Research

CWDC
Children's Workforce
Development Council

How do secondary school counsellors
work with other professionals?

Sharing our experience
Practitioner led research 2008-2009
PLR0809/115

This report is part of CWDC's Practitioner-Led Research (PLR) programme. Now in its third year, the programme gives practitioners the opportunity to explore, describe and evaluate ways in which services are currently being delivered within the children's workforce.

Working alongside mentors from Making Research Count (MRC), practitioners design and conduct their own small-scale research and then produce a report which is centred around the delivery of Integrated Working.

The reports are used to improve ways of working, recognise success and provide examples of good practice.

This year, 41 teams of practitioners completed projects in a number of areas including:

- Adoption
- Bullying
- CAF
- Child trafficking
- Disability
- Early Years
- Education Support
- Parenting
- Participation
- Social care
- Social work
- Travellers
- Youth

The reports have provided valuable insights into the children and young people's workforce, and the issues and challenges practitioners and service users face when working in an integrated environment. This will help to further inform workforce development throughout England.

This practitioner-led research project builds on the views and experiences of the individual projects and should not be considered the opinions and policies of CWDC.

How do secondary school counsellors work with other professionals?

Karen Cromarty and Kaye Richards, British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
April 2009

Abstract

Counselling services based in secondary schools across the UK are becoming common place. Indeed, several of the home nations have national strategies and targets to introduce universal counselling into schools to address the mental health needs of young people more effectively. This study explores how secondary school counsellors work with other professionals within and outside schools in the delivery of services.

Sixteen school counsellors from across the UK were interviewed, in four different focus groups - 2 in England (n=8) and 2 in Scotland (n=8). The findings indicate that the professional relationships counsellors have with other colleagues have a direct influence upon the quality of the service they feel able to offer. Time spent with colleagues when setting up services was viewed as highly beneficial, as was time spent building relationships and connections with colleagues within the school and from external agencies and organisations, as well as having a senior member of staff to liaise with.

It is apparent that attending to relationships outside of the counselling room may influence the positive outcomes for the counselling service and its clients generally. Implications of these findings may influence the time counsellors are employed by commissioners, and how counsellors use their time allocation in schools to ensure that effective services are both achieved and maintained. The research also points to the need for future research into the processes and practices in the delivery of school counselling across the UK.

Karen Cromarty and Kaye Richards
British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

1. Introduction

1.1   Setting the scene

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) is recognized as the leading professional body and the voice of counselling and psychotherapy in the United Kingdom, with over 30,000 members working to the highest professional standards. It is estimated that one quarter of these members work with children and young people, with the majority of those counselling in a secondary school setting. BACP has also attempted to capture the essence of a good school counselling service with good practice guidelines for counselling in schools (see McGinnis, 2006). With school counselling growing as a profession and schools employing more counsellors, it will be helpful to find out more about how these colleagues work with others, both within and outside of the school setting.

1.2   Aims

This project seeks to build on previous BACP research into school counselling (see Pattison et al., 2008) and asks 'How do school counsellors work with other professionals?'. The aim of the study was to elicit counsellors' views on how they worked with, and alongside, other professionals in schools, and those professionals they came into contact with who were external to the school. It examines how counsellors are able to integrate their working with others, whilst still maintaining the usual levels of trust and confidentiality required for a successful counselling relationship, intervention, and outcome. By exploring the factors that both enhance and hinder the development and maintenance of those professional relationships identified, it will help to identify wider considerations for the growing development of effective school counselling services across the UK.

1.3   Context

In *England*, the 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' agenda has prompted huge policy implementation in the children and young people sector. This agenda comes with guidance that expects professionals working with children and young people to work far more closely with others. This shift in policy, and subsequent working practices, may be affecting the school counsellor workforce. In recent years, there has been increasingly more government consultation and involvement in the field of children and young people's mental health. In England there is no national strategy for counselling in schools, and although counselling as a professional activity is prevalent in more than 50 per cent of English schools, this is as a result of local agreements. In *Wales*, the Welsh Assembly Government has developed a National School Based Counselling Strategy which has resulted in ring fenced funding for secondary school counselling over the next three years (*see* Pattison et al., 2008 for an overview of a Welsh Assembly Government commissioned study into counselling services in schools). In *Northern Ireland*, all post-primary schools have had the opportunity for school based counselling since 2007, following the implementation of a Northern Ireland national school counselling strategy. And finally, in *Scotland*, there is an aspiration target from the Scottish government to have accessible counselling for all school children by 2015
(Public Health Institute of Scotland, 2003).

Previous research into the area of school counsellors in the UK and their relation to other professionals is somewhat limited; however, previous studies have focused on:

- the effectiveness of school counselling services (Cooper, 2004; 2006)
- the views of school staff attitudes to counselling (Cooper et al., 2005; Baginsky, 2003)
- the views of young people about school counselling (Fox and Butler, 2007)
- models of counselling service delivery (Pattison et al., 2008).

Cooper (2004, 2006) indicates that school counselling interventions are beneficial to young people, including a reduction in psychological distress, and thus increases in psychological wellbeing as a result. Furthermore, clients and pupils across schools identify that they had a 'strong preference for locating the school service within the school environment' (Cooper, 2004: 1). However, Cooper (ibid.) also identified 'the need for greater communication and establishment of protocols between counsellors and guidance staff – particularly at the commencement of the service'. Baginsky (2004), in his review of school counselling in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, examined a range of issues in the delivery of school counselling. This included, amongst other things, issues around types of counselling, setting up a service and professional qualifications. The review identified that 'schools are often unaware of what is involved in setting up a service when they consider the possibility of doing so and on the kinds of unrealistic expectations about responsibilities and time than can result' (ibid.: 21). Fox and Butler (2007) examined young people's views on school counselling and found that young people do value having counsellors in schools. However, they also pointed to a range of issues that needed to be taken into account by those who manage school counselling services, including 'how counselling services become more accessible and acceptable to young people' (ibid.: 110).

A recent evaluation, commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government, examined school counselling services in operation across the UK (Pattison et al., 2008). This evaluation included a review of the different counselling models in schools and considered their advantages and disadvantages, as well as stakeholders' views of school counsellors, including those of headteachers, teaching staff and young people. The evaluation identified components for practice and service delivery in implementing effective school counselling, including access to multi-agency resources and support, work with and alongside other services and agencies in a collegial manner whilst maintaining levels of confidentially, and responding flexibly to local needs.

As well as initial evidence that suggests school counselling has a positive impact on young people, the above studies illustrate a range of issues that need careful consideration for the successful delivery of school counselling. Furthermore, although there is recognition that school counsellors work with a range professionals, the direct experience of how counsellors view these working relationships impacting on the effective delivery of school counselling is somewhat limited. This study aimed, therefore, to gain school counsellors' views on their day-to-day experience of working with other professionals, both within and outside a school setting.

2   Methodology

2.1   The general approach

A range of methodological approaches could be used to access views of school counsellors. This could include large-scale surveys, focus groups and/or individual interviews. For the purpose of this study it was deemed most appropriate to gain in-depth views, via focus groups. This would provide an opportunity to begin to identify related issues and would also be a time-efficient approach – individual interviews would be more time consuming in this context, especially as views across the UK were sought. The focus groups lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and a semi-structured interview schedule was used. Emergent issues during initial focus groups were followed up during later focus groups. The iterative nature of the questioning provided opportunity to explore issues that arose during each focus group and enabled early themes identified to be validated, or otherwise, by other participants.

2.2   Ethical Issues

The aims of the research were explained to all participants at the beginning of each focus group. The concept of anonymity was explained, along with what would happen with the information gathered during the interviews – ie that audio-recordings would be destroyed upon completion of the project, any transcribed interview transcripts would be made anonymous but kept for future reference or research, and that any views expressed could be used anonymously in research reports and publications. Also, it was made clear that participants could withdraw from the project at any stage (without having to offer any reason for this), and that they were also required to keep the viewpoints of other participants taking part in the focus group confidential. All participants agreed to take part in the study on this basis and then signed a participation consent form which included information explaining both the aims of the study and the above ethical information.

2.3   Participants

As counselling in schools is being developed strategically across all four nations it was recognized that it would be important to try to gain a representation of views from each nation. However, due to resource limitations, mainly the time to travel to different locations across the UK, coupled with limited time to undertake the study, it became apparent that this was not easily possible. Despite these restraints, the researchers were keen to adhere to the principle of more than one nation being represented. As such, efforts were made to ensure this and focus groups were carried out in England (n=2) and Scotland (n=2). The researchers are apologetic to colleagues in Wales who were ready and willing to take part in the study, but due to constraints of the study this was not feasible. Again, the reason that Northern Ireland was not considered was simply due to the limited resources to undertake the study within the time scale. This does point, however, to the need to undertake further research across all nations, especially as Wales and Northern Ireland have national school counselling strategies.

As noted above, the research consisted of four focus groups – two in Scotland (n=1; n=7) and two in England (n=2; n=6) – with a total of 16 school counsellors taking part in the study. As is evident, one of the focus groups ended up consisting of only one counsellor, however this was the first scheduled focus group, and thus served well

as an initial pilot as it was helpful in guiding the interview schedule for future focus groups. All the counsellors who took part in the study were existing or previous school counsellors or supervisors. Interviews took place in Scotland (October 2008) with a school counsellor; North East England (December 2008) with two school counsellors from different local authorities and different counselling teams; London (January 2009) with six counsellors, supervisors, and researchers from the school counselling sector across the UK; and Scotland (February 2009) with seven school counsellors and a counselling manager, all part of the same team. All groups were arranged on an opportunistic basis, depending on both the networks available to the researchers and the availability of the counsellors and researchers.

2.4   Data analysis
The interviews were all audio-recorded and extensive interview notes were taken by an observer researcher during the focus groups. Immediately post interview, the two researchers identified key themes from each interview. Due to limitations of resources the audio tapes weren't transcribed, however they were available should the researchers need to go back and clarify any of the interview notes. The interview notes were transcribed and initially read by a researcher for emerging themes. These transcripts were then reanalysed by the researcher for further themes and related categories, with sub-themes being then grouped into related categories.

2.5   The researchers' background
The researchers recognized that their own professional experience were areas of possible bias that they needed to be aware of. In particular, one researcher had direct experience of being a school counsellor, managing a cross-county school counselling service and providing supervision to other school counsellors. She thus brought a wide working knowledge of this sector and acknowledged that during the research some of the issues raised resonated with her professional experience. The second researcher also had direct experience of teaching in secondary schools and both researchers were employees of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy. Given these experiences, they both had working knowledge of and a vested interest in counselling in schools, and thus needed to be mindful of these experiences as points of possible bias throughout the study.

2.6   Study Limitations
The views gathered in this study are limited to the 16 counsellors interviewed and are thus not representative of all school counselling provision across the UK. The themes from the research were identified by one researcher, and weren't cross-referenced by a second analysis by another researcher, thus there is potential for bias and other related themes could have been overlooked. Furthermore, due to a small sample size, differences and similarities across the four nations cannot be ascertained. Also, in examining how counsellors work with other professionals, views from all these professional groups would offer a valuable perspective of the processes and dynamics in effective delivery of school counselling. Obviously, due to the resource constraints of this project, such an extensive study was not feasible, but it does offer possibilities for future research.

3   Findings

The findings from the study identify three key areas related to school counsellors working with other professionals:

1. Establishing a professional role in school:
    - Initial stages of building professional relationships
    - Employed by the school or not?
    - Time for building professional relationships
2. The purpose of establishing and maintaining professional relationships with others in and out of the school:
    - Referrals
    - Sharing information
3. Quality of professional relationships.

Each of the above key themes will be discussed in sequence, with relevant viewpoints as provided by the school counsellors interviewed, to illustrate emerging issues.

3.1   Establishing a professional role in school

3.1a   Initial stages of building professional relationships
It was considered that establishing oneself as a counsellor in school before even starting to work there was important. Counsellors who worked for managed services thought that it was very helpful for their manager to meet with senior staff before establishing the service in the school. The manager was able to discuss issues such as confidentiality, trust, and boundaries, often with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Senior staff in schools generally appeared to respond well to this approach and counsellors thought that this gave them a 'head start' in being accepted as being a professional in the setting. One counsellor noted that having the service manager to do this work was 'invaluable' and the result was that 'we are treated as professionals'. And another counsellor commented:

> 'In these early discussions with senior staff, either with the counsellor themselves or with the service manager, many ground rules were able to be laid down and school staff queries answered. Counsellors/counselling managers were able to discuss issues such as when confidentiality would be broken and to whom disclosures should be made. The issues around risk assessment and subsequent action were often discussed. Areas such as communication with other staff and parents about the progress of the clients were talked about and common understandings agreed. It was made clear in meetings what the expectations of counsellors were – what they would and wouldn't do in the school setting.'

Counsellors in the focus groups thought that time put into these early conversations with senior school staff laid the foundations for their future work in schools and that they were essential in the establishment of themselves as practitioners. For

counsellors who did not have such support and had to negotiate their contracts and terms and conditions before beginning work, this was a less positive experience. One counsellor who didn't have such meetings before starting work in a school noted:

> 'I suspect there was an element of suspicion when I started work in the school. I needed to work hard to make relationships with the "powerful people" – namely the head and senior management. I had to spend a lot of time with the deputy in developing services ... I had concern that the headteacher would be my boss, and that I might have to fill in for a teacher if they were off sick ... I think there was an element of suspicion about what I was offering ... (they wanted to know) ... what is my background?'

Another counsellor talked about difficulties when initial communication wasn't clear about expectation of role and boundaries, as she comments:

> 'I've had experience of sessions being interrupted. A young person [in school] is crying and [the teacher] wants me to give them immediate attention.'

A common theme that emerged in discussions about the establishment of services was that the support of a very senior member of staff was crucial to the establishment of a good service – as one counsellor said, 'the facilitating factors depend upon one senior person'. There was a general agreement amongst the counsellors that the better the relationship with that senior member of staff, the more successful the service was. Counsellors felt supported in these situations, for example when teaching staff didn't like students missing lessons for counselling.

3.1b   Employed by the school or not?
When considering their roles, counsellors reflected upon the difference between being employed directly by the school compared to being part of an external system, and how this impacted upon their professional relationships. It is fair to say that there were mixed views on the advantages and disadvantages of both models. Several counsellors thought that being externally employed helped them keep boundaries with school staff. One counsellor in particular liked the fact that she signed into school in a book that was for 'visiting specialists'. This suggested that school staff respected and valued the work of the counsellor. Others felt that being employed by the school allowed them to get to know staff better and, thus, become more part of the staff team and as such trusted more quickly. During the study it became more apparent that the actual debate was more about the amount of time spent in the school, rather than who the employer was. However, counsellors were divided as to the advantages, or otherwise, of the number of days they worked in a school.

3.1c   Time for building professional relationships

Relationships built with other school staff is obviously a factor that needs negotiating and accommodating for in the role of a school counsellor. One counsellor felt that the more briefings and meetings she went to the more she was accepted by school staff and this enhanced her working relationships. She noted:

> 'The more briefings I attend, the more teachers I know and the referrals are better.'

She also thought that the more exposure she had to teachers offered opportunities for her to educate school staff more fully about 'good referrals'. However, in contrast, another counsellor noted that she 'wouldn't want to spend more time in the school' as she didn't want to be 'seen as part of the school staff'. This counsellor thought that being seen talking to staff and going into the staffroom may compromise her relationship with clients who may think she is disclosing information to teachers.

Another time issue raised was one of working sufficient hours in school in order to carry out the role effectively. One counsellor noted how she felt stressed about the lack of time she had to carry out the functions of the role:

> 'Fitting my hours with theirs [school staff] is difficult. I can't do much in email because of confidentiality.'

Another counsellor noted:

> 'I struggle with only 1.5 days in the school ... it's insufficient, I would like to be in longer.'

Several other counsellors said that they had to 'juggle hours' to attend meetings, make referrals, and disclose child protection issues. Most interviewed were prepared to be contacted out of school hours to attend to these issues, but others were able to maintain working boundaries and only carry out school work in allotted hours.

Another consideration relating to time in school was to do with establishment of the counsellor/counselling service. It was clear that the longer the counsellor worked in the school the more trusted, known and relied upon their services became. Even the counsellors who had difficult starts in school acknowledged that as time went on the school's perspectives of their roles changed:

> 'I didn't win the battle, but we compromised ... there was a shift ... school accepted that I was not causing damage to young people.'

3.2   The purpose of establishing and maintaining professional relationships with others in and out of the school

3.2a   Referrals

Many counsellors mentioned that the quality of referral was directly related to their relationships in school. Those who had time to spend with staff and discuss cases,

explain about the counselling process, and were trusted by other colleagues, thought that they were in receipt of good, appropriate referrals to counselling. As one counsellor said:

> 'I need to be professional in the role, and educate others. It's part of the job to explain what the role is and when I can take a referral and when I can't but can signpost.'

Another counsellor talked about his relationship with the deputy headteacher and how that had impacted upon his role. Once he had been called into assist with a 'crisis' that the deputy head was dealing with, and having then supported this member of staff, the counsellor felt that his profile had been raised more in the school. Equally, some counsellors thought that they were more able to refer young people on to the many other agencies/ services they worked with, because of established relationships with them. (See Table 1 for an overview of other professionals school counsellors interviewed worked with).

Table 1: An overview of other professional agencies/services that school counsellors interviewed work with

Professionals within school	Professionals external to school
Pastoral care teams	School nurse
Deputy Headteacher and other senior managers	Behaviour support staff
Heads of Year/Learning Co-ordinators	Crisis response staff
Headteacher	Educational psychologist
Office staff	Community police
Child protection teacher	Drug and alcohol workers
Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator	Sexual health workers
Transition staff	CAMHS staff
Janitor/caretaker	GPs
Connexions workers	NHS staff eg self harm specialists
Learning Mentors	Health visitor
Transition teachers and assistants	Youth workers
Learning support assistants	Young Carers
Parent support worker	Youth offending team/youth engagement service
Connexions	Connexions
Educational welfare officer/educational liaison worker/attendance officer	Educational welfare officer/educational liaison worker/attendance officer
	Restorative justice workers
	Social workers

3.2b   Sharing information

Counsellors described how important the issues of sharing information were and also how on occasions this could be difficult. Counsellors were very clear about their statutory and contractual duties to disclose information: what should be disclosed, and with whom. Counsellors were broadly content to share general information about the general direction of individual cases with other colleagues; as one counsellor stated:

> 'I'm happy to say that a young person is attending counselling because they know that it can't be kept private in a school ... but I won't tell anyone what the content of the counselling is unless anyone is in danger, and the young person knows that too. I'm happy to say that they are attending and it's either going well or it's a bit tricky at the moment.'

Interestingly, counsellors were much happier sharing information on a one-to-one basis with other colleagues than in a group setting. This is particularly pertinent when counsellors are asked to attend Joint Area Team meetings (in Scotland) and other meetings such as case conferences or Child meetings (in England). One counsellor thought that attending inter-agency meetings was unhelpful for her as she didn't want to give any information about her client to the meeting, whereas others there thought that this was obstructive. Another counsellor said she did attend the meetings, but she didn't find them useful. However, she attended the meetings as it raised her profile with other professionals in school. Some counsellors were prepared to give a brief overview of a case in such meetings, if asked, but would not disclose sensitive information unless it had been agreed with the client in advance. Thus, counsellors generally felt more comfortable sharing information on a one-to-one basis with trusted colleagues, rather than in a group where they couldn't control the subsequent flow of the said information.

Counsellors also noted that with the young person's permission, sharing of information can be helpful in the school setting. An example of this could be when there had been a bereavement in a young person's family, and this knowledge may help the school support the child. Another was described by a counsellor as being useful when she requested that the special educational needs co-ordinator look into the possibility of a client being dyslexic, as she had noticed some possible signs of this in a session. Another time when counsellors were content to share information was when acting as an advocate for a young person – perhaps with staff or parents. One counsellor said she worked, very often and successfully, with the school nurse and seamlessly refers clients – making introductions and passing on information at the clients' requests to save them repeating themselves. It is evident then that counsellors were very willing to share information, as long as their clients had given informed consent and they were involved in the process in the way that they wanted to be.

3.3   Quality of professional relationships

In discussions with the counsellors it was clear that they generally enjoyed good working relationships with other professionals. In schools, the key people that counsellors thought were necessary to them in the role varied, but generally the following groups came out as important: pastoral teams with whom counsellors

worked with very closely; senior staff, who supported the delivery of services; secretarial staff, who were relied upon for much administrative work when counsellors weren't in school; and heads of year/learning co-ordinators, who have pastoral responsibility for students.

Table 1 lists all professionals who the participants of this research came into contact with.

In terms of external staff, different counsellors had varying relationships with other colleagues, often dependent upon the time and availability to meet or talk with them. Staff who were school based, like school nurses, were often seen to be more accessible and as such working alliances were successful. Two notable groups discussed in the focus groups were Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and social care direct/social workers.

The direct experience of counsellors working with CAMHS was mixed. As two counsellors noted:

> 'They [CAMHS] went out of their way to work collaboratively. We have monthly meetings, and make referrals directly to each other. They are really brilliant with us.'

> 'We get a good response to CAMHS – with good back up and support.'

However, another counsellor noted:

> 'I have nothing to do with referrals to CAMHS. Our child protection teacher has no contact. If I had time I would like to visit CAMHS, but that comes to the time and the role of the counsellor.'

The counsellors' experience of working with social workers was not so positive, with several counsellors saying that they were disillusioned by social worker responses to cases they have tried to refer. One counsellor said that social worker responses were poor:

> 'It makes me extremely sad. Their follow up is extremely poor. I often get the sense that 15 year olds have to grin and bear it.'

Other comments about social workers included:

> 'Some young people flirt with disclosure, but others don't disclose because they think there will be no action or it will make it worse for them.'

> 'Social Care Direct is uniquely bad. They don't seem to share my concerns. Out of ten referrals in seven years, nine have had no action – I find that disappointing.'

> 'It makes me feel furious and impotent when they don't follow up.'

'They arrange meetings and don't turn up.'

'Social workers are stigmatized, and schools try not to have contact with them. The schools want to work with the families so they try and use counsellors as a back door to this.'

4   Implications for practice

It appears that the success of a professional school counsellor is directly dependent upon several things. Firstly, at the initial stages of establishing a service in school, prior meetings with senior staff are very important to clarify issues such as roles and responsibilities, boundaries, confidentiality, and disclosure of child protection issues and other sensitive information. It is the perception of the counsellors interviewed that the effectiveness of this communication and clarity before a counsellor begins work in a school can enhance the service enormously. It is also apparent that the continued support of senior staff for the counsellor has an important role to play as the service is consolidated in school.

It is clear that the variety of colleagues that school counsellors work with and alongside is very broad, and indeed the list of colleagues that they come into contact with is very long. Given that many school counsellors work part-time in schools there is then a challenge for counsellors to, firstly, know who these colleagues are and what they do and, secondly, to know how and when to contact them. During this research neither of these issues was raised as a major difficulty, suggesting that school counsellors are sophisticated in gaining this information. However, it does alert schools to the dynamic role of counsellors in school and raises the need for schools to be mindful of the different ways in which counsellors need to be supported in their role.

The need to have time to build professional relationships was a common theme and broadly speaking counsellors felt that lack of time to carry out fully the tasks involved in the role could often present difficulty. This has implications for commissioners of services when employing school counsellors. Perhaps employers need to consider more carefully the number of hours/days for which school counsellors might be employed, commensurate with them having a manageable workload; this may well include the need to liaise with others in and out of school.

The building of strong professional relationships seems to have a direct impact on the success of a school counselling service. Counsellors talked about good referrals when there is clear understanding of the role and the process. All of the participants involved talked about the benefits of making links with others, and did so as part of their normal practice. This may have implications for service delivery models. For example, some schools employ a peripatetic school counselling service, whereby counsellors are not in anyway part of the school, but come in and have a session with one particular child and then leave. This study would suggest that this may be a less effective model.

Another finding from the study is the poor perception participants had about social workers and the interface between them. It would appear that much needs to be done here to investigate whether these perceptions are commonplace across the UK. Also, the mixed experience of CAMHS was identified in this research and this correlates with the findings in a recent CAMHS Review (CAMHS, 2008).

5   Conclusions

School counselling is a growing profession across the UK. This small-scale study has started to highlight some of the ways counsellors in schools relate to other professionals and how this both enhances their work and impacts on how they can effectively deliver services. It would appear that as counsellors are introduced into schools, the quality of communication that occurs between them and senior staff has a direct impact upon the establishment of their services. Equally, counsellors being aware of other staff so as to be able to relate to them, and having the facility and opportunity to communicate with other staff, seem to have a positive influence on the referral processes to and from counsellors.

The findings from this study seem to collaborate those of previous studies. Cooper (2004: 1) recommended that 'regular contact between counsellors and key members of the guidance staff should be established at an early stage in the counselling project, and maintained throughout the lifespan of the project'. Also, Pattison et al. (2008) noted the main problems of counselling in school services were seen largely in terms of the lack of resources, including lack of staff, and that schools indentified concerns about management, in terms of demand, accountability, negotiating with parents and cooperation with other agencies. A key recommendation of the study was that school counselling services needed to work with and alongside other services and agencies in a collegial manner, whilst maintaining appropriate levels of confidentiality. The findings from this study indicate that although counsellors are able to find ways of working alongside other services and agencies, more could be done to ensure these processes satisfy the demands of counselling in school services, for example referral systems and processes, and access to multi-agency resources. Furthermore, as noted earlier, gathering views from the range of professionals that counsellors have identified they work with across all four nations, would offer a better understanding and appreciation of the wider processes in action.

Given the current strategic directives in increasing the delivery of counselling in schools across the UK, it is an important time to consider carefully how to best provide efficient and effective services. In order to achieve the cornerstone of good practice in school counselling attention is required regarding a range of practical issues and this study points to areas of possible need and conflict for counsellors as they work with other professionals. More research into how to ensure effective delivery of school counselling, along with ascertaining the beneficial outcomes for all those children and young people who access these services, are a key need. Also, key to any future initiatives is to ensure that all children and young people are offered and have equal access to quality services that provide them with prevention or intervention opportunities that increase the likelihood that they go on to live healthy and happy lives.

References

Baginsky, W. (2003) *Counselling in schools: A survey of the views of school staff and pupils in Northern Ireland.* NSPCC.

Baginsky, W. (2004) *School counselling in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*: A review. NSPCC.

CAMHS (2008) *Children and young people in mind: the final report of the National CAMHS Review*. Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department of Health.

Cooper, M. (2004) *Counselling in schools project: Evaluation report*. Glasgow: The University of Strathclyde.

Cooper, M. (2006). *Counselling in schools project Phase II: Evaluation report*. Glasgow: The University of Strathclyde.

Cooper, M., Hough, M. and Lyond, C. (2005) 'Scottish secondary school teachers' attitudes towards, and conceptualisation of, counselling', *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, **33**(2), 199–212.

Fox, C. L. and Butler, I. (2007) '"If you don't want to tell anyone else you can tell her": young people's views on school counselling', *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, **35**(1), 97–114.

McGinnis, S. (with Jenkins, P.) (2006) *Good practice guidelines for counselling in schools. 4th Edition*. Lutterworth: British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

Pattison, S., Rowland, N., Cromarty, K., Richards, K., Jenkins, P., Cooper, M., Polat, F. and Couchman, A. (2008) *Counselling in schools: A research study into the services for children and young people' commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government*. Lutterworth: British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

About the authors

Karen Cromarty is the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy's Senior Lead Advisor, with special responsibility for children and young people. Karen works across the UK with policy-makers, strategists, researchers, academics and members of BACP to promote high quality, accessible professional counselling services for children and young people. Karen is an accredited counsellor, and an experienced supervisor, trainer, and manager of counselling services. She is a founding member of the Counselling in Schools Research Consortium (CSRC) (see:www.bacp.co.uk/research). Contact: karen.cromarty@bacp.co.uk

Dr Kaye Richards is Research Facilitator at the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. Her role is to undertake research, promote research awareness and facilitate research into counselling and psychotherapy. A key part of her role at BACP is to encourage and support BACP members in understanding and doing

research in counselling and psychotherapy. She also works with BACP's Counselling Children and Young People (CCYP) Division as Special Interest Lead and is interested in research developments in this arena. She is a founding member of the Counselling in Schools Research Consortium (CSRC) (see: www.bacp.co.uk/research). Contact: kaye.richards@bacp.co.uk

The Children's Workforce Development Council leads change so that the thousands of people and volunteers working with children and young people across England are able to do the best job they possibly can.

We want England's children and young people's workforce to be respected by peers and valued for the positive difference it makes to children, young people and their families.

We advise and work in partnership with lots of different organisations and people who want the lives of all children and young people to be healthy, happy and fulfilling.

For more information please call **0113 244 6311**
or visit **www.cwdcouncil.org.uk**

Or write to CWDC, 2nd Floor, City Exchange
11 Albion Street, Leeds LS1 5ES
email info@cwdcouncil.org.uk
or fax us on 0113 390 7744