

Chilton Trinity Technology College

Counselling Policy



- **Rationale**
- **Ethics**
- **Confidentiality**
- **Working within a school setting**
- **Counselling and Counselling skills**
- **Contracting**
- **Appointments**
- **Accountability**
- **Supervision**
- **Referral Routes**

“People become engaged in counselling when a person, occupying regular or temporarily the role of counsellor, offers and agrees explicitly to give time, attention and respect to another person, or persons, who will be temporarily in the role of client” British Association for Counselling 1995

Rationale

To provide students with an additional support service within the school, contributing to the best possible start in life for pupils by promoting:

- spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development both in school and into the community.
- helping to reduce stress levels and promoting emotional wellbeing and inclusion.
- helping students develop strategies in order to prepare them for the responsibilities and experiences of adult life.
- providing a safe place for consideration and exploration of desired life change.

Ethics

The BACP Code of Ethics and Practise Guidelines are followed - a copy of which is held by each school counsellor, the Deputy Head and Named Safeguarding Child Protection Officer. A copy can also be found in the counselling room.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is essential to the counselling process:

- to enable the young person to develop a trusting relationship with the Counsellor.
- to allow the young person to open up and share feelings without fear of blame, reprisal or judgment.
- to allow the young person to speak freely about issues concerning them.
- to encourage others to come forward for counselling.

Problems in maintaining confidentiality are unlikely to occur if there is mutual trust, goodwill and respect between counsellor, school, staff and parents. The young person is free to talk to anyone about their counselling sessions if they wish, but should not be directly questioned by school staff.

The counsellor will not pass on any detailed accounts of counselling sessions, but it may be necessary to communicate periodically with school pastoral staff, with the student's permission.

Sometimes, it may be necessary to liaise with, or refer the young person to another agency for further help. This would only happen with the young person's express permission and subject to child protection and mental health concerns.

Limitations to confidentiality

An individual's wishes about confidentiality may be overridden by a paramount duty to protect a child's welfare. (*A child is defined as anyone under the age of 18, Children Act 1994.*)

A school counsellor has a duty to work within the safeguarding children's policy, the child protection procedures of the school and the relevant Child Protection Legislation.

Breaching confidentiality

At the onset of the client/counsellor relationship it will be made clear to the young person when there is a need to breach confidentiality. This may happen when the young person or any other person is deemed to be at risk of significant harm.

The counsellor will discuss this with the young person should the need arise and try to gain their consent to disclosing concerns. Where possible the counsellor will keep them informed and involve them in this process. Counsellors will be familiar with and know how to make contact with the Deputy Head the Named Safeguarding Child Protection Officer within school. Even without the student's consent, it may be necessary to disclose information they have revealed.

More minor concerns will remain confidential unless the young person wants them shared in order to seek further help/support.

Working within the school setting

Counselling within a school setting is very different from working for other counselling agencies. School counsellors are accountable to the Head Teacher who makes the overall decisions about the sharing of information and also confidentiality. This needs to be dealt with in a sensitive way and always in the best interest of the student.

"Any attempt to remove the principle of confidentiality in counselling will rapidly undermine the overall ethos of the school as a caring educational community" (Roger Casemore, Confidentiality & School Counselling, BACP 1995). Counsellors coming into school from outside agencies need to be absolutely clear in their understanding about the sharing of information and confidentiality policy, as this area may be unique to working within a school setting.

The DfE accept that a counselling session will not be inspected or observed by anyone.

Collaboration is crucial. Counselling Coordinator to liaise with Heads of Year and other identified members of staff.

Deputy Head (Pastoral) and SENCO to be kept informed on the working of, and any relevant issues relating to the school counselling service.

All parents will receive a counselling information letter and leaflet - see appendix, to inform them of the service and the issues associated with confidentiality.

Counselling and using counselling skills

Counselling skills are used in various situations; the class room, in a learning support room, by the school nurse etc. *Counselling* is when two people contract to enter into a counselling relationship by agreeing a counselling contract which will involve working in a client/counsellor relationship over a number of sessions. When the contract is in place, the BACP Code of Ethics and Practice for Counsellors should be referred to.

Contracting

The verbal contract is negotiated between client and counsellor. The verbal contract is reviewed after the initial period of counselling - six weeks. Further counselling sessions can be offered after each review. The verbal contract should be adhered to so both client and counsellor is clear of what the process will involve. The verbal contract should allow the client to become empowered and take responsibility in order to gain fully from the counselling process.

Issues regarding confidentiality should be discussed and clearly understood when creating the initial verbal contract.

Appointment times

The duration of the counselling sessions will be 50minutes, with some flexibility to take into account individual client needs. Sessions are held during normal lesson time. However, it is important, that for the duration of the counselling, those sessions are rotated so the student is not missing the same lesson each week.

Counselling will take place in the designated counselling room within the Enrichment Centre.

Accountability

- The counsellor is ultimately accountable to the client.
- The counsellor is also accountable to the Head Teacher.
- Where the nature of accountability leads or may lead to a conflict of interests, counsellors need to declare this to the client (e.g. the passing on of information).
- Public liability insurance is to be held by each school counsellor – BACP have information on companies who specialise in providing counselor insurance.
- An evaluation sheet is to be offered to each client at the end of the counselling relationship
 - see appendix.
- Counsellors are responsible for keeping their own client notes.
- A statistical audit shall be completed by each counsellor - see appendix and given to Deputy Head (Pastoral) each term.

Supervision

Supervision is on an individual, regular basis as identified in the BACP Professional Standards Code of Practice. The organisation of supervision is the responsibility of the individual counsellor. The school makes supervision payment for volunteer counsellors. In addition there is also an opportunity for group supervision within the counsellors meetings which are held every six weeks.

Referral Routes

Students can be:

- Self referred.
- Suggested to the counselling service by a member of staff.
- Suggested to the counselling service by a parent, peer or outside agency.
- Referred as part of their Individual Education Plan or Pastoral Support Plan.
- Referred by a GP and/or CAMHS (Child and Mental Health Service.)

Clients will be offered an initial assessment session with Counselling Coordinator before allocation of a counsellor and a counselling contract being put into place. Appointment systems should be as discreet as possible - by way of a sealed envelope in the first instance placed in the student's form register. Future session times to be agreed during each session.

Clients should be encouraged to take responsibility for keeping appointments, and where possible leave a message via Counselling Coordinator if they are unable to attend an appointment. If a session is missed and a message is not received the counsellor will send a note to the student offering an appointment for the following week. This will be done for two weeks if the client does not attend and no message is received, a final note will be sent terminating the counselling contract, but assuring the student that the service is still open to them to access again in the future should they need it.