

Pembrokeshire County Council



Guidelines for School Counselling Service in Pembrokeshire

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Pembrokeshire County Council
County Hall, HAVERFORDWEST
Pembrokeshire, SA61 1TP

Cyngor Sir Penfro
Neuadd y Sir, HWLFFORDD
Sir Benfro, SA61 1TP

Guidelines for School Counselling Service in Pembrokeshire

Contents

	Section
What is counselling?	1
School Counselling Service in Pembrokeshire	2
How does counselling fit with other pastoral support?	3
Referral procedures	4
Appointment system	5
Confidentiality	6
Parental consent	7
Counselling sessions	8
Accommodation	9
School Counselling Service promotion	10
Ethical framework	11
Record keeping	12
Complaints procedures	13
Additional information	14

References

Appendix

1.0 What is counselling?

"Childhood and adolescence can be very stressful times and, like adults, young people sometimes need to talk to an understanding, independent person who will not judge them."

"Counselling is a way of helping people through talking and listening. The client is encouraged to express their feelings and thoughts about their problem so they can understand themselves and their behaviour better and therefore improve ways of coping."

"Counselling involves a deliberately undertaken contract with clearly agreed boundaries and commitment to privacy and confidentiality. It requires explicit and informed consent."

(BACP Code of Ethics and Practice)

1.1 Counselling...

- offers a regular space and time to talk or think about worries or difficulties
- helps young people explore their feelings and look at how they might want things to be different, by talking and using a range of activities
- may be about developmental issues, resolving problems, improving relationships, making choices, coping with changes, gaining insight and understanding, growing as a person
- is carried out by trained, fully qualified counsellors, who are Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checked and work within their professional code of ethics and practice.

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

2.0 School Counselling Service in Pembrokeshire

The School Counselling Service is a professional, confidential service available to young people living in Pembrokeshire and/or attending Pembrokeshire secondary schools as well as Year 6 pupils at Primary School. The service offers young people a regular space to talk and think about things that are important to them. The service operates in line with British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (BACP) Ethical Framework and the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. The counselling service provides support for children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural concerns, supporting them in fulfilling their potential. The service consists of a team of professionally

qualified counsellors, supervisors and trainers with many years of experience of working with children and young people.

The counselling service is tailored to the individual requirements of children and young people. It provides:

- one to one counselling for young people
- staff training upon request
- consultancy
- links and liaison with other appropriate agencies

3.0 How does counselling fit with other pastoral support?

A range of professionals work in schools whose role includes the pastoral care of pupils and schools have responsibility for the education and development of pupils; this includes welfare matters.

The School Counselling Service is a distinct and professionally regulated service, it is regarded as an additional source of specialist help generally available on school premises and in school time. Whilst it is a distinct service it operates within the policies of the school and those of the Children and Schools Directorate.

4.0 Referral procedures

Access to one to one counselling sessions in secondary school is by self-referral by the young person. Referrals can also be made by school staff, other professionals working with young people and parents/guardians with the young person's permission.

The school counsellor can be contacted using one of the following methods;

- Visiting the counsellor (on the days they are in school) in the counselling room to arrange an appointment
- Telephoning the School Counselling Service central office to arrange an appointment on; **01437 776473** and asking for the Counselling Service
- Emailing the School Counselling Service at; school.counsellor@pembrokeshire.gov.uk

Staff or parents/guardians may support young people in accessing the service however the explicit consent of the young person must be obtained by the counsellor before counselling sessions can commence.

Referral to the Primary School Counselling Service for Year 6 pupils is through the Wellbeing Therapies Panel. Ask your Educational Psychologist for further details.

5.0 Appointment system

Once an appointment has been arranged the counsellor will liaise with the designated link member of staff in school to inform them that the young person is attending counselling in order to explain their whereabouts in the school. Where available the internal school emailing system could be used. On occasions a young person may not want to receive counselling in school, in which case the counsellor will arrange an alternative venue.

The link member of school staff should be a member of the senior management team. The school counsellor and the link member of school staff should meet on a regular basis.

It is important that the appointment system is as discreet as possible, and staff will be informed on a need-to-know basis. The link member of staff and Head of Year will need to know if a young person is receiving counselling. See appendix 1.

6.0 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a basic ethical principle in the counselling process. It enables a trusting relationship to develop. It allows the young person to share feelings and worries without fear of blame or reprisal. A young person's right to privacy and confidentiality is legally established in the Human Rights Act 1998 article 8.

The counsellor will not pass on any detailed accounts of sessions, but may communicate periodically with school pastoral staff about general progress, with the child's permission. A young person is free to talk to anyone about their counselling sessions if they wish, but should not be directly questioned by school staff.

Sometimes, it may be necessary to liaise with or refer the young person to another agency for further help. This should only happen with the young person's express permission subject to child protection and/or mental health concerns.

Problems in maintaining confidentiality are unlikely to occur if there is mutual trust, goodwill and respect between counsellor, school, staff and parents.

6.1 What limitations are there to confidentiality?

"Any attempt to remove the principle of confidentiality in counselling will rapidly undermine the overall ethos of the school as a caring educational community."

(Roger Casemore, Confidentiality & School Counselling, BACP 1995)

However an individual's wishes about confidentiality may be overridden by a paramount duty to protect a child's welfare. (*A child is defined as anyone under the age of 18*, Children Act 1989). School counsellors work in accordance with the child protection policies of individual schools and the Child Protection Policy and Procedures for Schools 2014.

At the outset, the counsellor will make it clear to the young person that they may need to breach confidentiality (i.e. tell someone and seek help). This may happen when the young person or any other person is at risk of significant harm. The counsellor will discuss this with the young person again if the need arises. If the child is *`Gillick competent', the counsellor will try to gain their consent to disclose their concerns. Where possible the counsellor will keep the young person informed and involve them in this process. School counsellors are familiar with, and work within, school child protection procedures and know how to contact the Designated Person for Child Protection in school. Even without the child's consent, it may be necessary to disclose information they have revealed.

In the case of a young person threatening suicide or serious self-harm, there is a general acceptance of the need for intervention even when this involves breaking confidentiality. More minor concerns will remain confidential unless the young person wants them shared in order to seek further help.

The counsellor is **not** required to pass on information about a young person breaking a school rule or committing an offence, unless it could be deemed that by doing so the counsellor was aiding and abetting a crime (e.g. - a young person dealing drugs in school).

** Young people who are considered `Gillick-competent' are deemed to have reached a sufficient understanding and intelligence to be capable of making his/her mind up on a matter requiring his/her decision without their parents' permission or against their parents' wishes.*

7.0 Parental consent

Young people may be offered one or two initial exploratory sessions with a counsellor before committing themselves, and before any involvement with parents.

If a young person wishes to continue with counselling sessions parental consent may be sought with the agreement of the young person.

7.1 When does a young person have the right to access counselling without parental consent?

Sometimes a parent may withhold consent or the young person may be very distressed and unwilling for the school to approach the parents. In these cases, counselling can still go ahead if the counsellor assesses the young person as Gillick competent to consent in their own right. See appendix 2.

If a young person is unwilling to involve their parents and is assessed to be competent, the young person may give their own written consent for counselling.

"As a general principle it is legal and acceptable for a young person to ask for confidential counselling without parental

consent providing they are of sufficient understanding and intelligence." (Gillick v. West Norfolk AHA, House of Lords 1985)

Assessment of competence based on the Gillick principle depends on;

- The maturity of the young person
- The young person having sufficient intelligence and understanding to enable them to understand what is being proposed, i.e. counselling
- The young person having sufficient intelligence and understanding of the consequences of his or her actions

A person who:-

- a) does not have parental responsibility for a particular child but
- b) has care of the child;

may (subject to the provisions of the Act) do whatever is reasonable in all the circumstances of the case for the purpose of safeguarding or promoting the child's welfare.

(Children Act 1989 s3.(5))

8.0 Counselling sessions

The initial session provides an opportunity for the young person to learn more about counselling. They will be told that it is voluntary and confidential (with a few exceptions, which will be explained), start to gain trust in the counsellor, and talk a bit about their situation. The counsellor will also start to engage the young person and make an initial assessment, which will inform future work. A young person may need a second session before they decide if counselling is right for them. However, one or two sessions may be sufficient for many young people and then assessment may be a much shorter process.

One to one counselling sessions normally last approximately 45 minutes. Time may need to be allocated at the end of sessions for young people to think through the issues explored during the session. It may sometimes be necessary for a young person to have access to a quiet place after a session.

If a young person has missed two or more sessions once counselling has begun the designated member of staff will be informed and follow up with the young person.

Ending counselling sessions is usually agreed between the counsellor and the young person. If this happens the designated member of staff will be informed together with the relevant Head of Year.

It may sometimes be necessary to refer young people to another agency for further help. This will be undertaken with the young person's express permission, subject to child protection or mental health concerns. The school

counsellor will establish links with other appropriate local agencies and in some cases with parents or carers.

The service operates in line with General Data Protection Regulations 2016 and a Fair Processing Notice will be provided to young people or parents/guardians if parental consent is needed.

9.0 Accommodation

Some thought should be given to allocating suitable accommodation. Ideally the room should be discreetly placed and not be overlooked as well as be furnished in a way that differentiates it from a classroom or office.

10.0 School Counselling Service promotion

Information leaflets for parents will be produced by the service in order for parents to be properly informed and aware how young people can access the service. Leaflets will be available from school counsellors.

Information regarding the counselling service will be made available in the school prospectus, on the school website, in information leaflets and through school assemblies.

11.0 Ethical Framework

All school counsellors are BACP registered and operate in accordance with the 'Ethical Framework for Good Practice' of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).

12.0 Record keeping

The counsellor will provide the designated member of staff with a record of;

- The name of pupils receiving counselling
- Parental consent sought or obtained
- The number of sessions attended up to the end of counselling
- Any further action/onward referral undertaken

The school counsellor will comply with the General Data Protection Regulations 2016 when collecting, keeping or reporting on client records. Young people and, if parental consent is required, their parents or those who have parental responsibility have a right to access their personal information held by the service as well as a number of other rights outlined in the service Fair Processing Notice. A copy of the Fair Processing Notice will be available on commencement of counselling.

In certain cases, children under the age of 16 who have the capacity and understanding to take decisions about their own treatment are also entitled to decide whether personal information may be passed on and generally to have their confidence respected, for example if they were receiving counselling or treatment about something they did not wish their parent to know.

Case law has established that such a child as know as “Gillick Competent”, where a child is under 16 but has sufficient understanding in relation to the proposed treatment to give, or withhold consent, consent or refusal should be respected. However, good practice dictates that the child should be encouraged to involve parents or other legal guardians in any treatment.

(Guidance for Access to Health Requests under the Data Protection Act)

The School Counselling Service has a statutory duty under the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 to keep and submit to the Welsh Government aggregated anonymised data returns on an annual basis.

13.0 Complaints procedures

If a complaint is raised against a counsellor please contact the School Counselling Service manager in the first instance.

All School Counselling Service counsellors in Pembrokeshire are registered members of the BACP and abide by its Professional Conduct Procedure. The aim of the Professional Conduct Procedure is to provide complainants with an open and transparent route of remedy where complaints are made against members of the BACP. In processing such complaints, the BACP aims to protect members of the public, the name and reputation of BACP and the professions of counselling and psychotherapy. An outline of the complaints procedures is available within this code of practice.

14.0 Additional information

This document should be read alongside;

Schools Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act

Guidelines for counselling in schools - British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) together with The Gulbenkian Foundation

Good Practice Guidance for Counselling in Schools published by BACP - ed. Janette Newton fourth edition 2001.

Child Protection Policy and Procedures for Schools (2014) Kate Evan-Hughes, Pembrokeshire County Council

References

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Children Act, (1989), s3.(5)

DELLS. (2007), **School-based Counselling Service in Wales – a National Strategy**, Welsh Assembly Government

House of Lords, **Gillick v. West Norfolk AHA**, (1985), 3 All ER 402 (HL)

Newton, J. **Good Practice Guidance for Counselling in Schools**, British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapists

Bond, T. (2007), **Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy**, British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapists

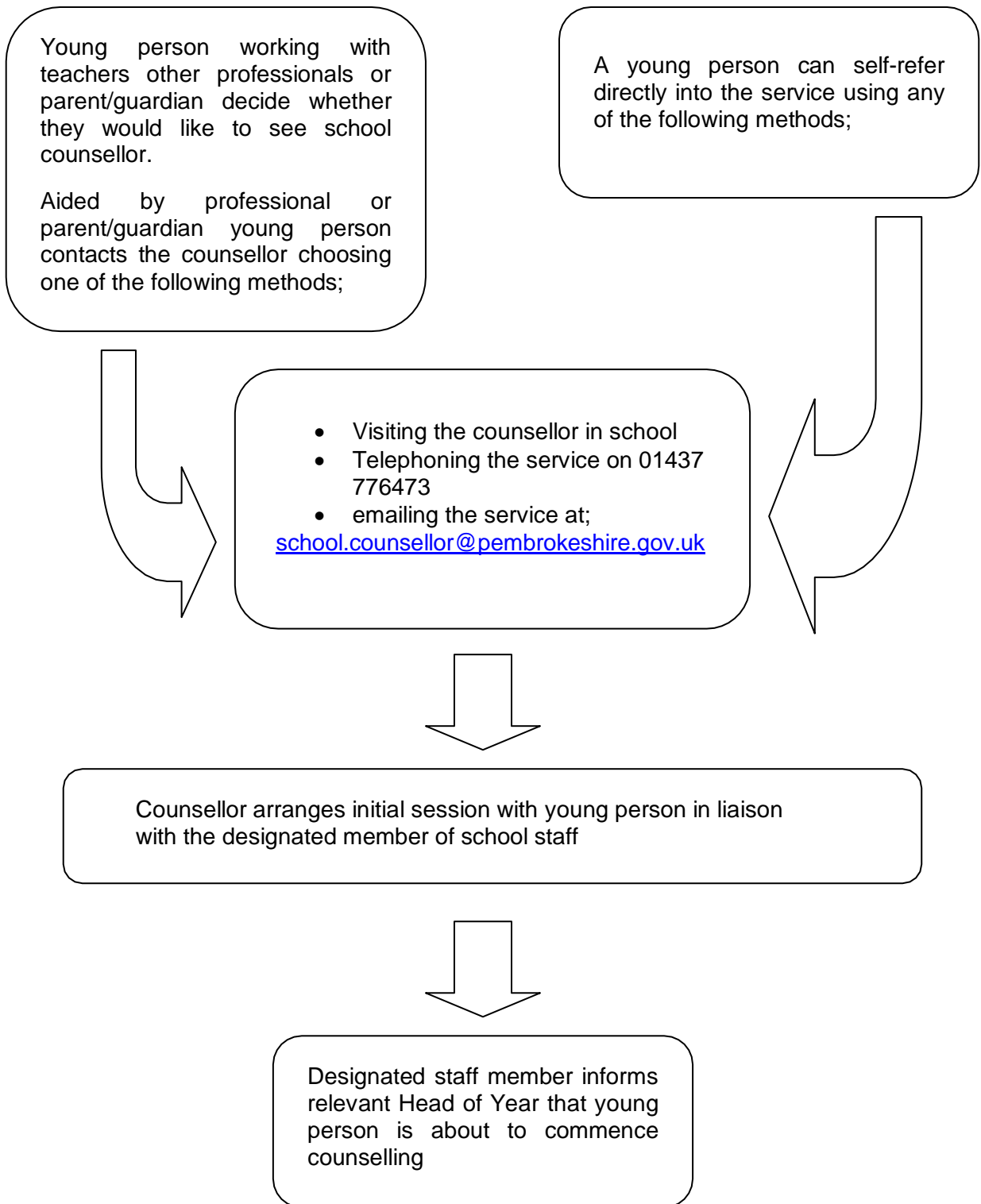
Data Protection Act, **Guidance for Access to Health Requests**, Dept. of Health

Websites

www.bacp.co.uk

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Referral process



Once counselling sessions have been completed the school counsellor will inform designated member of staff.

Appendix 2

Gillick Competence

A parent does not have the right to control a child up to the age of 18. Parental control yields to the child's right to make his own decisions when the child reaches a sufficient understanding and intelligence to be capable of making up his own mind on a matter requiring his decision. Such a child is now commonly described as a *Gillick* competent child. In *Gillick v West Norfolk and Wisbech Health Authority*, the House of Lords, by a majority, held that a child under the age of 16 was capable of giving consent to medical treatment if he was capable of understanding what was proposed and of expressing his own wishes. It follows that the more mature the child, the more care should be taken to consider his wishes and feelings. In addition, where a child is 16 or 17 either parent or child can consent to treatment independently (though neither can override the other or exercise a veto). The court can, however, override the wishes of both where treatment is vital to the child's welfare.