



## SWS Counselling Policy

<b>Approved by:</b>	Pending	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Last reviewed on:</b>	March 2021	<b>Written by:</b> K Coshall (School Counsellor)
<b>Next review due by:</b>	February 2022	

## **1. Introduction**

**1.1** There is a strong body of evidence about the beneficial impact of all students having access to counselling support when necessary. The significant role schools can play in helping to promote the emotional health and wellbeing of students is now recognised.

Students experiencing stress or emotional problems find it difficult to engage with the education process and to reach their potential. Where school staff can recognise and respond appropriately to their needs the educational outcome is maximised.

**1.2** At any time, students may require extra emotional support beyond the normal pastoral care offered by teachers. Students who have suffered bereavement, trauma, family breakdown or who are young carers may appreciate the opportunity to speak to an adult who is not directly involved with their education. School based counselling provides that opportunity.

**1.3** The counselling support provided conforms to high professional standards and current best practice for school based counselling, specifically in respect of counsellor qualifications, supervision policy and safeguarding practices. The school counsellor has a commitment to at least 30 hours of continuous professional development per year.

**1.4** In line with nationally agreed standards for school-based counselling, the school counsellor has an enhanced DBS check, is a qualified counsellor who holds membership with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and is bound by the BACP's Ethical Framework for Good Practice.

## **2. The Role of the School Counsellor**

As a school, we employ a counsellor to help address the emotional needs that young people can have in response to experiences such as family breakdown, bereavement, loss, family and peer relationship difficulties, anxiety and bullying. Counselling can often be an effective source of support for these students, enabling them to function better both in and outside school, enhancing their resilience and giving them resources to manage any future difficulties. Counselling at Sir William Stanier School takes place in the school and is an on-site response for students who require the additional expertise that counselling brings to the overall a pastoral support system. The counsellor will provide a weekly, fifty minute counselling session.

### **2.1 Student Counsellors**

In addition to the school counsellor, there may be occasions when Sir William Stanier School supports a student counsellor placement at the school. The student counsellor will be attending a recognised university or college counselling course. They will also be in a position to offer a weekly, fifty minute one to one counselling session. The student counsellor will work to a recognised ethical framework such as that of the BACP and will be mentored and regularly supervised by the school counsellor. Student counsellors wishing to use clients for written case studies for university assessments will need to discuss the matter with the counsellor and the counsellor's line manager before any consent is provided. Sir William Stanier School will consult with you to obtain consent for your young person to receive support from a student counsellor. You are able to decline this offer, should you wish to.

### **2.2 Certificates**

Counsellors are responsible for providing Sir William Stanier School with copies of renewed certificates of their DBS checks and membership of their governing body. Copies should be given to the school annually.

### **2.4 Supervision**

All counsellors are required 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 qualified supervisor who has experience and understanding of young people and of the school setting. Student counsellors are responsible for making their own arrangements for supervision, in accordance with their governing body's minimum requirements.

### **2.5 Onward Referrals**

Where there is a need for the young person to receive more specialised support, eg: CAMHS, Sir William Stanier School expects the counsellor to provide signposting to other services in order to facilitate this. Recognising the young person's right to be self-governing, however, they may make the informed decision that they wish to engage in further work or an onward referral. In keeping with ethical working practices, the counsellor must talk this through with their line manager, with his/her supervisor and the parents of the young person, if consent was given, before agreeing to any further referral.

### **2.6 Statement of Good Practice and Confidentiality**

The counsellor must be a member of a governing professional body, such as the BACP, and be familiar with and work to the guidelines of the ethical framework. Any breaches will be dealt with through the complaints procedures of the members' governing body. Counsellors must notify Sir William Stanier School if they are the subject of a complaint to their professional body. In the instance of risk to self or others, confidentiality may be broken and the Designated and Deputy Safeguarding Leads will then be notified. This will be outlined to the young person from the outset.

## **3. Administration**

Appointments, cancellations and all relevant paperwork will be organised by Mrs K Coshall, school counsellor. It will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

## **4 Referral Process**

### **4.1 Self-referral by students:**

Students may see the counsellor directly or speak to their form tutor or Raising Standards Lead to request an appointment. The counsellor will contact the student to complete an initial assessment, to ascertain the support needed.

### **4.2 Referral by staff**

Staff can make referrals, provided they have the student's permission. Staff should complete a referral form and email this directly to the counsellor.

### **4.3 Referral by Parents**

Parents may make a referral by speaking with their young person's Raising Standards Lead, Form Tutor, Safeguarding Team or the School Counsellor. It is essential that parents have discussed the referral with their young person who, at the very least has agreed to attend a no-obligation introductory/assessment session with the school counsellor.

### **4.4 Consent**

For a young person to be eligible to receive counselling, they must understand the nature of counselling and be able to make a valid verbal counselling contract, including the ability to understand the principle of confidentiality. The exceptions to confidentiality will apply to situations where the young person is considered to be at risk of harm to self or others. Consent may be given by the young

person without the parent/carers' involvement, if the young person is deemed Gillick competent or over the age of 13.

#### **4.5 Initial Assessment**

Once a referral has been received, an initial assessment will then be completed by the school counsellor. An agreement to receive counselling is then signed by the young person. The school counsellor will then arrange an appointment to see the young person at a mutually agreeable time in school hours or refer the young person if appropriate to a Student Counsellor.

#### **4.6 Session Allocation**

Appointments are made on a weekly basis. Sessions will be reviewed after six weeks. Any extension to these sessions is through discussion between the counsellor, the student and an adult, where appropriate. The duration of each session will be fifty minutes. Appointments will be made to suit the timetable of the young person, so as not have a negative impact on their learning.

#### **4.7 Confidentiality**

Respecting the young person's privacy and confidentiality are fundamental requirements for keeping trust and respecting the young person's autonomy. The professional management of confidentiality concerns the protection of personally identifiable and sensitive information from unauthorised disclosure. Disclosure may be authorised by the young person's consent or the law. Any disclosures of a young person's confidences should be undertaken in ways that best protect the young person's trust and respect their autonomy. Client consent is the ethically preferred way of resolving any dilemmas over confidentiality, but exceptional circumstances may prevent the counsellor from seeking client consent to a breach of confidence, due to the urgency and seriousness of the situation, for example, preventing the client causing serious harm to self or others. In such circumstances the counsellor has an ethical responsibility to act in ways which balance the client's right to confidentiality against the need to communicate with others.

### **5 Safeguarding and Young person Protection**

This document outlines the procedures that will be followed by the counsellor when child protection concerns are brought to their attention, to ensure they protect and promote the safety and welfare of all students and help foster confidence in the integrity of the Counselling Service.

**5.1** The student is informed, at the start of their first session, that the contents of each counselling session remain confidential between the student and school counsellor, unless the student makes a disclosure of child abuse, the counsellor considers that the student (or another individual) is at risk of significant harm, including self-harm and suicidal ideation/suicide attempts. The counsellor is required by law to report suspicions about terrorism, serious drug trafficking and money laundering and may be required to break student confidentiality if a court orders disclosure. The student will sign a counselling written agreement acknowledging terms where confidentiality may be broken.

**5.2** A brief confidentiality statement will be displayed in the counselling room.

**5.3** The school counsellor is not required to pass on information about a student breaking a school rule or committing an offence, unless it could be deemed that by doing so, the counsellor was aiding and abetting a crime e.g. a student dealing drugs in school, putting themselves or others at risk.

**5.4** Where there are significant concerns about students (or third parties), the school counsellor will follow procedures laid out in the school's Safeguarding & Protection Policy, referring concerns to the school's Designated and Deputy Safeguarding Leads and/or the Principal. These persons will, in consultation with the counsellor and possibly other relevant staff, make a decision of any further action to be taken.

**5.5** The school counsellor will make every reasonable attempt to communicate first to the student, their intention to break confidentiality and to discuss the information that needs to be shared. If such conversations cannot take place, the matter should be discussed with the student at the earliest opportunity following referral to the Designated and Deputy Safeguarding Leads and/or the Principal.

**5.6** The school counsellor may seek specialist advice and guidance on safeguarding and child protection issues from their counselling supervisor.

## **6 Where counselling will take place**

Counselling will take place in the designated counselling room. As part of the agreement, between the counsellor and the young person, any missed appointments, without prior discussion, will be considered as one of the six sessions offered.

## **7 Remote Counselling**

In the event of school closure, counselling will move to an online virtual meeting.

Virtual 'Meetings': This refers to using the 'Meetings' options on Teams to either meet virtually 1:1 in place of a meeting that would have normally taken place 1:1 in school e.g. a careers/counselling/line management meeting or to teach a small group of students live e.g. a form time meeting. All meetings of this type need to be agreed by SLT in writing.

See the attached Online Counselling Considerations document.

## **8 Sharing Information**

The counselling service will work in a multi-disciplinary way and communicate with school staff, other agencies and specialised services, whilst maintaining an appropriate level of confidentiality. Counsellors may find it necessary to liaise with, share information or refer the young person to another agency for further help. This should only happen with the young person's permission.

## **9 Diversity and Additional Learning Needs**

Sir William Stanier School is committed to providing services to young people that take account of cultural differences and Additional Learning Needs. This includes disabled young people and lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual young people whose identity and experiences may not have been represented in the school setting.

## **10. Record Keeping**

The school adopts a Data Protection policy in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. It is updated, as necessary, to reflect best practice in data management. Each young person's records are securely stored in a locked filing cabinet in the counselling room. Statistical data will be collated on a termly basis and a student will not be identified within the data collected.

### **10.1 Access to Records**

The young person has a general right of access to educational records, as a 'data subject' set out by the DPA 1998, and this includes confidential counselling material. However, a parent/carer 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 rights and freedoms or legitimate interests of the data subject' (i.e. the young person concerned). The counselling service would consider any request against the young person's wishes, to be undermining the young person's own right to privacy and confidentiality. Counselling records, including process notes, may be requested by the courts during hearings about the welfare of young person. If the

school counsellor is given a court order to appear in court or produce their session notes, they may obtain legal advice so that they can make representations to the court in the appropriate manner, to limit disclosure of non-relevant sensitive client information.

## **11 Evaluation and Reporting**

The school counsellor will meet regularly with the line manager to review the service and address any weaknesses in the system.

### **11.1 Reporting to Governors**

A termly report outlining the progress of the service is made available to the Governors.

### **11.2 Complaints Procedure**

In the first instance, all complaints should be raised with the school following the usual school complaints procedure, which can be found on the school website. If necessary, complaints alleging a breach of professional standards will be dealt with in accordance with the procedures outlined by the BACP (British Association of Counselling Professionals).