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Kempston Challenger Academy

COUNSELLING POLICY

LGB Approved: Date _____

CoG Signed: _____

Date for Review: _____

Access to professional counselling support is available for young people during difficult and vulnerable periods in their lives. Counselling contributes to tackling barriers to learning which may result from personal experiences. "Young people and children experience developmental changes that are unique to each individual. Counselling is a process which assists a client to focus on his or her particular concerns and developmental issues, while simultaneously addressing and exploring specific problems, making choices; coping with crises, working through feelings of inner conflict and improving relationships with others. Counselling enables children and young people to gain a better understanding of themselves and the situations facing them and to develop strategies to cope" (BACP 2006).

Rationale

To provide students with an additional support service within the school, contributing to the best possible start in life for young people by:

- Promoting spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development both in school and in the community.
- Helping to reduce stress levels and promoting emotional wellbeing and inclusion.
- Helping students develop strategies in order to prepare them for the responsibilities and experiences of adult life.
- Providing a safe place for reflection and exploration of any issue or distress to assist in developing an understanding and new ways of coping.

Ethics

The school counsellor adheres to the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) code of ethics. All young people are entitled to good standards of practice and care from their practitioner in counselling (BACP 2013). "Good standards of practice and care require professional competence; good relationships with clients and colleagues; and commitment to and observance of professional ethics" (BACP 2013).

Relevant legislation this policy is drawn up with regard to the following:

- Article 8 of the Human Rights Act 1998 which affords young people the right to privacy
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989
- The Children Act 1989
- The Education Act 2002
- Green Paper Every Child Matters 2003
- Case Law.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children

Definition of Counselling

"Counselling takes place when a counsellor sees a client in a private and confidential setting to explore a difficulty the client is having, distress they may be experiencing or perhaps their dissatisfaction with life, or loss of a sense of direction and purpose. It is always at the request of the client and no one can be "sent" for counselling. Good Practice Guidance for Counselling in Schools this document is essential reading for all Counsellors working on behalf of Kempston Challenger Academy, and service users. As well as setting out the ethical standards, it provides an explanation of many aspects of the service provided by the school, to enable Counsellors to offer the most effective support. It forms an integral part of a working relationship, and should be kept in an accessible place for easy reference. The KCA

Counselling policy is also published on the school website to allow parents and carers to understand the structures in place to ensure good practice in the counselling we undertake at the school.

The Role of a School Counsellor

Schools employ counsellors to help them 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 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 Kempston Challenger Academy is part of the Student Support Services within the school, and is an onsite response for those students needing the additional expertise that counselling brings to the overall pastoral support system.

Other Professionals

In order to reduce any potential conflicts of therapeutic effort, the School Counsellor and Associate Counsellors will not provide counselling to young people who are currently in receipt of other therapeutic support from another agency, i.e. CAMHs.

Supervision

All counsellors need 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 supervisor who has experience and understanding of children and young people and of the school setting. CAMH's and other agencies are responsible for making their own arrangements for supervision, in accordance with their governing body's requirements.

Statement of Good Practice and Confidentiality

The Counsellor and Associates must be members of a governing professional body, 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 Kempston Challenger Academy if they are the subject of a complaint to their professional body. In the instance of risk to self or other, confidentiality may be broken and the named Child Protection Officer shall be contacted. This will be outlined in the consent form for the young person from the outset.

Referral

Referral by staff can only come through the Student Support managers. Any member of staff may approach Student Support Managers and request a referral for a student. Students may also self-refer. Where this occurs, the relevant Student Support manager will be informed. A referral form will be completed by the staff member. Where appropriate an information letter will be posted to parents when a young person is receiving support (please note the decision whether or not depends on the case and on the level of Gillick competency). The School Counsellor will make the first appointment with the child at which point suitability for counselling and the level of need will be assessed. Parents/carers and/or additional agencies who feel a young person would benefit from counselling should discuss this with their young person's Form tutor/Student Support Manager.

Consent

For a young person to be eligible to receive counselling, s/he 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 and the need for this to be overridden where the young person is alleged to be at risk of harm from self or other. Consent may be given by the young person without the parent/carers' involvement, if the young person is deemed Gillick competent. As guidance for Gillick competency, the Counselling Service at Kemspton Challenger Academy will take the following into consideration:

- The young person has explicitly requested that their parent/carers have no knowledge about them receiving counselling;
- Discussions have taken place around the importance of involving parents/carers and the young person still wishes for the parents to have no knowledge of them receiving counselling;
- Documentation clearly states why the young person does not want their parent/carers to be informed;
- The young person understands the advice/information they have been given and have sufficient maturity to understand what is involved and what the implications are. They can comprehend and process information relating to counselling;
- The young person can communicate their decision and reasons for it;
- This is a rational decision based on their own religious beliefs or value system;
- The young person is making the decision for themselves and not being coerced or influenced by another person;
- The school must be confident in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the young person. Without the support, would the young person's physical or emotional health be likely to suffer? (<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1541/gillick-competency-factsheet.pdf>)

If YES is the answer to these questions, then it is believed that the young person is competent to make their own decisions about consenting to and taking part in the counselling process.

Initial Assessment

Contracting: The verbal contract is negotiated between the student and counsellor. The verbal contract is reviewed after the initial period of counselling – six weeks. Further counselling sessions can be offered after each review. The verbal contract should be adhered to so both the young person and counsellors are clear of what the process will involve. The verbal contract should allow the student to become empowered and take responsibility in order to gain fully from the counselling process. Issues regarding confidentiality should be discussed and clearly understood when creating the initial verbal contract.

The School Counsellor will make the first appointment with the child at which point suitability for counselling and the level of need will be assessed. An agreement to have counselling is signed by the young person and an appointment is made. If appropriate the School Counsellor will refer the young person to another service e.g. CAMH.

Session Allocation

Sessions are made on a weekly basis for 6 sessions to start (based on need). Any extension to these sessions is through discussion between the Student Support Managers and the Counsellor. Each session will last for around 50 minutes. Sessions will be made to suit the timetable of the young person, so as not have a negative impact on their learning.

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. Young person's consent is the ethically preferred way of resolving any dilemmas over confidentiality, but exceptional circumstances may prevent the Counsellor from seeking young person's consent to a breach of confidence, due to the urgency and seriousness of the situation, for example, preventing the young person causing serious harm to self or others. In such circumstances the Counsellor has an ethical responsibility to act in ways which balance the young person's right to confidentiality against the need to communicate with others. Counsellors should expect to be ethically accountable for any breach of confidentiality.

Confidential information about young people may be shared within teams:

- Where the young person has consented or knowingly accepted a service on this basis, e.g. sharing information with CAMH and the young person is aware of this;
- The information can be adequately protected from unauthorised further disclosures;
- The disclosure enhances the quality of service available to young people or improves service delivery.

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.

Where counselling will take place

Counselling will take place in the private counselling room.

Diversity & Additional Learning Needs

Kempston Challenger Academy 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 and bisexual young people whose identity and experiences may not have been represented in the school setting.

Record Keeping

The school adopts a Data Protection policy in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and it is updated as necessary to reflect best practice in data management. Each young person's records are stored in Student Support Services. Statistical data will be collated on an annual basis and no student will be identified within the data collected.

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. A parent/carer however 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 children. If the School Counsellor is given a court order to appear in court or produce their process 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.

Child Protection

If a counsellor has potential child protection concerns, this could lead to a breach of confidentiality in the interests of the young person's safety. Therefore as part of the initial session, the counsellor will explain the procedures and possible consequences of involvement by other agencies, and seek the young person's views and consent. Records will acknowledge if a young person is on the Child Protection Register and, therefore, any further disclosures of this nature will be reported on to the Designated Safeguarding Lead within the school.

Evaluation and Reporting to Deputy Head teacher

The Deputy Head teacher and the School Counsellor will meet regularly to review the service and address any weaknesses in the system.

Reporting to Governors

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

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).

References

1. The Gillick principle was established in 1985 when Lord Scarman ruled that ...parental right yields to the young person's right to make his own decisions when he reaches a sufficient understanding and intelligence to be capable of making up his own mind on the matter requiring decision. (Good Practice Guidance pg 19.)
2. Good Practice Guidance for Counselling in Schools (4th Edn) 2006 Susan McGinnis with Peter Jenkins BACP.
3. Every Child Matters 2003 Paul Boateng Cm 5860. London: Stationery office.
4. Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling & Psychotherapy (Revised edition) 2013 www.bacp.co.uk
5. HM Government (2015) Working together to safeguard children: a guide to interagency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Norwich: the Stationery Office. Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419595/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children.pdf