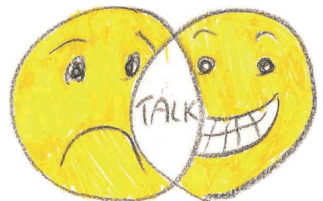




Counselling in Schools
Mentoring & Brief Therapy

Counselling in Schools Service

Information for Professionals



“I knew from my experience that children do not learn how to read and write and do maths when they are feeling terrible about themselves. I had already discovered in my work with children that when I took the time to do therapy with them and help them get out some of their blocked feelings, they did much better in their academic work.”

Quote from **V. Oaklander (1988) “Windows to our Children”**

What is the Counselling in Schools Service?

The Counselling in Schools Service (CISS) provides Counselling and Arts Therapy in a variety of schools and community settings across Hertfordshire to promote the emotional health and well-being of children and young people aged 5 – 19 years (up to 21 years for Care Leavers).

Service Aim

As a service we are committed to delivering quality assured therapy that provides children and young people with a creative, confidential and safe space to work through any issues that they may be experiencing. Through Counselling and Arts Therapy we aim to empower children and young people to find their own unique way of dealing with their thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

What Services do we offer?

The Counselling in Schools Service offers the following:

- **Counselling** (Our Counsellors have play therapy skills which allow them to work with the younger age group, and with children/young people with a learning difficulty/disability)
- **Art Therapy**
- **Drama Therapy**
- **Play Therapy**
- **Group Work** (a maximum of six students per group)
- **Supervision for staff**
- **Training** Our therapists can offer a variety of training on a range of topics that may be useful for your staff



What is Counselling?

Counselling offers people a non-judgmental space to discuss issues that are affecting their everyday lives in a safe and confidential setting. Issues explored vary according to each individual but usually can be linked to stress, relationships, change, loss and distressing/traumatic events. An essential part of the Counselling process is the therapeutic relationship between the therapist and client.

Our Counsellors use a variety of creative mediums such as art materials, sand trays, puppets and games to engage with clients.

What is Arts Therapy?

Arts Therapy offers people a creative alternative to Counselling. Art or drama is used as the primary means of communication to allow an individual the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings in a safe and confidential environment. It can be particularly helpful for those who find it hard to express their thoughts and feelings verbally.

“Having the same person who didn’t know my family and who wasn’t from my school was the most important thing”

Why have Counselling/Arts Therapy in a school?

Like most of us children and young people can find that their behaviour and/or ability to concentrate is affected when they are trying to deal with difficult issues. Allowing them a safe and confidential space to explore these issues can enable them to achieve their full potential both personally and academically.

In Mick Cooper’s report “School-based Counselling in UK Secondary Schools: A review and critical evaluation”, over two thirds of school students would rather see a Counsellor at their school as opposed to outside of the school environment.

What are the benefits of providing Counselling/Arts Therapy for pupils?

For pupils the benefits can include:

- **Improved self-esteem**
- **Reducing the risk of exclusion**
- **Improvements in behaviour and/or attendance**
- **Improved peer relationships**
- **Better attainment/achievement**

“Children who go improve socially, emotionally and are then open to learning. Children who go enjoy it and are comfortable about going to it. It opens up potential for them seeking it again later in life.”

What are the benefits of buying in the Counselling in Schools Service?

The Counselling in Schools Service provides the following benefits:

- **Fifteen years’ experience of delivering therapeutic intervention in school settings**
- **A quality assured service**
- **Hertfordshire wide coverage**
- **Experienced staff with a range of therapeutic tools e.g. play therapy skills CBT skills, solution focused work**
- **Experience of providing therapy to children/young people with additional needs**
- **Annual or Short Term contracts to allow consistency/flexibility of provision**
- **Ability to respond quickly in a crisis**
- **Ability to follow a child/young person through educational establishments in Hertfordshire e.g. Primary to Secondary school to support transition**
- **INSET training for staff**
- **Established policies and procedures for implementing service provision and maintaining quality assurance**
- **Service delivery supports a range of local strategies and has links with universal, targeted and specialist services to provide support to a child/young person and schools where appropriate i.e. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)**



How is the service quality assured?

The Counselling in Schools Service offers the following quality assurance standards:

- **All therapists have a valid DBS (Disclosure Barring Service) certificate**
- **Our Counsellors are qualified to Diploma level and beyond; with Arts Therapists to Masters level**
- **Therapists have Professional Indemnity Insurance**
- **Therapists work confidentially, except when a child/young person is at significant risk of harm from self or others**
- **All therapists access regular clinical supervision**
- **All therapists receive regular safeguarding training**
- **Our Counsellors are line managed under Hertfordshire County Council regulations**
- **Counsellors are accredited or working towards accreditation with the BACP (British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy)**
- **Counsellors receive regular training to enhance their practice**

“I didn’t know this service existed in schools, I am so pleased”

When can Counselling/Arts Therapy be helpful?

- When there is evidence of a behavioural change such as becoming withdrawn or disruptive
- When a young person is angry, erratic or shows mood swings or signs of possible depression
- When parents are going through divorce or separation and there are signs of changes in behaviour/distress
- Following the death of a family member or friend
- When there is knowledge or suspicion of some form of abuse or domestic violence
- When there are difficulties with friendships and/or bullying
- When a child/young person is new to the school, area or County and is having difficulty settling in or integrating
- When there are identity issues i.e. gender, cultural
- If there are health or disability issues such as life limiting illnesses
- When a child/young person refuses to engage with specialist services

Therapy can be used very effectively as an early intervention strategy to prevent the deterioration of a child or young person’s emotional health and well-being. It can enhance a pupil’s self-esteem and enable them to cope more effectively within a school setting; both socially and academically.

The more entrenched the issues that a child or young person is dealing with the more difficult it is for Counselling/Arts Therapy to be used as a preventative measure. It can mean that a longer, more intensive piece of work is required or that a child or young person may be less inclined to engage with the therapist.

“There should be someone we can go and talk to when we have problems rather than waiting for them to be difficult and affect our learning and not wanting to come to school.”

Who is Counselling/Arts Therapy not appropriate for?

- **Children/young people who do not want to or do not understand why they are attending**

All therapeutic work is dependent on a child or young person engaging with the process and as such it is important a child/young person understands why they are being referred for therapy and that they are willing to participate.

- **Children/young people requiring a specialist Mental Health Assessment or diagnosis**

Counselling in Schools therapists do not carry out mental health assessments, diagnose or prescribe. If during the course of the therapy specialist mental health needs are identified, therapists are able to support schools in accessing specialist services as and when appropriate.

Where a school identifies a pupil/family who will not engage with specialist mental health services, CISS is, where appropriate, able to work in partnership with CAMHS to ensure that an intervention is delivered to support the child or young person's emotional/mental health and well-being.

- **Children and young people receiving therapy from another service**

The Counselling in Schools Service will not usually work with a child or young person who is receiving a therapeutic intervention from another service. This is an ethical decision taken to prevent any confusion for a child or young person, and to avoid any possible 'contamination' of work. On occasion, as part of a therapeutic package being offered by CAMHS, we may work alongside one another to support a child/young person and their family but this work would be delivered within clear boundaries.



What should we have in place before we set up Counselling/Arts Therapy in our school?

In order for an effective, quality assured therapy service to be established, the following need to have been identified within a school before work can begin:

- **Accommodation for the Therapist:** A fit for purpose room for delivering the therapy needs to be available e.g. one that is the same each week, comfortable and private but not isolated
- **A referral process:** Schools need to consider how referrals will be managed, either by the SENCO or Head Teacher, or whether students can refer themselves to the therapist for support.
- **Referral Criteria:** Where a process will be put in place for referrals to be managed, it is helpful to consider what criteria will be used to identify pupils who are most in need of Counselling/Arts Therapy. It is also helpful to have this in writing.
- **A named Child Protection Liaison Officer:** This is vital in ensuring any disclosures arising from the work are taken forward in line with Hertfordshire Safeguarding Board Child Protection procedures. This relationship will also be used to feedback any non-confidential strategies that may support the school in working with the child/young person e.g. child/young person needs 'time out' after therapy.
- **A process for gaining Parental Consent (Primary Schools):** A range of options exist that the service can advise on e.g. sending an opt out letter to all parents before work begins. Counselling/Arts Therapy works best when it is supported by a parent/carer and as such therapists working within Primary Schools will offer to meet or talk with parents/carers before the work begins.

“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.”

A quote from: **Gillick v West Norfolk AHA, House of Lords 1985**

What happens if Child Protection issues arise/a disclosure is made?

At the beginning of any work a contract is set up between the therapist and the child/young person explaining the boundaries of confidentiality. It makes clear that if the child/young person is considered to be at risk of significant harm from others or to themselves as a result of information that is disclosed, the therapist will need to share this with the Designated Child Protection Lead in the school to help keep them as safe as possible.

The Counsellor/Arts Therapist would look to obtain the child or young person's permission to share information. Any decision that is taken by the therapist with regards to breaking confidentiality will be done in the best interests of the child or young person.

What information will we share with you?

Within the boundaries of confidentiality our therapists will look to share strategies and information that does not compromise the integrity of the work that is being carried out. If the Counsellor/Arts Therapist believes it would be beneficial, they may work with a child/young person to empower them to share information with their family or with the school themselves rather than speaking on their behalf.

The Counselling in Schools Service recognises how frustrating confidentiality can be for schools and as such therapists are encouraged to work confidentially but not in isolation.



Do we need parental consent before a child or young person can access the therapy?

No work can be undertaken without a school providing a signed Single Service Request (SSR) form or a copy of the CAF (Common Assessment Framework). In Primary Schools, parents are asked to sign the form as a means of giving written parental consent for the work. Most Secondary Schools allow their pupils to sign SSR forms in place of a parent's signature as a means of allowing them to access the therapy confidentially.

If a Therapist is off sick what happens?

If a therapist is off sick we would ask them to make up the session they have missed at an alternative day/time. We do recognise though that this is not always possible.

If the client is off sick what happens?

If the child/young person is unwell or unable to attend one session, therapists will usually be able to accommodate an extra session at the end of the work; but where this happens on more than one occasion the session numbers will not be increased. This is because we are a traded service and unable to cover the costs of more than one additional session.

For further information or to discuss a potential referral please contact the service on **01992 588796** or email **counsellinginschoolsmailbox@hertfordshire.gov.uk**

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