

WORCESTER SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

COUNSELLING POLICY

Updated March 2026

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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. In the process of counselling the YP is encouraged to make healthy decisions and choices and in the process of this support, attain personal insight and self-growth. Counselling enables the YP to learn and develop from their experiences and also provides the YP with skills to assist in managing and functioning better in their day-to-day life.
- A counsellor’s role is to facilitate the YPs exploration of their problems in a way that respects their value system, personal resources, and capacity for autonomy, and also attending to their MH and wellbeing at the core of this.
- Counselling provision takes account of the following legislation & WSFC policy documents:
 - Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025/6
 - Equality Act 2010
 - 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 YP 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 the YP themselves or to others.

3. OBJECTIVES:

- To **offer and enable YP to access** Individual Counselling via a blended approach according to the need and circumstance of the YP.
- To operate an **integrated service** where the YP can self-refer, or be referred via their tutor, Head of Year, or any member of the Safeguarding Team. Referrals are received by the Wellbeing Team.
- To make available a Mental Health & Wellbeing Booklet which provides information and contact details for local and national support agencies. This can be provided on the point of access to the counselling service, either in drop-in or at the start of a set of counselling sessions. The YP then has access to support in-between sessions, at the end of college counselling, or instead of college counselling.
- To signpost internal and external agency support in the process of counselling and also in the final session review. These include MELO, CAMHS West, Footsteps Bereavement Support, Young Carers, CAMHS, Nightstop, Cranstoun and Healthy Minds.
- To respond to **‘crisis’** presentations by offering drop-in sessions to ‘hold’ these situations. Where appropriate respond to YP need by providing counselling opportunities at heightened times of year e.g. exam and assessment periods.

- 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, telephone counselling and walk and talk therapy.
- To have defined roles and responsibilities with a clear management structure: The Designated Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Officer will line manage the counselling team and support with the practical running of the counselling service, resource needs as well as CPD needs.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES:

(i) Counselling

- The College only employs counsellors who have completed a BACP accredited core training course qualifying them to work with 16–19-year-olds. They are identified as 'College Counsellors' and work to the BACP Ethical Framework which includes attending regular CPD opportunities as required by their registered membership.
- Referrals for counselling are received by the Wellbeing Team. The College Counsellor will then invite the YP to an initial 'assessment session' prior to allocation of a set of 6 counselling sessions. Whilst waiting for counselling support, YP 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.
- 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 YP for counselling would honour 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 Wellbeing Team, a professional within Student Services (such as Careers Advisor) or an external agency might be recommended.

5. PROCEDURES:

- Counselling takes place on a self-referral basis, but a YP may also be advised to see the College Counsellor. It is the choice of the YP as to whether they choose to access college counselling.
- 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 exceptional circumstances, with YP knowledge and consent. The overall decision is the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead, but informed by YP, counsellor and supervisor recommendation.

6. QUALITY: MONITORING, REVIEW AND EVALUATION

- Effective use and operation of the service is continually reviewed, and the assessment of overall YP engagement (such as demand and capacity) takes place termly with adaptations being made where possible.
- Statistical data is kept and analysed annually in the form of a Counselling Report to review the service and the trends in counselling needs, as well as inform Quality Improvement Plans.

- YP are given the opportunity to feedback about the service through anonymised evaluation feedback questionnaires at the end of counselling.

7. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- The College Counsellors keep abreast of local and national developments of theory, practice and CPD opportunities.

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 which commonly present include loss and bereavement, identity, stress and anxiety, relational problems (family, friends, romantic), eating difficulties and presenting mental health problems.
- To build links with other external agencies for support and referral as appropriate, as well as providing up-to-date information in the Mental Health & Wellbeing Booklet regarding availability both locally and nationally
- Recording statistical analysis of work undertaken.
- To contribute to College Policy on Counselling and related issues.

(ii) Supervision

- The Counsellors undertake monthly supervision and have appropriate support in terms of:
 - Case load
 - Theory and practice
 - Ethical and legal practice
 - Personal and professional development.

(iii) Confidentiality

- In line with BACP Ethical Framework the Counsellors will offer confidentiality, unless a YP is in significant or immediate risk of harm.
- Information belongs to the YP 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 YP may cause significant or immediate harm to themselves or others OR
 - if the YP may be experiencing significant harm from others.
- YP will be advised of these exceptions at the beginning of the first counselling session where a counselling agreement is signed by both counsellor and YP.
- If the Counsellor considers that the YP may cause harm to themselves or others this will be discussed immediately with the Designated Safeguarding Officer or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who is responsible for the safeguarding of YP. 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 and NCPS ethical body guidelines.

(v) **Record Keeping**

- Brief individual records are kept and cannot be made available to a third party. These are held entirely separately from the YPs' 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.
- YP 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 YP, with the following options:
 - Further sessions up to an agreed limit, subject to discussion with the DSL and/or supervisor.
 - Drop-in opportunities
 - Referral to a specialist agency (if appropriate)
- If the counsellor's door is closed YP or staff should not enter as a counselling session will be in progress.
- **Appointment booking is directly with the College Counsellor.**
- When demand for counselling appointments exceeds available sessions, a waiting list system operates. YP are seen as soon as possible, and they are given information about what to do should their situation escalate before they are offered an appointment. 'Drop-in' sessions are available with both the College Counsellor and the Wellbeing Officer while students are waiting for regular appointments.
- YP 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 YP who are being seen by their GP mental health team 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 YP 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. This will be communicated, agreed and signed by the YP in the first session of counselling. The YP will also be reminded of this in the first instance of a DNA session.
- DNAs will count toward the maximum session number. Students will be aware of this from the counselling agreement, which the counsellor and YP sign.
- The waiting list is reviewed regularly, and if a situation is reached where demand for counselling exceeds supply (no more YP can be seen that year) the waiting list will be closed. No more students will be offered booked appointments. Students will be offered drop-in appointments and signposted to other internal or external support available.

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:

- To deliver internal staff training to develop understanding of the impact of mental health issues on YP.
- To source materials to engage with parents/guardians to support them in understanding current issues affecting YP.
- To consider the provision of a Counselling placement at WSFC for a Trainee Student Counsellor. This would include mentor support by the current Counsellor, and opportunities for safeguarding consultation where needed.
- The counsellor will continue to engage in regular CPD opportunities in order to continue their theory and practice.

11. KEY PERSONNEL

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Catherine Power* | College Counsellor |
| • Graham Williams* | Designated Safeguarding Lead |
| • Heather Anderson-Stevens* | Safeguarding Officer |
| • Rachel Briggs* | Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead |
| • Michelle Collings* | Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead |
| • Ellie Clayton* | Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead |
| • Catherine McPherson* | Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead |
| • Sam Murphy* | Mental Health & Wellbeing Officer |

* Denotes Member of the college Safeguarding Team.

12. POLICY REVIEW:

- This policy will be reviewed annually or as necessary in line with any significant agreed changes to the college counselling provision.