



# Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS)

HANDBOOK  
September 2012



Department of  
**Education**

[www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk)

AN ROINN

**Oideachais**

MÁNNYSTRIE O

**Lear**

## FOREWORD

This Handbook sets out how the Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS) should operate to ensure that the best service is provided for pupils. It is intended to support all partners in delivering a service to our young people which is safe, accessible and of a high professional standard.

The Handbook is a development and clarification of the Interim Handbook issued in April 2007. It builds on the original guidance, which drew heavily on the experiences of colleagues who pioneered school based counselling and reflects our own experience of providing an independent counselling service in schools since 2007. It also incorporates recommendations for improvements made by the Education and Training Inspectorate.

While the Handbook has been developed for use in those schools served by the ICSS, the principles and practices described are appropriate for use in any school based counselling arrangement.

It is not a definitive document and it is kept under review. Amendments will be made, as necessary, to reflect our continuing experience of making counselling support available in schools, any relevant changes in legislation and advice on current best practice. The current version of the Handbook is available for download at <http://www.deni.gov.uk>.

To help develop the service further comments are welcome from schools' personnel, young people, parents/carers, colleagues from other disciplines and those interested in the development of counselling in schools. These should be sent to:-

Ms Cathy Bell  
Regional Co-ordinator  
Independent Counselling Service for Schools  
Loughview Regional Centre  
2-6 Jordanstown Road  
Newtownabbey  
BT37 0QF  
Or email [Cathy.bell@eani.org.uk](mailto:Cathy.bell@eani.org.uk)



<b>CONTENTS</b>		<b>Page Number</b>
<b>FOREWORD</b>		
<b>Section 1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Section 2</b>	<b>Service Delivery Partner – Senior Management Team</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Section 3</b>	<b>Service Delivery Partner – Counselling Service Provider</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Section 4</b>	<b>Service Delivery Partner – Key Contact</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Section 5</b>	<b>Service Delivery Partner – Counsellor</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Section 6</b>	<b>Service Delivery Partner - ICSS Regional Co-ordinator</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Section 7</b>	<b>Counselling – Pupils’ Perspective</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Section 8</b>	<b>Counselling – Parents’ Perspective</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Section 9</b>	<b>Service Provision – Practice and Procedures</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Section 10</b>	<b>Complaints Procedures</b>	<b>26</b>
 <b>APPENDICES</b>		
<b>Appendix 1 Background to Counselling Service in Schools</b>		
<b>Appendix 2 Specimen ICSS Information Sheet</b>		
<b>Appendix 3 Specimen Letter and Information Leaflet for Parents / Carers</b>		
<b>Appendix 4 Specimen Information Leaflet for School Staff</b>		
<b>Appendix 5 Specimen Information Leaflet for Pupils’</b>		
<b>Appendix 6 I.C.S.S. Specimen Pupil Referral Form</b>		
<b>Appendix 7 Counselling Evaluation Form Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire</b>		
<b>Appendix 8 Counselling Evaluation Form – YP CORE</b>		



# 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 There is a strong body of evidence about the beneficial impact of all pupils having access to counselling support when necessary. The significant role schools can play in helping to promote the emotional health and wellbeing of pupils is now recognised. Pupils experiencing stress or emotional problems find it difficult to engage with the education process and to reach their potential. Where schools' staff can recognise and respond appropriately to their needs the educational outcome is maximised.
- 1.2 At any time pupils may need extra emotional support beyond the normal pastoral care offered by teachers. Pupils who have suffered bereavement, trauma, family break-up or who are young carers may appreciate the opportunity to speak to an adult who is not directly involved with their education. Independent school based counselling provides that opportunity.
- 1.3 All pupils of post-primary age in grant-aided schools have access to counselling which is independent of the school. This access is facilitated by the Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS). This service is funded by the Department of Education and delivered by counselling providers contracted following a public tendering process. Schools are grouped into areas and each school is allocated an agreed number of counselling sessions per week based on pupil numbers. A short history of school counselling is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.4 The counselling support provided conforms to high professional standards and current best practice for school based counselling, specifically in respect of counsellor qualifications, supervision policy, safeguarding practices and continuous professional development.
- 1.5 Counselling is one of those words that everybody understands but no two people understand it in precisely the same way. For all engaged with the ICSS there is the following shared understanding of the process for helping pupils.

*“Counselling is a way of helping young people through a process of talking, listening and empowerment. Young people are provided with a safe place to express their feelings and thoughts about what they perceive to be an issue in their life. Counselling can help young people to understand themselves and their situation better. It can give them new ways of coping with issues that cause them upset therefore increasing their capacity for learning. Successful counselling is based on trust, self-motivation and commitment.”*

- 1.6 The counselling relationship by its nature is confidential. The independence of the service is an important aspect for pupils, particularly those who prefer not to discuss issues with school staff. Experience has shown that this independence is not a barrier to counselling making a significant contribution to a school's pastoral care provision.
- 1.7 A counselling service that is responsive to pupils' needs and operates as an integral part of a school's pastoral care provision requires a collaborative and co-operative partnership. In the case of the ICSS the key parties to this partnership

are the school's Senior Management Team, the counselling provider, the main contact person within the school's staff for counselling (Key Contact) and the counsellor. All members of this service delivery partnership are supported in their respective roles by the ICSS Regional Co-ordinator and all work within an agreed set of practice standards.

- 1.8 In the following sections the roles of the individual partners and the expectations in respect of pupils and parents are described along with current practice and procedures.

## **2. SERVICE DELIVERY PARTNER: SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM**

- 2.1 The support of the Senior Management Team (SMT) is critical to the operation of an effective counselling service in a school. This support can be visible in acknowledging the contribution that counselling can make to promoting the emotional wellbeing of pupils and encouraging pupils, parents and staff to make appropriate use of the intervention. Less visible, yet equally important, is the support given to the Key Contact and the counsellor in timetabling suitable accommodation for counselling and time for both to review pupils' needs.

This section details those issues which will require SMT to make decisions or provide the lead in initiating action.

### **Appoint a Key Contact / Deputy Key Contact**

- 2.2 This staff member is the counsellor's main point of contact within the school. Some schools have appointed the Designated Teacher for Child Protection or the Head of Pastoral Care to this position. The appointed person should be acknowledged as approachable by pupils and have no direct link to the school's disciplinary processes. A Deputy Key Contact should be named to provide cover when the Key Contact is absent or unavailable. The names of the Key Contact and the Deputy Key Contact and an explanation of their role should be widely circulated within the school community.

### **Define how the counselling service will operate**

- 2.3 SMT should work with the service provider to agree how counselling will operate within the school. The agreed arrangements should be set out in an ICSS Information Sheet which will include the names of key personnel, the level of service to be provided, the process for making referrals and the evaluation process (see Appendix 2 – Specimen Information Sheet for basic details). In developing the arrangements the service provider should give due consideration to each school's unique culture and contextual setting and adapt standard procedures as appropriate.

### **Decide policy on parental consent**

- 2.4 A decision will be required on how and when parental consent will be sought for a pupil to access counselling. Parents can be advised of the service at the outset of a school year and a generalised consent sought. The process for determining that a pupil can access counselling without parental consent must be agreed. This involves an assessment to determine that a pupil has sufficient maturity and understanding of what is involved to be regarded as "Gillick" competent. The process is explained in more detail at paragraphs 8.8 to 8.10.

### **Inform the Board of Governors about the service**

- 2.5 The Board of Governors should be aware that pupils have access to counselling and how the service operates. A copy of the ICSS Information Sheet should be available to members as this gives the key information and contacts.

## **Provide counsellor with information on the school and relevant policies**

- 2.6 The counsellor should be provided annually with copies of relevant school policies such as child protection, discipline including anti-bullying measures, use of the internet, use of mobile phones and parental consent. Details of school's staff with pastoral care responsibilities, school holidays and planned closure days should also be provided.

## **Introduce the counsellor to staff and pupils**

- 2.7 The introduction to staff could be facilitated at a general staff meeting or interest group meeting such as the Pastoral Care Team. The staff must include the Principal (if not making the introductions), the Key Contact, Deputy Key Contact and Designated Teacher for Child Protection. Pupils should be introduced to the counsellor at assembly/class meetings or in small groups.

## **Inform parents / carers about the service**

- 2.8 A policy on involving parents in the counselling process, including how parents will be informed about the service, how referrals can be made and how consent will be managed by the school will be needed. Parents may be given the opportunity to meet the counsellor at open nights. Parents should be given information about the service through school news sheets or an information leaflet. Many schools have used a standard letter at the beginning of the first term to obtain implicit consent from parents for their child to access counselling support if appropriate (Appendix 3 Specimen Letter and Information for Parents)

## **Facilitate the counsellor with suitable accommodation and resources**

- 2.9 A room suitable for counselling young people which meets the need for confidentiality and acknowledges safeguarding requirements should be designated for use by the counsellor. It is important that the same room is available every week for continuity of service. The designated room should have a power point as the counsellor may use a computer based system to update records following sessions with pupils. The counsellor will also need access to a secure lockable cabinet for confidential records and an external telephone line for confidential calls.
- 2.10 A 'post box' will be needed to allow pupils to self refer. This should be easily accessed by pupils yet sited discretely. Other means of contact such as e-mail or text messaging can be considered. A 'post location' should be designated for use by the counsellor and the Key Contact for exchanging notes and other information.

## **Review the operation of the service annually**

- 2.11 The operation of the counselling service within the school should be reviewed annually and any necessary improvements made. This process should be led by the SMT with contributions from other partners. The process should be initiated following receipt of the annual report from the school's counselling provider.

### **3. SERVICE DELIVERY PARTNER: COUNSELLING SERVICE PROVIDER**

- 3.1 The provider is under contract to the Department of Education, following a public tendering process, to make counselling accessible to pupils in schools in a defined geographic area. There are specific contractual requirements which providers must meet. There is an growing knowledge base of professional best practice in supporting young people, particularly as school based counselling provision expands, which providers are expected to evaluate and incorporate into their service provision as appropriate.

This section details the service the provider must make available to schools.

#### **Employ suitably qualified and experienced counsellors**

- 3.2 Counsellors must be qualified to at least Diploma level in counselling and have had a minimum of 150 hours clinically supervised practice before starting work in a school. All counsellors must have an enhanced vetting check prior to commencing work in schools and will attend child protection training organised by the ICSS. All counsellors should have prior experience working with young people and have personal qualities such as being approachable, having good listening skills and a manner that encourages a climate for safe and trusting relationships.

#### **Assign a named counsellor to every school**

- 3.3 The presence of the same counsellor every week ensures continuity of the counselling intervention for pupils and the development of a relationship of trust and confidence based on a shared understanding of the counselling process with the Key Contact, pupils and staff.

#### **Ensure operating arrangements are in place for every school**

- 3.4 The provider will work with the Principal/Senior Management Team to agree how the counselling service will operate and key details will be set out on the ICSS Information Sheet. The provider will ensure that all relevant issues are addressed.

#### **Manage the allocation of counselling sessions to schools**

- 3.5 Providers have been allocated a fixed number of sessions for each area based on the number of schools and the number of enrolled pupils in the area. Providers can operate flexibly within that overall number in response to changes in demand across schools in the area.

#### **Monitor the counsellor's professional practice**

- 3.6 All counsellors must be covered by Professional Indemnity Insurance and be provided with regular clinical and managerial supervision which must comply with agreed professional practice standards. All counsellors must hold a Diploma in Counselling, or equivalent, and hold or be working towards British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) or Irish Association for Counselling and Therapy (IACT) accreditation.

### **Ensure a response to urgent referrals**

- 3.7 All requests for the service should receive a response within 5 working days. When a pupil needs to be seen urgently there should be a response within the school day or, if the request is received outside school hours, the next working day. Schools should be aware that counselling is not always an appropriate response in an emergency situation and that referral to a General Practitioner (GP) or other Child Protection policy actions may be required. If counselling support is required any urgent response provided should be recorded as one of the schools's allocated sessions.

### **Respond to requests for support with critical incidents**

- 3.8 The ICSS may be asked to assist in response to critical incidents at schools. Such requests for counselling will be made through the Critical Incident Response Team in each Education and Library Board. Providers must ensure any counsellors involved in critical incidents are trained in crisis management and are supported by their organisation.

### **Advise Regional Co-ordinator of request for support with a critical incident**

- 3.9 The ICSS counselling sessions made available as part of the response to a critical incident are additional to the contracted sessions at a school. Providers must have prior approval from the ICSS Regional Co-ordinator before undertaking this work.

### **Assist with the annual review of counselling**

- 3.10 An annual report on how counselling has operated within the school should be presented to the Principal at the end of the summer term. This should form the basis of the annual review of the counselling and the provider should work with the school's Senior Management Team, the Key Contact and the Counsellor to identify and implement any necessary changes. The arrangements for review should be set out in the ICSS Information Sheet.

### **Provide required financial and statistical returns**

- 3.11 All financial and statistical returns required by DE should be completed and returned within specified timescales. The monthly details of sessions delivered and related statistics are used to support payments and to monitor the counselling service provision.

#### **4. SERVICE DELIVERY PARTNER: KEY CONTACT**

- 4.1 The Key Contact is appointed by the school's Senior Management Team and, ideally, should be a member of the school's Pastoral Care Team. The Key Contact will be the main contact point for the ICSS within the school and it is important that the person appointed has the trust and confidence of both the staff and the pupils.

This section details the main responsibilities of the Key Contact's role.

##### **Act as the link with the school community**

- 4.2 All contact with the counsellor for staff, pupils or parents should be arranged through the Key Contact. A good working relationship between the counsellor and the Key Contact is essential if counselling support is to meet the needs of pupils and be regarded as an integral part of the school's pastoral care provision.

##### **Promote awareness of counselling with parents**

- 4.3 The Key Contact will work with the counsellor to promote an awareness of the service with parents and how it can benefit pupils. The Key Contact will deal with any specific issues parents raise regarding consent for counselling.

##### **Manage the waiting list of referred pupils**

- 4.4 Referrals to counselling from staff, parents or self-referrals should be placed on the waiting list. New referrals should be discussed with the counsellor each week and the waiting list reviewed. The priority for each pupil awaiting counselling should be re-assessed and if there is any new relevant information about a pupil, who is engaged in counselling or on the waiting list, this should be shared.

##### **Seek approval to accept referrals from external agencies**

- 4.5 External agencies should not be making referrals to the school based counselling service. Where such a referral has been received the Key Contact should seek approval from the Regional Co-ordinator before placing the pupil on the waiting list.

##### **Schedule counselling sessions for pupils**

- 4.6 It is important to manage the schedule of counselling sessions for pupils and liaise with the counsellor to ensure that a pupil does not regularly miss the same lesson and that sessions are sensitive to the school's timetabling constraints. If it is known in advance that pupils will be absent from school, the Key Contact can reallocate sessions to other pupils in consultation with the Counsellor.

##### **Inform counsellor if no sessions are required**

- 4.7 If the school will be closed or no pupils are likely to require counselling, the Key Contact should notify the counsellor in advance so that those sessions can be allocated to another school in the area.

### **Meet with the counsellor at an agreed time each week**

- 4.8 This will normally be face to face when the counsellor is in the school. This provides the opportunity to review the waiting list and deal with any other issues or concerns. In exceptional circumstances, where a meeting in the school is not possible, there should be contact either by telephone, by text or e-mail to provide an update. Where e-communication is used a young person should not be named or details of their personal issue described.

### **Maintain a record of pupils referred**

- 4.9 The Key Contact should keep an individual record for referred pupils. The file will contain the referral form, the parental consent details, the number of sessions attended and a note of any follow up action required or agreed by the counsellor, school, young person or other agencies. The records should be held securely and retained until the pupil leaves the school.

### **Take appropriate action on child protection referrals**

- 4.10 The content of a counselling session remains “confidential” unless a disclosure is made of child abuse or if a pupil’s safety or welfare is considered at risk, this includes acts of self harm or suicidal ideation. In such circumstances the school’s child protection procedures will be used. The counsellor will advise the Key Contact of a disclosure or any ‘at risk’ concerns and this information should be passed immediately to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection. The Key Contact should tell the counsellor when a referral is made to social services or PSNI or if other action is taken. The counsellor will retain the professional responsibility to refer cases directly to Social Services / PSNI if there are continuing concerns.

### **Keep the Senior Management Team briefed on progress**

- 4.11 Each term the Key Contact should receive a report from the counsellor detailing the number of sessions provided, key issues arising and identifying any recurring themes. This can be used as a basis to brief the Senior Management Team about counselling provision in the school.

### **Participate in the annual review of the service provision**

- 4.12 At the end of the school year the provider will present a report to the Principal detailing the number of sessions provided, key issues arising and identifying any recurring themes. This will be used as a basis for reviewing service provision.

## **5. SERVICE DELIVERY PARTNER: COUNSELLOR**

- 5.1 The counsellor is assigned to the school by the provider. The counsellor has a Diploma in Counselling, or equivalent from a recognised validating organisation, is experienced in working with young people of post primary age, is a member of a professional body and receives appropriate clinical supervision. The counsellor will normally be present in a school at the same time every week; this makes the counsellor accessible to all members of the school community, helps develop relationships and reinforces the view that counselling is a normal part of a school's provision for its pupils.

This section details the key responsibilities of the School Counsellor.

### **Deliver the service as set out in the ICSS Information Sheet**

- 5.2 The counsellor will be available in the school at the agreed time each week, be contactable for urgent referrals and advise the Key Contact of any changes in contact details. Referrals for counselling will be accepted in line with the agreed methods. The counsellor will work with the Key Contact to review referrals, schedule pupils, share information as appropriate and liaise weekly on the progress of waiting lists and any current issues.

### **Promote the appropriate use of counselling with staff**

- 5.3 An understanding of the counselling process and how it can best be used to support pupils will be provided for school staff in partnership with the Key Contact. This can be done through meeting groups of staff, awareness sessions on staff training days or informal contact in the staff room (see Appendix 4 Specimen Information Leaflet for School Staff).

### **Promote awareness of counselling with parents**

- 5.4 An awareness of the counselling service will be promoted with parents in partnership with the Key Contact. This may involve attending parents' evenings.

### **Promote awareness of counselling and when it can help with pupils**

- 5.5 The counselling process will be explained to pupils showing how it can help, what confidentiality means and how the referral system works. This will be carried out with the assistance of the Key Contact and can be done at assembly, class briefings or drop-in sessions. Leaflets and posters may be used to promote the service. (see Appendix 5 Specimen Information Leaflet for Pupils)

### **Provide a service of high professional standards to pupils**

- 5.6 All counselling work will be undertaken within the ethical framework of the professional body and the service provided will be in line with the arrangements set out in this Handbook. While the counsellor's primary responsibility is to the pupil, the context for their work requires accountability also to the employer and to the school. However, the fundamental principle underpinning all action is that the welfare of the pupil is paramount.

### **Work within the school's child protection policy**

- 5.7 All safeguarding concerns, including suspected or alleged abuse, must be reported to the Key Contact who will pass it on immediately to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection. While the decision to make a referral to the investigating agencies rests with the school, the counsellor retains the professional responsibility to refer child protection concerns directly to the appropriate agency if there are continuing concerns.

### **Refer to other agencies/services as appropriate**

- 5.8 When the need for a referral to another agency or service is identified the Key Contact will be advised. The agreement on who will make the referral will be in line with existing school policies, such as child protection, or normal professional arrangements.

### **Meet weekly with the Key Contact**

- 5.9 The counsellor will meet with the Key Contact each week to discuss new referrals, review the waiting list and to share any relevant information about pupils' priority for counselling. Issues emerging from counselling sessions which require action by the school will be shared.

### **Maintain accurate client counselling session records**

- 5.10 An accurate record of individual sessions with pupils must be held on the client's file. These records should be held in line with both the provider and minimum professional requirements. The files will include an accurate record of main issues discussed, key decisions reached, actions to be taken and outcomes. The record should also hold details of approaches used and any agreement reached with the client. The files must be stored securely and be retained in line with the providers policy. If a counsellor takes process notes these should be amalgamated with the client's file at the end of the intervention as the records could be required at a later date for an official inquiry such as a Case Management Review (CMR).

### **Complete required records and statistical returns**

- 5.11 The counsellor will keep a record of sessions delivered on each visit to the school and ensure that it is countersigned by a member of the school's staff for audit and payment purposes.

### **Assist with critical incidents as required**

- 5.12 Counselling may be requested, through the relevant Education and Library Board's Critical Incident Team, as part of the overall support arrangements put in place for a school in response to a critical incident. The counsellor will be expected to contribute to this response. A report on the response to the critical incident should be sent to the Regional Co-ordinator immediately after the incident and an update provided six weeks after the event. This should identify the number of pupils seen, issues arising and any further action that might be required.

### **Provide a report on service usage at the end of each term**

- 5.13 A report detailing the number of sessions provided and the key issues arising will be provided to the Key Contact at the end of each term.

### **Contribute to annual report on service provision**

- 5.14 At the end of the school year the counsellor will contribute to the provider's report on service provision in the school. This report will cover the number of sessions provided, key issues arising and identify any recurring themes. The counsellor may also contribute to the annual review of service provision in conjunction with school personnel.

### **Maintain and enhance counselling skills**

- 5.15 The counsellor will maintain and develop professional practice through regular and ongoing managerial and clinical supervision and appropriate training.

## **6. SERVICE DELIVERY PARTNER: ICSS REGIONAL CO-ORDINATOR**

- 6.1 The Regional Co-ordinator is tasked with the operational management and development of the Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS) on behalf of the Department of Education. The Regional Co-ordinator acts as the key contact for liaison between schools, counselling providers, professional counselling associations and the Department.
- 6.2 The person who holds the Regional Co-ordinator post must be a practicing counsellor qualified to at least diploma level, be a member of a relevant professional body and have experience of working with children and young people. The post holder must be experienced in the management of a support service for this age group.

The rest of this section sets out the role of the Regional Co-ordinator and, where appropriate, the action expected in specified situations.

### **Compliance with contract arrangements**

- 6.3 The Regional Co-ordinator is responsible for ensuring that all providers comply with the contract requirements and that the service provided meets the specified standards.
- 6.4 The Regional Co-ordinator meets with the counselling providers on a bi-monthly basis (or as necessary) to monitor service usage and emerging issues. The agenda for these meetings includes:
- the actual utilisation of sessions by individual schools in the context of the overall allocation of sessions and the projected pattern of usage;
  - waiting lists by individual schools and, where appropriate, the scope to reduce waiting times by the re-distribution of sessions;
  - the consistency and completeness of data collected by providers and emerging patterns; and
  - confirmation of continuity of service at individual school level and any necessary contingency arrangements.
- 6.5 The bi-monthly meetings provide an opportunity for any issues which have been raised with the Regional Co-ordinator or any concerns from counsellors to be discussed with a view to resolution.
- 6.6 The Regional Co-ordinator undertakes an annual audit to confirm that the qualifications of the counsellors, their relevant experience working with young people, the clinical supervision arrangements and the standard of case recording meet contract requirements. This assurance, together with the statistical data for the school year and a general assessment of the service provision, is presented as an annual report to the Department.

### **Liaison with schools**

- 6.7 The Regional Co-ordinator maintains a list of all Key Contacts and undertakes to visit every school at least once every two years. The visits provide an opportunity to meet with the Key Contact and to gain insight into the practical issues which

arise in making counselling accessible at school level. Information from the visit contributes to the qualitative assessment of the service from a user's perspective for monitoring purposes and the discussion allows for exploration of emerging service development issues. The Regional Co-ordinator will meet with groups such as schools councils or Boards of Governors as agreed.

- 6.8 External agencies should not be making referrals directly to the school based service. If a referral is made, it will be necessary to establish that the ICSS can provide suitable support and that the young person is willing to engage with the counselling process. In such a situation, the Key Contact should seek the advice and approval of the Regional Co-ordinator before placing the pupil on a waiting list.
- 6.9 The Regional Co-ordinator is available by telephone or e-mail to discuss with a school's Key Contact, or any member of the Senior Management Team, any concerns about counselling or service provision. The Regional Co-ordinator assists schools' where there is a formal complaint about the service provision or about the conduct of the assigned counsellor. The detailed procedures are set out in Section 10.

### **Response to critical incidents**

- 6.10 The Critical Incident Response Team from the relevant Board may ask the ICSS to provide counselling for pupils as part of a broader response to a critical incident involving a school. Counselling sessions made available by the ICSS as part of the response to a critical incident are additional to the contracted sessions for any school. The Regional Co-ordinator must give prior approval to counselling providers before this work is undertaken.
- 6.11 The Regional Co-ordinator is required to monitor the position with critical incidents and to provide briefing to the Department as required.

### **Professional advice to the Department**

- 6.12 The Regional Co-ordinator provides advice to the Department of Education on matters of professional practice with implications for the ICSS including:-
- emerging best practice for counselling children and young people especially in schools;
  - recently published or on-going relevant research;
  - changes in legislation relating to counselling;
  - the contribution of counselling to broader mental and physical wellbeing strategies, action plans and initiatives; and
  - changes in professional practice.
- 6.13 As part of the service development brief, the Regional Co-ordinator identifies any capacity building requirements for ICSS counselling staff and liaises with providers and others to arrange appropriate training. Child protection training is arranged for all counsellors' and their clinical supervisors by the Regional Co-ordinator.

- 6.14 The Regional Co-ordinator contributes to the Department's wider pupils' emotional health and wellbeing programme as required. The Co-ordinator represents the ICSS interests on working groups on professional practice issues such as mental health and emotional wellbeing.

## **7. COUNSELLING – PUPILS’ PERSPECTIVE**

- 7.1 Pupils and their needs are at the centre of the counselling process. Pupils will gain maximum benefit from the counselling intervention if they have a sound understanding of the process and how it can help them before they engage with a counsellor. Pupils can only benefit if they wish to engage in counselling.
- 7.2 This section describes the essential information which all pupils should have about counselling. This information should be provided to pupils in the form of a leaflet and be reiterated in a variety of ways, such as school assembly, talks to classes, drop in sessions with the counsellor, posters and leaflets.

### **Counselling Relationship**

- 7.3 The counselling relationship provides the opportunity to talk in private about anything that is of concern to a young person. The counsellor is there to assist in exploring choices and to support pupils to make their own decisions and will not be judgemental. At the beginning of a counselling relationship the pupil and the school counsellor will enter into a written agreement. This clearly sets out the boundaries of a school-based counselling service and ensures the pupil actively works in partnership with the practitioner in case planning, decision making, reviewing and evaluation.

### **Counselling Approaches**

- 7.4 While talking is the basis of most counselling sessions in the course of a counselling session counsellors may propose to use different strategies and techniques to explore feelings, such as mood cards and role play. A counsellor will always explain what the method is, how it might benefit and will seek the pupil’s agreement. Pupils should understand that they can say ‘no’ and that the counsellor should be told if they feel uncomfortable or distressed.

### **Confidentiality**

- 7.5 It is important that that the young person understands the meaning of confidentiality. Whatever has been discussed with the counsellor will be kept confidential except in very specific circumstances. These circumstances should be explained to pupils and why a disclosure of abuse or ‘at risk’ concerns must be shared with the appropriate authorities.

### **Referral**

- 7.6 Pupils should know that they can self-refer and the arrangements for doing this. They should also know that schools’ staff or parents can also seek help on their behalf after discussion and agreement with the pupil.
- 7.7 Pupils should be very clear that they can refuse counselling at the outset or at any stage during their involvement. Pupils should be advised that there are other sources of help and counselling outside the school which they can access.

- 7.8 The young person can have an initial assessment meeting with the counsellor to determine if counselling would be appropriate for them. The pupil can expect this to be carried out within 5 working days of a written referral being received.

### **Consent**

- 7.9 Before counselling intervention can start parental consent may be required. The school's policy on this should be explained and how consent is to be sought. Further pupils should be aware that they can consent to counselling in their own right if they are sufficiently mature to understand the action proposed and its consequences. In these circumstances the young person will be considered Gillick competent. This is dealt with in more detail at paragraph 8.8
- 7.10 Consent on the part of the pupil is a pre-requisite to the formation of an effective counselling relationship. A counsellor will always confirm with a pupil at the outset of a counselling session that they wish to continue.

### **Involvement of Parents**

- 7.11 Counselling works best when parents know their child is seeking counselling and are supportive of the process. Pupils will be encouraged to share their engagement with counselling with parents. If a pupil wishes to engage without parental involvement an assessment will be made to establish if the pupil is Gillick competent and a decision will be made based on the pupil's safety and wellbeing. If the young person is deemed to be Gillick competent (see paragraphs 8.8 to 8.10) the parents do not have to be informed.

### **Assessment of Progress**

- 7.12 At the start of counselling, during the course of a series of sessions and at the end a pupil will be asked to assess their state of wellbeing. This assessment is used by the counsellor to plan sessions, determine progress and to evaluate the outcome of counselling for the pupils.

### **Consultation**

- 7.13 A review of how the service is operating in a school may include pupils' views on all aspects of the provision. From time to time ICSS may seek pupils' view on aspects of service provision common to all schools such as the information material used, how access might be made easier and ethical issues such as confidentiality and sharing of information.

### **Complaints Procedures**

- 7.14 Pupils should know that there is a procedure to deal with any complaints about the service provided by the counsellor. This information should be in the leaflet about counselling and given in awareness raising sessions about the service. The counsellor will also explain the procedure at the outset of the counselling intervention.

## **8. COUNSELLING – PARENTS’ PERSPECTIVE**

- 8.1 Counselling works best when parents know that their child is seeking counselling and are supportive of the process. Counsellors will encourage pupils to tell their parents that they are seeking counselling and to share with them, as appropriate, the experience of the counselling intervention. The parent can be introduced to the counsellor both in person at open nights and school activities or via school news-sheets.
- 8.2 This section outlines the information parents should be given about the counselling process and how it fits into the pastoral care system within the school. An information leaflet for parents should be made available by the school in the first instance and it should cover the following topics.

### **Information about the service**

- 8.3 Parents should be informed about the counselling process and how the service will operate in the school. The information should include the name of the counsellor, the service provider, the day and time of counselling sessions in the school. Details of the Key Contact or who to speak to about concerns should also be noted (see Appendix 3 Letter and Information Leaflet for Parents)

### **Referral to other services**

- 8.4 Parents should know that they can refer their son/daughter for counselling support and that it should be arranged in consultation with the Key Contact. Parents should be aware that sessions will only be taken forward if the young person agrees to engage in the process. The wish to continue with counselling will be confirmed by the counsellor at the outset of every session.
- 8.5 Parents should also be informed that school staff may make referrals and that pupils can self refer to the service.

### **Parental consent**

- 8.6 Parents should be informed about the school’s policy on consent and on how and when consent will be sought.
- 8.7 Parents should also know that there are specific situations and circumstances when a pupil can decide to seek counselling in their own right. While parents may state that they do not wish their child to access counselling or to have counselling without their knowledge, there is a legal basis for allowing a young person to make that decision.

### **Legal Position: Gillick Competent**

- 8.8 The legal position was clarified by a judgement in the House of Lords in the case of Gillick vs West Norfolk and Wisbech AHA and DHSS in 1985. The clarification known as the Fraser Guidelines set out the criteria that should be met before a service is offered to a young person below age 16 without parental consent. The key factors which must be considered for access to counselling are:

- maturity of the pupil;
- sufficient intelligence and understanding to enable the pupil to understand what is being proposed, i.e. counselling;
- sufficient intelligence and understanding of the consequences of the proposed action; and
- the potential deterioration in mental health if access to counselling is not provided.

8.9 Therefore pupils requiring counselling, who have sufficient intelligence and understanding of the proposed action and its consequences, do not require parental consent to engage in the process and are regarded as ‘Gillick competent’. These pupils do not have to consult their parents, nor does the counsellor have to inform parents that counselling has taken place.

8.10 The decision about ‘Gillick competence’ is likely to be made after an initial session to determine if counselling is an appropriate response for the young person and their circumstances. Where a pupil is judged to be ‘Gillick competent’, the ICSS must respond appropriately.

### **Confidentiality**

8.11 Parents must be made aware that the content of counselling sessions remains confidential between the counsellor and the pupil unless the welfare or safety of the pupil is considered to be at risk of significant harm. The counsellor may, with the pupil’s agreement, provide parents or schools’ staff with a general progress report.

### **Complaints**

8.12 Parents should know that there is a procedure to deal with any complaints about the service provided and how it can be initiated. This information should be in any information leaflet provided by the school and should be mentioned in any awareness raising sessions with parents.

## **9. SERVICE PROVISION - PRACTICE AND PROCEDURES**

- 9.1 The practice and procedures used across the ICSS are derived from an agreed set of practice standards and incorporate best practice developed over the period the service has been available.

### **Initial Referral**

- 9.2. Referrals for counselling sessions may be made by the pupil, parents or school personnel. User-friendly information will be displayed and distributed to inform the school community of the service.
- 9.3 The mechanisms to be used will be agreed with each school and widely publicised. The ICSS referral form must be completed by the school before the first session with the counsellor (see Appendix 6 ICSS Specimen Pupil Referral Form).

### **Self Referral**

- 9.4 A post-box or other referral system should be used as agreed by the school. Where a post box is used, this should be easily accessed by pupils yet sited discretely. Both the counsellor and the Key Contact will hold a key to allow access in the event of a critical incident or unplanned event involving a pupil when the counsellor is not on the premises.

### **Referral by Parents**

- 9.5 A parent who wishes to make a referral should seek an appointment through the Key Contact. The procedure should be set out in an information leaflet for parents including the need for the pupil's prior consent to engage in the counselling process explained.

### **Referral by School Staff**

- 9.6 A member of staff who wishes to make a referral must discuss it first with the pupil and seek their agreement. This approach values the pupil and respects his/her right to be involved in decisions. Counselling is not compulsory and a pupil may choose whether or not to attend. School Counselling is not a disciplinary measure and must not be used as such. Staff can encourage a self-referral or, with the pupil's permission seek an appointment via the Key Contact.

### **Counselling Sessions**

- 9.7 A named counsellor is assigned to a school and will be in attendance regularly, normally once per week at an agreed time. Working with the school the counsellor will determine the length of sessions. The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) in their document Counselling in Schools (2006) state that:-

***“Individual sessions can vary depending on the style and orientation of the counsellor, the needs of the child or young person and the school's***

***timetabling structure. A session is usually about 40-50 minutes or the length of a normal class period.”***

- 9.8 This emphasises the need for any school counselling intervention to be centred on the pupil and their identified issues. It also highlights that the timetabling within each school must also be taken into consideration. Morning appointments provide the opportunity for any issues of concern to be addressed and resolved before the end of the school day. As far as possible pupils will be given appointments which ensure no one subject is repeatedly missed during the counselling process.
- 9.9 Often issues raised in counselling by pupils are complex, and frequently being explored for the first time. Ethical practice requires that the counselling session be sensitively managed with appropriate time allocated to a beginning, middle and end to the session. It is important this is respected by all and sessions should not be interrupted unless there is an emergency.
- 9.10 It has been the experience of those involved in school counselling that, on average, a young person may participate in four to six sessions of counselling. The number of sessions offered must be based on the need and agreed with the young person as part of the review process. A review of the counselling intervention will take place after 6 sessions and a decision made on whether it should continue. The Key Contact is an important contributor to this decision as is the counsellor's line manager and clinical supervisor. This review will involve an assessment of the pupil's progress, motivation to continue and whether there is useful work still to be done (see Appendix 7 and 8 – Counselling Evaluation Forms).
- 9.11 Counsellors should deliver the service according to the 'Ethical Framework for Good Practice' of their professional body. This should cover areas such as supervision; record keeping (within data protection guidelines); evaluation and complaints procedures. Service will also be delivered within the ethical code of the provider's professional organisation.

### **Referral to Other Services**

- 9.12 After the initial assessment, or indeed during any counselling session, it may become apparent that the pupil requires referral to specialist services. When a referral is required the counsellor should keep the young person informed and seek permission to share information at all stages. No onward referrals should take place without the Key Contact's involvement or prior knowledge. Any decision about an onward referral, any relevant consultation and who will take the action must be recorded in the client's notes.
- 9.13 If there is a safeguarding issue then the procedures in the school's Child Protection policy must be followed.

### **Confidentiality and Information Sharing**

- 9.14 At the beginning of a counselling relationship the counsellor must explain confidentiality and its limitations to the pupil. This should clearly identify what confidentiality means in a way that is relevant to the pupil's maturity and level of understanding. Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed - the welfare of the

pupil will, at all times, take precedence over confidentiality. It is good practice for counsellors to regularly re-visit the concept of confidentiality at different stages of the counselling process with the pupil.

- 9.15 The ICSS will treat in confidence all personal information about pupils whether obtained directly, indirectly or by inference. Such information includes name, address, biographical details and other descriptions about the pupil's life and circumstances that might result in identification. Information about the pupil's school will also be treated as confidential. Counsellors will not discuss case details outside the service except for safeguarding and governance purposes.
- 9.16 While the school Key Contact may have a general overview of the presenting reason for referral the content of sessions will remain confidential unless the welfare and safety of the pupil is considered at risk.

### **Disclosure of Information with Consent**

- 9.17 The counsellor must seek a pupil's consent in advance of any disclosure of information, which could be construed as a breach of confidentiality. The rationale for disclosure of the information and the implications of the process for the pupil should be explained. This process sustains the commitment to support the pupil's autonomy and capacity for informed consent at every stage of the counselling process. Any disclosure of information will be made in the pupil's best interest.
- 9.18 The counsellor should only disclose confidential information obtained from the counselling relationship in the following exceptional circumstances:
- The pupil requests, and feels that it is within his/her best interest, that certain information is passed on;
  - Circumstances exist where the counsellor has sufficient grounds to believe that the pupil is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, for example, through neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, domestic violence or drug abuse;
  - The pupil discloses that they are aware of significant harm of another person;
  - Suicidal ideation and or self harm are being disclosed.
- 9.19 A permission form signed by the pupil and setting out what information can be shared and with whom, must be prepared for all instances of disclosure by consent.

### **Disclosure without Consent / Breach of Confidentiality**

- 9.20 Before confidentiality is breached without the pupil's consent, a Counsellor may discuss the reasons for this action with their line manager/ Clinical Supervisor within the service providing organisation. The Counsellor will give the Key Contact the relevant information. Any breach of confidentiality should be about the immediate situation and information should only be shared with those services that can provide appropriate and timely support to the pupil. The

counsellor will follow the school's child protection procedure and will remain at the school as long as necessary to support the pupil through the disclosure process.

- 9.21 The counsellor will log all revisions or changes made to the confidentiality agreement with the pupil on the case file. This is necessary to track actions taken, outcomes and implications.

"Where there is a disclosure of abuse, suicide plan or plans to harm self or others, counsellors have a duty of care to the client and others and need to take appropriate action." (Ref: Counselling Adolescents Geldard - Kathryn, David, Sage Publishers 2004)

- 9.22 The Key Contact must be an active partner in any decision making where a pupil's safety or welfare is considered at risk, this includes acts of self harm or expression of suicidal thoughts / ideologies.

### **Line Management**

- 9.23 A counsellor is a member of a team which provides a service to schools in a specific area and is line managed by a team leader. The counsellor will have regular meetings with the line manager who has responsibility for the organisational aspects of the counsellor's work.

- 9.24 Line management responsibilities and boundaries with regard to professional practice will be clearly set out in the contract between the counsellor and the service provider organisation. The line manager is responsible for the general welfare and wellbeing of the counsellor and should take any necessary action to address personal support needs.

- 9.25 Line managers should know about the caseload of each counsellor at all times.

### **Clinical Supervision**

- 9.26 All counsellors must have clinical supervision in line with the requirements set out for ICSS. Clinical supervision involves the counsellor meeting with a suitably qualified and experience practitioner from the same discipline. At these meetings professional practice is reviewed in the context of the counsellor's current caseload and client progress. Clinical supervision is intended to be both supportive and challenging.

- 9.27 Service providers will make the clinical supervision arrangements for the counsellors they employ. Providers are expected, when appointing clinical supervisors, to ensure that they can:

- assure the quality of counselling practice and that it meets agreed professional standards;
- develop individual learning and improve practice;
- meet the counsellor's professional support needs; and
- relate provision to the operational context of the ICSS.

- 9.28 Clinical Supervisors must be experienced practitioners, competent in supervising the approach used by the counsellor. Supervisor of counsellors working within the ICSS should have a background in or recognised knowledge of the various stages of child development. Supervisors will hold or be working towards accreditation as a clinical supervisor.
- 9.29 Counsellors must receive a minimum of 1½ hours clinical supervision per month, depending on the nature of the cases and experience of the counsellor. A list of all on-going cases should be maintained by the counsellor and presented to the supervisor at the outset of the session. During the course of an intervention all cases will have been discussed at least once with the Clinical Supervisor and this will be recorded in case notes. The professional practice focus of the session remains a matter for the Clinical Supervisor and the provider.
- 9.30 The Supervisor must report any concerns about a counsellor's continued competence to practice to the provider immediately.

### **Monitoring Service Provision**

- 9.31 The Regional Co-ordinator will meet with providers each term to review service usage, emerging issues and possible responses or action needed. These meetings will be informed by the data collected routinely about the service provided in each school. The factual data will include:
- numbers of young people attending sessions;
  - gender of young people attending;
  - number of sessions per young person;
  - numbers who did not keep counselling appointment;
  - presenting and other issues raised in counselling session e.g. family conflict, bullying, self harm, suicidal ideation;
  - safeguarding issues raised in counselling session e.g. Domestic violence, sexual, physical, emotional abuse, neglect; and
  - nature of any disability, illness or special needs of pupil.
- 9.32 In addition to the factual information about service provision, reports will be made on the action taken and response in respect of referrals to other agencies, the immediate impact of counselling for the pupils and the broader impact within the school.

### **Evaluation Methods**

- 9.33 The provider must evaluate the service with pupils in an age appropriate way. The proven tools, Young Person's Child Outcome Results Evaluation (YP-CORE), Child Outcome Results Survey (CORS) or Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) must be used. The ICSS preferred tool for the monitoring of a young person's progress is YP-CORE which is completed at each session. As YP CORE is widely used the outcome can be used both to evaluate the impact of ICSS and facilitate comparison across jurisdictions. See examples of evaluation forms at Appendix 7 Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and Appendix 8 YP CORE.

- 9.34 Providers can use other techniques to evaluate the impact of the service provision, for example, focus group discussions, surveys through questionnaire of members of the wider school community, or actively seek feedback from those who have made referrals.
- 9.35 The Education and Training Inspectorate undertake evaluation surveys of the service provided.

### **Counselling Records – Individual Pupil**

- 9.36 All counsellors must adhere to the Data Protection Act 1988 which covers paper records and notes held on computer systems where individuals are identified. In all aspects of data protection and record keeping the child's welfare is paramount and must remain the priority for the counsellor delivering the ICSS provision.
- 9.37 The counsellor must keep notes about what has been discussed in the session(s). These notes are part of the individual pupil's file and must be treated as confidential. Any disclosure of a safeguarding nature will be recorded on the pupil's file together with details of the parties with whom information was shared and any other action taken. Information provided about any relevant change in the pupil's circumstances between sessions, any telephone calls made on behalf of the pupil or other action taken should be recorded. The file should also contain a record of attendance at sessions, record of any sessions missed and a copy of the pupil's agreement to engage in the process.
- 9.38 Pupils' files are given a unique identification number and filed in numeric order in a secure locked cabinet on the school premises. An alphabetical list with the pupil identification number is held separately. The counsellor and Key Contact must have a key to the cabinet. Counsellors must remember at all times that a pupil can request to see his or her case records but cannot see any information from a third party without their permission.
- 9.39 The pupil's file is the property of the service provider and it is the provider's responsibility to ensure that it is stored securely until it is destroyed. The individual pupil file should be removed from the school to the provider's premises at the end of the counselling intervention. Files must be retained in line with the providers' policy on record retention.

### **Other Records**

- 9.40 Counsellors will record statistical information on client gender, age, ethnicity, reason for referral and other details as advised by the provider. This information will be processed in line with the provider's procedures for data collection. This information will be made available to the Regional Co-ordinator each term and annually, or on request in response to specific queries. The statistical data will be made available to schools on an annual basis.

### **Information Sharing – Special Circumstances**

- 9.41 Where the professional conduct or competence of the counsellor is under investigation it may be necessary to review the individual pupil(s) file. The consent of the pupil(s) will be sought by the party conducting the investigation.

9.42 Counsellors may be required to share information about a pupil who is the subject of a Case Management Review (CMR). This will only occur where the pupil was receiving counselling support at the time of death or shortly before. Counsellors should be aware that in the event of a CMR being initiated all related files and notes of personnel involved with the pupil are 'sealed' and removed for later scrutiny. The ICSS counsellor's involvement in the case will be documented and covered in the context of the Internal Agency Review conducted by the relevant Education and Library Board.

## **10. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

- 10.1 The Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS) endeavours to provide a service which meets high professional standards. Ensuring that standards are maintained and revised, when appropriate, requires an effective and responsive system for dealing with any concerns or complaints from pupils, parents or schools' staff.
- 10.2. All providers are required, as part of their formal contract, to have a complaints procedure and to make this available to those schools where they are responsible for making counselling provision. The complaints procedure should be part of the arrangements agreed with a school. All specimen information leaflets about ICSS for use with pupils, parents and schools' staff make reference to a complaints procedure. At the outset of a counselling intervention the procedure will be explained to a pupil.

### **Complaints about service provision**

- 10.3. The contract for counselling services between the Department of Education and providers establishes the requirements for provision at school level. The ICSS Information Sheet for each school sets out the details of the service which will be available and the procedure to be followed if there is a complaint about any aspect of the agreed provision. The Plan should include a named person who will deal with complaints and their contact details. This will normally be the School Principal or the Key Contact and the counselling provider.

### **Procedure**

- 10.4 Complaints should be raised directly by either the Principal/Key Contact with the Provider's named person.
- 10.5 The named person should deal with the complaint and report back to the Principal/Key Contact within 5 working days of receipt.
- 10.6 If the response is unsatisfactory or the matter is not resolved within 5 working days, the Principal/ Key Contact should refer the complaint to the Regional Co-ordinator for action. The focus for action at this stage will be on compliance with the contract.

### **Complaints about professional practice**

- 10.7 All counsellors are required to practice within the standards imposed by their relevant professional body. The Provider has a responsibility to ensure these are maintained, through practice supervision and continuous professional development. The Provider also has a responsibility to ensure that strategies and techniques used by their counsellors are appropriate for use with young people. Regardless of the following procedure, anyone who has a concern or complaint about a counsellor's professional practice can raise it directly with the relevant professional body.

## **Procedure**

- 10.8 If a pupil, parent or member of staff makes a complaint about the counselling practice or behaviour of a counsellor the Key Contact will explain the complaints procedure and confirm that a formal complaint is to proceed. The Key Contact will prepare a written statement of the complaint and seek consent from the person making the complaint before proceeding.
- 10.9 The Principal should be advised of the complaint. Where the complaint is made by a named pupil(s) then the parents should be informed of the position by the Principal, in line with the school's consent policy and the wishes of the pupil.
- 10.10 The Principal/Key Contact should send the written complaint to the Provider and copy it to the Regional Co-ordinator. The parents of the pupil should be advised of the position as appropriate.
- 10.11 The Provider will carry out an internal review in line with their complaints procedure. The nature of the complaint and the facts will be established from both the complainant and the counsellor.
- 10.12 A written report should be prepared by the Provider and issued within 20 days of receipt of the complaint to the Principal/Key Contact and copied to the Regional Co-ordinator.

## **Independent Review**

- 10.13 If the outcome of the report from the Provider is not satisfactory, then the Regional Co-ordinator should be contacted. The Regional Co-ordinator will meet with the Principal, Key Contact and the complainant to clarify the grounds for the dissatisfaction and to establish if an independent review of the Provider's investigation is required. Advice will be sought from the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) if required.
- 10.14 The Terms of Reference for an independent review will be agreed with the complainant.
- 10.15 The Department will appoint a person to conduct the independent review. The person will have no direct connection to the ICSS; will be experienced in counselling young people and undertaking clinical supervision.

## **Complaints of child abuse**

- 10.16 If an allegation of child abuse is made against the counsellor, it should be treated as a complaint against a member of staff and reported to the Principal immediately.
- 10.17 The Principal should establish the facts of the alleged behaviour and determine whether a referral should be made to the police/social services or the allegation treated as a disciplinary matter such as poor professional conduct.
- 10.18 A referral to the police/social services should be made in line with agreed procedures. The Principal when making the referral should tell the police/social

services that the counselling provider will be advised and the facts of the allegation will be passed on. The decision to suspend the counsellor from working in schools is a matter for the provider and will be made in consultation with the police/social services.

- 10.19 If the complaint is considered to be of a disciplinary nature, the counselling provider should be advised as soon as this decision is made and the Principal should provide the details in written form.

### **Monitoring Complaints**

- 10.20 The Regional Co-ordinator, as part of the overall arrangements for quality assuring service provision, monitors complaints made about counsellors. Providers are asked to furnish details of any complaints received how they were dealt with and the outcomes.

- 10.21 If at any time an individual is unhappy with the response to his or her complaint they can approach the Regional Co-ordinator directly:-

Phone: 07917106742  
E-mail: Cathy.bell@eani.org.uk  
Letter: Ms Cathy Bell  
Regional Co-ordinator  
Independent Counselling Service for Schools  
Loughview Regional Centre  
2-6 Jordanstown Road  
Newtownabbey  
BT37 0QF

## **Background to Counselling Service in Schools**

1. Counselling in schools can play an important role in supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of young people. Pupils' experiencing stress or emotional problems find it difficult to reach their potential. Where staff can recognise and respond appropriately to their needs the educational outcome is maximised. An independent counselling service can be such a response.
2. During the 1990s limited counselling support was available to schools often determined by whether the school could afford to buy in support or had a member of staff trained in counselling. Recognising the need for independent counselling in schools organisations, such as NSPCC and Contact Youth, began to pilot a service for pupils.
3. Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) reports published in 2003 and 2005 confirmed the need for counselling support as an important complementary feature of pastoral care arrangements and recommended that it should be independent of the school.

## **Establishment of the Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS)**

4. In March 2006, the Secretary of State announced the creation of the Children and Young Peoples' Funding Package. The overall objective of the package was to reduce underachievement and improve the life chances of children and young people by enhancing their educational development and fostering their health and well being. The Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS) was established with funding from the Package.
5. The ICSS provision was secured at the outset by means of a public tendering process and this practice continues. The initial contract was awarded in October 2006 and the contract was re-tendered in 2009. The operating specification for the service, as set out in the tender documentation, sets high professional standards for the counsellors and reflects acknowledged best practice in the processes used.
6. At September 2007 counselling support, which was independent of the school, was made available to all grant aided post primary schools. The choice to use the service rested with schools and over 95% made use of the service on a weekly basis. From January 2011 the ICSS provision was extended into special schools so ensuring that all pupils of post primary age have access to counseling support if they wish it.
7. The establishment of the ICSS ensures that all post-primary pupils have access to a consistent high quality professional counselling service. The ICSS is now funded as part of the pupils' emotional health and well-being programme which seeks to promote positive mental health and emotional well-being within schools.





**ICSS Service Information Sheet 2012/\_\_\_**

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel No: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Role	Name	Telephone Details	Email Details
Principal			
Key Contact			
Deputy Key Contact			
Designated Teacher for Child Protection			
Counsellor			
Counselling Provider			
Out of Hours Contact Details			

**Counselling Service Availability**

Agreed Day	
Time	
Room No	

**Referral Arrangements**

Referral Source	Agreed Procedure
Self Referral	
School Referral	
Parent/Carer Referral	
Other	

**School Policies/Information Provided To Counsellor**

Policy Documents	Received
Child Protection	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discipline/Anti Bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of Internet/Mobile Phones	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parental Consent	<input type="checkbox"/>

Information Provided	Received
School holidays	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Review of Service Provision**

The operation of the counselling service within the school should be reviewed annually. A report from the counselling provider will be made available in \_\_\_\_\_ each year to facilitate this process.



**DRAFT LETTER TO PARENTS**

Dear Parent,

Young people today are faced with many pressures as they continue to develop their coping skills and preparation for the adult world. Pupils experiencing stress or emotional problems find it difficult to engage with the education process and to reach their potential.

Here at \_\_\_\_\_ ***name of school*** we are committed to providing your son/daughter with every opportunity to reach their potential during their time with us. While the support given through our pastoral care staff and heads of year is of the highest standard we are very conscious that some young people appreciate the opportunity to speak to an adult who is not directly involved with their education. Independent school based counselling provides this opportunity.

The Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS), which is funded by the Department of Education, has been available to all post-primary schools since 2007. The counselling support provided conforms to high professional standards and current best practice for school based counselling. Our current provider is \_\_\_\_\_  
***provide details of counselling provider / name of counsellor***

A list of the frequently asked questions relating to school based counselling is attached to this letter. ***If the school is hosting information sessions for parents provide details.***

If you have any objection to your son/daughter making use of this service please let me know by telephoning on \_\_\_\_\_ emailing on \_\_\_\_\_ or writing to me at the school address.

A counselling service that is responsive to pupils' needs operates as an integral part of the school's pastoral care provision and we will work with the counselling providers to deliver this service.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

## **SPECIMEN INFORMATION LEAFLET FOR PARENTS AND CARERS**

### ***What is counselling?***

Counselling provides an opportunity to talk in confidence to a qualified Counsellor about any issues/concerns. The issues raised will depend on the individual, but common themes are stress, relationships, bereavement or traumatic events.

### ***Who are the Counsellors?***

They are a team of professionally qualified and experienced people who have experience working with children and young people. Counsellors are trained to listen without judging and to help people sort out their thoughts and feelings about whatever is concerning them.

### ***Why do we need a Counsellor in school?***

Few of us are able to work well when we are stressed or unhappy. The impact of distressing or difficult situations can be felt even more acutely by young people than by adults. If pupils are able to receive emotional support from a qualified professional they will have greater opportunity to fulfil their potential.

### ***Where and when does it take place?***

A small, private room is made available in school during the day. Sessions can last up to fifty minutes and appointment times are varied so that time is not lost from any one subject. Counselling may last for just a few sessions or be longer term. The need is reviewed regularly between counsellor and pupil.

### ***Is it confidential?***

A key feature of the counselling service is that information is treated confidentially. Counselling is a time when it is alright to talk about concerns without fear of them being discussed elsewhere. This includes not discussing the counselling work with parents, unless the pupil requests or gives consent to this. This can be hard for parents to accept at times, but ensuring the confidentiality of the work is crucial for establishing trust so that pupils feel confident to speak openly and freely about what is concerning them.

However, if a pupil appears to be at risk of significant harm it may be appropriate to seek help from other agencies to keep them safe. The Counsellor will discuss this with the pupil first.

All Counsellors receive supervision of their work to ensure the quality of their practice, and these sessions involve the anonymous presentation of casework. At no time will the pupil's name appear on paperwork.

### ***What if I don't want my child to receive counselling?***

If your child requests counselling and is able to understand what is involved in the process, then they have the right to access counselling. You cannot deny them this right. The Counsellor, however, would prefer to have your support for the work and is always happy to talk with you about any concerns that you may have about the idea of counselling.

### ***What if my child refuses to have Counselling?***

The decision about whether or not to take up the offer of counselling is entirely voluntary for young people just as it would be for an adult.

### ***Can I support the Counselling work?***

Yes, and this is welcomed. Experience shows that the most helpful thing a parent or carer can do is to show an acceptance of counselling as a normal and useful activity, and to show an interest if their child wishes to talk about it, but not to press them if they do not. Counsellors acknowledge that this is not an easy task, and it is quite natural for parents to feel anxious about what may be being said in the sessions.

It is hoped that talking with a Counsellor will lead to greater openness, but you may need to allow a little time for this to happen.

### ***If my child wants to see a Counsellor does that mean I am failing as a parent?***

Absolutely not! We all experience occasions when it feels hard to speak to those closest to us about things which are bothering us. Often this can be because we do not want to worry those we love best, or because we want help thinking things through with someone unbiased and removed. The Counsellor will not be judging you or your child, but looking to help them find their way through whatever is troubling them.

### ***How are referrals made to the Counselling Service?***

Referrals are made through the school's pastoral care system but the request may come from you, your child or a teacher. If a teacher makes the request we expect them to speak with the pupil first about why it may be a good idea. An initial session can be held with the young person to determine if counselling is an appropriate support in their circumstances.

### ***Data Protection Procedures and Evaluation***

All information about counselling work undertaken must be kept securely by the Counselling Service in line with the requirements set by the Data Protection Act 1988. After the counselling has finished your child will be sent an evaluation form to complete anonymously. If there is any cause for complaint, you or your child are welcome to contact the Counsellor, the Counselling Provider or the ICSS Regional Co-ordinator who will try to resolve any issues of concern.



## **SPECIMEN INFORMATION LEAFLET FOR SCHOOL STAFF**

The Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS) operates as an integral part of a schools' pastoral care provision to support the emotional health and wellbeing of the pupil. This requires a collaborative and co-operative partnership from all areas within the school.

A named counsellor is assigned to each school and should be available at the same time each week. The Senior Management Team will introduce the nominated Counsellor to staff. The Counsellor will promote an understanding of the counselling process and how it can be used to support pupils. This may be done at general staff meetings, in small groups or through informal contact in the staff room.

At the heart of the counselling service is one to one therapeutic counselling provided for pupils'. If you feel that a pupil could benefit from the service you should discuss this with them. The approach values the pupil and respects his/her right to be involved in decisions.

If you are unsure whether to refer a pupil for counselling it may be helpful to discuss concerns with the school Counsellor in order to clarify the most appropriate way forward. Once you are clear that a referral is appropriate you need to speak with the Key Contact in your school.

Counselling is not compulsory and a pupil may choose whether or not to attend. School counselling is not a disciplinary measure and must not be used as such.

ICSS counsellors deliver the service according to the ethical framework for good practice of a professional body such as the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). Supervision and record keeping (within data protection guidelines), evaluation forms and complaints procedures are all within the code of their professional organisation.

If you have any concerns, please discuss them with the Counsellor or the Regional Co-ordinator.

If you want to know more about the service, a copy of the ICSS Handbook is available from the Key Contact or on <http://www.deni.gov.uk>.



**SPECIMEN INFORMATION LEAFLET FOR PUPILS*****What's counselling about?***

Sometimes we all have problems that are worrying. Think of a confusing jigsaw when all of the pieces are difficult to match together. Talking about a problem in counselling is like sorting out the pieces so that we can build a picture that makes more sense to us.

***What happens in counselling?***

Counselling gives you the opportunity to talk in private about anything which is worrying you. The counsellor will not take sides or tell you what to do or how to live your life, but they will help you to look at choices and encourage you to make your own decisions.

***Who are the Counsellors?***

They are a team of professionally qualified and experienced people who have experience working with children and young people. Counsellors are trained to listen without judging and to help people sort out their thoughts and feelings about whatever is concerning them.

***Where will counselling take place?***

Counselling will take place in a room set aside by the school. This room will be a safe place where no one will be able to listen in to what you are telling the counsellor. Sessions can last up to 50 minutes and appointment times should be varied so that time is not lost from the same subject.

***When is counselling available?***

Your counsellor is \_\_\_\_\_ and he/she will be in the school on \_\_\_\_\_ mornings.

***How do I get to see the counsellor?***

You can see the counsellor by talking to one of your teachers, self-referring by using the post box in the reception area or asking your parent or carer to arrange an appointment.

***Is counselling Confidential?***

What you say in counselling is not repeated to others without your permission, unless there are very serious concerns about your safety or another person's safety. This will be explained to you at the initial meeting with the counsellor.

***Do my parents need to know?***

Counselling works best when you are able to tell your parents and they can support you. If you want to have counselling without your parents knowing your school will decide if you can do this. This decision is based on how well you understand what counselling is about and the consequences of not telling your parents. This is known as being 'Gillick competent'





**CONFIDENTIAL**

**Independent Counselling Service for Schools  
Referral of Pupil Form**

**Section 1: Pupil Details**

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Referral: \_\_\_\_\_

Pupil's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age/Year Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Pupil ID No: \_\_\_\_\_ Male/Female: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 2: Referral Details**

Has this pupil been referred to counselling before? Yes/No: \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please give details: \_\_\_\_\_

Key Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of referrer if different: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for referral: \_\_\_\_\_

Has this referral been discussed with young person? Yes/No: \_\_\_\_\_

Are they happy to attend counselling? Yes/No: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 3: Background Information**

Details of action already taken by school, if applicable:

\_\_\_\_\_

Parents/Carer informed of referral? Yes/No: \_\_\_\_\_

Does pupil have a statement of special education need? Yes/No: \_\_\_\_\_

Other agency involvement: eg CAMHS; GP; Social Service?

\_\_\_\_\_

Any other relevant information: \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please note information on this form may be shared with the pupil.



**CONFIDENTIAL**

**Counselling Evaluation Forms - Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire**

For each item please mark the box for Not True (NT), Somewhat True (ST) or Certainly (CT). Please give your answers on the basis of the child's behaviour over the last six months or this school year. To be completed at beginning and end of counselling process.

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Male / Female \_\_\_\_\_

	Not True NT	Somewhat True ST	Certainly True CT
Considerate of other people's feelings			
Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long			
Often complains of headaches, stomach aches, sickness			
Shares readily with other children (pencils, treats etc.)			
Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers			
Rather solitary, tends to play alone			
Generally obedient, usually does what adults request			
Many worries, often seems worried			
Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill			
Constantly fidgeting or squirming			
Has at least one good friend			
Often fights with other children or bullies them			
Often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful			
Generally liked by other children			
Easily distracted, concentration wanders			
Nervous or clingy in new situations easily loses confidence			
Kind to younger children			
Often lies or cheats			
Picked on or bullied by other children			
Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers, etc)			
Thinks things out before acting			
Steals from home, school or elsewhere			
Gets on better with adults than with other children			
Many fears, easily scared			
Sees tasks through to the end good attention span			

Do you have any comments or concerns? \_\_\_\_\_

---



---



---



---





CORE-YP

Assistance given?   
(If yes, please tick)

Site ID	<input type="text"/>	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>
Client ID	<input type="text"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
Letters only	Numbers only	Age	<input type="text"/>
Therapist ID	<input type="text"/>	Stage Completed	
Subcodes	Numbers only (1) Numbers only (2)	S Screening	
Date form given	d d / m m / y y y y	R Referral	
		A Assessment	Stage
		F First Therapy Session	<input type="checkbox"/>
		P Pre-therapy (unspecified)	
		D During Therapy	
		L Last Therapy Session	Episode
		X Follow up 1	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Y Follow up 2	<input type="checkbox"/>

**These questions are about how you have been feeling OVER THE LAST WEEK.**  
**Please read each question carefully. Think how often you have felt like that in**  
**the last week and then put a cross in the box you think fits best.**  
**Please use a dark pen (not pencil) and mark clearly within the boxes.**

**OVER THE LAST WEEK...**

	Not at all	Only occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Most or all of the time
1. I've felt edgy or nervous	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
2. I haven't felt like talking to anyone	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
3. I've felt able to cope when things go wrong	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
4. I've thought of hurting myself	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
5. There's been someone I felt able to ask for help	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
6. My thoughts and feelings distressed me	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
7. My problems have felt too much for me	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
8. It's been hard to go to sleep or stay asleep	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
9. I've felt unhappy	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
10. I've done all the things I wanted to	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

**Thank you for answering these questions**



