

WORCESTER SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

STUDENT COUNSELLING POLICY

Updated February 2023

CONTENTS

	Page.
1. Policy Statement	3
2. Aim	3
3. Objectives	3
4. Responsibilities	4
5. Procedures	5
6. Quality: Monitoring, Review and Evaluation	5
7. Staff Development	5
8. Role of the College Counsellor	6 – 7
9. Other Relevant Documents	8
10. Provision Development	8
11. Key Personnel	8
12. Policy Review	8

1. POLICY STATEMENT

'Worcester Sixth Form College is committed to offering a counselling service to all students based upon an assessment of need.'

- Counselling provides therapeutic support for a range of presenting issues, including mental health and well-being issues. Counselling addresses these issues in order to facilitate positive change. In the process the student is encouraged to make decisions and gain personal insight and self-growth, to enable them to learn from their experiences and be able to function better in their day-to-day life.
- A counsellor's role is to facilitate the student's exploration of problems in a way that respects the student's value, personal resources, and capacity for autonomy.
- Counselling provision takes account of the following legislation & WSFC policy documents:
 - Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Disability Discrimination Act 1995
 - Equal Opportunities Policy and Race Equality Policy
 - Health & Safety Policy, Data Protection Policy, Safeguarding Policy.
 - Special educational needs and disability code of Practice: 0-25 years 2015
- The Counselling Policy is updated annually and 'endorsed' by the Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body.

2. AIM:

Working to legislation surrounding Child Protection and the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) Ethical framework, **offer a range of confidential* counselling opportunities** addressing individual need and equality of opportunity, enabling students to successfully progress with their studies and to be able to function better in their everyday life.

*Confidential unless in exceptional circumstances where there is significant or immediate risk of harm to either to student themselves or to others.

3. OBJECTIVES:

- To **offer and enable students to access**:
 1. Individual Counselling and Support Services
 2. Small group workshops
 3. A Level 1 & 2 accredited Counselling training course as a student enrichment activity.
- To operate an **integrated service** where the student can self-refer, or be referred via their tutor, College Mental Health & Wellbeing Mentor or any member of the Safeguarding Team. Links made with relevant external professionals and voluntary support groups, such as GPs, Relate, Young Carers, CAMHS, Nightstop and Healthy Minds.
- To **respond to 'crisis counselling'** by offering drop-in sessions to 'hold' these situations. Where appropriate respond to student need by promoting counselling and listening opportunities at stressful times of year e.g. exam and assessment periods.
- To signpost external agency support in the process of counselling and also in the final session review.

- To play an active role as part of the Safeguarding Team.
- Make 'reasonable' adjustments to the counselling service when required including (but not limited to) using a range of platforms as an alternative to face-to-face contact, such as on-line and telephone counselling.
- To make available information and contact details for local support agencies (including Social Services, bereavement counselling, substance misuse, child abuse, disordered eating) for students who prefer to receive counselling by someone not directly connected to college, and accessible during college holidays.
- Have a written policy in place as a working document.
- Work in collaboration with the college Mental Health & Wellbeing Mentor, Safeguarding Team, and in partnership with local agencies.
- To have defined roles and responsibilities with a clear management structure: The Designated Safeguarding Lead will line manage the counselling team and take overall responsibility as a member of the college Senior Leadership Team.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

(i) Counselling

- The College only employs qualified accredited counsellors, identified as 'College Counsellors'. They work to the BACP Ethical Framework and attend regular CPD opportunities as required by their accredited status.
- Students can book an initial 'screening session' with the counsellor, followed by an initial 'assessment session'. This takes place prior to allocation of a set of 6 counselling sessions. Whilst waiting for counselling support, students can also access 'drop-in' appointments, leading onto an assessment and booked appointments, or 'drop in' sessions as a 'holding' mechanism which also informs allocation. Students can also access support from the college Mental Health & Wellbeing Mentor whilst waiting for counselling sessions.
- Counselling usually involves work with individual students but can also take place in small workshop groups, based around specific issues, such as exam stress.
- The Counsellors can also support other staff in their support roles.
- The Lead Counsellor is a member of the college Safeguarding Team.

(ii) Counselling Role

- a) STAFF: All tutors, Heads of Year, Student Services staff and other members of staff have a 'listening' and safeguarding role in supporting students with personal issues.
- b) Any member of staff approached by a student for counselling would honor the confidentiality of the young person. There is an understanding that a member of staff may be unable to provide the level of support required by a student. In this situation a referral to a more senior member of pastoral staff, the College Counsellor, Mental Health & Wellbeing Mentor, a professional within Student Services (such as Careers Advisor) or an external agency might be recommended.

(iii) Teaching & Learning

- The Counsellors may provide training opportunities at college.
- A Level 1 & 2 Counselling course for students is delivered by the counselling team as an enrichment activity.

5. PROCEDURES:

- Counselling takes place on a self-referral basis, but a student may be advised to see the College Counsellor or a professional working at a local advice agency.
- Counselling takes place on a short-term basis: students are initially offered six individual booked appointments. An extension is possible in exceptional circumstance, with supervision and safeguarding consultation.
- Involvement of parents or carers may be considered in some exceptional circumstances, with student knowledge and consent. The decision is the responsibility of the professional involved (informed by supervision and the Designated Safeguarding Lead).

6. QUALITY: MONITORING, REVIEW AND EVALUATION

- Effective use and operation of the service is continually reviewed, and the assessment of overall client engagement (such as demand and capacity) takes place termly with adaptations being made where possible.
- Statistical data is kept and analysed annually to review the service and the trends in counselling needs.
- Students are given the opportunity to feedback about the service through measures such as session rating scales, feedback forms and student voice groups.
- The outcome of the Quality Assurance arrangements is used:
 - To inform strategic development and operational plans
 - To inform the content of tutorial provision and Student Services systems
 - To maintain Quality Standards for Counselling
 - To inform the Counselling Annual Report and Quality Improvement Plans.

7. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- The College Counsellors keep abreast of national and local developments of theory, practice and CPD opportunities via the BACP or other professional counselling body

8. **ROLE OF THE COLLEGE COUNSELLOR:**

(Current provision: 1 Counsellor working 5-days a week over 33.5 hours college term-time only)

(i) **Role of the Counsellor**

- To provide a cross-college confidential counselling service; issues commonly covered will include bereavement, stress and anxiety, personal development, mental health problems, gender and sexual identity and relationships problems (family and friends).
- Networking with other community agencies for support and referral as appropriate.
- Recording statistical analysis of work undertaken.
- To contribute to College Policy on Counselling and related issues.
- To contribute to Staff Development, as required.

(ii) **Supervision**

- The Counsellors undertake monthly supervision and have appropriate support in terms of: Case theory and practice and personal and professional development.

(iii) **Confidentiality**

- In line with BACP Ethical Framework the Counsellors will offer individual confidentiality, unless a student is in significant or immediate risk of harm.
- Information belongs to the client and will not be given to a third party without their permission. The only circumstances in which confidentiality will not be maintained are as follows:
 - If the Counsellor considers that the client may cause harm to themselves or others OR
 - if the client may be experiencing significant harm from others.
- Students will be advised of these exceptions at the beginning of the first counselling session.
- If the Counsellor considers that the client may cause harm to themselves or others this will be discussed immediately the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who is responsible for the safeguarding of students. If unavailable, the situation will be discussed immediately with:
 - A Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)
OR
 - A member of the college Safeguarding Team
OR
 - Any member of the Senior Leadership Team who has undertaken Worcestershire Children's First DSL training.

(iv) **Code of Conduct during sessions**

- This will be in line with BACP Ethical Framework.

(v) **Record Keeping**

- Brief individual records are kept and cannot be made available to a third party. These are held entirely separately from the students' College records.
- Statistical data will be kept enabling review of the effectiveness of the service:
 - To view the services trends
 - To analyse and plan for future counselling provision needs.
 - To measure impact e.g. retention, progression and attainment.

(vi) **Procedures**

- Counselling sessions will last 50 minutes per session, initially for up to 6 individual booked appointments.
- Student expectation will be managed during the first session (limitations of the service outlined).
- The situation will be reviewed by the Counsellor, in negotiation with the student, with the following options:
 - Further sessions up to an agreed limit, subject to discussion with the DSL.
 - Drop-in opportunities
 - Referral to a specialist agency (if appropriate)
 - Further assessment of need.
- If the counsellor's door is closed students or staff should not enter as a counselling session will be in progress.
- **Appointment booking is via Student Services Reception** - The Counselling appointments diary is managed by the receptionist in collaboration with counsellors.
- When demand for counseling appointments exceeds available sessions a waiting list system operates. Students are seen as soon as possible for a screening appointment to identify urgency. They are given information about what to do should their situation escalate before they are offered an appointment, in addition to signposting to the college Mental Health & Wellbeing Mentor for additional support.
- Clients will need to be re-assessed for further sessions and at the end of their course of sessions this can include the offer of drop-in sessions.
- Any students who are being seen by their GP or CAMHS should not normally be offered counselling in college, unless they are specifically referred to the service following a multi-agency consultation about the efficacy of this. This will also be discussed in supervision in order to inform ethical decision making.
- 'Did not attends' (DNAs) – if a student has legitimate reasons then they should still be offered up to 6 appointments. DNAs with no reason should be offered another appointment after a first 'no show'. If they DNA for a second appointment, then they won't be offered further appointments.
- DNAs will count toward the maximum session number. Students will be aware of this from the counselling agreement, which the counsellor and young person sign.
- The waiting list is reviewed regularly, and if a situation is reached where demand for counselling outstrips supply (no more students can be seen that year) the waiting list will be closed. No more students will be offered screening assessments leading onto booked appointments and the screening process with stop. Students will be offered drop-in appointments and also signposted to the Mental Health & Wellbeing Mentor.

9. OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS:

Please refer to the 'Policy Section' of the WSFC website for the following policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Equality Statement and Equality Policy
- GDPR Policy
- SEN Code of Practice

10. PROVISION DEVELOPMENT

- As stated, an accredited Level 2 Counselling course for students will be delivered by the counselling team as an enrichment activity from September 2023 for those Year 2 students who have completed the Level 1 course in Year 1.
- The Level 1 Counselling course will continue to be available to both Year 1 and 2 students.
- The possibility of providing a Counselling placement at WSFC for a Trainee Student Counsellor from September 2023 is currently being explored. It is envisaged that they would be supervised by the current Counsellor, who is a qualified Supervising Counsellor.

11. KEY PERSONNEL

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| • Sarah Mills* | College Counsellor |
| • Dan Collins* | Designated Safeguarding Lead |
| • Graham Williams* | Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead |
| • Sara Payne* | Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead |
| • Carl Rusby* | Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead |
| • Ellie Clayton* | Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead |
| • Jane Wells | Mental Health & Wellbeing Mentor |

* Denotes Member of the college Safeguarding Team.

12. POLICY REVIEW

- This policy will be reviewed annually by the Senior Leader responsible for Counselling, currently the DSL.
- Next review due February 2024 or as necessary in line with any significant agreed changes to the college counselling provision.

Dan Collins
Designated Safeguarding Lead
February 2023