COUNSELLING POLICY

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YP Therapy Assessment Form
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 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 The Marches School, 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. This document 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.

2. The Role of a School Counsellor
Schools are now employing 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 The Marches School 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. The Counsellor will provide 6 one to one counselling sessions, once a week for 50 minutes per client.

2.1 Associate Counsellors
In addition to the School Counsellor, there will be Student Counsellors on placement at the school, who are attending a recognised university or college course in Counselling. They will also be in a position to offer 6 one to one counselling sessions, once a week for 50mins. They will work to a recognised ethical framework such as that of the BACP, and they will be mentored and regularly supervised by the School Counsellor.

Associate counsellors wishing to use clients for written case studies for university assessments, need to discuss the matter with the Counsellor/Deputy Head before any consent can be given.

2.2 Certificates
Counsellors are responsible for providing The Marches School with copies of renewed certificates of their DBS checks, professional indemnity insurance and membership of their governing body. Copies should be given to the Administrator annually.
2.3 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.

2.4 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. Associates are responsible for making their own arrangements for supervision, in accordance with their governing body’s minimum requirements.

2.5 Private Work
Where there is a need or wish on the young person’s part to move on to private counselling, The Marches School expects the Associate 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 enter a new, longer term counselling relationship with their original Counsellor. In keeping with ethical working practices, the Associate Counsellor must talk this through with the School Counsellor and/or Deputy Head, with his/her supervisor and the parents of the young person, if consent was given, before agreeing to any further work. When approval is given by The Marches School, the young person should be made aware of the change of contract and hence the clinical responsibility, and written confirmation is required in recognition of this (a form is available from the Student Support Services.) It is suggested that there is a gap of a few weeks between the end of school Counselling and the start of private work, signifying the change in relationship. In the case of the School Counsellor, they will refer to the Deputy Head and act in accordance with the above protocol.

2.6 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 The Marches School 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.

3. Administration
Appointments, cancellations, contracting arrangements and all relevant paperwork will be responsibly held by the Administrator in Student Support Services at all times, in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Counsellors should have in place arrangements for the Administrator to be notified if they are suddenly unwell/unavailable and the Administrator should always be notified when individuals are planning to be away and unavailable to take referrals.
Counsellors should not normally take referrals if they are expecting to be on leave within the course of the work – Bank Holidays and Christmas are obvious exceptions to this.

4. Referral
Referral by staff can only come through the Progress Directors (Andy Hall, Jo Phillips, Sali James). Any member of staff may approach a Progress Director to request a referral for a student.
Students may self-refer. Where this occurs, the relevant Progress Director will be informed.
A referral form will be completed by the Progress Director and held within Student Support Services, where the administrator will hold a waiting list. A consent letter will then be posted out to the parent/s to sign and return before counselling can begin.
On receipt of the consent letter, the School Counsellor will make the first appointment with the child where a CORE YP-assessment form will be completed and suitability for counselling will also be assessed.
Parents and carers or outside agencies who feel a child would benefit from counselling should discuss this with their child’s Progress Director.

4.1 Consent
A consent letter is posted out to the parent/carer of the child upon receipt of the referral. Once this has been returned, an initial assessment appointment will be made between the School Counsellor and the young person.

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 child without the parent/carers’ involvement, if the child is deemed Gillick competent.

As guidance for Gillick competency, the Counselling Service at the Marches School will take the following into consideration:

1. The young person has explicitly requested that their parent/carers have no knowledge about them receiving therapy.
2. The Service has done everything it can to persuade the young person to involve their parent/carers.
3. Documentation clearly states why the young person does not want their parent/carers to be informed.
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. This 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. Without the service, would the young person’s physical or emotional health be likely to suffer?

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

4.2 Initial Assessment
After a referral has been made, an initial assessment form will be completed (using YP-CORE) by the School Counsellor or other member of Pastoral staff. YP-CORE will be the measure of risk, and used for on-going reviews and evaluations of the service. An agreement to have counselling is then signed by the young person. The School Counsellor will then refer the young person if appropriate to an Associate Counsellor, or arrange an appointment to see the young person at a mutually agreeable time in school hours.

4.3 Session Allocation
Appointments are made on a weekly basis for a maximum of 6 sessions. Any extension to these sessions is through discussion between the Deputy and the Counsellor. Each session will last for 50 minutes. Appointments will be made to suit the timetable of the young person, so as not have a negative impact on their learning.

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 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. Counsellors should expect to be ethically accountable for any breach of confidentiality.

Confidential information about clients may be shared within teams:

1. where the client has consented or knowingly accepted a service on this basis;
2. the information can be adequately protected from unauthorised further disclosures;
3. the disclosure enhances the quality of service available to clients or improves service delivery.
4.5 Where counselling will take place
Counselling will take place in Student Support Services. A member of staff from Student Support Services will mark the young person present when in attendance with the Counsellor; over-riding any absence marks a teacher may have made, for not being seen to attend a time-tabled class.
As part of the agreement between the Counsellor and the young person, any missed appointments, without prior discussion, will be counted as one of the 6.

4.6 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.

4.7 Diversity & Additional Learning Needs
The Marches 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 and bisexual young people whose identity and experiences may not have been represented in the school setting.

5. 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 kept under an anonymous ID number and stored in a locked cabinet, in a locked room in Student Support Services. Statistical data will be collated on an annual basis and no student will be identified within the data collected.

5.1 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. 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 child concerned). The counselling service would consider any request against the child’s wishes, to be undermining the child’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.

5.2 Child Protection
If a counsellor has potential child protection concerns, this could lead to a breach of confidentiality in the interests of the child’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 views 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 on to the designated Child Protection Officer within the school.

5.3 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. The use of the CORE YP-Therapy System will provide end of year statistics and an over-arching evaluation of the service.

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 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).

Appendix 1
YP Therapy Assessment Form
Over the last week...

1. I've felt empty or寡
2. I haven't felt like telling anyone
3. I've felt able to cope when things go wrong
4. I've thought of hurting myself
5. There's been someone I felt able to ask for help
6. My thoughts and feelings depressed me
7. My problems have felt too much for me
8. It's been hard to go to sleep or stay asleep
9. I've felt unhappy
10. I've done all the things I wanted to.

Thank you for answering these questions.