

COUNSELLING THOROUGH SCHOOLS

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Scottish Government's 10 year Mental Health Strategy (2017-2027), recognises the need for targeted and specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), but also promotes effective prevention and early intervention through support services at a local level, delivered as close to the young people as possible.
- 1.2 To this end, the Scottish Government has committed funding for this financial year and the following three years to support the delivery of counselling through schools following a set of ten nationally agreed core principles.
- 1.3 Establish a model of implementation to enable the recruitment of appropriately qualified counsellors that can support children and young people through schools from age 10.
- 1.4 Establish a robust, multiagency group to screen referrals and analyse need identified across Argyll and Bute, to ensure that children and young people access the right support at the right time to improve outcomes.
- 1.5 Develop strong collaborative working with the Educational Psychology Service to ensure the continued implementation of focused and effective preventative and early intervention approaches within schools and communities.
- 1.6 Work in partnership across services to ensure effective implementation and robust evaluation of impact on outcomes for children and young people.
- 1.7 Recommendations

It is recommended that Community Services Committee

- a) Endorse the proposed development of counselling within schools in Argyll and Bute;
- b) Note the deployment and resources in regard to the provision of Counselling in Schools will be agreed by the Executive Director with responsibility for Education, and the Chief Officer of the HSPC and;

- c) Agrees that the Head of Education: Lifelong Learning and Support will provide updates on the counselling in schools Programme to future Community Services Committee Meetings.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Scottish Government's 10 year Mental Health Strategy (2017-2027), recognises the need for targeted and specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), but also promotes effective prevention and early intervention through support services at a local level, delivered as close to the young people as possible.
- 2.2 To this end, the Scottish Government has committed funding for this financial year and the following three years to support the delivery of counselling through schools following a set of ten nationally agreed core principles.
- 2.3 Establish a model of implementation to enable the recruitment of appropriately qualified counsellors that can support children and young people through schools from age 10.
- 2.4 Establish a robust, multiagency group to screen referrals and analyse need identified across Argyll and Bute, to ensure that children and young people access the right support at the right time to improve outcomes.
- 2.5 Develop strong collaborative working with the Educational Psychology Service to ensure the continued implementation of focused and effective preventative and early intervention approaches within schools and communities.
- 2.6 Work in partnership across services to ensure effective implementation and robust evaluation of impact on outcomes for children and young people.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Community Services Committee

- a) Endorse the proposed development of counselling within schools in Argyll and Bute;
- b) Note the deployment and resources in regard to the provision of Counselling in Schools will be agreed by the Executive Director with responsibility for Education, and the Chief Officer of the HSPC and;

- c) Agrees that the Head of Education: Lifelong Learning and Support will provide updates on the counselling in schools Programme to future Community Services Committee Meetings.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 Supporting the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people is everyone's business. The benefits to the individual and to wider society of preventing problems from arising and intervening early are significant. For schools, this can result in improvements in attainment, attendance and behaviour as well as happier, more confident and resilient pupils.
- 4.2 The 10 year mental health strategy includes a number of recommendations that have been taken on board as part of the current strategy in Argyll and Bute. This includes the development of the framework for practice and associated resource hub *Our Children, Their Mental Health*, sustained intervention from the Educational Psychology Services to build mentally healthy secondary schools along with colleagues from Health and Choose Life, training and implementation support for Early Learning and Childcare settings and Primary Schools on the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) curriculum and the development of nurture approaches across educational establishments.
- 4.3 The vision for the Education Service is that ***together we will realise ambition, excellence and equality for all***. In practice, this involves the promotion of the principles of Getting It Right for Every Child across education, health and social care. This should involve the Named Person, in partnership with families and other agencies, using the Argyll and Bute Practice Model and the Child's Plan, to identify, assess and put support in place for children and young people with a wide range of wellbeing concerns and additional support needs. This will include those who experience emotional wellbeing difficulties and mental health issues.
- 4.4 Research findings consistently indicate that children and young people experiencing emotional well-being or mental health issues will, in most cases, be best supported by adults who know them well and with whom they feel familiar, comfortable and safe to talk, for example, parents or carers, other family members, peers and/or school staff (Bowlby, 2005; Hattie & Yates, 2013).

The Educational Psychology Service, Principal Teachers and colleagues in Health provide training on mental health awareness, the development of social and emotional learning, building positive relationships, responding to

ACEs and trauma and developing nurturing establishments. Such training is accessible for staff at all levels. Clear guidance on building positive relationships and trauma informed practice will enhance the confidence of staff in supporting children experiencing emotional challenges through anxiety and distress. As a result, the developments already outlined are complemented by Argyll and Bute's involvement in the national Trauma Training Pilot to develop a trauma informed workforce across services.

- 4.5 In Argyll and Bute, the promotion of positive emotional wellbeing for all children and young people is a key function of the support provided by the Educational Psychology Service, Primary Mental Health Workers (PMHW) and Education Support Officers, in collaboration with school staff, partner agencies, young people and their families. Where staff in schools have particular concerns about a young person's mental health, they will often consult with their Educational Psychologist (EP) or PMHW in the first instance, before requesting a service from Tier 3 CAMHS, if this is required.
- 4.6 To support the introduction of access to counsellors through schools the Scottish Government is providing £12 million to local authorities for 2019/20, rising to £16 million in each of the three financial years 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23. Within Argyll and Bute the funding allocated is £286,000 for this financial year and £377,000 for each of the following three years.
- 4.7 This funding will provide the resource to ensure greater equity and availability of this type of support, including through our island schools. In addition to the EPs and PMHWs, some schools have been offered counselling services, provided by voluntary or 3rd sector organisations, in their geographic areas. With the access to additional resourcing through Pupil Equity Funding, some schools have bought in counselling services as part of the support they provide for pupils. While valuable, this support is neither consistent nor equitable at present and where it is provided, it is not always part of a staged approach or provided within the GIRFEC Practice Model.
- 4.8 The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) define school based counselling as: *'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.'*
- 4.9 Active discussions are currently taking place between Education and the Health and Social Care Partnership to develop a model of counselling through schools that will complement existing services, build capacity to meet identified needs, enhance approaches to early intervention and improve outcomes for children and young people.

- 4.10 Young people who are most likely to benefit from counselling:
- have a degree of insight into their own life and issues impacting upon them;
 - are relatively able intellectually and socially;
 - are able to participate in relatively sophisticated verbal interaction;
 - recognise that there is a problem and that they can help resolve it;
 - have the potential to delay and rehearse resolution strategies, and
 - have some ability to incorporate external views and to assimilate and generate verbal feedback

The Named Person will lead an explicit discussion with the young person, their parents / carers and the other professionals involved, using information gathered through local assessment processes and the criteria above, to identify whether a young person is likely to benefit from counselling at that particular point in time.

- 4.11 Referrals will be reviewed by a multiagency team to ensure that a staged intervention approach is followed in conjunction with consideration of the criteria stated at 3.10 above. In line with the recommendations of the Scottish Government's Mental Health Taskforce and best practice guidance, the provision of counselling through schools must form part of an integrated model for supporting the mental and emotional wellbeing of children and young people, with a clear line management structure to provide the essential checks and balances to ensure safe and equitable delivery of service. This will be a function of a multiagency team with governance through regular reporting to Argyll and Bute's Children. There will be close partnership working across the team of counsellors, Educational Psychology and Child and Adolescent Mental Health.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 A service to provide counselling through schools should be implemented from January 2020 to enhance the current approaches to supporting the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people across Argyll and Bute.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy – None
- 6.2 Financial – Allocation of Counselling in Schools Grant from Scottish Government.
- 6.3 Legal – None.
- 6.4 HR – Recruitment of Staff

- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty – Providing equity and inclusion to meet the needs of all young people.
- 6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics – All legislative requirements will be met
- 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – N/A
- 6.5.3 Islands – No differentiated impact.
- 6.6. Risk – Inability to recruit to all areas across Argyll and Bute leading to inequity of service accessibility. Insufficiency of appropriately qualified candidates leading to an inability to deliver the proposed service.
- 6.7 Customer Service – Improvements in service to meet individual needs are being sought

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Counselling Through Schools: A partnership approach