

Counselling policy

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1. 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 as no one can properly be 'sent' for counselling.

By listening attentively and patiently, the counsellor can begin to perceive the difficulties from the client'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 client to take a particular course of action. Counsellors do not judge or exploit their clients in any way.

In the counselling sessions the client can explore various aspects of their life and talk about their feelings openly in a way that is rarely possible with friends or family. Bottled up feelings such as anger, anxiety, grief and embarrassment can become intense and counselling offers an opportunity to explore them, with the possibility of making them easier to understand. The counsellor will encourage the expression of feelings and as a result of their training will be able to accept and reflect the client's problems without becoming burdened by them.

Acceptance and respect for the client are essential for a counsellor and as the relationship develops so too does the trust between the counsellor and the client. This enables the client to look at many aspects of their life, their relationships and themselves which they may not have considered or been able to face before. The counsellor may help the client to find an area where it would be possible to initiate some change as a start. The counsellor may help the client to look at the options open to them and help them to decide the best for them."

(British Association for Counsellors and Psychotherapy (BACP) Guidelines)

2. The Role of the College Counsellor

The College Counsellor is employed to help the College address the emotional needs that young people can have in response to a wide range of experiences such as family breakdown, bereavement, loss, family and peer relationship difficulties, anxiety, bullying and loss or lack of self-esteem.

Counselling can be an effective source of support for these students, enabling them to function better both inside and outside of College, enhancing their resilience and giving them resources to manage any future difficulties.

Counselling at The Ladies' College is part of the Pastoral Care within the school, and is an onsite response for those students needing the additional expertise that counselling brings to the overall pastoral support system.

The Counsellor will provide 3 counselling sessions per student (1 x 30 mins (initial session) and 2 x 40 mins sessions). If required, further sessions may be available at an additional charge.

2.1 Certificates

The Counsellor is responsible for providing The Ladies' College with copies of renewed certificates of their membership of their governing body (for their personal file).

2.2 Other Professionals

In order to reduce any potential conflicts of therapeutic effort, the College Counsellor will not provide counselling to students who are currently in receipt of therapeutic support from another agency, e.g. CAMHS or private counselling

2.3 Supervision

All counsellors need to engage in regular clinical supervision to maintain and monitor standards and to comply with their ethical code. The College Counsellor should undertake counselling supervision with a Supervisor who has experience and understanding of children and young people and of the College setting. The Counsellor at The Ladies' College will be responsible for making their arrangements for supervision independently, in accordance with their professional body's minimum requirements. The College will be kept informed of these arrangements.

2.4 Private Work

Where there is a need or wish on the student's part to move on to private counselling, The Ladies' College expect the Counsellor to provide signposting to other services in order to facilitate this. No individual Counsellor will be recommended.

The College Counsellor will not see College students in a private capacity.

2.5 Statement of Good Practice and Confidentiality

The Counsellor must be a member of a professional body and be familiar with and work to the guidelines of their Code of Ethics. Any breaches will be dealt with through the complaints procedures of the member's professional body. The Counsellor must notify The Ladies' College if she is the subject of a complaint to her professional body and the College will follow its own Complaints Policy internally.

In the instance of risk to self or others, confidentiality may be broken, and the named Designated Senior Person shall be contacted.

The Parent/Guardian of pupils from Melrose/Melrose Pre-Prep will be advised of this during the consent procedure and the pupil will be advised when they meet with the Counsellor.

Students from the Senior School and the Sixth Form will have this confidentiality clause outlined in the initial consent form at the outset.

3. Administration

Appointments, cancellations, contracting arrangements and all relevant paperwork will be responsibly held by the College Counsellor at all times in accordance with the Data Protection (Bailiwick of Guernsey) Law 2017.

The Counsellor should have in place arrangements for their Line Manager; The Principal or Deputy Principal (Pastoral), to be notified if she is suddenly unwell/unavailable. Appropriate arrangements should be in place to ensure any students due to see the Counsellor are notified.

3.1 Billing and Finance

If further counselling sessions are required/requested by the student after 3 sessions (1x30 mins & 2x40 mins) then the Counsellor will have a discussion with the student and request permission for contact to be made with their parent/guardian as further sessions will be chargeable at £60 per session (40mins).

A signature will be required from the parent/guardian agreeing to the terms set out in respect of the amount of further sessions and payment.

The Counsellor will inform the Bursar of chargeable sessions and these will be billed at the end of each term.

4. Referral

1) Melrose/Melrose Pre-Prep referrals will be by email from the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher direct to the Counsellor (after discussion and signed permission from a parent/guardian).

The College Counsellor will then email the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher to arrange a suitable time for the pupil to visit the Counsellor.

2) All Senior School and Sixth Form referrals will come through the Year Co-ordinators by email. Any member of staff may approach a Year Co-ordinator to request a referral for a student, or a student may talk directly to their Tutor or Year Co-ordinator.

The College Counsellor will contact the Senior School/ Sixth Form student direct to arrange an initial appointment.

4.1 Consent

For a pupil from Melrose/Melrose Pre-Prep to be eligible to receive counselling signed permission will be required from their parent/guardian. This will be arranged by the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher.

Students in the Senior School and Sixth Form are deemed Gillick competent and may give consent without parent/guardian involvement initially.

For a student from the Senior School or Sixth Form 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 and the need for this to be overridden where the young person is alleged to be at risk of harm to self or others.

As guidance for Gillick competency, 'The Listening Room' Counselling Service at The Ladies' College will take the following into consideration:

1. The young person has explicitly requested that their parent/guardians have no knowledge about them receiving therapy.
2. The Service has discussed with the young person the opportunity to involve their parent/guardian.
3. Documentation, which is held securely, clearly states why the young person does not want their parent/guardian to be involved.
4. 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.
5. The young person can communicate their decision and reasons for it.
6. There is a rational decision based on their own religious belief or value system.
7. The young person is making the decision for themselves and not being coerced or influenced by another person.
8. The service must be confident in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the young person.
9. Would the young person's physical and emotional health be a concern without access to a counselling service?

If the Service is able to answer YES to these questions, then this will enable the Counsellor to believe that the young person is competent to make their own decisions about consenting to and taking part in the counselling process.

If any student from the Senior School is not deemed to be Gillick competent after the initial assessment, then permission from their parent/guardian will be required to continue with counselling.

4.2 Initial Assessment

After a referral from the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher of Melrose/Melrose Pre-Prep, (and after signed permission from the parent/guardian), the Counsellor will meet with the pupil for an initial 30 min meeting and contract verbally. An 'Assessment Form-Melrose' (Appendix 1) will be completed by the pupil in collaboration with the Counsellor. Any further appointments will be arranged by the Counsellor through the Head Teacher or the Deputy Head Teacher.

After a referral has been made from the Senior School or the Sixth Form, an initial 30 min meeting will be arranged and an 'Pre-Counselling Questionnaire' (Appendix 2) will be completed by the student in collaboration with the Counsellor. An agreement to have counselling will be signed by the young person. The College Counsellor will arrange the two further appointments (if appropriate) at a mutually agreeable time (during school hours) with the student.

If, at any stage, there is a safeguarding concern this will be discussed immediately with the Principal or other Designated Senior Person.

4.3 Session Allocation

Appointments are made on a weekly basis for 2 sessions (40 mins each) after the initial meeting. After these sessions have taken place a 'Post-Counselling Questionnaire'(Appendix 3) will be completed by the student. If additional sessions are requested, parents will be contacted and asked to pay for these. A maximum of 12 further chargeable sessions will be available through 'The Listening Room' Counselling Service.

During the summer break, (particularly when it is felt that ending the therapeutic relationship prematurely may be detrimental to the student), additional sessions (chargeable) may be offered through 'The Listening Room' Counselling Service in order to provide continuity.

4.4 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 sensitive information from unauthorised disclosure. Disclosure may be authorised by the young person's consent or law. Any disclosures of a young person's confidences should be undertaken in ways that best protect their trust and respect their autonomy.

The young person's consent is the ethically preferred way of resolving any dilemmas over confidentiality, but exceptional circumstances may prevent the Counsellor from seeking the young person's consent to a breach of confidence, due to the urgency and seriousness of the situation, for example, preventing the young person from 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 and to follow the College's safeguarding policy.

The Counsellor should expect to be accountable to the Principal for any breach of confidentiality.

4.5 Where counselling will take place

Counselling will take place in 'The Listening Room' which is located in the Art and Drama Building. The Counsellor will liaise with Reception to ensure a child is marked as present when in attendance with the Counsellor, this will over-ride any absence mark a teacher may have made for the young person not being seen to attend a time-tabled class.

4.6 Sharing Information

The Counsellor will work in a multi-disciplinary way and communicate with College colleagues, other agencies, specialised services and parents, whilst maintaining an appropriate level of confidentiality. The Counsellor may find it necessary to liaise with, share information or refer the young person to another agency for help through the College safeguarding procedures. This should only happen with the young person's permission and with parental awareness.

4.7 Diversity and Additional Learning Needs

The Ladies' College is committed to providing equal services to young people that take account of race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or social background cultural differences and additional learning needs.

5. Record Keeping

The school adopts a Data Protection Policy in accordance with the Data Protection (Bailiwick of Guernsey) Law 2017, and this is updated as necessary to reflect best practice in data management. Each young person's counselling records are kept under an anonymous ID number and stored securely. Statistical data will be collated on an annual basis and no student will be identified within the data collected.

5.1 Access to Records

Regarding 'Access to Records' the Counselling Service will adhere to the GDPR policy as set out by The Ladies' College under the Data Protection (Bailiwick of Guernsey) 2017 Law.

Counselling records, including process notes, may be requested by the courts during hearings about the welfare of children. If the College 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.

5.2 Child Protection

If the Counsellor has potential child protection concerns, this will lead to a breach of confidentiality in the interests of the young person's safety. Therefore, as part of the initial assessment, the Counsellor will explain the procedures and possible consequences of involvement by other agencies, and seek the client's view and consent.

Records kept will acknowledge if a young person is on the Child Protection Register and, therefore, any further disclosures of this nature will be reported to the Principal or another Designated Senior Person within the College.

5.3 Evaluation and Reporting to Principal

The Principal and the College Counsellor will meet regularly to review the service.

The use of the Pre and Post-Counselling Evaluation Questionnaires will provide end of year statistics and an over-arching evaluation of the service, which will inform the Development Plan and consideration of the College's Pastoral Care improvements.

5.4 Reporting to Governors

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

5.5 Complaints Procedure

In the first instance all complaints should be raised with the College following the College Complaints Policy which can be found on the College website. If appropriate, complaints alleging a breach of professional standards will be dealt with in accordance with the procedures outlined by The National Counselling Society (NCS).

Appendix 1 - Assessment form -Melrose

Appendix 2 - Pre-Counselling Evaluation Questionnaire

Appendix 3 - Post-Counselling Evaluation Questionnaire