



COUNSELLING POLICY

AT

HEATHFIELD COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Date reviewed : August 2020
Date of next review : August 2022

Reviewers : Mike Brooks / Debbie Eaton / Sinead McDonald

Date of ratification by Governing Board : _____

| Document Control | | |
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| Edition | Issued | Changes to previous |
| | | Please see highlighted in yellow |

| Policies / Documents referred to in this policy | Post Holders / Persons named in this policy |
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Review every 2 years

Access to Counselling is outlined with the school's intervention framework.

The policy is advised by "The Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy," introduced by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) in April 2002.

And "Good Practice Guidance for Counselling in Schools - 4th Edition" published by BACP.

This policy has been formed in collaboration between Deputy Head (Pastoral) and School Counsellor.

The policy is submitted to the Heathfield Community School Governors via the Governors Personnel Sub-Committee.

The policy will be reviewed every two years.

Link worker at CAMHS (Children and Adolescent's Mental Health Services) is currently Marianne Dinsdale.

The school employs 1 x part time counsellor and offers placements to student counsellors.

DEFINITION OF COUNSELLING

The relationship between counselling and schools was first officially recorded in 1963 in The Newsom Report. For almost fifty years the pendulum has swung between the role of the specialist School Counsellor and the teacher in pastoral care integrating counselling skills into their primary role of teacher.

However, the “Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy” makes a clear distinction between counselling skills and the process of formal counselling with a practitioner.

“The term ‘practitioner’ is used generically to refer to anyone with responsibility for the provision of counselling or psychotherapy services.”

Counselling at Heathfield is the highest level in our graduated response for mental health support and is part of our SEMH Partnership

Aims

Counselling aims to help the student in need. It provides an in-school service for young people experiencing difficulties as a result of emotional concerns, behavioural problems, social and peer pressure, family tensions, bereavement and normal developmental issues.

THE ROLE OF THE COUNSELLOR

- To offer students individual counselling or to take part in group work.
- To provide information on the counselling service, the role of the counsellor and the boundaries of confidentiality.
- To work within the agreed appointment system and administration structure.
- To keep suitable case records on the counselling in a secure place.
- To report back to Year Heads and SLT Link on a regular basis on numbers who use the services and give a general overview of the types of problems.
- To network (via SLT) personnel from other agencies with a view to easing referrals and accessing specialist consultants (e.g. Promise Scheme, Youth Service, CAMHS, MIND etc).
- To devise and, where appropriate, deliver a programme of training to support and deliver the counselling service.
- To provide consultation to staff whose role is to support students in distress abiding at all times to confidentiality policy.
- Counsellors will support each other with termly meetings and some may elect to have their own more structured supervision. Individual students will not be discussed.

Trained Counsellors and staff with some training or experience in counselling at Heathfield

Debbie Eaton : Trained Counsellor

Nicola Sargent : Trainee Counsellor

Peter Hoare : Head

Nicola Patmore : Deputy Head and Designated Safeguarding Lead

Mike Brooks & Sinead McDonald (SENCO) : Acting Deputy Head - responsible for Co-ordinating the Counselling Service

Connie Bowler : Forest School

Adam Hill : Year Heads who deal with students needing support on a daily basis.
Jennifer Martin
Jodi Crocker
Hannah White
Helena Nicholls

NHS School Clinic : Our NHS School Nurse counsels' students on more medical issues but, in so doing, may represent a vital source of advice and information about some vulnerable and distressing moments for students.

(SPACE students may self-refer / request counselling via their Personal tutor or other staff as outlined in The SPACE handbook.)

RECOGNITION OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF OTHER STAFF/STUDENTS

The following teams and individuals (colleagues and students) provide support in the following ways.

SLT :

All members of the SLT are constantly dealing with the needs of students within the school and, as such, are a mine of information and experience in such matters. They also represent a route by which external help may be requested.

The Special Educational Needs Team :

Their dealings with students on a more individual basis means that often they take an important role in providing more than just academic support for the many students in their care. Their experience and background information relating to particular students is often second to none.

Designated Safeguarding Team :

This team frequently deal with Child Protection concerns and issues frequently relating to external services. Lead : Nicola Patmore; Deputies : Kate Berryman and Sue Hawkins plus experienced team.

All Staff Mentors :

Have the brief of taking a special interest in the academic progress of targeted students. However, they also have a more general supportive role and like the Special Needs team have a more individual knowledge of their students.

LSA Mentors :

Work with a variety of students who need additional 1 : 1 support out of the classroom.

Community/Business Mentors :

Again, these non-school based adults take an academic interest in particular students and, as such, are important people in the lives of their students. They meet their students on a monthly basis and work on targets (time management, self-esteem, presentation skills and confidence building). They receive training regarding confidentiality issues and parameters of counselling. They are aware of the named Child Protection personnel in school.

Form Tutors :

Have daily contact with their tutor groups and have responsibility for their academic/pastoral welfare as well as liaison with parents.

Sue Hawkins :

Trained First Aider in the school office. Sometimes what presents itself as a medical issue will emerge as an emotional one. Designated Safeguarding Deputy (Child Protection).

Self Harm LSAs :

Karen Marsden has been trained in supporting students who self-harm. Students can self-refer or be referred by another member of staff.

TRAINEE COUNSELLORS

From time-to-time the opportunity arises to involve trainee counsellors who require 'experience and supervision' for their diploma course. They require DBS clearance and are expected to arrange their own supervision outside of the Heathfield staff counselling team. Confirmation from the supervisor will be required.

Counselling takes place in a dedicated room above the Main Reception.

BEREAVEMENT

Bereavement specialist counsellors are accessed via direct referral (e.g. Barnadoes, Winston's Wish).

APPOINTMENT SYSTEMS

Accessing Counsellors

- (a) Counselling is publicised in assemblies and offered in 1:1s when students express concerns.
- (b) Information for students regarding access to, and details about, counselling is available via their form tutor and on posters around the site.
- (c) Students can be referred via the Year Head, SLT or other member of staff.
- (d) Students may be referred to outside agencies. Team 4 (Adolescent Support Workers), PFSA (Parent and Family Support Advisor) and CAMHS (Children & Adolescent Mental Health Service) and other agencies play an important role with both individuals and groups. Head teachers may not give permission for young people to go offsite to a referral service. Consent is required from the person with a parental responsibility.
- (e) Parents/carers may ask to refer their child.
- (f) Students may raise concerns about a peer.
- (g) Staff will discuss with the student whether an alternative Mental Health Support strategy is more appropriate (see Appendix).
- (h) On RCADS (Revised Childhood Anxiety & Depression Scale) may be completed, possible along with other outcome measures.

APPOINTMENTS

Elaine Gossage timetables the sessions. Clients are called to appointments using discreet methods - through the daily notices (usually just described as Appointment) and a student notice which is given out in registration. The choice to continue with counselling is at the discretion of the student client.

Students are generally counselled by extraction from class or during break and lunchtimes. The latter obviously has disadvantages because clients may view the timing negatively but the former method runs into difficulties when staff are naturally unwilling to release certain students (especially from Year 11). It is important to 'roll' the appointments in such a way that they do not affect one subject unfairly. This can be surprisingly difficult given that the student may not wish to miss certain subjects and that the counsellors will only be free to counsel during limited timetable slots. Overall, however, most teachers are happy to release students for this purpose, especially if this is requested in advance.

It is also important that our system allows Year Heads/SLT to find out who is being counselled and by whom. In the bustle of school life it is easily possible not to pick up on what is already being done. An appointment log is kept in the main office for this reason. It is also necessary to centralise booking for the counselling rooms.

Students will have an initial assessment session, followed by a further 6 Counselling sessions. Some students may need more, some may need less. Counsellors regularly review the need for counselling and decide whether to continue or stop or refer to an outside agency.

Where illness of the Counsellor has missed a session then a session will be rescheduled. If a student chooses to not attend 2 sessions (not including illness) the counselling will be stopped and they will be put back on the waiting list.

PARENTS

Parents are informed about the school's counselling service through the student planner and the school website.

Since the service offered follows the Counselling Code of Confidentiality whereby students do not have to inform their parents that they are receiving counselling. Parents are asked to notify the school if they specifically wish their child to be excluded from this service.

However, often counselling is triggered as a result of parent request and/or alterations in domestic situations.

It is important to us to maintain the trust of students and parents in order to support students throughout their time at Heathfield. Often counselling issues are straightforward e.g. stress management, behaviour, anger-management, bereavement, family splits etc. However, any issue relating to Child Protection is treated under the appropriate Code of Practice (see relevant paragraph).

CHILD PROTECTION

An individual's wishes about confidentiality may be overridden by a paramount duty to protect the young person's welfare.

Section 87 of The Children's Act 1989 imposes a "qualified duty" upon those workers employed by Local authorities, including Education and Health Services to assist Social Services in their enquiries in the case of child abuse where called upon to do so but not where doing so would be unreasonable in all the circumstances of the case.

In assessing what is 'unreasonable' counsellors must always refer to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy (Child Protection) - current post holders are displayed in the staff room and main school office, and are named in this document.

This must be done on the same day as the 'disclosure'. In the event of neither of these designated persons being available, the Head or one of the Deputy Heads should be informed of the case.

Allegations can then be reported to Social Services (Somerset Direct : 0845 345 9122) by the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputies.

FRASER GUIDELINES, TEENAGERS AND CONSENT & CONFIDENTIALITY

There is no minimum age in terms of legal capacity to consent to medical treatment and so it is legal for a young person under 16 to approach and use sexual health services. Young people also have rights of self determination given to them in The Age of Legal Capacity Act 1991 which assigns various legal rights to young people of any age, including the legal capacity to consent to surgical, medical or dental procedure or treatment.

There may still be debate however about when a young person might be *competent* to make their own decisions and seek out services, and worries about whether adequate efforts have been made to encourage under 16's to involve their parent(s) in the issues or decisions which they are facing.

When agencies talk about the assessment they make as to whether a young person can be provided with confidential sexual health services without parental consent they often talk about using what has been called the *Fraser Guidelines*. The guidelines arise from the case in the early 80's when Victoria Gillick attempted to set a legal precedent in England and Wales which would have meant that medical practitioners could not give young people under the age of 16 treatment or contraceptive services without parental permission. Initially successful the ruling was eventually changed when the House of Lords ruled that people who are under 16, who are fully able to understand what is proposed, and its implications, are competent to consent to medical treatment regardless of age. This is now the legal position in England and Wales. In Scotland, the ruling has also been interpreted as meaning that medical practitioners can give contraceptive advice or treatment to young people under 16 without parental knowledge.

In making his judgement the Law Lord, Lord Fraser, offered a set of criteria which must apply when medical practitioners are offering contraceptive services to under 16's without parental knowledge or permission. The so-called *Fraser Guidelines* (some people refer to assessing whether the young person is *Gillick competent*) state that all the following requirements should be fulfilled. The guidelines have proved such a useful tool that most agencies offering information, advice or services to young people about their sexual health have adopted the *Fraser Guidelines* as the basis for best practice.

The guidelines suggest that before providing a service to under 16's to which parents have not given consent the staff member should ensure that the following criteria are met :

The Fraser Guidelines

1. The young person understands the advice being given.
2. The young person cannot be convinced to involve parents/carers or allow the medical practitioner to do so on their behalf.
3. It is likely that the young person will begin or continue having intercourse with or without treatment/contraception.
4. Unless he or she receives treatment/contraception their physical or mental health (or both) is likely to suffer.
5. The young person's best interests require contraceptive advice, treatment or supplies to be given without parental consent.

RECORD KEEPING

Counsellors must keep a log of counselling sessions recording: name, tutor group and date. These records must be kept in a safe and secure place. These records belong to the counsellor and not the school, as such the counsellor's permission must be sought for the notes to be passed on to a third party.

If a child has been having mentoring, counselling or any other 1:1 session in school and CSC or the school Child Protection team have Safeguarding concerns then the Child Protection Lead (or Deputy) may request to access mentoring/counselling notes. The mentor/counsellor will be contacted. If contact is unable to be made and the Safeguarding concerns are high or an emergency the Child Protection Lead (or Deputy) may access the notes without permission. The notes will only be seen by the Child Protection Lead (or Deputy) and will not be passed to any third party outside of the school without the permission of the counsellor.

A statistical Audit will be maintained by the Lead Counsellor (Debbie Eaton).

SUPERVISING AND MANAGING

- Practitioners are responsible for clarifying who holds responsibility for the work with the client.
- Counsellors receive supervision independently of any school managerial relation.

APPENDIX

- School Code of Practice.

APPENDIX

SCHOOL CODE OF PRACTICE

- 1.) The school does not help with the training of “trainee” counsellors (due to the demands of supervision).
- 2.) The Counsellor should hold counselling sessions in a soundproof room where students can feel safe and comfortable.
- 3.) Giving advice and information about outside agencies in order to help young clients make informed choices is different from referral, where there will be direct contact with the outside agency on behalf of the client. The latter procedure usually involves informing parents and this is the responsibility of the Head teacher. Head teachers cannot give permission for young people to go off-site to a referral counselling service (e.g. a local youth counselling service). This is the responsibility of the person with parental responsibility (Good Practice Guidance for Counselling in schools - page 11).
- 4.) Parents are informed, via the Student Planner and the school website about the school’s counselling service. It is explained that students may access this without parents/carers permission (although often parents/carers request the referral). The school will enable this to happen unless the parent/carer expresses, in writing, that they do not wish their child to have access to counselling unless they are informed in any situation. Any such request should be sent directly to Nicola Patmore (SLT).
- 5.) It is important for the counsellor and the school staff to encourage the young person to communicate positively with their parents/carers and to make every attempt to ensure that a difficult family situation is not exacerbated by the implementation of the Fraser (Gillick) - competent principle.
- 6.) The right to student confidentiality can be maintained **except** when there are over-riding reasons - such as risk of self-harm, under-age pregnancy and misuse of drugs. (The Head teacher has the right to exercise judgement over the negotiation of the level of confidentiality for the school counselling service) - “Good Practice Guidance for Counselling in Schools”).
- 7.) An individual clients’ wish for confidentiality may be overridden by a paramount duty to protect the child.
- 8.) Teachers will work together with the counsellor about sharing information with parents/carers in the best interests of the child and the schools relationship with the family (which in turn supports the child in question and any siblings who are, or will be, attending the school).

- 9.) The Head teacher or parent/carer may request a discussion with a counsellor about the client when there are doubts as to the child's welfare, or to the suitability and progress of counselling.
- 10.) The counsellor needs to explain to student clients the boundaries of confidentiality the Heathfield School Counselling Service can offer. They should not be offered a level of confidentiality that cannot be kept. It is the counsellors' responsibility to explain to students clearly and periodically exactly what this means in practice. They should be assured that the best decisions regarding confidentiality would be made in the interest of safe guarding and promoting clients' welfare, preferably with their knowledge and consent. Counsellors should do everything within their means to ensure that this is always the case.

Examples of the types of problems for referral to the school's counselling service

Health

- Post-abuse (emotional, neglect, physical) * (This would usually be after, or in-tandem with external agency counselling.)
- Eating disorder
- Smoking
- Pregnancy
- Personal hygiene
- Substance abuse
- Pre-trial counselling might be considered (see guidance from Crown Prosecution Service)

Personal / Self

- Anxiety / stress
- Gender and sexuality
- Self-esteem
- Self-harm
- Bullying

Relationships / family

- Bereavement
- Dysfunctional family
- Parental needs / expectations
- Financial problems
- Sibling
- Split family / separations
- Step-parents
- Boy / girlfriend
- Friends
- Inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Isolation / loneliness
- Peer relationships

School

- Academic / not coping
- Attendance difficulties
- Behaviour
- Experience of school
- Stress
- Phobic
- Relationships with staff

Post 16 students

Each student at The SPACE has a personal tutor. In a situation where a student requests counselling this can be accessed via their tutor who will contact Peter Hoare in order for counselling to be made available. Alternatively, students can self-refer to the counselling service (details in The SPACE handbook).

References

1. "The Ethical Framework for Good Practice in counselling and Psychotherapy 2002". Published BACP www.bacp.co.uk - BACP House, 35-37 Albert Street, Rugby, Warwickshire. CV21 2SG.
2. The Children's Act 1989. Section 87.
3. The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs - 4th Edition.
4. The Newsom Report. Half Our Future: Report of the Central Advisory Council for England (Newsom Report), 1963. 4 Fiches.
5. ISBN 0946 181608 - Good Practice Guidance for Counselling in Schools
Telephone : 08704 435252

Useful information can be found via the NHS Northumberland, Tyne & Wear Website (ntw.nhs.uk).

Here you can find 24 self-help leaflets on subjects such as anxiety, sleeping problems, self-harm and eating disorders.

Also a website for professionals [https : //www.minded.org.uk](https://www.minded.org.uk)

Further external support can be found on the school website : www.heathfieldcommunityschool.com