

Guidance to Support GDST Provision of School Counsellors Policy

INTRODUCTION

This guidance has been drafted to accompany the GDST 'Provision of School Counsellors Policy' which was published in January 2015 and is available in the GDST Policies section of [Oracle](#).

It addresses a range of issues raised by colleagues during the process of drafting the Policy and addresses topics raised by schools who have only just embarked on their journey of having counsellors working regularly in their schools, as well as schools who have several years' experience.

There are several other sources of guidance and information (some listed at the end of this document) which schools will find helpful. Of particular note is '*Counselling in Schools: a blueprint for the future*' published by the [Department for Education](#) in March 2015. It is recommended that you obtain a copy of this document and read it in conjunction with this GDST guidance.

COUNSELLORS – Recruitment and Management

1. Qualifications and Experience

All counsellors should be appropriately **qualified**. This means:

- A Diploma in Counselling / Psychotherapy;
- Accreditation with one of the professional bodies: BACP, UKCP, BPS; and
- On an Accredited Voluntary Register.

Counsellors should have **relevant experience and demonstrable competence** working with the target age group, i.e. junior and senior school pupils. If the counsellor does not have experience of working with the full age range, the school should have systems in place to ensure pupils of all ages are adequately supported.

2. DBS Clearance

A new DBS with barred list check should be undertaken when a counsellor is appointed. The school must have sight of the original DBS certificate and note the date of this check on the Single Central Record.

3. Third Party Insurance

All self-employed counsellors, and counsellors employed on a consultancy basis should have appropriate Public Liability and Professional Indemnity insurance. Insurance certificates should be submitted to the school prior to engagement, and copies retained.

4. Independence

The counsellor(s) should be totally independent, i.e. *not* a member of school staff with other duties / responsibilities in school and *not* directly connected to any pupil or member of staff at the school. However, it will probably be impossible to ensure that there is absolutely no connection, hence the importance of the counsellor's knowledge and implementation of professional boundaries

5. Supervision

All counsellors are required to have regular supervision to maintain their professional qualification. BACP recommends 1.5 hours / month. If a counsellor is self-employed or employed on a consultancy basis, it is their responsibility to procure /organise their own supervision. However, schools should help/facilitate supervision if counsellors are school employees. The [BACP](http://www.bacp.co.uk) website can be used to find supervisors.

6. Recruiting Counsellors – Recommended Places to Advertise

- a. British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP) website - <http://www.bacp.co.uk/jobs/index2.php>
- b. UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) website <http://members.psychotherapy.org.uk/findATherapist>
- c. Guardian Newspaper <http://jobs.theguardian.com/>

7. Job Description, Person Specification and Outline of Role

It is important that the school has a clear vision of the counsellor's role in the school. This might include:

- What the school wants to achieve
- What involvement the counsellor should have in assessments, triage, conversations with parents, direct contact with parents and outside services
- The referral system - internal and external
- Participation in PHSE sessions / development of PSHE strategy,
- Working with pastoral teams, peer mentors, prefects etc.
- Workshops/assemblies with girls,
- Involvement in wellbeing/ health awareness days/weeks
- Training sessions with members of staff,
- Advising Heads, Deputy Heads, Pastoral Heads on mental health issues
- Organising workshops with parents,
- Writing articles for pupil newsletter / agony aunt column – link into an anonymous suggestion box

8. Pay Scales

Schools may agree to pay an hourly rate, a daily rate, a rate per pupil receiving counselling support, or if an employee a salary with all the usual GDST benefits. Expect to pay in the order of £50 / hour in London/ Home counties to have someone with appropriate qualifications and experience. The fees paid should cover the counsellor's time spent at meetings, training sessions, admin, etc. Admin time will vary, but could take up to 20% of the counsellor's time. If counsellors are required to attend for additional hours / days to the normal contract, this should be remunerated accordingly.

9. Ideas for Interview Questions

- Qs that will draw out a person's personal qualities (extremely important to this role), e.g. how empathetic they are
- Qs that will identify if they have suitable counselling knowledge/experience
- Qs that will identify if they have suitable education knowledge/ experience
- If they have worked in state schools but not independent schools/ girls' schools, Qs re different issues they are likely to come across
- Qs to determine range of work they have undertaken with different aged pupils
- What attracted you to this school, role, and age range of pupils (if not for full range)?
- What issues do you think the pupils will present to you
- Qs re the counselling styles they use, e.g. CBT, person centred, talking therapy, play therapy
- How do you understand the client's unconscious material and how do you work with it?
- Give examples of any difficulties you have experienced when dealing with other clients, and how you dealt with them
- What do you see your role in the school including?
- Q to pull out understanding of safeguarding issues
- Q to pull out understanding of confidentiality issues
- Q to pull out understanding of boundaries within a counselling relationship
- What would you do if e.g.:
 - A Year 7 pupil said she wanted to commit suicide
 - You've been asked to support a pupil who has been told that they have a terminal illness
- What do you do to maintain your own wellbeing?
- What do you do to ensure you keep professionally up to date and continue your professional development?
- How do you facilitate your clinical supervision?

Schools may like to consider having a 'pupil panel' to as part of the interview process as candidates must be able to quickly form effective working relationships with the girls.

10. Reporting Line

It is recommended that the counsellor reports directly to the Pastoral Deputy Head.

COUNSELLING SESSIONS

11. Safeguarding

Everyone, including the pupils, must be aware that safeguarding trumps confidentiality issues on every occasion. It is essential that the counsellor is fully aware who the safeguarding lead is in the school and the disclosure reporting procedures. Regard must be had to the [GDST 'Safeguarding Procedures'](#), in particular the guidance on 'Information Sharing'.

12. Communication Links and Information Sharing

For counselling to be most effective there needs to be good communication links/working relationships between the counsellor and all other members of the pastoral team, including the school nurse. It is recommended that the counsellor and their line manager, pastoral heads and school nurse, meet once each half term and more regularly if the need arises.

The school and counsellor should agree, in advance, the issues that they will liaise on. These will include: safeguarding **issues**, serious self-harming, eating disorders, and abuse issues. It is also recommended that the counsellor is involved in conversations about how to proceed with more serious cases in school as they can help inform a good treatment plan.

Commented [CC(01): ADD 'and child protection issues']

The counsellors should always encourage pupils to share their concerns with the school's pastoral team, so that they can be supportive, and with their parents. There may be circumstances where it might be appropriate for the counsellor to see the pupil and her parent(s) together; this should not be discouraged.

It can be helpful if the School Nurse and Pastoral Head knows which pupils are receiving counselling in order that they can provide appropriate assistance if a pupil requires interim support between her appointments with the counsellor, however this should be on a case-by case basis and has to be balanced against the pupil's desire for confidentiality.

Parental liaison - Counsellors should agree a protocol with their line manager for all communications with a pupil's parents.

It is recommended that counsellors are included in school's safeguarding update training sessions. Newly appointed counsellors must be inducted into the school's safeguarding policies and procedures in the same way as for all other staff.

13. Delivery Options

The counselling provision should be proportionate to the number of pupils requiring specialised support, and the type and complexity of their needs; this may change over time.

It is good practice for the counsellor and school to agree:

- The days of the week that the counsellor is in school,
- A calendar of events for the term ahead, specifically including:
 - Days when the counsellor is not required to attend, e.g. on days of whole school events such as sports day,
 - Additional days when the counsellor is required to attend, e.g. for Health Awareness days.

Each pupil's session with the counsellor should last for an appropriate length of time, depending on the age of the pupil and the nature of the support they require. This should be agreed between the counsellor and the school. Sessions for senior school pupils will typically last 40-50 minutes, with 10 minutes between appointments to enable the counsellor to make notes, prepare for the next client.

For pupils in years 10 – 13, it is desirable to avoid having appointments during exam subject lessons. Options might include during PE sessions, PHSE sessions, study periods and lunch times. Before / after school sessions can be a useful way of seeing more clients in a day and reducing the impact on pupil's lessons.

Group sessions - Depending on the issues / pupils involved it might be appropriate for counsellors to see small groups of pupils with similar issues together, e.g. bereavement, anxiety, exam stress. These require careful planning but can be very beneficial.

Occasionally pupils may request to see the counsellor in pairs; typically this will be the first time they see the counsellor. They may have a common issue, or one may just be a 'supporter'. This can help the girls make the big first step to access this level of support. It should not be discouraged initially, but the counsellor will probably want to move quickly to individual sessions once the issues have been identified and a trusting relationship established.

Ideally schools will offer a combination of scheduled appointments and shorter 'drop in' sessions that pupils could use for short term / one off support. Lunch times are often a good time for 'drop in' sessions to take place.

Counsellor Absence - Schools should agree procedures with the counsellor for notifying the pupils if the counsellor is unable to come into school for appointments, e.g. due to sickness.

Life Coach - Some schools might like to enhance counselling provision even further by engaging a 'life coach' to help pupils with issues such as exam worries, revision, stress and sleep problems. The boundaries between life coaching and counselling must be clear to all

parties and careful thought needs to be given to how girls are assessed and allocated, by whom and how. Pupils should not see the life coach and the counsellor at the same time as doing so can promote splitting and confusion. Pupils who are thought to have serious mental health issues are more suitable, at least in the first instance, for counselling rather than life coaching.

14. Confidential Self-Referral

There are several ways that pupils can confidentially self-refer themselves to the counsellor. These include:

- **Confidential drop box**
- **Email** – Counsellor should have a GDST email address which they can access out of school. Pupils should contact the counsellor using their school email address. Pupils find this method particularly easy as they can access emails on computers, I-Pads and their phones, both in school and at home.
- **'Need Help' button** on school's portal/Firefly page - link to an appointment request site that counsellor has access to.
- **Appointment sheet** – placed in an easily accessible place, which can be accessed discreetly if necessary, where pupils can sign up for an appointment. NB the sheet should not be located in a place where someone monitors who is signing up for a session. An issue with this system is that the counsellor can't contact a person to remind them of the date /time of their appointment if they sign up anonymously, e.g. for a first visit. (For subsequent visits the pupils can sign-up using an agreed code word/number).
- **Texts** – Counsellor would need to have access to a GDST mobile phone at all times to respond to texts.

15. Gillick Competency

Young people (under the age of 16) who are considered to be 'Gillick-competent', i.e. they have sufficient maturity and judgement to enable them to fully understand what is proposed, can consent to medical treatment, including counselling, without their parent(s)' permission or against their parent(s)' wishes. This was defined in England and Wales by the House of Lords in the case of Gillick vs West Norfolk and Wisbech AHA and DHSS in 1985. More information on 'Gillick competency' can be found [here](#)

Junior school pupils are not considered to be 'Gillick competent'. Pupils in GDST senior schools would normally be considered to be 'Gillick competent', although every pupil under the age of 16 should be assessed for competence.

Assessing competence to consent by children and young people

The following guidance is based on the Fraser Guidelines and adapted for application to counselling and is copied from 'Good Practice Guidelines for Counselling in Schools', 4th edition by Susan McGinnis and Peter Jenkins.

Factors to consider	Checklist for questions
Immediate issues	
Child's age:	How <i>old</i> is the child or young person?
Gillick test:	Does the child or young person <i>understand</i> the counselling or advice? Are they <i>refusing</i> to allow their parents to be informed? Do their best <i>interests</i> require that the advice or counselling be given without parental consent?
Short-term issues	
Nature of contact:	Is the contact with the counsellor or therapist controlled entirely by the child or young person? (e.g. emergency phone call, drop-in centre)
Support systems:	What support does the child or young person have access to alongside or in the place of counselling or therapy, should contact be broken or withdrawn?
Nature of the immediate issue or problem	What is the degree of risk, if <i>any</i> , posed by the child to him or herself or to others (e.g. drugs, abuse, suicide, arson)? : Is the risk significant, immediate or longer term?
Child protection responsibilities:	Is the counsellor or therapist <i>required</i> by their conditions of employment, or agency policy, to report all suspected child abuse to social services?
Longer-term issues	
Stage of cognitive and emotional development:	Does the child or young person <i>understand</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the nature of the issue or problem? • their own needs and the needs of others? • the risks and benefits of counselling or therapy? Does the child or young person have <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a sense of their own identity? • a sense of time, past, present and future?
Source: Jenkins, 1997: 216-7 (abbreviated version)	

16. Pupil Agreements

It is recommended that, at an early stage in the counselling process, the counsellor explains to each pupil:

- How counselling works,
- The boundaries of confidentiality and contact with parents / carers,
- How the pupil and Counsellor can contact each other,

- About data protection, and
- Reminds the pupil that it is their responsibility to remember to attend the counselling sessions.

17. Records

It is important that counsellors keep factual records of who they have seen, when, for how long, for what reason and a brief summary of topics discussed / any relevant reflections.

All records, paper or electronic, should be the property of the GDST (this should be stated in the school's contract with the counsellor). They should be treated / stored in the same way as safeguarding records.

The records should be kept until the pupil they refer to reaches the age of 25, or 7 years after leaving school, whichever is the longer, in case future circumstances, e.g. a serious case review after the death of a pupil, requires the records to be produced.

18. Evaluation of Service

In order to evaluate the service, the counsellor/school could use:

- Core forms (initial assessment forms) for pupils with longer term issues,
- Exit questionnaire/client ending forms,

The school should keep records of the numbers of pupils seen by the counsellor so they can identify trends which will help them better manage the girl's health and welfare. Examples of trends include:

- Reason for referral
- Severity,
- Number of sessions attended
- Age / Year group
- Need for referral to more specialist services

19. Pupils Needing Ongoing Support

Whilst each case needs to be treated as an individual, each pupil should normally be offered a series of six regular sessions (half a term) with the counsellor. At the end of the six week period, the counsellor should reassess the pupil and decide if they need to be referred to external services, continue support in school, or if the counselling is no longer needed. The counsellor must use their professional judgement and refer a pupil to external services, or end the sessions if they are no longer needed, before the end of the six week period.

All school based sessions should be free of charge to pupil.

Support during the holidays - Schools should consider facilitating counselling during the school holidays for pupils who are already receiving support. Each case needs to be judged on its own merits, but where circumstances are such that it would do the pupil harm if the sessions were terminated for a significant periods of time, e.g. for the summer holidays, every effort should be made to continue the counselling provision. This may be with the school's usual counsellor, or it may be through referral to another organisation. Sessions

during the holidays should take place at a time and place mutually agreed by the pupil, her parents and the counsellor. It may be possible for the session to take place on school premises or it may take place at an external venue.

20. Ideal Counselling Facilities

Room

- Quiet room where people won't be disturbed, or disturb others
- Comfy chairs/sofa, small table, lamp/soft lighting, relaxing environment,
- Space to play/draw etc.

Equipment

- Phone,
- Computer – for access to emails, to make records. NB Unless the Counsellor is a school employee, it is strongly recommended that they are not given access to SIMS because of data protection issues.
- Lockable cupboard for equipment

Location

- Ideally, the room will be in a discreet location – some pupils will not want to be seen going there, but it should not be in a remote area where no one ever goes to so it would be obvious why you were going there! Good locations might include:
- Close to the medical room – lots of people go to the medical room for all sorts or normal reasons
- Close to library - lots of people going in and out at odd times, so can easily slip unnoticed into counselling room
- A room used for lots of other reasons – so a pupil might be going there for a tutorial with a teacher, or they might be seeing the counsellor – no-one would know. NB the room should be booked out for the days/times when the counsellor is in school to avoid unwanted interruptions.
- A venue very close to school that students can go to for after-school sessions

21. Funding

The GDST wish to actively promote and support the role of professional counsellors working in partnership with the schools. To that end, schools who are not already providing counselling services in line with the GDST policy should request funding for its provision through the normal budgetary process.

22. Private Referrals

It is not recommended that counsellors promote their private practice within the school as this could be seen as a conflict of interest/not ethical.

23. Sources of Further Advice and Information

- Counselling in Schools: a blueprint for the future – March 2015 - Published by the [Department for Education](#) – reference DFE-00117-2015 - download for free from the internet.
- Guideline for Counselling in Schools, 4th edition, 2006 – Susan McGinnis and Peter Jenkins, published by [BCAP](#) ISBN: 1905114168 **NB** this document is due to be updated in the near future.
- **School-Based Counselling Operating Toolkit** – Welsh Assembly Government and the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy – Available [here](#)

On-line counselling services

- [Kooth.com](#) - great for pupils that don't want to actually see a counsellor. Currently available in 15 geographical areas. Comes highly recommended by Nottingham Girls' High School.
- Other online services listed on the [Young Minds](#) website

Websites

- [Talk to Frank](#) – Drugs Advice
- [Young Minds](#) – Children and young people's wellbeing and mental health
- [NSPCC](#) – Fighting for Childhood
- [MindEd](#) – e-learning to support young and healthy minds

24. Authors

With many thanks to the Working Group who helped develop this guidance:

- Kensington Prep School – Diane Marcangelo - Head of PSHCE & Year 2 teacher
- Newcastle High School for Girls - Michael Tippett – Deputy Head (Development and Wellbeing)
- Newcastle High School for Girls - Vicki Wilson – School Nurse
- Nottingham Girls' High School – Julie Keller – Deputy Head (Pastoral)
- Royal High School, Bath - Debbie Dellar - Deputy Head (Pastoral)
- South Hampstead High School – Lucy Mullins – School Nurse
- South Hampstead High School – Rayna Shock – School Counsellor
- Sutton High School - Elizabeth Clark - Head of Sixth Form and Upper School
- Trust Office - Clare Cunningham – Head of Health & Safety
- Trust Office – Mary Sansom – Training and Policy Manager
- Trust Office – Chris Thompson - Legal Adviser

Appendix 1- GDST Counselling Contract

GDST Counselling Contract

Your Counsellor will discuss the contract with you during your first appointment.

The aim of counselling is to provide a safe space where you can talk about whatever you want without being judged or being told what to do. Your Counsellor will support you while you explore your feelings and thoughts and, through talking, you may be able to find a better way to cope or a way to solve your own problems.

What is your name?

What is the date?

What is the name of your Counsellor?

Sessions

You will discuss the time and day of your [insert length of session] minute sessions with your Counsellor. Sessions will take place [insert number of times a week] a week [or fortnightly] and may be during break, lesson time, free periods, lunchtime, or after school. Sessions will be booked for the next [] weeks with a review on the last session. You can have up to [] counselling sessions and, in some cases, you may decide with your

Counsellor that it would be beneficial to have more[, but this will/may be charged]. [At this point, we would need to discuss with your parents, with your permission.]

I have read and understood

Preparing

It may be helpful to reflect in advance on how you would like to use your sessions and what you may like to talk about. Your Counsellor is there to support you and will be led by you and what feels important to you each week, so this will help you both to stay on track and make the best use of the time you have together.

I have read and understood

Confidentiality

The content of the sessions will remain confidential which means that the Counsellor will not talk to teachers, your parents, or other students about what you have said. There are exceptions to this, which are listed under Safeguarding below. You may talk to whoever you want about counselling.

[Your Head of Year, the Deputy Head Pastoral, and the Head] will only have a copy of the list of the names of students attending counselling sessions, however, they will not share this information unless they feel it is necessary to do so. The reception staff also have a duty to keep track of students who are out of lessons, so they will also have a list of students attending counselling sessions. No other information is shared with the above members of staff; it is just to ensure that we know where you are in case of a fire alarm, and to reassure your pastoral staff that you are receiving support.

Members of staff that are notified will be asked to avoid bringing your attendance to counselling up in conversation unless you bring it up with them.

I have read and understood

Supervision

All counsellors are required to have regular supervision where they are encouraged to reflect on their practice. This means that your Counsellor will have a supervisor and they will discuss the Counsellor's work. Your Counsellor will not use your name or anything that could be used to identify who you are, unless one of the exceptions under Safeguarding apply.

I have read and understood

Safeguarding

The content of the sessions will remain confidential unless:

- a) You are at risk of harm because you are hurting yourself or are going to hurt yourself;
- b) Someone else is harming you now or has harmed you in the past; or
- c) Someone else has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

If any of these things happen, your Counsellor will notify the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the school, to help you (and others who have been harmed or are at risk of harm) to stay safe and feel better. The Designated Safeguarding Lead may then involve your parents, (the parents of others who have been harmed or are at risk of harm), or outside agencies. Your Counsellor may also talk to their supervisor, to discuss how best to support you (and others who have been harmed or are at risk of harm).

In such circumstances, your Counsellor will always try to talk to you first, if it's possible, before sharing their concerns with anyone else.

I have read and understood

Record keeping

All counsellors are required to write brief notes about your sessions. It is the Counsellor's responsibility to ensure these notes are securely stored. Notes will not contain any descriptives whereby you could be recognised, keeping you anonymous. Any notes taken will ordinarily be kept until you turn 25, however, if you disclose a safeguarding concern listed under Safeguarding above, any notes the Counsellor makes in relation to that concern will be kept indefinitely.

I have read and understood

Attendance

It is your responsibility to notify your teacher you will not be in their lesson due to attending a counselling session, and to see them about the work you will miss. [You do not have to tell the teacher where you are going, instead you can simply say "I have an appointment".] If there is a problem and a teacher requests you to be in their lesson, for instance, due to a test or rehearsal, let your Counsellor know.

I have read and understood

Cancellation

If you need to cancel a session, for example, because a teacher requests you to be in their lesson, please email your Counsellor giving as much notice as possible, so that your Counsellor can rearrange your session and use that time with another student. If you do not attend for [two] sessions and you do not let your Counsellor know, they will assume you no longer want to continue attending counselling sessions.

There may be occasions where your Counsellor needs to cancel your session at short notice. If this happens, your Counsellor will contact you to let you know and rearrange a time to see you.

I have read and understood

Missed session

If you are in school and you miss a session without warning, this will be taken off your [] session allocation. If you are absent from school, this will not be classed as a missed session.

I have read and understood

[Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation (CORE) [or other evaluation system]

You will be asked to complete a CORE form during your first and last session to see if there have been any noticeable changes since starting counselling. This will involve your Counsellor asking you some questions and filling out a form.

I have read and understood

Seeing each other

You may see someone from the counselling team out and about, around school. The team will always take your lead about whether to say hello or not to avoid putting you in an awkward situation.

I have read and understood

Satisfaction

If you are not satisfied with the counselling, please let your Counsellor know. If you don't feel comfortable to do that, you can speak to your [Head of Year or the Deputy Head Pastoral] and they will talk through your concern.

I have read and understood

Are you currently receiving any external support at the moment? (If yes, please inform your Counsellor what this is)

Yes

No

No, but I have received external support in the past

No, but I am on a waiting list for external support

Are you happy for your parents to be notified that you are in receipt of counselling?

(Though please note that there may be some situations, as described above, in which the Designated Safeguarding Lead may need to involve your parents, regardless of your response to this question.)

Yes

No