



ABERDEENSHIRE SCHOOL COUNSELLING SERVICE

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

2nd October 2020

What is counselling?

Counselling provides a safe and confidential space for young people to talk to a trained professional about issues and concerns they face. The counsellor will help the young person explore their thoughts, feelings and behaviours so they can develop a better understanding of themselves and of others.

A counsellor will not give young people their opinions or offer advice. They will help the young person find their own solutions – whether that's making effective changes in their life and relationships or finding ways of coping with their problems.

What does a counsellor do?

Counsellors listen without judging and try to help young people understand their thoughts and feelings about whatever is concerning them, as well as enabling and supporting young people if they wish to make changes that will improve their situation.

All our counsellors are professionally trained and have training and experience specifically related to working with young people. All our counsellors belong to a professional body either COSCA and / or BACP and abide by the codes of conduct and ethics of these professional bodies. This includes a commitment to the principles and values set out in the BACP and/or COSCA Ethical Framework(s), attending regular clinical supervision, and practicing with confidentiality, accountability and continued professional development.

How does this differ from the support already offered at the school?

CAMHS work with severely unwell young people and Pupil Support Workers may work with emotional distress that requires a skilled listening service and / or a defined programme of support, counsellors fit into the space between these services. Counsellors work with young people facing more entrenched mental health challenges that do not meet the criteria for CAMHS referrals. Counselling is not an ad hoc or one-off intervention during an emotional or behavioural crisis, but longer-term (usually 10 sessions) work based on building a trusting and meaningful relationship between the young person and the counsellor.

Is it confidential?

The counselling relationship is between the young person and the counsellor. Therefore, it is important that the information discussed in the counselling sessions is treated confidentially. Counselling is a time for the child or young person to talk about concerns without fear of them being discussed elsewhere. This includes not discussing the work with parents, unless the child or young person requests or gives consent for 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 your child feels confident to speak openly and freely about what is concerning them.



All counsellors adhere to the Aberdeenshire Council's child protection and data protection policies. The only time when this is not possible is when the counsellor feels your child or another person around the child is at risk of harm.

Can I support the counselling work?

Yes, and we welcome parental support. The most helpful thing parents can do is show acceptance of counselling as a normal and useful activity. Young people may wish to share with you what happens in their counselling sessions, but it is helpful if you do not press them if they don't. Counselling may lead to greater openness with parents and families about the issues worrying a young person.

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 don't want to worry those we love, or because we want help thinking things through with someone else outside the family. The counsellor will not be judging you or your child, instead we will look to support your child in finding their way through whatever is troubling them.

How can my child access counselling?

There are challenging life experiences we all go through where it's natural to experience difficult emotions. This doesn't always mean that your child needs counselling, with some time, they may be able to work through difficulties on their own. However, if you feel like the situation remains difficult for the child to manage, please speak to your child's guidance teacher or class teacher and discuss if counselling may be helpful.

Who is counselling best for?

For counselling to work the most important element is that your child wants to work through the things that are worrying them. It is important that the child is not pressed to attend. Coming to the first session will give them the chance to decide whether they actively choose to continue working with the counselling which is a vital part of the process.

Some examples of when counselling may be helpful for a young person:

- Feeling sad, unhappy, anxious or lonely
- Problems and arguments at home
- Feeling angry
- Parents splitting up
- Death of someone special
- Confused feelings about identify
- Wanting to hurt themselves or others
- Being bullied
- Suicidal thoughts
- Worrying about sex or relationships
- Having problems at school
- Issues with body image or weight
- Questions about sexuality or gender
- Issues with peer relationships and friends
- Relationship with food



From mountain to sea

- School and exams stress school
- Traumatic events that have happened in the past
- Substance misuse
- Difficulties with attending school

When might counselling not be appropriate?

There are challenging life experiences we all go through where it is natural to experience difficult emotions. This does not always mean that a young person needs counselling, with some time and if a supportive family structure is in place, many will be able to work through difficulties on their own. At other times an alternative intervention to counselling is more appropriate in meeting a young person's needs.

Some examples of when counselling may not be appropriate include when the young person:

- does not wish to attend
- is attending CAMHS
- is offered support from another professional in the school
- is experiencing a one-off difficult day
- is experiencing the immediate aftermath of bereavement