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Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

# School-based Counselling Services in Wales

a National Strategy



## Information

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# School-based Counselling Services in Wales - a National Strategy

<b>Audience</b>	Governing bodies and head teachers of maintained and independent schools and pupil referral units in Wales. Children and Young People's Partnerships; local health boards; those involved in providing and commissioning health services, particularly CAMHS; teaching and other unions; church diocesan authorities; national and local bodies in Wales with an interest in promoting and supporting children and young people's emotional /mental health.
<b>Overview</b>	This document represents a strategy for implementing a comprehensive school-based counselling service throughout Wales.
<b>Action required</b>	A number of actions are set out throughout the document and will be coordinated by the Welsh Assembly Government.
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<b>Additional copies</b>	Further copies may be obtained at the above address. This document can also be accessed from the Welsh Assembly Government website at: <a href="http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills">http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills</a>
<b>Related documents</b>	School-based Counselling Services in Wales - a Draft National Strategy National Strategy for a School-Based Counselling Service in Wales - Response to the Consultation Circular 47/2006: Inclusion and Pupil Support National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services in Wales See also the list of documents in the References section.

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## SUMMARY

This document sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy for developing school-based counselling services for children and young people that are safe, accessible and of a high standard. This is produced in response to a recommendation contained within the Children's Commissioner for Wales' Clywch Inquiry Report and to implement one of the key actions (2.35) set out in the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services in Wales.

The Welsh Assembly Government's goal is to have counselling provision available to all school pupils giving them confidence that their needs will be heard and addressed. This will need to complement the range of approaches already available in schools that help to support the health, emotional and social needs of pupils and lead to a healthy school culture. It is widely accepted that schools which promote the health and well-being of pupils are also more likely to create an effective learning environment.

The strategy is primarily concerned with developing formal counselling i.e. that undertaken by a professional counsellor acting in his or her specialist role rather than the use of wider counselling skills used by many people who work with children and young people.

Section 1 of the document sets out the main thinking behind the Assembly Government's wish to develop counselling services based at schools and other learning settings. Section 2 sets out the definitions of key terms and how counselling services fit within the Assembly Government's approach to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and other current policy developments.

Section 3 sets out the aims, principles, objectives and outcomes of the strategy.

Section 4 sets out the details of the proposed strategy including the 14 key actions within 4 areas:

- Guidance and Standards
- Qualification Skills and Training
- Research and Evaluation
- Implementation through Partnership and Joint Working

These actions are contained in a summary table at the end of the document.

Further information on the roles and responsibilities of counsellors within schools is contained in Annex A.

The Strategy has been adapted as a result of the responses received during the formal consultation on the draft strategy which took place from February to May 2007. More detail on the changes made specifically in response to comments made as part of the consultation process can be found on the Welsh Assembly Government's website.

The Strategy also reflects extra information obtained through the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy's Research Project commissioned by the Welsh

Assembly Government and published in November 2007 available at the following link:  
[www.bacp.co.uk/research/School\\_Counselling.php](http://www.bacp.co.uk/research/School_Counselling.php)

# A National Strategy for a School-Based Counselling Service in Wales

## 1. Introduction

1.1. This document sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy for developing school-based counselling services for young people that are safe, accessible and of a high standard. It sets out how these might be delivered throughout Wales. Developing a universal school-based counselling service for all children and young people in Wales was a recommendation of the Children's Commissioner for Wales' Clywch Inquiry Report<sup>1</sup> which was accepted by the Assembly Government. It is also one of the key actions (2.35) set out in the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services in Wales<sup>2</sup>. Our goal is to have counselling provision available to all school pupils providing them with someone to turn to if they need help or support.

1.2. Counselling is one of a range of services that help to support the health, emotional and social needs of pupils and lead to a healthy school culture. Other elements include emotional literacy programmes, seeking pupils' views through school councils and other means, effective pastoral care, school nurses, education welfare services, advocacy, anti-bullying policies and support for pupils with additional learning needs. It is widely accepted that schools which promote the health and well-being of pupils are also more likely to create an effective learning environment.

1.3. Whilst school-based counselling services will be delivered through education organisations they have wider application for children and young people's lives and will form part of the Welsh Assembly Government's approach to mental health promotion. This will sit alongside actions set out in a Suicide Prevention Action Plan for all ages developed in Spring 2008.

1.4. It is the Welsh Assembly Government's intention to promote the development of services which are working effectively and safely rather than adopt a 'one size fits all' model. The objective is to provide a framework of safe and effective practice within which a number of models of practice can operate and adapt to local needs.

1.5. Whilst the Strategy is primarily school-based the Welsh Assembly Government will be working with Children and Young People's Partnerships to develop approaches which include learners not in school and to consider to what extent they could provide services outside school hours or during school holidays.

1.6. The Welsh Assembly Government has made available initial funding of £1m, in 2008-09, £2.5m in 2009-10 and £3m in 2010-11 to take forward the Strategy. The gradual increase in the level of funding reflects the need for a staged roll-out of services from a solid base as well as the potential need to train more counsellors over time to meet demand.

1.7. The Strategy was developed with the guidance of a steering group composed of key practitioners and Welsh Assembly Government officials from education and health services, counselling providers, the BACP and the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

The Strategy has been amended in the light of responses received during the consultation period of February to May 2007 as well as the further evidence obtained from the BACP research project 'Counselling in schools: A research study into services for children and young people'<sup>3</sup> published in November 2007. This report on the extent and effectiveness of services currently available for children and young people in Wales and the UK was specifically commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government in order to inform the development and roll-out of the Strategy.

## **The need for counselling**

1.8. Consultations with young people in Wales and throughout the United Kingdom<sup>4,5,6,7</sup> consistently tell us that what they want when they are unhappy, afraid or distressed is:

- a variety of resources that are easily accessible and meet individual needs; and
- time to be listened to by an adult who shows them respect, is competent and respects confidentiality.

1.9. Evidence shows that a counselling service which provides support within an overall school strategy can be highly effective in promoting young people's welfare, supporting their learning and alleviating and preventing the escalation of mental health problems<sup>7,8,9</sup>. Counsellors work with children and young people to help them cope with social, emotional and psychological problems. These problems may arise for a number of reasons that include;

- family and peer relationships;
- having a member of the family in custody;
- sexual relationships and pregnancy;
- pressures arising from poverty and deprivation;
- pressures arising from the media;
- being in public care;
- bereavement;
- bullying;
- domestic violence and other forms of abuse; and
- misuse of drugs, alcohol or other substances.

1.10. School-based interventions offer great potential for addressing the emotional well-being of children and young people, often without more specialist intervention. Such interventions can empower individuals to take control over aspects of their life by helping them to make decisions. A school with effective pastoral and counselling services can also contribute to delivering interventions for children and young people suffering from a mental disorder.

1.11. It is difficult to predict what the impact of expansion of school-based counselling services might be on referrals to Specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Tiers 2 to 4 – see definitions). Providing counselling may have the impact of reducing or removing inappropriate referrals to CAMHS allowing them to use their expertise more effectively with the smaller proportion of children and young people with mental disorders who require more specialist services. However, it is possible that providing greater access for children and young people to school-based counselling services could

increase demand on Specialist CAMHS if this leads to identification of greater numbers of children and young people in need of more specialist services. To ensure that referrals to specialist CAMHS are made only where appropriate, school-based counselling services will need to be linked with services provided by education service specialists such as education psychologists, education welfare officers and school nurses within the boundaries of confidentiality.

1.12. The consultation responses on the draft strategy did not provide a definite view or evidence on the potential knock-on effect of developing school-based counselling services on other services, particularly specialist CAMHS, through an increased level of referrals. For this reason the Welsh Assembly Government intends to require CYP Partnerships to provide information on referrals to specialist services as part of the monitoring of use of funding. This will help to inform consideration of future funding for CAMHS services. Many consultation respondents believe that there may be an initial increase when new services are set-up or current services expanded but over time the effect will be to reduce referrals. Some respondents felt that there was evidence of 'reverse referral' from specialist services to school services where the level of intervention required for a child or young person has diminished over time or where they have been inappropriately referred.

### **Current provision**

1.13. Information gathered from local authorities and other organisations in December 2005 and as part of the assessment of the Better Schools Fund spending proposals, indicates that around half of Welsh local authorities currently have a school-based counselling service. Some are provided by local authorities, but in some cases schools employ counsellors or buy-in counselling services from independent providers using their own budgets. Further information was gathered as part of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy's (BACP) research project commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government and published in November 2007. Further work will be undertaken in implementing the Strategy to ascertain the exact amount and type of provision being put in place.

### **The role of counsellors**

1.14. A range of professionals work in schools whose role includes pastoral care of pupils. However, there are factors which constrain the ability of school staff to provide counselling, including:

- time constraints;
- the potential sensitivity and complexity of the issues involved;
- lack of appropriate training, knowledge and skills; and
- lack of independence, with the member of staff seen as an authority figure or facing a conflict of interest.

1.15. The BACP advises that it is not good practice for counsellors to hold a dual role in schools (for example, as a teacher and counsellor) because of the difficulty of remaining independent. When pupils are faced with workers who combine two roles, boundaries can become confused and responsibilities and accountability can conflict.



1.16. Counsellors do not give advice. They seek to view the problems brought to them by young people from the young person's perspectives. By providing time, confidentiality and a safe place they can help young people to talk about their worries and any problems that are affecting them and to identify ways to cope.

## 2. The Context

### Definitions and Terminology

#### Counselling

2.1. The term counselling is used to describe a range of activities, which includes, listening and other support for children and young people by a qualified counsellor. In this strategy we make a clear distinction between formal counselling and using counselling skills:

- Formal Counselling is undertaken by a professional, appropriately qualified counsellor acting in his or her specialist role and in accordance with a recognised code of ethics that requires confidentiality, accountability, supervision and continuing professional development.
- Counselling skills are used by many people who work with children and young people in a specific role such as teachers, school nurses, youth workers and social workers. These skills include listening in a non-judgemental way, being empathic and helping people to feel valued and understood. The role and responsibilities of the individual professional will determine the boundaries of their working practice.

2.2. This strategy is primarily concerned with developing formal counselling as defined above.

2.3. Further information on this role of counsellors in schools is contained in Annex A.

#### Emotional Health, Emotional Well-being and Mental Health Problems and Disorders

2.4. Mental health is essentially about emotional well-being. The terms emotional health, emotional well-being and mental health tend to be used interchangeably. Generally speaking a mentally / emotionally healthy young person has the ability to:

- Develop psychologically, emotionally, socially, creatively and spiritually;
- Use and enjoy solitude;
- Initiate, develop and sustain mutually satisfying relationships;
- Become aware of others and empathise with them;
- Play and learn; and
- Face and resolve problems and setbacks satisfactorily and learn from them<sup>10</sup>

2.5. In contrast those who are not mentally / emotionally healthy may:

- have anxiety problems;
- have low self-esteem or self-image;
- have sleep problems;
- be unable to concentrate;
- refuse to eat ;
- have temper outbursts;

- be aggressive;
- be withdrawn; or
- be unresponsive.

2.6. Everybody's Business<sup>11</sup>, the Welsh Assembly Government's Strategy for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) says:

*Mental Health Problems may be reflected in difficulties and /or disabilities in the realm of personal relationships, psychological development, the capacity for play and learning, development of concepts of right and wrong, and in distress and maladaptive behaviour. They may arise from a number of congenital, constitutional, environmental, family or illness factors. Mental Health Problems describes a very broad range of emotional or behavioural difficulties that may cause concern or distress. They are relatively common, may or may not be transient but encompass mental disorders, which are more severe and/or persistent. (P14)*

Thus, the term 'mental health problems' refers to the problems manifested by children and young people who are identified as having 'emotional and behavioural problems'.

2.7. The majority of children and young people are remarkably resilient and many are able to overcome any problems that they may experience with support from their friends and families; and these problems may pass quickly. Sometimes problems persist and children and young people need an independent adult, to help them to overcome problems that might otherwise prevent them from enjoying life and school in the same way as their peers.

2.8. 'Everybody's Business' defines mental disorders as:

*..... those mental health problems that meet the requirements of International Classification of Diseases (IC 10), an internationally recognised classification system for disorders. The distinction between a Mental Health Problem and a Mental Disorder is not exact but turns on severity, persistence and the effects and combinations of features found.*

## Parent

2.9. Any reference to 'parent' throughout this document means each and every parent coming within the definition set out in Section 576 of the Education Act 1996. This defines 'parent' as: all natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility (as defined in the Children Act 1989) for a child or young person; and any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person. Having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law.

## **The place of Counselling Services within Wider Education Support and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.**

2.10. The Welsh Assembly Government's policy for CAMHS is that commissioning and providing those services is the responsibility of all of the statutory bodies that deliver services for children. This is known as the CAMHS Concept. Everybody's Business sets out the need for a multi-agency approach to commissioning and delivering CAMHS with child and adolescent services planned and commissioned, though not necessarily organised, according to a Four Tier Strategic Framework of functions. In practice, most specialist services deliver functions in more than one tier.

2.11. Services that deliver the functions of Tier 1 have the primary responsibility for responding to the needs of children and young people who have mental / emotional health problems. Services that deliver the functions of Tiers 2, 3 and 4 focus primarily on the needs of children and young people who have mental disorders.

2.12. Tier 1 includes mental health promotion and preventative services and access to adults, including professionals, from a wide array of disciplines, who are able to recognise when a young person is distressed, identify emotional problems and provide assessment and intervention. These adults should also be able to recognise when those problems are more severe or longer term and pass into the realm of mental disorder and require referral of children and young people to more specialised services.

2.13. Tier 2 contains the first line of specialist provision that includes assessment and intervention for children and young people who have mental disorders. Tiers 3 and 4 provide more specialist intervention that includes a range of specialised clinics and residential social care.

2.14. The core business of schools is universal provision for learning. Schools and their support services have a key role in delivering a range of mental health promotion and general preventative services and can be regarded as falling within Tier 1. This includes a role in supporting children and young people who have mental / emotional health problems.

2.15. Education support services provide individual, more specialised base assessment and intervention functions that fall into Tiers 2 or 3. Support services staff, including educational psychologists, specialist teachers, youth workers, school nurses and SEN Coordinators can be seen as providing Tier 2 functions. Some of these professionals such as educational psychologists and social workers, working as part of a team alongside other professionals, will provide a coordinated specialist intervention at Tier 3 level.

2.16. Counsellors who provide a generic service primarily provide a Tier 1 function. However, there may be occasions, provided they have the necessary qualifications and expertise, when they provide first-line specialist therapeutic interventions for children or young people who have mental disorders, at Tier 2.

## **Duties and Responsibilities of Schools and Local Authorities**

2.17. Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 requires LEAs and governing bodies of maintained schools to have arrangements to ensure that they exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. This duty to safeguard and protect is also highlighted in Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

2.18. Accordingly local authorities and schools have a responsibility to:

- provide a safe environment for children and young people for learning;
- identify children and young people who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, and take appropriate action with the aim of making sure they are kept safe both at home and at school; and
- develop through the curriculum and other means, children and young people's understanding, awareness, and resilience.

2.19. Achieving these aims requires systems designed to:

- prevent unsuitable people working with children and young people;
- promote safe practice and challenge poor and unsafe practice;
- identify instances in which there are grounds for concern about a child's welfare, and initiate / take appropriate action to keep them safe; and
- contribute to effective partnership working between all those involved in providing services for children.

2.20. Section 176 of the Education Act 2002 also requires schools and local authorities to have regard to any guidance given by the National Assembly for Wales about consultation with pupils in connection with the taking of decisions affecting them. This accords with Article 12 and 13 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Any guidance must provide for a pupil's views to be considered in the light of his / her age and understanding. This guidance, entitled 'Safeguarding Children in Education: the role of local authorities and governing bodies under the Education Act 2002' will be issued by the Welsh Assembly Government in April 2008<sup>12</sup>.

## **Links to Key Welsh Assembly Government Initiatives**

2.21. Counselling services in schools can contribute to delivering the Assembly Government's Seven Core Aims for Children and Young People based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. These core aims are to ensure that all children and young people:

- have a flying start in life;
- have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities;
- enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation;
- have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities;

- are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised;
- have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional well-being; and
- are not disadvantaged by poverty.

2.22. The Children Act 2004 places a statutory duty to co-operate in planning and delivering services for children and young persons on local authorities and their partners, including the police, probation services, youth offending teams, local health boards and NHS trusts, schools and the voluntary sector. As a result, statutory **Children and Young People's Partnerships**<sup>13</sup> are now responsible for planning and delivery of services for all children and young people from birth to 18 years, or to 25 if they are receiving youth support services or are care leavers in education.

2.23. The Act requires the appointment of a Lead Member and Lead Director for children's services in each local authority; and equivalent appointments by local health boards and NHS trusts. Their main responsibility is to ensure effective partnership working including ensuring that, children, young people and their families are listened to and responded to in decision-making. The Act also allows the Assembly Government to require local authorities in Wales to prepare and publish a single plan for services to children and young people (the Children and Young People's Plan). The first plans covering 2008-11 are to come into force by the end of September 2008.

2.24. The **Learning Country**<sup>14</sup> and **Learning Country II: Vision into Action**<sup>15</sup> set out the Welsh Assembly Government's vision for learning: the need to make sure that all children reach their full potential; and policies to create the best environment for lifelong learning.

2.25. Developing counselling services in schools will help to fulfil those broad aims while also helping to implement key specific education initiatives such as the personal support element of **Learning Pathways 14-19**<sup>16</sup>; developing schools' and local authorities' approaches to **Inclusion and Pupil Support**<sup>17</sup>; improving their effectiveness through the **School Effectiveness Framework**<sup>18</sup> and the ongoing work on **reducing bullying**<sup>19</sup> in schools and equipping young people to deal with its effects.

2.26. Schools are required under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 to put in place procedures for dealing with **complaints by pupils**<sup>20</sup>. There may be occasions when pupils seek advice and support from counsellors to help them deal with the emotional stress of making a complaint or the effect of the events leading to the complaint. Although the counsellor would not play an active role in any complaints procedure he / she might be involved in securing advocacy or mediation support for the pupil.

2.27. The current level of **advocacy**<sup>21</sup> in education is limited. The Welsh Assembly is currently developing its New Service Framework for the Future Provision of Advocacy Services for Children in Wales with a view to this being in place by Spring 2010. The Framework will set in place an integrated model for delivering advocacy services for children in Wales commissioned through the Children and Young People Partnerships under a local / regional arrangement. The new model aims to offer greater independence from providers of services and be more accessible to children and young people.

2.28. The Assembly Government's drive to improve the level of children and young people's **participation** in the decision-making process is a key aspect of its policies for children and young people. Evidence suggests that involving children and young people in this way can help develop their self-esteem. As part of the participation policy **school councils**<sup>22</sup> were made compulsory in primary (apart from nursery and infants), secondary and special schools from November 2006 and these are a prime vehicle through which pupils can express their opinions on how schools can create a healthy environment.

2.29. Counselling also sits alongside other key Assembly Government initiatives to develop children's resilience, social skills and emotional well-being at an early age, namely **Flying Start**<sup>23</sup> for 0-3 year olds and the **Foundation Phase for 3-7 year olds**<sup>24</sup>.

2.30. Schools' approaches in developing pupils' personal and social skills will also complement counselling provision. The revised curriculum and **Personal and Social Education (PSE Framework)**<sup>25</sup>, will be introduced in September 2008 and this sets out the learning outcomes that schools are expected to cover. This is supplemented by further Assembly Government guidance on **substance misuse**<sup>26</sup> and **sex and relationships education in schools**<sup>27</sup>. These approaches will be supported by the commitment made by the Welsh Assembly Government in **One Wales**<sup>36</sup> to provide a family nurse for each secondary school.

2.31. **Working Together to Reduce Harm**<sup>28</sup> the substance misuse strategy for Wales 2008-2018 recognises the importance of school based prevention and support. Many of those accessing counselling services may have substance misuse problems and schools provide a structured environment where individuals at risk of exclusion from substance misuse can be identified and helped. The Schools Counselling Strategy will need to embed with approaches developed in response to the One Wales commitment to take forward the report into substance misuse counselling services produced in 2007.

2.32. Youth services are often involved in delivering counselling services or supporting pupils who require counselling. The counselling strategy, therefore needs to be considered alongside the developing **youth strategy**<sup>29</sup>. The strategy aims to develop a youth service that provides a rich variety of opportunities through the maintained and voluntary sectors, which has the highest expectations of all those working with young people, which enables those opportunities and activities to be available to all those who want to be involved, and which works closely with other organisations to ensure holistic support for young people.

2.33. More broadly, **Everybody's Business**<sup>11</sup> (2001), the Assembly Government's strategy document on developing child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), sets out the key role that education practitioners have in promoting children and young people's emotional / mental health and providing them with appropriate help when they are experiencing problems (see paragraphs above).

2.34. A key component of this strategy is the Assembly Government's **Mental Health Promotion Action Plan**<sup>30</sup>, which aims to promote the mental health and well-being of the population of Wales. It highlights the robust positive evidence that health-promoting schools can influence mental health outcomes for individuals. Key components include adopting a whole-school approach, developing a positive school ethos and aiming to promote positive mental health. The Counselling Strategy will be a key aspect of the

Mental Health Promotion Action Plan and will also sit alongside the more specific actions set out in the Welsh Assembly Government's ***Suicide Prevention Action Plan*** to be published in Spring 2008. By 2010, all maintained schools in Wales are expected to be involved in the ***Welsh Network of Healthy Schools Schemes***<sup>31</sup>.

2.35. Developing school counselling services in Wales will also be a key component in implementing a number of the standards and key actions set out in the ***National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services in Wales***<sup>2</sup> (2005). The NSF sets standards to improve the quality of services that children, young people and their families have a right to receive and emphasises the need for service planners and providers to work in partnership and collaboration to deliver these standards. Chapter 2 of the Framework defines standards for universal services, which all children and young people in Wales should receive, including promotion of their health and well-being through counselling services. The Framework also has a specific Chapter on Children and Young People with Mental Health Problems and Disorders (Chapter 4).

2.36. Development of a comprehensive school counselling service will entail increasing the number of qualified counsellors and providing the necessary training. This will need to be undertaken within the wider context of the Assembly Government's ***Children and Young People's Workforce Development Strategy***, which the Care Council for Wales is currently developing with the assistance of a Children and Young People's Workforce Development Network. At the same time, Children and Young People's Partnerships are developing their local children's workforce strategies as part of their plans for 2008-11. In developing the workforce it will be important to ensure that developments are compatible with national occupational standards for psychological therapies currently being developed by Skills for Health.

2.37. All developments in services for citizens should take place under the key strategic direction for Wales set out in the Assembly Government's policy document ***Making Connections: Delivering Beyond Boundaries***<sup>32</sup>. The key themes are:

- Putting citizens first;
- Working together locally, regionally and nationally;
- Developing the workforce;
- Efficiency; and
- Performance and governance.



### **3. The Aims, Principles, Objectives and Outcomes of this Strategy**

#### **Key Aim of the Strategy**

3.1. The key aim of the strategy is to set out a plan for developing school-based counselling services for children and young people across Wales that are independent, safe, accessible and of a high standard.

3.2. Initially, implementation of this strategy will concentrate on expanding provision for children and young people of secondary school age, as this is the age group where there is the most immediate need and for which formal one-to-one counselling is likely to be the most effective. However many respondents to the consultation felt that year 6 pupils should also be included in order to support them through the transition to secondary schooling. In rolling-out the strategy CYPPs will therefore be asked to consider how secondary schools can work on a cluster basis with primary schools for those pupils who are on the point of transition to secondary school. It is also proposed that a small proportion of the funding available for the strategy could be used on pilots in primary schools as it would be useful to explore early intervention approaches at the same time as developing approaches for older learners.

3.3. Potential problems with a service which allows self-referral were raised during the consultation on the draft strategy. However the WAG believes that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that a service which allows an element of self-referral can be highly effective and wishes to adopt this approach as far as possible to enable the greatest possible access for children and young people. This aspect will however need careful ongoing monitoring particularly in setting-up new services.

3.4. Whilst the WAG believes that a counselling service which is not directly employed by schools may be the best model in terms of demonstrating independence it also recognises that there are many examples of highly effective services where the counsellor is employed directly by the school. The most important factor is that children and young people have confidence that their problems will not be shared with others without their knowledge and agreement. In that sense the method of employment is perhaps not the prime consideration as counsellors who are not employed by schools could still be seen as not independent by children and young people if they are seen to have too close a relationship with school staff. However, it remains the Welsh Assembly Government's view that counsellors should not have a dual role alongside teaching.

3.5. The principles, objectives and outcomes for the Strategy as amended following consultation and agreed by the Steering Group are presented on the following pages. These incorporate the ten recommendations put forward by BACP in their study into current services. These are included in full in Annex B

### 3.6. Principles

- A service that is learner-centred and seeks to respond to the diversity of issues, and challenges faced by young people in society.
- A service that is non-stigmatising and sits within an emotionally supportive school ethos.
- A service that caters for the diversity of individuals' race, gender, disability, culture, belief and sexual orientation.
- A service that as far as possible allows individuals to use the language of their choice, including sign language.
- A service that links with school policies for pupils' well-being and learning outcomes.
- A service that promotes the participation of children and young people in its design and delivery and respects their rights as identified in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- A service which has the welfare and protection of children and young people as its focus and engages counsellors who will work in partnership with schools, parents, families and other agencies to safeguard children and young people.
- A service which enables children and young people to self-refer.
- A service which requires the consent of children and young people where referral is by the school or another service supporting the learner.
- A service that is confidential while working within the boundaries of child protection and independent of the teaching role of the school, though held accountable by the school or local authority for overall delivery of services to pupils.
- A service that gives children and young people confidence that information about them will not be shared without their knowledge and agreement unless it is to safeguard them from actual or potential significant harm.
- A service that addresses local needs, uses staff qualified for working with children and young people and adopts a framework of good practice.
- A service that is given appropriate levels of funding over the long term.
- A service that is continually monitored and evaluated.

### 3.7. Objectives

- To make it acceptable and easier for young people to ask for help when they are upset, worried, confused or afraid.
- To develop clear definitions of confidentiality.
- To develop services that are confidential, promoted to young people as independent of formal school structures i.e. teaching staff and school management: and are readily accessible
- To improve access to services for children and young people who are experiencing emotional distress.
- To disseminate information on effective models of school-based counselling services for young people of secondary school age, drawn from within and outside Wales.
- To develop pilot approaches for working in primary schools and explore models of working on a cluster basis between secondary and primary schools, particularly for pupils in year 6
- To raise awareness and provide information and good practice guidance on delivering counselling services through schools for counsellors, local authorities, Children and Young People's Partnerships, health services, school leaders including governors and leaders of other educational settings.
- To provide information for parents, young people and school staff on the nature and principles of a school counselling service
- To develop partnership and inter agency collaborative working in planning and delivery of counselling services in schools.
- To build safeguarding and child protection into all services that provide counselling in schools to children and young people.
- To be compatible with services for children and young people and associated plans, policies and initiatives to ensure a holistic approach is taken in meeting their needs.
- To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of counselling services that are based in schools and ensure that record-keeping is sufficiently robust.
- To ensure independence and high quality counselling services through appropriate professional counselling supervision.

### 3.8. Outcomes for children and young people

- Children and young people have easy and confidential access to someone they can talk to about a range of matters that may affect their emotional health and well-being.
- Children and young people have a positive view of counselling services in schools and believe that they are working in their best interests.
- Children and young people who experience emotional problems are able to gain access to assistance and assessment, in the early stages in an environment that is supportive, familiar and comfortable
- Children and young people have access to support at the transition stages, such as, from primary to secondary school or from school to higher/further education or the world of work.
- Children and young people have access to appropriately trained counsellors who are able to provide therapeutic approaches to deal with the emotional / mental health problems that they experience.
- Children and young people have access to appropriately trained counsellors who are able to assess when they should be referred to the education support services for consideration of their need for more specialised services.
- Children and young people can access appropriate guidance to empower them to access practical help e.g. on substance misuse, sexual health, domestic abuse, legal aspects or advocacy and complaints.
- Children and young people experience improved emotional health and well-being to enable them to reduce the effect of emotional and mental health problems as a barrier to learning.
- Children and young people throughout Wales have equal access to a counselling service which is able to respond to their individual needs.

## 4. The Strategic Plan

### Types of Service in Wales

4.1. A scoping exercise<sup>33</sup> carried out by the Welsh Assembly Government in 2005 gathered information on counselling services available to pupils in schools in Wales at that time, sought the views of counsellors working in or with schools, and gathered information on counselling provision in other parts of the UK.

4.2. It found that the availability of counselling provision in schools in Wales varied with clusters of services in some areas and very little or none in others. There was no strategic planning, and only a few services were linked with community-based initiatives as part of a local authority plan. The form of provision varied but often reflected needs of the locality, for example, in rural areas counselling was sometimes provided on an outreach basis as well as in schools.

4.3. Capey (cited in Good Practice Guidance BACP)<sup>34</sup> describes four different types of service all of which are found in Wales.

- A counsellor employed and managed by the school on a full-time or part-time contract and funded by the school.
- Local education authority counselling service where peripatetic counsellors work in a number of schools and are employed and managed by the LEA.
- Counselling services run by voluntary agencies, who employ and manage counsellors while schools buy in the service
- Services, such as youth counselling services in the community, to which schools can refer pupils.

4.4. The BACP Report<sup>3</sup> alternatively defined 12 forms of service currently operating in Wales or other parts of the UK as follows:

- Counselling as part of a multi-agency team
- School-based healthcare staff
- Teaching staff
- In-house peer support
- Centralised peripatetic local authority provision
- Centralised / in-house local authority provision
- Singleton practitioner model
- In-school provision by external agency
- Out of school provision by external agency
- Cluster model
- Management only model
- Vetted / pool model

4.5. The Report sets out the possible advantages and disadvantages of each of the twelve models and CYP Partnerships will be asked to consider these when developing and expanding services. The Welsh Assembly Government agrees with the BACP's view that counsellors should not have a dual role alongside teaching and would wish any such services in Wales to be phased out as soon as is practicable. The Clywch Inquiry highlighted the more general difficulties of ensuring that counsellors employed directly by schools are seen as independent by children and young people. Many children and young people may not wish to speak to a counsellor employed by a school because of concerns that what they say will not remain confidential, or will not be acted upon. The key aspect is that irrespective of the form of management, children and young people must be confident that their problems are not being shared with others without their knowledge.

4.6. As part of the roll-out of the Strategy the Welsh Assembly Government will explore the possibility of developing different forms of counselling, such as those delivered online or over the telephone, in order to provide children and young people with the widest possible range of services to enable them to choose the service most appropriate for their needs. It is likely that these approaches will be piloted at a national level.

4.7. The BACP research as well as the earlier scoping exercise suggested there was little information available for monitoring the effectiveness of school-based counselling services in Wales and how they are experienced by pupils, teachers and other professionals working in and outside education. Gathering such information, in Wales and elsewhere would provide evidence to help schools and local authorities to decide what sort of approach suits their circumstances. Such a study would also help to identify good practice and develop the framework needed to deliver a high quality service.

**Action 1: The Assembly Government will commission research during the roll-out of the Strategy to evaluate the different types of counselling services and identify the merits of different approaches and cost implications.**

**Action 2: The Assembly Government will explore the possibility of developing national pilots on differing forms of counselling, such as those provided online or through the telephone.**

### **Guidance and Standards**

4.8. If counselling is to be one of the recognised interventions for promoting the mental / emotional health of young people in schools, then standardisation and consistency in practice are required.

**Action 3: Standards and guidance for counsellors and counselling services working with children and young people in Wales will be developed drawing extensively on the NSF and guidance and research produced by BACP and other relevant professional bodies. The guidance will be designed to assist schools and local authorities to develop services.**

4.9. If pupils are to have services to meet their needs then they must be consulted on an ongoing basis on the service offered by or through individual schools.

**Action 4: The Strategy will include advice on consulting pupils (users) on development of services in or for their school and on seeking their views on the service provided as part of overall monitoring.**

4.10. Counsellors working in Wales are not subject to statutory regulation. The introduction of statutory regulations would address many important issues such as criteria for registration, including qualifications, continuing professional development, child protection and codes of professional practice. The issue is being debated in England and it may be possible to link action for Wales to conclusions reached in England with regard to the options for voluntary or statutory registration of school counsellors.

4.11. Estyn's inspections of schools cover the health and well-being of pupils and will need to include the effectiveness of school-based counselling services. Our approach would be to seek pupils' views as part of gathering their views in the inspection process.

**Action 5: The Assembly Government will consult Estyn as to how the work of counsellors can be included in the inspection process.**

#### Practice and Service Components

4.12. The BACP report<sup>3</sup> set out 40 practice and service components which schools and their partners should consider in setting-up and operating counseling services. The Welsh Assembly Government will ask CYP Partnerships to consider these as they develop their approaches.

1. Funding Source
2. Sustainability of funding
3. Employer
4. Cost effectiveness / value for money
5. Setting. Primary / secondary / cluster
6. Integrated into school / peripatetic
7. On school site / off site
8. Policies and procedures
9. Adherence to guidance and legislation
10. Risk assessment
11. Accountability
12. Insurance
13. Terms and conditions of employment
14. Complaints procedure
15. Professional membership
16. Training and qualifications of counsellor
17. Experience of counsellor
18. Personal qualities
19. Supervision
20. CRB check
21. Continuing professional development
22. Job description, other functions in school

23. Staff awareness of service
24. Parental awareness and permissions if necessary
25. Publicity and promotion of service
26. Non-stigmatising
27. Full time/part time
28. Availability during school holidays
29. Designated and appropriate room
30. Theoretical orientation
31. Referral systems. Referred with consent, self referral, open referral
32. Open ended / fixed number of sessions, and session length
33. Appropriate available resources
34. Individual / group / both
35. Confidentiality and appropriate information sharing
36. Safeguarding
37. Record keeping
38. Monitoring
39. Evaluation (qualitative and quantitative)
40. Reporting arrangements

4.13. At present the 'Western model' is the universal method of counselling services in the UK. Over time consideration will be given as to whether this can be adapted for minority ethnic pupils. The specific needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children are recognised but maybe better dealt with by community-based counselling services offered in the areas of most need rather than school-based services.

### **Qualifications Skills and Training of Counsellors**

4.14. Training is the major entry route into counselling and there are many different pathways that those people who wish to become qualified counsellors can take. Counsellors come from diverse backgrounds that have commonly included teaching, social work and nursing. The BACP recommends that to be a counsellor, an individual should have undertaken a training course which is a minimum of one year full time or two years part time. This course should cover theory, skills, personal development and professional issues. Training would usually take a minimum of three years part time which is made up of an introductory year followed by a two year practitioner training. The practitioner training should involve a supervised placement. In addition to this, the BACP recognises that counselling with children and young people requires specific training which is more than a generic adult training. Counsellors should be a member of a professional body, thereby working to an ethical code, and also should be engaged in ongoing professional development.

4.15. Comprehensive information is not available, but anecdotal evidence suggests that there are currently insufficient counsellors who are trained specifically to work with children and young people. Therefore, the workforce requires a training programme, if counselling services are to be made available through schools across Wales. In doing so it will be important to ensure that sufficient Welsh-speaking counsellors are available in order for children and young people to be able to communicate in their preferred language.



4.16. There are few courses that offer a module or specific training for counsellors who choose to work with children and young people. The courses available will have to be expanded. Since working with children and young people requires particular skills, the training should cover:

- children's rights;
- child protection that recognises the signs and symptoms of abuse specified in 'Safeguarding Children: Working Together Under the Children Act 2004';
- safe practices in working with children;
- children's development;
- methods of communicating with children and young people;
- approaches to tackling bullying and knowledge of its effects;
- the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and Their Families;
- race, culture, religion and belief, gender, disability and sexual orientation awareness;
- substance misuse, including the effects on children of parental substance misuse;
- self harm;
- data protection;
- safe use of the internet; and
- identification and management of domestic violence, in accordance with Welsh Assembly Government guidance.

4.17. It is also important that working with young people is promoted as a viable and rewarding career pathway to those interested in becoming counsellors.

4.18. Local authorities provide in-service training, sometimes in collaboration with other agencies, for staff at all levels. Part of the role of primary mental health teams is to build capability in tier 1 professionals and part of this remit is to provide training programmes. Training for counsellors could be included within these programmes.

**Action 6: To develop, in consultation with further and higher education providers, training provision for existing and new counsellors to develop their skills in working with children and young people.**

**Action 7: To identify existing training provided for local authority staff by local health boards and consider how school counsellors might have access to this.**

4.19. School staff also need training if they are to identify pupils who need referral to counselling or to more specialised mental health services. The aim would be to develop understanding of how early identification and assessment of mental health problems in young people can be carried out; and outline assessment techniques and interventions that are appropriately delivered as Tier 1 functions. There will be a need for counsellors, as a minimum, to provide training to staff on how they should interact with and refer to the school's counselling service. The extent to which they are involved in wider training of school staff on emotional and mental health will have to take account of the need to provide a sufficient number of hours of direct services to children and young people as well as the availability of other services which could undertake this work.

4.20. In implementing the Strategy it will be particularly important to consider the need to integrate the work of the counsellor with that of nurses working in schools. This is

particularly relevant in light of the **One Wales**<sup>36</sup> commitment for a family nurse per secondary school in Wales.

**Action 8: To consider how counsellors and mental health workers, might be involved in delivering training for school staff and others working in schools including school nurses.**

4.21. As the number of counsellors working in schools expands, it will be appropriate to develop networks to share good practice and consider emerging challenges.

**Action 9: Seek the views of those in the field as to what is needed to assist the development of networks for counsellors.**

### Supervision

4.22. Supervision of counsellors' work and professional development is concerned with monitoring, developing and supporting practitioners in their roles to ensure that the needs of young people are addressed. Trainee counsellors need to have hands on experience in a range of settings including schools. Supervision of qualified counsellors as well as trainees is essential for competent effective and ethical counselling practice. Supervisors also need training.

**Action 10: Consultation with training providers and the profession on continuing professional development needs, including provision of training in supervisory skills and requirements**

### **Research and Evaluation**

4.23. It is essential that counsellors evaluate their work with pupils. This provides all stakeholders, including young people and counsellors with information on how their service is working. This information can be used to identify what works and areas for improvement. Feedback can also provide information for schools and other authorities on recurring issues affecting young people, such as bullying. Information of this kind should be used to inform policy and funding decisions.

4.24. Analysis covering gender, age, ethnicity, disability, the presenting problems of users, the number of sessions provided, and how access to the service is being offered provides key evidence for performance management and ensuring that the service is designed to maximise positive outcomes. The use of standard questionnaires and feedback from school and local authority staff can also provide information on the effectiveness of the service.

**Action 11: Guidance will be provided on collection of data and outcome evaluation: and the use of this evidence to evaluate and inform counselling service development and wider policy development**

## Implementation, Partnership and Joint Working

4.25. Paragraphs 2.23 to 2.24 set out the requirements of the Children Act 2004 that strengthen local partnership arrangements for planning and delivering services for children and young people. Children and Young People's Plans (CYPPs), that are required from 2008, will set out priorities and outcomes that are jointly agreed across all services, including health and education and voluntary sector organisations. The guidance on the contents of the plans included development of school-based counselling services.

4.26. The CYPP, as the defining statement of strategic planning, intent and priorities for all children and young people's services in an area will act as the reference point for other plans. Relevant priorities, such as counselling, that appear in the CYPP, will therefore, be reflected in local Health, Social Care and Well-Being Strategies (HSCWBS), together with details of links required to ensure coherence between the two.

**Action 12: Ensure services to address the emotional and mental health needs of children and young people, including those for school-based counselling services are included in the statutory guidance on Children and Young People's Plans and HSCWBS: and that Children and Young People's Partnerships are identified as having a strategic lead in developing commissioning of school-based counselling services.**

4.27. Lack of funding is an ongoing concern for school counselling services whether provided by schools or LEAs or through contracts with voluntary or independent providers. It is difficult to estimate what an expanded service would cost. The BACP recommends that direct, face-to-face counselling hours are 60 per cent of a counsellor's time. A full time counsellor would therefore be providing 20 hours per week of direct counselling work with young people. One counsellor working for 39 weeks a year would provide 780 hours of counselling and, assuming an average of 6 sessions, work with between 100 and 150 young people. On this basis a counsellor would be required for most secondary schools with, perhaps, some smaller secondary schools sharing a counsellor. This suggests a need for around 150-200 counsellors across Wales. It was not possible to gain a definitive average cost for a counsellor from the consultation responses and ongoing analysis during the initial years of the strategy will be required in order to develop solid estimates for the level of funding required for future years.

4.28. There may be off-setting gains for education support and other services as a result of earlier intervention in addressing the needs of some young people. However there is concern that there might also be a greater demand for these and other services as a result of greater access for all young people. Demand on specialist CAMHS, other health services (such as substance misuse treatment) and social services departments might be increased accordingly.

4.29. From the consultation responses it is difficult to gauge whether there will be an increase in onward referrals to specialist CAMHS services as a result of expanding school counselling services. This is shown by the differing opinions of those currently providing counselling services. This suggests that the number of onward referrals may also be dependent on the way in which the counselling is provided. Opinions were also divided as

to whether costs would differ if services were offered out of school hours with a higher proportion feeling that costs would be greater.

4.30. For this reason the Assembly Government proposes monitoring the amount of onward referral closely in the first year of new funding before deciding what future approach to funding should be taken. The Assembly Government will consider with Children and Young People's Partnerships the possibility of moving towards greater pooling of budgets locally, particularly between health services and local authorities to allow greater flexibility of provision and improve joint-working.

4.31. The need for sufficient primary mental health workers to support the counselling strategy is recognised and the Assembly Government will consider how this might be addressed.

**Action 13: The Welsh Assembly Government will review existing sources of funding and consider what additional resource is needed to secure expansion of provision across Wales. This will include assessing any impact on other services including education support services, specialist CAMHS, other health services and social services departments; and considering a staged expansion of counselling provision.**

4.32. Where child-protection issues are involved counselling services need to be linked to other agencies. Confidentiality is crucially important, but it cannot be absolute because practitioners can never rule out the possibility of child protection concerns arising at some point in their professional relationships with children and young people. Counsellors need to explain the limits of confidentiality to the child or young person as part of the first counselling session.

**Action 14: The Assembly Government will consult on and produce information for key groups, including children and young people, school staff and parents, to explain the role of school-based counsellors and the protocols that apply to their work.**

4.33. The first phase of implementing this strategy will focus on:

- developing protocols for inter-agency working
- identifying models of effective practice;
- developing protocols for the work of counsellors with the school environment;
- addressing the need for standards for counselling services;
- requirements for initial and ongoing training and supervision of counsellors; and
- availability of resources to expand counselling services.

4.34. All are necessary as the basis for designing, commissioning and delivering a sustainable approach to counselling services.

4.35. The second phase will be expanding provision for secondary-school aged children and young people in mainstream and special schools, pupil referral units or being educated wholly outside a school setting. Starting with this age group is influenced by the fact that the level of individual attention pupils receive in school is generally less than in primary schools; and the level of acute need is more apparent as children get older.

**Action 15: The Assembly Government will appoint a coordinator to oversee implementation and development of the strategy.**

## Summary of Actions for the Strategy

Action	Estimated Timetable
<b>Research and Evaluation</b>	
1: The Assembly Government will commission research during the roll-out of the Strategy to evaluate the different types of counselling services and identify the merits of different approaches and cost implications.	Jan 2008
2: The Assembly Government will explore the possibility of developing national pilots on differing forms of counselling, such as those provided online or through the telephone.	Dec 2008
11: Guidance will be provided on collection of data and outcome evaluation: and the use of this evidence to evaluate and inform counselling service development and wider policy development.	May 2008
<b>Guidance and Standards</b>	
3: Standards and guidance for counsellors and counselling services working with children and young people in Wales will be developed drawing extensively on the NSF and guidance produced by BACP and other relevant professional bodies. The guidance will be designed to assist schools and local authorities.	May 2008
4: The strategy will include advice on consulting pupils (users) on development of services in or for their school and on seeking their views on the service provided as part of overall monitoring.	May 2008
5: The Assembly Government will consult Estyn as to how the work of counsellors can be included in the inspection process.	June 2008
<b>Qualifications, Skills and Training</b>	
6: To develop, in consultation with further and higher education providers, training provision for existing and new counsellors to develop their skills in working with children and young people.	Mar 2009
7: To identify existing training provided for local authority staff by local health boards and consider how school counsellors might have access to this.	Dec 2008
8: To consider how counsellors and mental health workers, might be involved in delivering training for school staff and others working in schools including school nurses.	Dec 2008
9: Seek the views of those in the field as to what is needed to assist the development of networks for counsellors.	July 2008
10: Consultation with training providers and the profession on continuing professional development needs, including provision of training in supervisory skills and requirements.	Dec 2008
<b>Partnerships</b>	
12: Ensure services to address the emotional and mental health needs of children and young people, including those for school-based counselling services are included in the statutory guidance on Children and Young People's Plans and HSCWBs: and that Children and Young People's Partnerships are identified as having a strategic lead in developing commissioning of school-based counselling services.	Sep 2008 (partly achieved)
13: The Welsh Assembly Government will review existing sources of funding and consider what additional resource is needed to secure expansion of provision across Wales. This will include assessing any	Sep 2007 (partly achieved)

impact on other services including education support services, specialist CAMHS, other health services and social services departments; and considering a staged expansion of counselling provision.	
14: The Assembly Government will consult on and produce information for key groups, including children and young people, school staff and parents, to explain the role of school-based counsellors and the protocols that apply to their work.	<b>Sep 2008</b>
15: The Assembly Government will appoint a coordinator to oversee implementation and development of the strategy.	<b>May 2008</b>

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## Annex A

### The Role and Responsibilities of the Counsellor Within Schools

Counsellors do not give advice. They view the problem a young person brings to them from the perspective of the young person. By providing time, confidentiality and a safe place they encourage and help the young person to talk about the issues that are affecting them and identify strategies that will help them to cope more effectively.

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) guidelines set out the roles and responsibilities of school-based counsellors as follows:

- to offer pupils, individual or group counselling;
- to liaise with the pastoral management staff, special needs co-ordinators, year tutors, class teachers, governors, parents and LEA support agencies;
- to provide information on the counselling service, the role of the counsellor and a clear understanding of the contract of confidentiality with young people;
- to review and evaluate the service;
- to attend supervision with a suitably qualified supervisor;
- to devise and where appropriate deliver a programme of training to support and develop the counselling service;
- to provide consultation to staff whose role is to support pupils in emotional distress; and
- to support peer support schemes and other means of support based on counselling values and listening skills.

There is a range of professionals working in schools whose role includes support and pastoral care of pupils. Why then do we need qualified counsellors? In reality there are many factors which may impede a therapeutic counselling relationship, for example

- time constraints;
- the sensitivity and complexity of the issue;
- lack of appropriate skills; and
- lack of independence with the member of staff seen as an authority figure or facing a conflict of interest.

It is not considered best practice for counsellors to hold a dual role in school for example, as a teacher/counsellor, because of the difficulty of remaining independent. When pupils are faced with the worker in two roles, boundaries can become confused and responsibilities and accountability in the two roles can conflict.

The approaches to counselling identified in the literature<sup>29</sup> as being the most suitable for working in school settings include;

- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT);
- Gestalt Therapy;
- Person Centred Counselling;
- Psychodynamic Counselling;
- Solution-focused Brief Therapy; and

- Transactional Analysis.

Play therapy and art therapy are also used with children and adolescents. Many counsellors although trained in a specific approach may draw on techniques from other models of therapy and use an existential approach to meet the needs of the individual child or young person.

The BACP regards counselling as taking place when a counsellor sees a client in a private and confidential setting to explore a difficulty the client is having, distress they may be experiencing, or perhaps their dissatisfaction with life, or loss of a sense of direction and purpose. The BACP is the key professional body governing the activities of counsellors in schools and has produced good practice guidelines. The guidelines explain the nature of counselling in the following terms:

*'People become engaged in counselling when a person, occupying regularly 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'*

This implies that:

- Counselling is a voluntary relationship entered by the child or young person.
- Counselling is confidential, except where a counsellor is concerned for the safety of the child or young person, or other connected person. All that takes place between the counsellor and the child or young person is treated with respect and discretion.
- The counsellor takes seriously everything that the child or young person is attempting to convey, verbal and non-verbal, consciously and unconsciously.
- Counselling is not about giving advice but about listening and enabling the child or young person to make sense of how they feel and what, if any, action they choose to take.
- Counselling is not a punishment, and should never be used as a punitive measure or as a threat in working with children and young people.

Formal counselling takes place in a therapeutic setting and is therefore different from other types of services that may be available for young people in schools such as:

- information work that can include signposting and giving resources so that young people can discover their own answers to questions and needs; it does not include an assessment.
- advice is concerned with helping a young person to change or cope with practical issues and problems. It seeks to widen the young person's choices by providing accurate information regarding their rights and potential courses of action which can be undertaken with or on behalf of the young person; and
- personal support is a general term which embraces a range of helping activities, including befriending, one to one and group work.

## **Key Elements of a Counselling in Schools Service**

### **1. Distinction of roles**

It is important that anyone involved in providing counselling services for young people is clear about the distinction between those who are formally qualified as counsellors working in that profession, and those who may use counselling skills as an adjunct to other professional roles such as teachers, nurses or youth workers.

Courses in counselling training to become qualified counsellors include diploma and degree courses in counselling. People employed in education who hold a counselling skills qualification should not call themselves counsellors.

### **2. Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is a basic ethical principle in the counselling process. It enables a trusting relationship to develop. It allows the young person to share feelings and worries without fear of blame or reprisal. A clear confidentiality policy aims to provide counsellors, young people, and schools with clear guidance on confidentiality and the circumstances under which it may need to be broken. Counsellors working in schools work within a statutory framework and in accordance with the child protection policies of the school and the local authority. (Set out in Wales in 'Safeguarding Children: Working Together Under the Children Act 2004')

### **3. Independence**

It is not considered best practice for counsellors to hold a dual role in school for example, as a teacher/counsellor, because of the difficulty of remaining independent. When pupils are faced with the worker in two roles, boundaries can become confused and responsibilities and accountability in the two roles can conflict.

**4. Supervision** is a formal arrangement for counsellors to be able to review and discuss their work. It is important that those practicing supervision are experienced in counselling and supervision skills. Identified time for supervision should be part of the terms and conditions of all counsellors working in schools.

### **5. Information to young people, professionals, parents/carers and others**

It is important that information is provided to young people about the counselling service. Young people themselves are best placed to advise on the most appropriate ways to do this. Information should also be available in the school prospectus, pastoral care handbook and information leaflets to parents.

Many counsellors speak about their role in assemblies and are often available to publicise their work at staff meetings and parent events.

## **6. Referrals**

The referral process will vary according to individual school circumstances. There is often a link person in the school's pastoral care team who liaises with the counsellor. Pupils can be referred to the counsellor by that person or through other agencies and other school staff.

In addition to this process pupils should have the opportunity for self-referral to the counsellor. When this happens the counsellor would inform the link person that the young person is attending counselling in order to explain their whereabouts in the school.

Systems are needed to deal with young people missing lessons to attend sessions. Appointment times would need to be varied so that young people would not be absent from the same lesson each week. The counsellor would need to make the appointment system as discreet as possible.

## **7. Complaints**

Any organisation which delivers services to children and young people must have a complaints system in place that is child friendly and accessible. Counsellors who receive complaints from young people about any matter must feed this into the school's complaints arrangements. Complaints must not be ignored: they must be taken seriously

## **Annex B: Recommendations for Counselling Services in Schools in Wales**

The BACP report 'Counselling in schools: A research study into services for children and young people', commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government in 2007, put forward the following recommendations for developing high quality and sustainable counselling services in Wales:

Services should:

1. Have sustainable funding
2. Employ professionally qualified counsellors who have experience of working with young people, who access appropriate clinical supervision with experienced supervisors, and who take part in regular, relevant continuing professional development
3. Deliver accessible counselling in an appropriately private but safe setting within the school vicinity
4. Be seen as non-stigmatising by the school community and a normal part of school provision, which is integrated into the school community
5. Be monitored and evaluated by individuals or an agency (in or out of the school) with experience in this specialised area of work
6. Pay due regard to current legislation and guidance, and offer confidentiality within usual ethical and safeguarding limits
7. Respond flexibly to local needs in respect of diversity (e.g., language) and practicality (e.g., availability during holiday periods)
8. Work with and alongside other services and agencies in a collegial manner, whilst maintaining appropriate levels of confidentiality
9. Employ counsellors who are members of a professional body and as such have an established ethical framework and complaints procedure
10. Employ counsellors whose personal qualities will mean that they are approachable, have good listening skills and a manner that encourages a climate for safe and trusting relationships