working in partnership with parents / carers can benefit the counselling relationship, there is the need for a clearly stated policy of a commitment to protecting counselling confidentiality, which sets definitive limits to parental involvement, decisively underpinned by both ethical and legal factors.

4.2.4 It is the counsellor's responsibility to explain to pupils clearly and periodically exactly what this means in practice. Pupils' welfare should be safeguarded and promoted, preferably with the young person's knowledge and consent.

*“Young people requiring counselling who have sufficient understanding and intelligence do not have to consult their parents, nor does the counsellor have to inform parents that counselling has taken place.”<sup>[4]</sup>*

4.2.5 The Fraser competency, previously known as the Gillick competency, sets out what a counsellor must do in seeking to consider the young person's capacity to access counselling without their parent(s)/carer(s) wishes.

4.2.6 Lord Scarman determined:

*“Parental right yields to the child's rights to make his own decisions when he reaches sufficient understanding and intelligence to be capable of making up his own mind on the matter requiring attention”<sup>[5]</sup>*

4.2.7 As this service is being offered in post-primary schools we must take account of these legal findings in the ICSS operating arrangements.

## **Informing Parents/Carers of the Service**

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<sup>[4]</sup> Legal judgements referenced in Mabey, J and Sorenson, B (1995) Counselling for young people Open University Press

<sup>[5]</sup> Gillick versus West Norfolk Wisbech authority. (House of Lords 1985 All England Report)

4.2.8 In all instances the welfare of the young person remains our paramount concern. Within our post-primary counselling service the following steps will help ensure there is no conflict between the parental rights and the young person's rights.

- Schools inform parents at the beginning of the counselling service of its existence and that an opportunity is given for them to opt in or out at this initial stage. Schools to date have used a standard letter to obtain implicit consent from parents.
- Parents are given opportunities to meet the counsellor both in person (at open nights, school concerts) and via school news-sheets.
- If a parent wishes to meet the counsellor long before any issue arises for their child, this could be arranged in the school.

4.2.9 If a child / young person requests counselling, then the school and the Counselling Service, together, can assess if he or she is "Gillick Competent". If this is deemed to be so, then they may access counselling without their parent's knowledge or consent.

4.2. 10 Key factors to be considered in the assessment of Fraser / Gillick Competency are:

- Maturity of the child or young person.
- Sufficient intelligence and understanding to enable him or her to understand what is being proposed, i.e. counselling.
- Sufficient intelligence and understanding of the consequences of his or her actions.
- What would happen if they didn't get help regarding a possible deterioration in their mental health?

### **4.3 Referral by School Staff**

4.3.1 School staff who wish to consider a referral must in the first instance discuss this with the young person involved. This approach values the young person and respects their right to be informed and involved in decisions concerning themselves. It is important to emphasise that counselling is not compulsory and a young person may choose not to continue counselling. Staff can encourage a self-referral or with a young person's permission seek an appointment via the Key Contact. A specimen information leaflet for school staff is at Appendix 4.

#### **4.4. Referral to Other Services**

4.4.1 After the initial assessment, or indeed during the agreed counselling sessions, it may become apparent that the young person requires referral to specialist services.

4.4.2 When required, referrals to other services will take place. Protocols used in this onward referral will be based on both existing and any new working in partnership guidance that becomes operational. **No onward referrals will take place without the Key Contact's involvement.**

### **5. Structure of Service**

#### **The Counselling Sessions**

5.1 The ICSS will provide an independent counsellor on-site in school, as agreed once a week, offering up to three counselling sessions. While the face to face session may last up to 50 minutes, details will be agreed with each school. Using this model ensures both staff and pupils swiftly become aware of the counsellor's availability. Morning appointments provide the opportunity for any issues of concern to be addressed and resolved before the end of the school day. Students will be given appointments which ensure no one subject is repeatedly missed during the counselling process.

5.2 Often issues raised in counselling by young people 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.

5.3 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.”*

5.4 This emphasises the need for any school counselling intervention to be centred on the young person and their identified issues. It also highlights that the timetabling within each school must also be taken into consideration. This assists in school counselling being accepted as an integrated part of school life and can help normalise the concept of counselling.

5.5 While it has been the experience of those involved in school counselling that on average a young person may participate in four to six sessions during the period of counselling, the amount of counselling offered must be relevant to the young person's need and agreed with them through the review process set out in the contract, between the young person and the counsellor.

5.6 All the counsellors deliver the service according to the 'Ethical Framework for Good Practice' of their professional body. Supervision and record keeping (within data protection guidelines), evaluation forms and complaints procedures are also delivered within the ethical code of the provider's professional organisation.

## **6. Confidentiality and Information Sharing (See Standard 4)**

6.1 At the beginning of a counselling relationship the counsellor will explain confidentiality and its limitations to the young person. The contract entered into will clearly identify what confidentiality means in a way that is relevant to the young person's maturity and level of understanding. **Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed - the welfare of the young person will, at all times, take precedence over confidentiality. Confidentiality may need to be discussed with the young person at different stages of the counselling process.**

6.2 The Independent Schools Counselling Service will treat with confidence all personal information about young people whether obtained directly, indirectly or by

inference. Such information includes name, address, biographical details and other descriptions about the young person's life and circumstances that might result in identification.

6.3 All information about the young person's school will also be treated as confidential. Counsellors will not discuss case details outside the service,

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

6.4 The counsellor will seek the young person's consent in advance of any disclosure of information, which could be construed as a breach of confidentiality. The rationale for disclosure of information and the implications of the process for the young person will be explained. This sustains our commitment to support the young person's autonomy and capacity for informed consent at every stage of the counselling process. Any disclosure of information will be made in the young person's best interest.

6.5 The Counsellor will only disclose information obtained from the counselling relationship in the following exceptional circumstances:

- The young person requests, and feels that it is within their best interest, that certain information be passed on.
- Circumstances where the counsellor has sufficient grounds to believe that the young person is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, for example, through neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, domestic violence or drug abuse.
- If the young person discloses that they are aware of significant harm of another person.
- In the event that the young person is under a care order, or when child protection issues arise, the counsellor, with the permission of the young person, may attend case conferences and continue to honour the confidentiality contract.

6.6 Signed permission detailing the terms upon which the counsellor may disclose and to whom, will be logged in all instances of disclosure by consent.

## **Breach of Confidentiality**

6.7 Whenever possible a counsellor's decision to breach confidentiality, without the young person's consent, will be made after consultation with their manager. Any breach of confidentiality will only relate to the immediate situation and will only be relayed to those services that can provide appropriate support required by the young person. The counsellor will initiate the school's child protection procedure before leaving the school and will remain as long as necessary to support the young person through the disclosure process. The counsellor will log all revisions to individual confidentiality in the young person's contract, This will track actions taken, outcomes and implications,. The process will be reported on t step by step to their organisation and ensuring the Key Contact is fully aware of the situation.

6.8 The Key Contact will be an active partner in any decision making where the child's safety or welfare is considered at risk.

## **Sharing of Information**

6.9 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 young person is considered at risk. In these cases the school's child protection policy will be activated. Current guidance on information sharing will direct the manner in which information is shared.

*Geldard, Kathryn and David in Counselling Adolescents Sage 2004 state:*

***“Where there is a disclosure of abuse or 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.”***

## **7. Data Protection and Record Keeping (see Standard 5)**

7.1 The ICSS in partnership with the school needs to keep records in order to provide an effective service to the young person

7.2 The counsellor will keep notes about what has been discussed in the sessions. These remain confidential and the responsibility of the counselling provider. In the event of a disclosure or an allegation regarding child protection issues the actions taken will also be recorded and shared with the designated teacher for child protection as required for UNOCINI or other purposes.

7.3 Any information retained on school premises should be locked in a secure cabinet within school premises. It is important that counsellors recognise that a young person can request to see his or her case records but cannot see any information from a third party without their permission

7.4 Each young person's records should be kept under an anonymous ID number and stored securely. The Independent Schools Counselling Service records statistical information on client gender, age, ethnicity, reason for referral and other issues. This statistical data will be made available to schools on an annual basis.

7.5 All counsellors must adhere to the Data Protection Act 1988 which covers manual notes kept in a systematic way identifying individuals as well as those held on computer.

## **8. Qualities of a School Counsellor**

8.1 The school's counsellors are qualified to at least Diploma level in counselling and have a minimum of 150 hours clinically supervised practice. Every counsellor will have undergone an enhanced check prior to commencing work in schools and will have undergone their Organisation's induction training as well as any specific training on working with young people provided by the organisation, or other training set up by the ICSS The Provider will have Professional Indemnity Insurance and ensure regular clinical and managerial supervision is provided.

8.2 Counsellors in schools must be approachable have good listening skills and a manner that encourages a climate for safe and trusting relationships.

## **9. Line Management and Clinical Supervision – (See Standard 8)**

## **Line Management**

9.1 Line management responsibilities and boundaries must be clear within any contract between the counsellor and employing organisation (DHSSPS Draft Counselling Standards 2006)

9.2 Counsellors also require separate line management supervision to help with administrative requirements, accountability and the development of the service. This is not the same as clinical supervision.

## **Clinical Supervision**

9.3 Clinical Supervisors must be experienced practitioners, competent in supervising the approach used by the counsellor. Each school counsellor receives clinical supervision as set out in his or her professional guidelines.

9.4 The provider must ensure their counsellors have individual supervision which follows the current recommendation of their professional body. BACP currently recommends a minimum of one and a half hours of supervision per month. The amount of clinical supervision required is relative to a counsellor's experience, caseload and the challenging nature of the issues young people bring to counselling.

9.5 The clinical supervisor is required to have knowledge of the issues young people bring to the counselling room and an understanding of the various stages of adolescence development. The organisation must ensure there is a protocol in place which allows the clinical supervisor to raise any concerns about the school counsellor's ability to practice safely and effectively in the school environment.

## **10. Child Protection (See Standard 6)**

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

concerns or an allegation against a member of staff. This policy applies to all staff, pupils and visitors.

10.2 The school and the counsellor will also work together using pastoral care documents / circulars and other relevant information as supplemented by local Safeguarding Boards, Health and Social Services Boards and Trusts.

10.3 All counsellors attached to the school need to be provided with a copy of the school's child protection policy and any other relevant pastoral care documents, i e.g. anti-bullying policy and discipline policy.

10.4 Each Counsellor will be required to undertake the Child Protection training facilitated by the Regional Child Protection School Support Service. Though the provider may have their own child protection policy this does not replace the counsellor's responsibility to attend the training and follow the school's child protection procedures in all cases.

10.5 Child protection referrals will be monitored as part of the quality assurance responsibilities.

## **11 MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS**

11.1 Monitoring of the counselling service provision will take place on an ongoing basis to evaluate performance, identify areas of concern and inform service development. Data will be collated that includes:

- Numbers of young people attending.
- Gender of young people attending.
- Number of sessions per young person.
- Numbers who did not keep counselling appointment.
- Range of Issues arising e.g. family conflict, self harm, bullying
- Safeguarding Issues Arising e.g. Domestic violence, sexual, physical, emotional abuse, neglect.
- Action resulting from safeguarding concerns.

- Ethnicity of young people accessing counselling.
- Disability, illness, special needs.
- Immediate impact of counselling for the young person.
- Impact within the school (evaluation forms).

11.2 Evaluation will take place using a variety of methods including:

- User friendly forms
- Focus Groups.
- Peer Evaluation.

11.3 DE/ ESA will work closely with the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) in the evaluation process.

11.4 The provider must evaluate the service directly with young people in a way that takes cognisance of the young people's world. A proven tool for such evaluation e.g. Core, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire must be used

11.5 All information held by the provider must be kept securely in line with current data protection regulations.

## **12. Complaints Procedure**

12.1 The Independent School's Counselling service seeks to provide an accessible, high level of service to the entire school community. In order to assist with this we have the following complaints arrangements in place:

### **Level 1: Complaints about Services.**

12.2 This relates to service delivery and the operational aspects of the service. For example, time keeping and attitudes. At this level the concern is raised directly with the nominated person for school counselling in the organisation. Contact details for this person(s) will be clearly set out in the Operating Plan between the school and the provider.

12.3 At any time concerns can also be raised with Cathy Bell the Regional Co-coordinator for the service who is available by:

Phone – 02891 279932

E-mail – Kathy.Bell@deni.gov.uk

Letter – Cathy Bell, Department of Education, Pupil Support Unit,  
Rathgael House, 43 Balloo Road, Bangor, Co Down BT19 7PR.

## **Level 2: Complaints against a member of staff.**

12.4 If a complaint is made against a counsellor in school the following actions will be taken:

- The complaint will be sent directly to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection and / or the Principal in the school.
- The nature of the allegation and the facts will be established.
- The designated board officer will be informed.
- The Regional Co-ordinator and the counselling providers designated child protection officer will be informed.

12.5 Complaints will be treated confidentially and dealt with swiftly. However, where further long-term action is required the complainant will be informed of completion of this action.

12.6 If at any time an individual is not happy with the response to his or her complaint they can approach the Regional Co-ordinator directly by e-mail or telephone.

12.7 Regular auditing of the counselling service will require the counselling provider to furnish details of any complaints received show how they were dealt with and their outcomes.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### ***Rationale for Service***

1. Counselling in schools is a specialist activity and a rapidly growing phenomenon within the United Kingdom. Countries such as Australia and USA have had school-based counselling for many years. Children and young people attending schools here have as much right to access such a school-based service as those attending schools in other parts of the world.
  
2. Over half of a young person's waking hours are spent in school, therefore it is important that young people can access services in the place where they spend so much of their day.
  
3. Two of the important characteristics of a school-based counselling service are the emphasis on preventative/early intervention work and the strong belief that the service needs to be accessible to young people.

Beginstry 2001 states:

***“Counselling and support services have the potential to provide for early intervention helping young people to develop, i.e. language for their emotions, offering ways of restoring and retraining self-respect and providing a forum for talking about difficulties as an alternative to acting out.”*** [7]

4. Counselling in the school environment can facilitate three main functions:
    - An educative function i.e. a person's personal and social development can be enhanced in the school context.
  
    - A reflective function, which explores the possible impact of and contribution to personal and social development and mental health of the practices within the classroom and other aspects of school life.
-

- A welfare function which means responsibility to plan for and react to issues which impact on a pupil's life <sup>[8]</sup>

McLaughlin states that:

***“Counselling by virtue of its educative function can have a positive effect on classroom performance as well as bringing general benefits to children.”*** <sup>[9]</sup>

5. The successful completion of school life can add to a smooth transition from school to adult life. School not only allows for the acquisition of general skills that can be applied to new learning but for raising self-esteem, self-efficacy, social maturity and competency. This is in keeping with the emphasis on the learning for life curriculum being taught in our schools.

6. Counselling can assist pupils in their management of steps along this pathway. As such, its effects are twofold. Skills can be developed which are transferable to academic life and enable pupils to develop skills, which make personal transitions more manageable. Counsellors are also in a position to recognise at an early stage those children who are at risk, in need, vulnerable or for whom there are potential serious mental health risks.

7. The Mental Health Foundation states

***“Mental health problems among young people are on the increase. Emotionally literate children are not likely to experience mental health problems; schools have a critical role to play in creating emotionally literate children and in the early identification and referral of children with mental health problems within Northern Ireland.”*** <sup>[11]</sup>

- 1 in 4 will experience some sort of mental health problem in the course of a year ( ) (Health Promotion agency 2007)

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<sup>[8]</sup> McLaughlin 2001 – Personal and Social Education, the Evidence Base Broadsheet.

<sup>[9]</sup>

<sup>[11]</sup> Promoting Mental Health within Early Years and School Settings DfES, 2001

- 1 in 3 children live in poverty (www.niccy.co.uk)
- 4 times more adolescent females self harm than adolescent males (Samaritans 2008)

In early 2005 the Education and Training Inspectorate survey of school counselling identified:

*“The escalating complexity of personal problems and issues being experienced by children and young people in schools in Northern Ireland”.* <sup>[13]</sup>

8. Across Northern Ireland there have been various models of counselling employed in our schools with a raft of both funding and internal and external school counselling provision. Some schools chose to use teachers who had completed guidance or counselling courses such as those provided under the DASE training. This meant teachers had delegated time within the school day to be available for pupils seeking support. Others schools funded the service from existing school budgets and employed an independent trained counsellor to work specifically within their school ethos and community. Organisations such as Contact Youth and NSPCC, recognising the need for independent school counselling, began in the late 1990s to pilot school counselling across various parts of Northern Ireland. These pilots were subsequently evaluated and have provided a basis for the current development of independent school counselling across our schools. <sup>[15]</sup>

9. In 2003, following a scoping study of school counselling carried out by ETI, the Department of Education (DE) allocated funds from the Executive Programme Fund (EPF) directly to the boards for a three year period, specifically for the purpose of providing counselling support for pupils in post -primary schools.

10. In 2005 ETI carried out a further counselling survey, which highlighted among areas for improvement, the lack of consistency in both services to schools and the range of models being used.

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<sup>[13]</sup> Education and Training Inspectorate Counselling Survey 2000, page 4

<sup>[15]</sup> Contact Youth 2006, NSPCC. It’s okay to see the counsellor 2003 and 2006

*"It has now become widely accepted within Education circles that counselling support in schools has resulted in a range of positive outcomes for children and young people. Consequently sustained access to such positive and beneficial services should be made available as a matter of priority, for all pupils within schools in Northern Ireland." [16]*

11. The current development of the Independent Counselling Service for Schools takes forward these concerns and draws on the experience of the good practice that has been developed, not just in Northern Ireland but across these islands. From 2007 the ICSS was available to all Post primary Schools. Initially funding was from the Children and Young People's Funding Package announced by the then Secretary of State of Mr Peter Hain in March 2006. The ICSS, which is now accepted as an additional support for our young people in Post Primary Education, is now funded by the Department of Education and is part of the Pupil Emotional Health and Wellbeing Programme (PEHAW).

12. PEHAW is a programme involving the Department of Education and key statutory, community and voluntary stakeholders working in partnership to develop a Pupils' Emotional Health and Wellbeing Programme. The programme seeks to enhance existing school emotional health and wellbeing initiatives and work alongside the Revised Curriculum to support young people experiencing stress or support schools in the event of a critical incident. The PEHAW program seeks to promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing within our school communities.

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[16] ETI report 2006 PG 8

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **SAMPLE CONTENTS OF AN INFORMATION LEAFLET FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

#### **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.

#### **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

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

The counsellor will be in school each week.

#### **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

#### **Who is the School Counselling Service For?**

It is open to any pupil in the school. You may have worries or concerns to do with school, family, personal matters or other issues. These can be discussed during counselling. It is a chance to talk about anything that may be worrying you.

#### **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. Your school counsellor is \_\_\_\_\_ and he / she will be in school on \_\_\_\_\_ from (state times).

## **Appendix 3**

### **SPECIMEN INFORMATION LEAFLET FOR PARENTS AND CARERS**

#### **What is Counselling?**

1. The opportunity to talk about things that are concerning us, in confidence, with a qualified counsellor. What is spoken about will depend on the individual, but common themes are stress, relationships, change, loss and distressing, traumatic events.

#### **What does a Counsellor do?**

2. Counsellors are trained to listen without judging and to help people sort out their thoughts and feelings about whatever is concerning them.

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

3. They are a team of professionally qualified and experienced counsellors who also have experience working with children and young people in a variety of settings.

#### **Why have a Counsellor in school?**

4. 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. Our experience is that young people find counselling useful in the same way as adults. Also, that they bring similar issues to counselling, with split family situations, bullying, anger and peer difficulties occurring most frequently. If children and young people are able to receive emotional support from a qualified professional they will have greater opportunity to fulfil their potential.

#### **How long will counselling last?**

5. Counselling may be for a few sessions, or longer term. It is reviewed regularly between counsellor and young person.

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

6. Usually, a small, private room is made available in your young person's school during the day. Sessions last up to fifty minutes, and appointment times are varied so that time is not lost from any one subject.

### **Is it confidential?**

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

8. 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 would discuss this first with the pupil concerned.

9. All counsellors receive supervision of their work, to ensure the quality of their practice, and these sessions involve the anonymous presentation of casework.

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

10. If a child or young person requests counselling and is able to understand what is involved in the process, then they have the right to access counselling. Parents and carers may not deny them this right. We would, however, prefer that we have your support for the work, and we are 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?**

11. 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?**

12. Yes, and we welcome this. Our experience shows that the most helpful thing a parent can do is to show an acceptance of counselling as a normal and useful

activity, and to show an interest if their son/ daughter wishes to talk about it, but not to press them if they don't. We acknowledge that this isn't an easy task, and it is quite natural for parents to feel anxious about what may be being said in the sessions.

13. It is always our hope that talking with one of us will lead to greater openness with yourselves, 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?**

14. 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 don't want to worry those we love best, or because we want help thinking things through with someone unbiased. 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?**

15. Referrals are made through the school's pastoral system to the Counsellor, 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 child or young person about why they think this may be a good idea. If interest is shown they will then suggest that it is discussed with you at home.

#### **Data Protection Procedures and Evaluation**

16. All information about counselling work undertaken is kept securely by the Counselling Service in line with current data protection regulations. After the counselling has finished your child will be sent an evaluation form that they can complete anonymously and return. This lets us know how well we are helping the children and young people that we see. If there is any cause for complaint, you or your child are welcome to contact the Counsellor or the regional Manager who will try to resolve any issues of concern.

17. **If after reading this information**, you have any more questions please contact us. If you want any further information you can ask to speak with the counsellor.

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **SPECIMEN INFORMATION LEAFLET FOR SCHOOL STAFF**

1. The Counselling Service supports the emotional health of the pupil that underpins academic achievement and facilitates the building and management of helpful relationships in the school environment. We understand the dynamics within the school, the issues young people have, the dilemmas busy staff face and the concerns of parents/carers.

2. At the heart of our service is one to one therapeutic counselling provided for pupils after liaison and consultation with staff.

3. Listed below are some issues for staff to be aware of when considering referring a pupil for counselling:

- Standard of work dropping dramatically.
- Becoming subdued or over excited; marked mood swings, behaviour that is 'out of character'.
- School refusal.
- Those who bully others and those who are victims of bullying behaviour.
- Are known or who are suspected to have been sexually, physically or emotionally abused.
- Have difficulties due to family breakdown.
- Peer group difficulties/relationships.
- Have been bereaved or suffered loss or separation.
- Low self-esteem.
- Self-harm e.g. cutting.
- Misuse of alcohol and drugs.

#### **Some Key Questions to Ask Are:**

4. *How extreme is the behaviour or attitude?*  
*How long or persistent is it?*

*How sudden is the change?*

*Is there a contrast between the way a child behaves at home and at school?*

*How is the behaviour affecting other members of the school community?*

### **Referral:**

5. If you are unsure whether to refer for counselling it may be helpful to discuss concerns with the counsellor in order to clarify the most appropriate way forward.

- Once you are clear that a referral is appropriate you need to speak with the Key Contact.
- The idea of counselling needs to be talked about, sensitively with the pupil. This can be done, either by the Key Contact, or by someone else who the pupil knows and trusts. You may find it helpful to use the 'Information Sheet for Young People about Counselling' when you are talking to them about the idea of counselling. It helps them to understand what is involved and that this is a normal and ordinary approach to supporting young people with difficulties. The care that is taken with this can make a big difference to whether or not they attend the first appointment, or how they approach it.
- It is voluntary and confidential and it is a means of support not a disciplinary measure. It should be made clear that it is an opportunity to talk about problems and worries with a view to resolving or managing them more easily. In order to inform their parents the 'Information for Parents and Carers about Counselling in Schools' leaflet can be taken by them or sent home.

6. The first session is an opportunity for them to make a decision as to whether to begin or not.

7. All of the 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). Supervision and record keeping (within data protection guidelines), evaluation forms and complaints procedures are all within this code of our professional organisation. If you have any queries or concerns please discuss them with the counsellor or the regional co-ordinator.

**APPENDIX 5**

**Referral of pupil to Independent Counselling Service for Schools**

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

Young Person's Name:	DOB	Age
Address:		
Postcode:		
Can we contact you if necessary? Yes / No	M/F:	
Class / Year :		
Name(s) of Parent(s)/Guardian:		
Has this young person been referred before Yes (What date?) No		

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

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

1. Reason for referral:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Details of action taken by school:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Parents informed of referral? Yes / No

4. Statement of special education needs? Yes / No *If Yes, date completed*

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Other agency involvement: e.g. other counselling service, EWO, Social Services CAMHS, GP etc.

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Any other relevant information

\_\_\_\_\_

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

Please note information on this form may be shared with the young person

## Appendix 6

### Counselling Evaluation Form

We would like to improve our service to you so please be honest when filling in this form.

Male

Female

Year Group

Why did you come to see the counsellor?

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How has it helped you?

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How could we make it better for you?

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Anything else you would want to say.

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Date:

**Independent Counselling Service for Schools**

Invoice for \_\_\_\_\_ (insert month) AREA \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL NAME	Profiled Hours	Counselling Hours provided this month	Total Hours Counselling Provided to Date	Amount claimed in (insert month)	Total amount Claimed to date	Balance Of hours remaining	Balance of Hours Remaining
1.							
2.							
3.							
4.							
5.							
6.							
7.							
8.							
9.							
10.							
<b>TOTALS</b>							

**Independent Counselling Service for Schools  
Monthly Monitoring Form**  
(to be forwarded to Department with Invoice)

<b>Month:</b>	<b>School Name :</b>
<b>Counsellor Name :</b>	

<b>Initial Assessments</b>	<b>Number of Cases Closed</b>	<b>Number of Young People on Current List</b>

<b>Sessions Cancelled Did Not Attend / Absent etc.</b>	<b>Number on Waiting List</b>

<b>Male Students Counsellled This Month</b>	<b>Female Students Counsellled This Month</b>

**Signed by Counsellor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed by School Representative:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_