



## Counselling

In line with the Welfare Policy, King's College provides a counselling service. The counselling service is designed to complement the strengths of the pastoral system by offering additional personal support to students and staff who may benefit from the opportunity to work with a professional counsellor. The school counsellors belong to a professional counselling body and holds counselling qualifications.

### **What is counselling?**

Counselling is often described as the “talking cure”. It provides an opportunity to talk to someone who is professionally trained to listen attentively in a non-judgemental way. The pupil and Counsellor work together to make sense of what is causing distress or difficulty in the client's life. Most personal, relationship or identity problems can be ameliorated through counselling, including anxiety, stress, feeling low or depressed, adjusting to school life, homesickness, bullying (for both victim and perpetrator) and peer pressure. Counselling can also help with other problems such as eating disorders, addictive behaviours, and anxieties caused by family events such as bereavement, divorce or parent serving in the Forces.

### **Confidentiality**

The guarantee of confidentiality is vital in enabling young people to express their distress and is an essential element of the counselling process if trust is to develop between pupil and Counsellor. However, it cannot be absolute.

A clear contract is made during the first session, explaining the boundaries of confidentiality in the interest of safeguarding and promoting the well-being of the student:

A person over 16 is entitled to absolute confidentiality unless they are at serious risk of harm or they might endanger another person, in which case the Counsellor must consult with the Headmaster, Head of Secondary/Primary and Senior Designated Safeguarding Lead (currently the Deputy Head), if appropriate. In DSL's absence there are four other fully trained Designated Persons on the staff who may be consulted: Tom Parkinson, Paul McNally, Paula Parkinson and Hanan Nazha. If the student is a non-boarding pupil, then their home GP may be contacted.

A person under 16 years of sufficient maturity and understanding (Fraser Guidelines) and who is Gillick competent is also entitled to confidentiality unless they are at serious risk of harm or they might endanger another person, in which case the Counsellor must consult as above.

Confidentiality includes attendance at counselling sessions. However, where a member of staff has referred a student, they will be informed if the student does not attend a first session, or ceases to attend within a short timeframe.

If the Counsellor judges that confidentiality has to be overridden in the pupil's best interest, then preferably this should be first discussed with the student in the hope of obtaining their consent.

### **Safeguarding**

Where there is serious cause for concern, then the Counsellors must consult immediately with the Senior Designated Safeguarding Lead (the Deputy Head) or in her absence, the Head of Secondary or Primary in line with the Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy. Indications of concern may include: suicidal thoughts especially when combined with a suicide plan; severe obsessional rituals; serious self-harm including severe cutting, anorexia or bulimia, or drug or alcohol abuse; profound impairment in social or school functioning, and parental, or other abuse. Abuse may comprise physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, or neglect.

### **Appointments**

Appointments with the Counsellors can be made directly using either email or mobile, or via the School Nurse. Referrals may be made by school staff. The Counsellor uses the same room for sessions each week, and is regularly available. Sessions last approximately 40 to 45 minutes, and if necessary, times are rotated to ensure the student does not miss the same academic period each week.

### **Reports**

The Counsellor provides reports in the first instance to the headmaster which detail the numbers of sessions offered and taken up and other information judged useful to the School in assessing the role of counselling within its framework of pastoral care. Actual names of those attending counselling are not included.

### **Reference**

This policy has been prepared with particular reference to: *Good Practice Guidance for Counselling in Schools* (2006, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition). Eds: McGinnis, S. and Jenkins, P. Lutterworth: British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).

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