

28 November 2018

TITLE OF REPORT: Safe Space: A Review of HLN DSG Funding

Report of the Director of Children's Services

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 To update the Forum on the work of Safe Space (previously Counselling in Schools) and to propose changes to the funding arrangements.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Safe Space delivers counselling and therapeutic services in Hertfordshire schools and other community settings. HLN funding has supported the direct delivery of these services, 20% of which are to the SEND group. It also supports the cost of HCC Corporate overheads. There is more demand from schools than the service can currently provide. The impact of removing these services would be an insufficient response to the mental health needs of children and young people and an escalation of issues both within the school setting and to more specialist and expensive services. Conversely investment in the capacity of the service would enable a wider offer with the same integrity of professional supervision and consistent approach to safeguarding.
- 2.2 There is a strong case for providing central DSG funding to support the service because its benefits extend beyond the school "buying" the service at any particular time. In particular:
- (i) The service helps prevent pressures on other higher, cost services with consequential savings to DSG and to other schools; and facilitates an effective referral process.
 - (ii) The service provides some wider, non-traded beneficial services such as volunteer mentoring programme.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Forum is recommended to support the following proposals:

- i) To continue to support Safe Space
- ii) To reduce the cost of overheads charged to DSG by 50% / £123,000.
- iii) To invest a further £70,000 to enhance and widen the Safe Space Offer funded from these savings in overheads.
- iv) To implement a consistent pricing structure across all Hertfordshire schools.

4. Background

As a service Safe Space (formerly the Counselling in Schools Service) works with children and young people across Hertfordshire delivering quality assured counselling, arts therapy and mentoring. The service is part of Services for Young People within Children's Services.

With more than fifteen years' experience of delivering therapeutic provision in schools and other community settings Safe Space has evolved and expanded in response to the level of emotional and mental health need within Hertfordshire. Part of the Safe Space portfolio is a traded service.

Safe Space forms an integral part of the continuum of emotional / mental health provision on offer in Hertfordshire for our children and young people and delivers an alternative for those unwilling or unable to access Specialist provision.

Safe Space continues with passion to develop partnerships with teams and services across social care, education, health and the voluntary sector that promotes positive well-being and improves prevention and earlier identification of mental health issues within our children and young people. The service is one of the few that does not employ the use of thresholds; provided a child or young person can work safely on a one to one basis an intervention can be offered.

Safe Space's main aims and objectives are:

- Developing resilience in children, young people and the communities around them to better enable them to deal with life experiences.
- Providing a safe, positive experience of accessing therapeutic support in a familiar setting.
- Enabling children and young people who do not find other provision accessible to benefit from a therapeutic intervention (this is particularly important for non-verbal children and young people).
- Delivering a flexible offer that can work best to support the holistic needs of the child or young person.
- Equipping children and young people with tools and techniques to improve, monitor and maintain their own well-being and mental health into adulthood.

- Offering support to Schools and other settings on developing quality assured therapeutic provision for our children and young people.
- Using creativity, empathy and openness to engage even the most hard to reach children and young people.
- Working alongside our colleagues in other services and teams to improve the 'journey' for children, young people and their families whilst they require support.
- Increasing access to quality assured therapy, where needed, that enables earlier identification of mental ill health as part of a continuum of provision.

5. The need for emotional / mental health support in Hertfordshire

Approximately 24,000 children and young people aged between 3 and 19 years currently meet the threshold for a mental health diagnosis in Hertfordshire. By 2020 we can expect this to have increased to just over 26,000 children with diagnosable mental health difficulties. Evidence from the 2015 Hertfordshire CAMHS Review suggested that only around a third of children with a diagnosable mental health problem appeared to get the help that they needed with the report further highlighting that children and young people's mental health needs are most likely to be met only when they present in a crisis.

Despite the increased CAMHS Transformation investment locally, the development of extremely positive early intervention and preventative approaches within Families First and with the commissioning of online support such as Kooth; there is still a significant need for medium to long term therapeutic support for those children and young people who have had and continue to have Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). While Hertfordshire's children enjoy higher than UK average levels of wellbeing and attainment, there are self-reported high levels of worry among children in the county which can be linked to academic pressure. When this is combined with additional needs our children and young people become increasingly vulnerable.

As pressure increases on specialist provision Safe Space continues to manage the demand from the children and young people with enduring emotional health problems who will not meet thresholds for CAMHS. This increasing cohort of children and young people often display a level of emotional and / or behavioural issues that impact on their daily lives and affect their ability to learn. Our schools are increasingly struggling to manage these pupils but are often committed to understanding how they can best support them, particularly where there are complex family circumstances.

Safe Space's unique position within Hertfordshire County Council and its strong links with Step 2 (Hertfordshire Community Trust) and Specialist CAMHS (Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust) have enabled it to develop across the continuum of mental health and social care provision; offering a crisis response to support school communities when a tragic

event occurs, delivering bespoke programmes for particularly vulnerable young people. It works across both the therapeutic interventions and the mentoring programme by developing an increasing contribution to contextual safeguarding.

6. **How does Safe Space support children and young people with SEND?**

There are a number of features of the service that Hertfordshire schools have told us provide additional support for children and young people with SEND.

- **Creative Therapies** - In addition to counsellors the team use art, drama and play therapists to support children and young people with more complex needs enabling them to engage in the therapeutic process without needing to verbalise their thoughts and feelings. We are the only countywide team to offer this provision and we receive referrals from PALMS and Specialist CAMHS. Arts Therapies are clinically validated and most importantly accessible.
- **Age range into adulthood** - In addition to the flexibility in approach Safe Space is able to work with young people during their transition into adulthood and adult service provision. We work with young people up to 21 where there are LDD needs and 25 years for Care Leavers at a time when they are particularly vulnerable. At this time of change and uncertainty Safe Space can offer consistency and an opportunity to explore the thoughts and feelings that arise as a result.
- **Mentoring** - In addition to delivering therapeutic interventions Safe Space also runs a volunteer mentoring programme. The mentoring programme provides 1-1 support for a sustained period of time (anywhere from 6-12 months) which many services are unable to offer. Children and Young People with SEN/LDD often need time to build relationships with individuals and the extensive time period available really helps develop this. Mentors working with Children and Young People with SEN quite often provide not just emotional support but also practical support for example; using public transport, organising time, budgeting, and socialising.
- **Experience of delivering to CYP with additional needs** – Safe Space has more than ten years' experience of delivering therapeutic interventions in Hertfordshire's Special Schools. In 2017-18 we worked in 8 of the Hertfordshire Special Schools.
- **School / Home based support strategies** - Once the therapist gets to know a child or young person they are able to offer support and advice strategies for the school with help in managing difficult behaviours and emotions. This is particularly helpful for children in mainstream schools as staff have identified the positive impact it has on the learning environment for all pupils. We have a number of examples of where the input from the therapist has directly contributed to the child maintaining

their place at school and also where we have been able to support reintegration when children and young people have been out of education for some time, largely due to anxiety.

- **Young People's views** - Young people we work with who have additional needs and access multiple services have told us that using a therapy service at the school is less stigmatising; they also highlighted how important it was that they are able to use a service that any young person could use rather than one specifically for people with additional needs.
- **Holistic Support** - The service recognises the holistic needs of a child or young person which means that we are able to support a range of issues which may preclude them from accessing other provision such as PALMS or Specialist CAMHS. We find particularly for SEND needs our children and young people access a wide range of health, education and social services but none look at the whole child.
- **Geographical & setting flexibility** - Safe space offers flexibility and creativity that is not available through statutory services. For some of our most vulnerable children and young people we can offer therapy in a range of settings such as Children's Centres, Libraries, GP Surgeries (although not the home) which will help them to feel more at ease and better able to engage. In addition the countywide spread of the service for both mentoring and therapy means consistency in coverage that cannot be offered elsewhere.
- **'Their time'** - The number one thing children and young people tell us is that their therapy sessions are for them. Other interventions they have had might be focusing on 'changing them' or their thoughts and feelings and behaviours but Safe Space gives them an opportunity to understand what is happening that is causing them to respond in such a way and find alternative solutions.
- **Interaction with families** – Whilst the therapy is for the child or young person Safe Space has increasing involvement with the parents / carers and professional networks around those we work with. Providing reassurance, strategies, information and advice is a valuable part of the offer.
- **Transition** – Safe Space has worked extensively to support children and young people through various transitions. For those with SEND this has had a very positive impact given the consistency that the sessions offer during a time of uncertainty. The service can support the move from Primary to Secondary, re-integration into school following a period of absence, transition from Children's Health and Social Care into adult provision.
- **Contextual Safeguarding** – As referenced previously Safe Space plays an important role in contextual safeguarding by supporting vulnerable children and young people whose situation does not

currently meet thresholds for any other service but where there is a need for an intervention.

7. Financial Implications: How is the DSG funding used by Safe Space?

The budget of the service is made up as follows:

Counselling In Schools Team

	Budget £	Budget £	Budget £
Expenditure			
Salaries & Salary Related	673,903		
Transport Related	25,667		
Supplies & Services	9,850		
Total Expenditure (excluding recharges)		709,420	
*Overheads & recharges		246,000	
Total Expenditure (including recharges)			955,420
Income			
Primary School Income	390,643		
Inc from acade, free sch, non-HCC maint Sch for se	145,000		
Lease Cars Income	1,948		
Total Income		537,591	
Third Party Payments			
Cross Departmental Recharges	50,000		
Public Health Interdepartmental Transfer	42,200		
Total 3rd Party Payments		92,200	
DSG contribution	79,629		
DSG contribution for overheads & recharges	246,000		
Total DSG		325,629	
Total Income			955,420
Total Net Budget			0

High Level Needs DSG support to the service reflects some of the wider benefits of the service, but also keeps direct costs to schools lower than they would otherwise be by covering the costs of corporate overheads and making a further contribution to direct costs.

This is done to enable the service to keep costs charged to schools as low as possible to allow Hertfordshire schools to be able to afford a quality assured

therapy service to support their pupils. We have achieved this with only one inflationary price increase in six years. Overwhelming feedback from our schools has told us that this price stability has enabled us to retain existing contracts and attract new business despite the impact of diminishing resources.

For historical reasons, a differential pricing structure is adopted as between Maintained Schools, Academies and other users. A ten per cent discount is applied to the cost of an annual contract for maintained schools with five per cent being given to Academies. This equates to a difference of £89 for 1 hour of Counselling on an annual contract (3 terms). However, this review of the support for the service provides an opportunity to address this differential, and it is proposed for the future to align charges to both types of school. Current prices for the service are as below.

Hertfordshire County Council Schools

Cost of 1 session per week of Counselling (Short Term contract)	£589.00
Cost of 1 session per week of Counselling (Annual Contract – 3 terms)	£1590.00
Cost of 1 session of Arts Therapy (Short Term contract)	£708.00*

Please note that the above prices are for the hour of face to face delivery and include the cost of preparation, note taking, data recording, other administrative functions and appropriate supervision, which is all part of the added value for schools.

In addition to helping Safe Space maintain pricing levels across the years the DSG funding has been utilised to support the essential quality assurance of the service. This enables us to provide high quality clinical supervision, line management and safeguarding. It also covers the cost of the delivery of topical training that ensures therapists can support emerging needs, be up to date on best practice and gain additional therapeutic tools to further enhance their skills.

Our quality assurance enables us to offer schools a more holistic offer than independent counsellors and we have established referral pathways into Specialist Mental Health provision for when children and young people's needs require more intensive and specialist input. We are able to work effectively across the health and social care continuums of need providing step up and step down support as appropriate.

Comparatively Safe Space represents good value for money with Community Counselling agencies and private providers charging between £40-100+ per hour for therapy with children and young people. Safe Space charges £49 per hour for counselling. This is an all-inclusive amount that covers costs associated with coordinating and delivering quality assured therapy. Our schools tell us our pricing is transparent and that they welcome the additional benefits of commissioning therapy through Safe Space.

Our Schools tell us that the combination of the discount, prices having remained consistent and the value added by buying in a service (support with safeguarding, referrals to specialist provision, liaison with Children's Services across voluntary and statutory sectors, training, line management and clinical supervision for staff as well as advice and signposting to professionals and families) are what makes them return to Safe Space each year.

The average number of sessions for all children and young people accessing Safe Space is 12; this is usually the equivalent to one term of intervention.

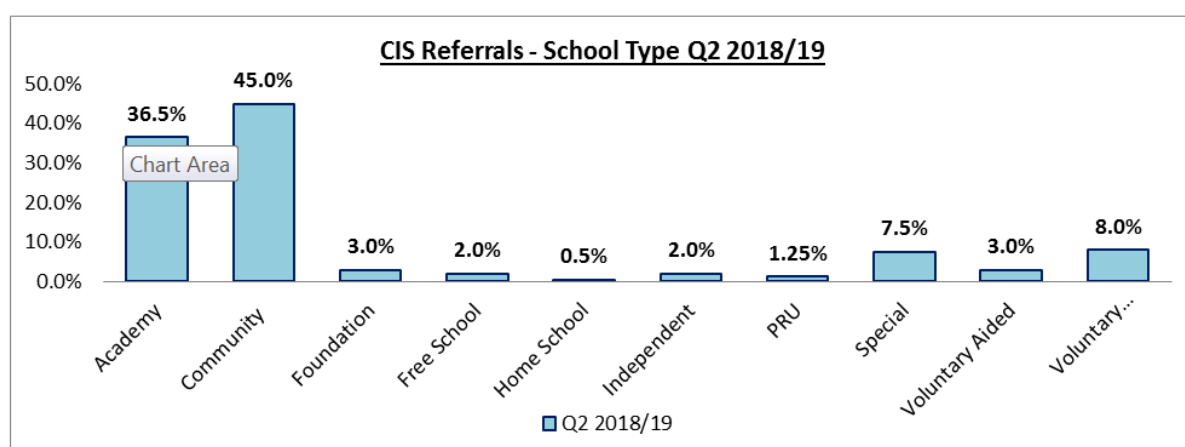
Overheads:

As set out above, currently £246,000 of overheads/recharges are charged to the service. It seems likely that there would be scope to reduce this figure through a review of the basis on which costs are allocated. For the time being, for next year, it is assumed that a reduction of 50% / £123,000 can be achieved, with the level for future years awaiting the outcome of the review.

8. Data

In Quarter 2 of the 2018/19 financial year the number of children and young people worked with by Safe Space was 511. This was a 3% increase on previous quarter (496) and in spite of the school holidays.

The graph below shows the most recent figures for referrals to Safe Space. 45% of referrals received by Safe Space in Q2 were for children and young people attending Hertfordshire County Council community schools. 7.5% of these were special schools and 1.25% Pupil Referral Units (PRU's).



In order to give a sense of the number of SEND children and young people being supported by Safe Space who benefit from this funding see the table below.

	No. of Children and Young People SEN registered* - New referrals	No. of Children and Young People with ADHD - New referrals	No. of Young People seen through the mentoring programme with SEND - New referrals	Total no. of children and young people with SEND worked with - New referrals	Total no. of children and young people worked with - new referrals and ongoing cases
2016-17	50	58	N/A	108	794
2017-18	61	52	44	157	813
2018-19 to 31 st August	28	22	15	65	496

*As recorded by the referrer.

The figures above illustrate that Safe Space makes an important contribution to the Hertfordshire SEND local offer. As a service the provision of Arts Therapies means that therapeutic interventions are more accessible for children and young people with additional needs as they are not required to verbalise their thoughts and feelings. The importance of the availability of these more creative therapies cannot be underestimated for some of our most vulnerable children and young people.

9. Outcomes and effectiveness of the work

Safe Space use a number of outcome measures to monitor the effectiveness of the therapeutic work. Below demonstrates the average effectiveness of all sessions delivered as per the data collected in 2017-18.

Clinical Outcome Rating Scale (CORS):

Average start score: 25

Average end score: 35

An end score of 32+ indicates high well-being which is in line with the non-clinical population. A change of 5 or more points in the start and end scores equals a reliable change.

Young People CORE:

Average start score: 18

Average end score: 10

An end score of 10 or below indicates high well-being which is in line with the non-clinical population.

These scores demonstrate the clinical effectiveness of the sessions. The following are a selection of the 'successes' with children and young people with SEND.

- Reintegration into mainstream school following non-school attendance.
- Facilitation of onward referrals to PALMS & Specialist CAMHS which were accepted.
- Improved attainment and attendance.
- Successful managed moves following a period of exclusion.
- Supported transition from Special School to College working alongside pastoral teams.
- Inner hero workshop to help children identify their strengths.

10. Impact of funding changes on Safe Space

Reduction in DSG - As part of this review we have identified the key risks associated with the loss of DSG. In order to recoup the loss of this funding we would need to remove the discounts for all schools buying an annual contract. For an HCC school this would mean an increase of nearly two hundred pounds if they only bought 36 hours per term. For academies the impact would be less severe but our largest contract is for 20 hours per week and as such the cost increase would be several thousand. Arts Therapy is already more expensive and as such we would anticipate less take up of this which would affect accessibility for children and young people with additional needs. Our market research has suggested that even with a minimal increase in prices we could potentially lose at least 25% of our schools who would no longer be able to afford the service.

Raising prices as described above would be able to generate only half of the funding gap even if we were able to retain the same level of contracts despite the increase. In order to achieve the remainder of the funding we would need to make redundancies across the service. Having always prioritised spending on direct delivery the service is already limited in its non-clinical capacity. Service management and development already proves challenging given the increased level of demand and number of staff so this would need to be a downscaling of the employed clinical team.

Undoubtedly the loss of this funding would be significant for Safe Space and the number of schools that could be worked with would be restricted even if contract levels could be maintained.

Additional risks of funding loss on the quality of service for children and young people:

- Loss of signposting, advice and guidance for Hertfordshire schools due to reduced capacity
 - Increase in number of unregulated counsellors / therapists in our schools

- Community Counselling agencies are already at breaking point / closing which increases the level of demand for Safe Space
- Reduced availability of arts therapies across Hertfordshire (costs prohibitive)
- Increase in number of children and young people who do not reach thresholds for Specialist intervention without access to provision
- Safe Space are commissioned to deliver therapeutic input to school communities following a crisis / tragic event. Over the years we have developed a partnership approach to deliver a coordinated offer with Educational Psychologists who respond in the first 24-48hrs.

11. The case for an increase in funding

Set out above is some of the evidence round growing demand for the Safe Space service, both in terms of counselling and Arts therapy. The private market will not provide this, nor will schools purchase it at the level which reflects the wider, external benefits of the provision beyond those to the school itself —setting aside the main benefit to the wellbeing of young people themselves.

Further, the quality of the service is different from that which the private market offers, in terms of the quality assurance, management and oversight and breadth of what is offered.

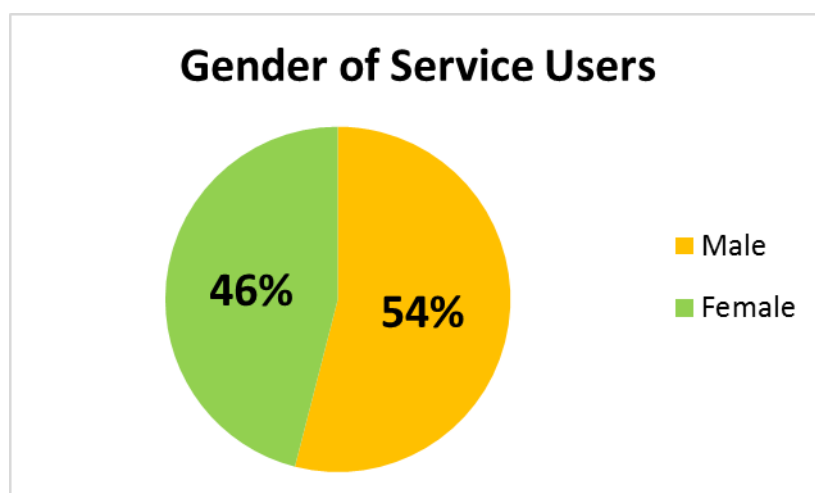
Currently the service cannot widen its offer because the current level of charging does not cover the full costs entailed. By re-directing a part of the proposed savings in overheads to the direct cost of the service, the overall offer can be disproportionately expanded. At the same time, pricing can be made consistent as between Academies and Maintained Schools, and there would be some limited scope for further non-traded work.

On that basis, it is proposed that £70,000 of savings from overheads are redirected towards supporting the direct costs of the service, with a further £53,000 taken as a saving to the HLN DSG block.

It should be noted that this proposal is not consistent with the figures in the wider paper elsewhere on this agenda round next year's budget; it would be necessary to make a minor amendment when next the HLN DSG budget is presented to Forum in the new year.

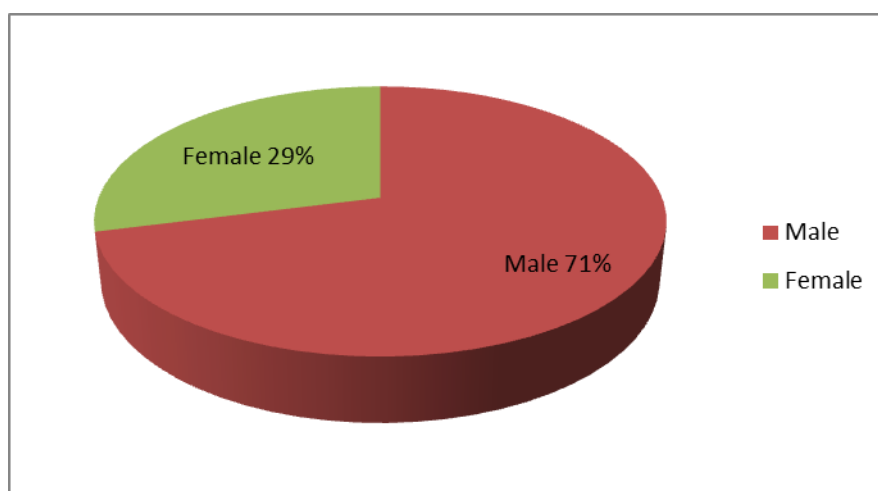
Appendix 1: Safe Space Facts and Figures

The data is captured from the information provided by the referrer.



Taking into account both referral groups mentioned earlier the information below provides additional detail on the children and young people Safe Space are working with presenting with SEN who are receiving Counselling or Arts Therapy.

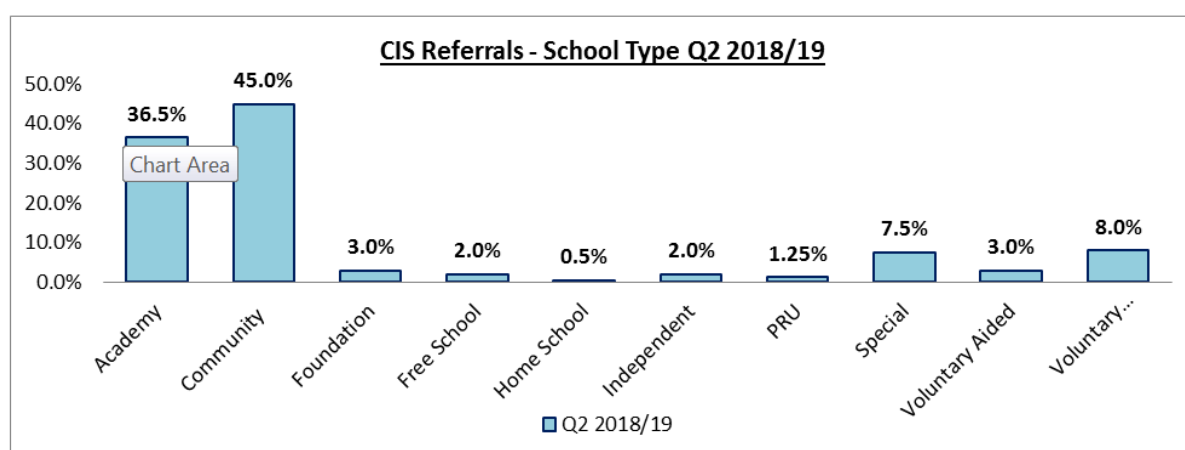
Number of total SEND referrals by gender 2017-18



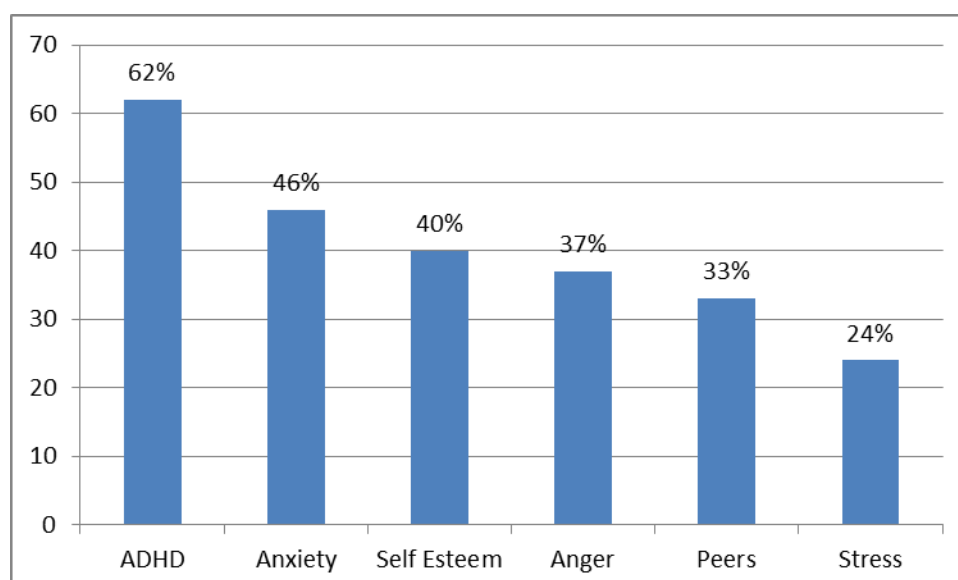
Interestingly this differs greatly to the gender pattern seen across all contract types within Safe Space. As a service we believe that this is linked to the types of behaviour presenting at school being generally more challenging from boys i.e. aggression and / or angry outbursts and that the schools are struggling to manage within the classroom. It is positive though given the statistics that demonstrate how under represented boys and young men are in mental health services.

Referral Source

45% of referrals received by counselling in schools services in Q2 of 2017/18 were for children and young people attending HCC community schools of which 7.5% were special schools and 1.25% Pupil Referral Units (PRU's). Children and young people attending Academies made up the next largest proportion of referrals with 36.5% followed by Voluntary Controlled schools with 8%. Independent schools accounted for just 2% of the total referrals in Q2 which may appear low in comparison to other school types however it is believed that independent schools choose to charge parents/carers for the support which may have an impact in the take up of the service.



Top Presenting Issues for children and young people with SEND 2017-18:



These were the main presenting issues that were reported by SEND children and young people to the therapist. Anxiety is the main presenting issue for all of our children and young people.

Geographical spread

The table below shows the countywide spread of schools. These are fairly even and demonstrate why Hertfordshire wide coverage is important.

