

service, these records will include details such as the young person's name, age, gender, brief details of any Additional Support Needs, the broad topic of discussion and any actions taken as a result of the conversation. This information will be stored securely by the counsellor.

When a young person is engaged with therapeutic counselling, additional records will be kept. These are likely to include:

- A record of contact
- Session notes – a summary of what the child/young person said, how they presented themselves, and direct observations made by the counsellor, etc.
- Referral paperwork
- Copies of relevant correspondence
- Evaluative questionnaires
- Other relevant items

Anonymous data will be collated across the school counselling service, and this will be used to establish the impact and to inform any modifications to the service, and to report to the Scottish Government on the effectiveness of the service.

As is typical in the therapeutic counselling process, several baseline and endpoint-evaluative questionnaires will be used. For example, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), possibly incorporating versions for the young person, parent/carer and PT Pupil Support, and the Young Person's Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation (YP-CORE). This data will be stored securely and shared with the council anonymously.

Due to the personal and sensitive nature of these records, only the counsellor has automatic and full access to the

counselling record as the counsellor is responsible for the work contained therein. These records will be stored securely. On completion of the series of counselling sessions, records will be securely and centrally archived, and will be recalled if the young person re-engages with school counselling. The records will then be destroyed 5 years after the young person leaves school, in line with council policy.

A Privacy Notice for the School Counselling Service can be found at:  
<https://www.stirling.gov.uk/media/21837/school-counselling-services-privacy-notice-v1.pdf>

### **Who do I speak to about arranging for my child to meet with the school counsellor?**

If your child wishes to request a Time to Talk appointment with the school counsellor, they should follow the instructions received in school. If you wish to discuss your child's mental and emotional wellbeing and options for support, including therapeutic counselling sessions, please contact your child's PT Pupil Support.

### **What should I do if I am unhappy with the service?**

We would encourage you to make contact with the school to discuss any questions or concerns that you have about the counselling service.

For complaints regarding the School Counselling Service, Stirling Council's complaints procedure should be referred to.

**STIRLING COUNCIL**

**SCHOOL COUNSELLING**

# **FAQs for Parents/Carers**

## What is school counselling?

School counselling is formal counselling and will follow the British Association for Counsellors and Psychotherapy (BACP) definition of counselling, which is:

*“a professional activity delivered by qualified practitioners in schools. Counsellors offer troubled and/or distressed children and young people an opportunity to talk about their difficulties, within a relationship of agreed confidentiality.”*

By listening attentively and patiently, the counsellor can begin to perceive the difficulties from the young person's point of view and can help them to see things more clearly, possibly from a different perspective. Counselling is a way of enabling choice or change or of reducing confusion. It does not involve giving advice or directing a young person to take a particular course of action.

## How will school counselling look across Stirling Council?

Stirling's school counselling service will be a universal service, available to all pupils aged 10 and over. This will complement the range of whole-school and targeted approaches already available to help support the mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing of children and young people. We aim to have one school counsellor within each learning community by the end of September 2020. The Scottish Government has committed to funding school counselling services until March 2023.

## What support will the school counsellor provide?

- Time to Talk appointments - These are one-off appointments, lasting for around 15-20 minutes and are arranged at the request of any young person. The appointments may be useful for a young person to talk through any concerns or worries that they would like support with.
- Therapeutic counselling sessions - These sessions typically last for around 45 minutes per session, and take place over a number of weeks. This is an enhanced, targeted intervention to support our young people with additional support needs that are of a health, emotional or social nature. The appointment times will vary where possible to ensure that the young person does not miss the same class repeatedly.
- Universal support, e.g. assemblies, workshops, etc.
- Group work sessions
- Staff training and consultation

## Would my child benefit from counselling?

The principles of school counselling will be explained to all of our young people, and any questions that you or your child has should be directed to your child's PT Pupil Support. In addition to the school and counsellor agreeing that therapeutic counselling is an appropriate intervention for your child, your child also must be willing to engage in this process. School

counselling is not always an appropriate form of support, and some young people may not be ready or willing to engage in the counselling process. If this is deemed to be the case, alternative forms of support can be discussed with the relevant PT Pupil Support or with the Team Around the Child.

At times, the counsellor may decide that an onward referral to another service would be of benefit to the young person and this would be discussed with the young person and/or parent/carer, as appropriate.

## Who is my child's counsellor?

Our school counsellors are fully qualified and professionally registered.

## Is school counselling confidential?

While it is acknowledged that working in partnership with parents/carers can benefit the counselling relationship, there is a need for clarity and transparency around the limits to parental involvement, decisively underpinned by both ethical and legal factors. Scots law on capacity is governed by the Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act (1991), which specifically gives children, who have sufficient understanding, the right to make such decisions. Where children/young people have this capacity, there is no need to obtain the consent of a person with parental responsibilities and parental rights (Counselling Children and Young People in School Contexts in Scotland, Legal Resource for the counselling professions, BACP 2016). Before the age of 12, it is unlikely that children will be of sufficient understanding to make this decision themselves.

In the majority of cases, children and young people are willing to agree to the school contacting home about their wish to access counselling support. Parents/carers must consent in order for counselling to take place if their child is under 12-years old. If a child/young person is unwilling for parents/carers to be informed of their request for support, and they are 12-15 years old, counselling can go ahead if the school and counsellor can confirm that the young person has the capacity to consent in their own right. Further information on children's rights to additional support in school, and assessing capacity to use these rights, can be found in the Enquire factsheet on Children's Rights to Education and Additional Support in School. Young people aged 16 years and over have the right to provide their own consent, without requiring consent from their parents/carers.

Confidentiality is central to the counselling process – it helps the young person to build trust with the counsellor and to feel free to discuss whatever is troubling them. Discussions and themes discussed between the young person and counsellor will not be shared with parents/carers or the school. However, the safety and welfare of our young people is paramount and this may take precedence over confidentiality if it becomes clear that they, or someone else, is at significant risk. Young people are made aware of this when they meet with the school counsellor.

## What records will be kept and who will these be shared with?

Counsellors must work to professional standards by keeping accurate and appropriate records. For the Time to Talk