

Policies and Procedures

Title:	School Counsellor Policy
Associated Policies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding and Child Protection • Anti-Bullying Policy • Online safety and acceptable Use Policy • Exclusion and Suspension Policy • Behaviour Policy
1	Policy Statement
	<p>The significant role schools can play in helping to promote the emotional health and wellbeing of students is outlined in the government document Counselling in schools: a blueprint for the future Departmental advice for school leaders and counsellors.</p> <p>Northampton School for Girls recognises that students experiencing emotional trauma may find it difficult to engage with the education process and reach their potential. At any time students may need extra emotional support beyond the normal pastoral care offered by teaching staff or the wider pastoral team. Students who have suffered bereavement, trauma, violence, who are young carers, or are experiencing other emotional difficulties may appreciate the opportunity to speak to an adult who is not directly involved with their education. A school based counsellor offers students a comfortable, non-judgemental and confidential space to talk about their difficulties, so they do not become a block to their learning and self-development.</p> <p>At Northampton School for Girls, we aim to provide a counselling service that is responsive to students' needs and operates as an integral part of a school's pastoral care provision. The school counsellor service is available to students in any Key Stage where counselling is deemed appropriate and beneficial for the individual.</p> <p>All students accessing counselling must have been referred via the school-based referral system, with a prioritised waiting list utilised in the case of oversubscription. In order to reduce any conflict of psychotherapeutic effort, the school counsellor service will not provide support to students who are currently in receipt of other psychotherapeutic support via another agency such as CAMHS or professional individuals.</p>
2	Definition of Counselling
	<p>The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) definition of school-based counselling is "a professional activity, delivered by qualified practitioners in schools".</p> <p>Counsellors offer troubled and/or distressed students an opportunity to explore and understand their difficulties, with a qualified professional within a relationship of agreed confidentiality.</p>
3	Referral for counselling
	<p>Counselling is one of a range of interventions available at Northampton School for Girls and will not always be the most appropriate. Where a Head of Academic Standards/Head of Year believes that a student would benefit from a referral the necessary paperwork must be completed for assessment.</p> <p>New referrals are discussed fortnightly, and the waiting list reviewed to ensure the most relevant cases are prioritised.</p> <p>Referrals will be made for a variety of reasons including for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who bully others and those who are victims of bullying behaviour. • Students who have difficulties due to family breakdown • Students who have repeated peer group difficulties, or relationships. • Students who have been bereaved or who have suffered other loss or separation. • Students who have extreme anxiety

4	Consent, Confidentiality and Safeguarding
	<p>Consent</p> <p>In most cases consent will be gained from the parents/carer for counselling, particularly where sessions are ongoing. In most cases, parental/carer consent will be ascertained at the initial referral stage by the Head of Academic Standards/Head of Year. Once an initial intake session has taken place with the students, a Student/Counsellor contract, self-assessment and student leaflet will be given to the student to read at their leisure. A confirmation letter and parent/carer information leaflet will then be sent to the parent/carer. For students to be eligible to receive counselling they must understand the nature of the process and agree to engage.</p> <p>The school counsellor will make every effort to inform and encourage students of the benefits of informing their parent/carer that they are receiving counselling, unless this is detrimental to their safety and wellbeing. At such times, the student can self-refer, this process follows the Gillick Competency Principle. Under the Gillick Competency Principle, young people aged 16 and under have the right to access confidential counselling without parental knowledge or consent, provided they are of sufficient intelligence to understand what is being proposed and the potential consequences. Most secondary students are deemed intelligent enough to understand the counselling process. The counsellor and school will complete an assessment, using Fraser guidelines to ascertain if the student is Gillick competent. (A guide to the Fraser guidelines)</p> <p>Confidentiality</p> <p>Respecting a student's privacy and confidentiality are fundamental requirements for keeping trust and respecting their autonomy.</p> <p>The school counsellor will inform the parent/carer once their child's sessions are complete but will not discuss the student's counselling process; i.e.; their personal thoughts and feelings.</p> <p>Confidential records are kept separate from other information held by school and the counsellor is expected to be ethically and professionally accountable for any breach of confidentiality.</p> <p>Confidential information about a student may be shared with relevant professionals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where the student has consented or knowingly accepted • The disclosure enhances or improves the quality of the service available to students. • Where there is perceived to be a safeguarding, safety or child protection risk. <p>A student has the general right of access to educational records as a "data subject" as set out by the Data Protection Act (DPA) 1998 and this includes confidential counselling material. The parent/carer however does not have this right and in accordance with Section 4 (3) 6 (1) of the DPA 1998, any disclosure or processing of such material "is unwarranted in any particular case by reason of prejudice to the right and freedoms or legitimate interest of the data subject" (ie the child concerned) The counselling service would consider any disclosure against the students wishes, to be undermining of the students own right to privacy and confidentiality.</p> <p>If parents have concerns about counselling, they can speak to the school Counsellor or may contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead. All complaints should be raised following the Northampton School for Girls complaints procedure found on the school website. Complaints alleging a breach of professional standards will be dealt with in accordance with the procedures outlined by the BACP.</p> <p>Safeguarding</p> <p>The DSL is the counsellors' main point of contact within the school for the purpose of child protection. School counsellors will adhere to the Northampton School for Girls Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy in all their work. If a counsellor identifies that there is a risk to self or others, confidentiality may be broken and the DSL informed. This is made clear to the student at the commencement of counselling.</p>
5	Review and Discharge
	<p>Appointments with a school counsellor will generally be allocated weekly or fortnightly and allocated in six-session blocks followed by a review. Where additional sessions are deemed necessary by the school counsellor</p>

	<p>these will be allocated through discussion with the DSL. Appointments will be made with the intention of minimising their impact on student learning.</p> <p>In preparation for discharge, the counsellor will discuss any ongoing needs of the student and make (or enable the student to make) appropriate arrangements or referrals. Parents/carers will be informed of the discharge by letter</p> <p>The school counsellor will take responsibility for developing a network of close links in the appropriate referral services e.g. CAMHS, Children's Services and any other statutory and voluntary support and mentoring services for young people that may be of ongoing benefit to students.</p>
6	Support, Supervision and Training
	<p>All counsellors need to engage in regular clinical supervision to maintain and monitor standards and to comply with their ethical code. School counsellors should undertake counselling supervision with a supervisor who has experience and understanding of children and young people in a school setting and will protect the confidentiality of students at Northampton School for Girls. Organising supervision is the school counsellor's responsibility.</p>