

# Report

Report to:	<b>Education Resources Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>31 August 2021</b>
Report by:	<b>Executive Director (Education Resources)</b>

Subject:	<b>Counselling Through Schools – Update Report</b>
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## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ provide an update on the delivery of counselling through primary, secondary and special schools and on the further guidance developed for schools.

## 2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following (s):-

- (1) that progress on the provision of counselling through primary, secondary and special schools be noted;
- (2) that the content of the further guidance documents be noted.

## 3. Background

- 3.1. In June 2018, the Children and Young People's Mental Health Task Force was jointly commissioned by the Scottish Government and COSLA and tasked with investigating how to improve the way in which children's mental health services were organised. The Taskforce published a series of recommendations in July 2019, highlighting that a whole systems approach, underpinned by Getting it Right for Every Child, would help children, young people and families get the right help at the right time.
- 3.2. Following on from these recommendations and as part of its Mental Health Strategy, the Scottish Government has made available funding for the provision of access to counsellors through schools to be delivered to pupils aged 10 and over from 2019/2020.
- 3.3. The agreed principles underpinning the delivery of the counselling through schools service developed by the Scottish Government are:-
  1. the commitment that the service should be delivered in partnership between national and local government, and relevant partners, and should build upon the services already in place wherever possible
  2. that the provision of counselling should be part of a holistic, child centred approach to improving the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people
  3. that counselling services should be delivered within the COSCA (Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland) definition of counselling by qualified counsellors registered with an appropriate body

4. that services should be available to secondary pupils primarily, with access for children over the age of 10 in primary and special schools and in communities
5. that there should be availability of counselling services during school holidays, to ensure continued support to children and young people
6. that services should ensure a robust assessment is carried out and that young people are supported to access alternative services where counselling may not be appropriate
7. that the provision of counselling through schools should align to, and/or enhance the local services to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people
8. that services should be accessible, utilising technology, virtual approaches and delivery in non-educational settings where communities need it, particularly in rural communities
9. that local policies and procedures in relation to child protection and information sharing should be followed. The requirements of the registering body in terms of professional conduct and supervision should also be followed
10. the recognition that counselling is not appropriate or helpful for all young people, and that particularly where a young person's home or circumstances are outwith their control, there may be other supports required. Counselling may, or may not, form part of that support but is dependent on a wider child centred approach and assessment and staged intervention in line with GIRFEC principles.

#### **4. A Continuum of Support**

- 4.1. Counselling is only one of a range of supports which may be available within school to support children and young people's emotional wellbeing needs. The range of support may include regular time with a trusted adult, coaching, access to a mentor, group work, peer support, involvement with Psychological Services, and/or access to School Nursing or local community-based support, or referral on to specialist services including CAMHS.
- 4.2. Reference is made to what can be described as a tiered model of intervention to support a young person which takes account of their perspective. The Mental Health Governance Group supports the principle of individual support and the prioritisation of this based on the needs of the young person. This includes the views of the young person, schools, and, where appropriate, education psychological services, child and adolescent mental health services, NHS Lanarkshire Health Promotion, the voluntary sector, NHS Lanarkshire Adult Psychology Service and Education Resources Youth, Family and Community Learning Service.
- 4.3. Where counselling is agreed as an individual support, referrals should be prioritised through appropriate school level planning groups, in order that there is an overview of who is accessing counselling, for what purpose and over what timescale.

#### **5. Implementation – update on progress**

- 5.1. All children and young people aged 10 years and over in South Lanarkshire have access to the Counselling through Schools service, through their school.
- 5.2. There are currently 40 counsellors, across 10 counselling providers, supporting 452 young people in 43 schools across South Lanarkshire.
- 5.3. Secondary Schools select a suitable provider for their establishment and Primary Schools are supported to work collegiately in their learning communities to access a provider together.

- 5.4. Following on from the introduction of the Framework for Delivery of Counselling through Schools in January 2020 at the Head Teachers' conference, a Quality Improvement Officer (QIO) was appointed to work collegiately with the Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP) to develop and support the implementation of the Counselling through Schools service.
- 5.5. Operational support and guidance on key aspects for school staff and counselling providers has continued to be provided to support the delivery of the service. This has included referral process information and forms; procurement flowchart with guidance; yearly timeline; questionnaires for service users; FAQs for staff and parents; Quick Guides. All schools now have operational guidance, support and funding to access the Counselling through Schools service, if appropriate.
- 5.6. The Quality Improvement Officer and Principal Educational Psychologist prioritise all queries from school staff and counselling providers to ensure they are answered timeously and support given, if required.
- 5.7. Guidance detailed within Section 8 of SLC Framework for Counselling through Schools, highlights how schools should raise awareness of this service within their establishment. This includes highlighting counselling services in parental and pupil meetings; use of school website and social media; displaying service information and highlighting to pupils at Mental Health events and assemblies.

## **6. Procurement and Providers- update on progress**

- 6.1. All applications from counselling providers were robustly assessed by the Principal Educational Psychologist, Depute Principal Educational Psychologist and Quality Improvement Officer, with ten selected to provide the service across South Lanarkshire.

These include sole traders, charities and larger companies who are all registered members of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACPS).

- 6.2. Regular communications with providers take place to ensure consistency across the service. Guidance has been provided for counselling providers, in conjunction with procurement and school staff, to ensure all services have a clear understanding of the required procedures.

## **7. Evaluation**

- 7.1. An evaluation of the service took place during May and June 2021. Referrals were analysed and questionnaires were issued to children and young people, parents/carers and referrers.
- 7.2. Initial analysis indicates that-
- 89% of referrals were school referrals, 8% of young people self-referred and 3% were parent/other agency referrals.
  - 68% identified as female (including transgender female), 30% identified as males (including transgender male) and 2% identified either as non-binary/other/did not specify.
  - Main reasons identified by young people for accessing counselling were Anxiety; Family Issues; Emotional/Behavioural Difficulties; Relationships and Friendships, Body Image; Bereavement and Self harm.
  - The numbers of referrals were highest within S4 (19%) and S5 (17%) year groups, followed by S2 (16%) then S3 (15%).
  - 186 young people completed a pre/post counselling evaluation. Of the 186, 120 reported improved outcomes. The figure for the pre/post evaluation results on

the SLC Framework was artificially low, as we are in the process of agreeing a universal framework. This number will increase next year.

- The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a widely used pre and post involvement measure for social and emotional wellbeing, suitable across the full age range for counselling in schools. Of the young people who completed pre/post SDQs, 52% reported improved outcomes.
- YP-Core is a short measure for secondary school pupils designed to evaluate change and progress in health and wellbeing, pre and post involvement in counselling. 70% of young people reported improved outcomes.
- For younger children, the Stirling Wellbeing scale was used, which is a holistic, positively worded scale measuring emotional and psychological wellbeing in children aged 8-15 years. 100% of primary school pupils who received counselling, reported improved outcomes.

## **8. Future Allocation of Resources**

- 8.1. A detailed audit of counselling commitments and costs across all schools, with a review of the budget allocation to schools will take place, with future allocations calculated and based on school roll, SIMD, locality/rural, FME.
- 8.2. Counselling support for children and young people with additional support needs will be further supported by identified counselling providers providing more specialised counselling support to assist in our ASN establishments.
- 8.3. As part of the continuum of early intervention supports for children and young people's mental health, the Blues Programme, which has supported in six secondary schools across the four localities, will continue. This project is led by Action for Children and is an early intervention wellbeing programme, supporting pupils in S3 through the teaching of emotional resilience.
- 8.4. A multi-agency approach has been taken to raise awareness of Togetherall, an online moderated mental health support available for young people aged 16-19 years old in South Lanarkshire. This shared awareness and understanding across education, health, social work and Police Scotland will ensure access and support for more young people. To date, there have been 122 registrations.

## **9. Employee Implications**

- 9.1. There are no employee implications arising from the information in this report.

## **10. Financial Implications**

- 10.1. South Lanarkshire Council has been allocated £0.962m this financial year to support the delivery of this initiative as part of the Scottish Government allocation announced in September 2019. Funding will be baselined into the Local Government Settlement thereafter.
- 10.2. Services will be procured within the developed 'Procured Service Arrangement for Educational Services Framework' with an associated scheme of delegation for contract approval and in line with the requirements of the Council's Financial Regulations.

## **11. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications**

- 11.1. There are no significant implications for climate change, sustainability and the environment arising from the recommendations in this report.

## **12. Other Implications**

- 12.1. There are no other implications associated with this report.

### **13. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**

13.1. This report does not require an equality impact assessment.

13.2. Engagement and consultation with schools, young people and liaison with multi-agency partners has and will continue to be part of the approach to ensuring that the counselling programme remains child centred.

**Tony McDaid**  
**Executive Director (Education Resources)**

6 August 2021

#### **Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives**

- ◆ Protect vulnerable children, young people and adults
- ◆ Deliver better health and social care outcomes for all
- ◆ Support our communities by tackling disadvantage and deprivation and supporting aspiration
- ◆ Improve achievement, raise educational attainment and support lifelong learning

#### **Previous References**

- ◆ Education Resources Committee 1 October 2019
- ◆ Counselling through Schools update report March 2020

#### **List of Background Papers**

- ◆ Scottish Government Guidance for Education Authorities Establishing Access to Counselling in Secondary Schools 2019

#### **Contact for Further Information**

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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