



If you have any more questions please contact your child's school or YCT:

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*We would like to thank Abigail, Jaime, Jeff, Sandor and the children of Milwards School in Harlow for their lovely pictures*

## Counselling for primary school children

Information for parents and carers



## What is Counselling?

Counselling provides an opportunity for children to talk, in confidence, about things that are worrying them or affecting their day to day life. What children choose to talk about is completely up to them, but common issues are bullying, parental separation, stress, friendships, change, bereavement, distressing traumatic events and anger.

## What does a Counsellor do?

Counsellors are trained to listen without judging and to help children sort out their thoughts and feelings. Counsellors in primary schools often use creative activities such as drawing, art, sand trays and writing to help a child express their concerns.



## What if s/he refuses to have Counselling?

The decision about whether or not to take up the offer of counselling is entirely voluntary for children just as it would be for an adult.

## If my child wants to see a Counsellor does that mean I am failing as a parent?

Absolutely not! We all experience occasions when it feels hard to speak to those closest to us about things which are bothering us. Often this can be because we don't want to worry those we love best, or because we want help thinking things through with someone else outside of the family.

The Counsellor will not be judging you or your child, but looking to help them find their way through whatever is troubling them.

### **How can I support the Counselling work?**

The most helpful thing a parent/carer can do is show an acceptance of counselling as a normal and useful activity, and to show an interest if their son/daughter wishes to talk about it, but not to press them if they don't. We acknowledge that this isn't an easy task, and it is quite natural for parents to feel anxious about what may be being said in the sessions.

### **What if I don't want my child to receive counselling?**

If a child requests counselling and is able to understand what is involved in the process, then they have the right to access counselling. Parents and carers may not deny them this right.

All parents/carers of primary school aged children will be informed of any referral for counselling. This is usually done either directly by the schools or through an opt in/ out policy which you will be informed of when your child starts at school.

We are always happy to talk with you about any concerns that you may have about the idea of counselling and feel the more you are able to support your child in this process the more effective the counselling is likely to be.

### **Why have a Counsellor in school?**

When children are experiencing difficulties at home or in school their concentration and the way they behave can be adversely effected.

A school based service brings counselling to children in a place that is familiar, safe and secure. By providing emotional support and enabling children to 'off load' feelings and anxieties counselling can help a child to concentrate more in class, feel better about themselves and build their self-confidence.

### **How do I know it is safe for my child to see a YCT counsellor?**

YCT is an accredited organisational member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy - this means that all our counsellors are:

- Qualified to a minimum of a Post Graduate Diploma in Counselling
- BACP accredited or working towards accreditation
- Experienced in working with children OR are in the process of gaining this experience through supervised practice
- DBS checked
- Insured
- In receipt of regular clinical and line management supervision
- In receipt of regular continuing professional training
- Familiar with and working within Essex Safeguarding Children Policies and Procedures.

### How long will counselling last?

Counselling will usually last for 1-2 terms, thus providing enough time for issues to be explored in a meaningful way. However, the counsellor will regularly review the usefulness of counselling with a child and if the child no longer feels the need for counselling the sessions will come to an end.

### Where and when does counselling take place?

Usually, a small, private room is made available in your child's school. Sessions last up to fifty minutes (depending on the circumstances), and appointment times can be varied during the school day.



### Is it confidential?

A key feature of our service is that information discussed in the counselling session is treated confidentially. Counselling is a time when children need to feel able to talk about concerns without fear of them being discussed elsewhere. This includes not discussing the work with parents/carers, unless the child requests or gives consent for this. This can be hard for parents/carers to accept at times, but confidentiality is crucial for establishing trust and for enabling children to speak openly and freely about what is concerning them.

If a child appears to be at risk of significant harm it may be appropriate to seek help from other agencies in order to keep them safe. The counsellor would aim to discuss this first with the child concerned and their parent/carer before informing the person in school responsible for 'safeguarding' issues.

Whilst sessions are confidential, all parents/carers of primary school children will be offered an opportunity to meet with their child's counsellor at least 2-3 times during the time they are receiving counselling. This will provide an opportunity for any concerns to be voiced and any questions to be answered.

It is always our hope that talking with a counsellor will lead to greater openness with parents and families, however you may need to allow a little time for this to happen.