

Director of Children's Services: Helen Budge

Children's Services
Educational Psychology Service
School Counselling Service
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If calling please ask for
Louise Wood

Our Ref: ref LW/vj/210604a
Your Ref:

Date: 10th June 2021

Dear parent/carer,

School Counselling Service – provision during school holiday periods

I last wrote to you back in December as we launched the new School Counselling Service across our school estate. I am writing again today to provide you with an update before the end of term and to remind you how to be in touch if you feel that your child may wish to benefit from the School Counselling Service.

As a reminder, school counselling is one of a range of interventions that can help support the mental, emotional and social needs of children and young people. It provides a safe, private, regular space for a child or young person to talk through their thoughts and feelings with a trained counsellor. They can talk about difficulties that are important to them and work at their own pace. The counsellor will listen without judgement and work alongside them in understanding their experience.

The School Counselling Service respects a child and young person's rights to privacy and confidentiality. This means that the school counsellor will not share the content of a session unless there is a concern that someone is at risk. A child or young person may have the capacity to give informed, self-consent for counselling or it may be that we need to ask a parent or carer to support consent. Sometimes young people want to access school counselling without their parent/carers knowledge and where appropriate this is accepted. Often this is about protecting a private space for the confidential nature of their counselling. Working in partnership with parents and carers in a way that does not impinge on a child or young person's engagement in counselling is really important to the success of the counselling.

Every school has an allocated school counsellor and identified LINK workers, based in schools, to support access to one to one school counselling. During term time, most enquiries in to service are re-routed through this LINK.



The School Counselling Service will continue to operate during school holiday periods. Below is information on how services will be provided:

Active counselling sessions

Active counselling sessions will continue to be delivered effectively via an online platform. For those who are in active session during holiday periods, alternative, safe access bases will be organised as well as suitable devices and a stable internet connection. Planned breaks from counselling can also be arranged.

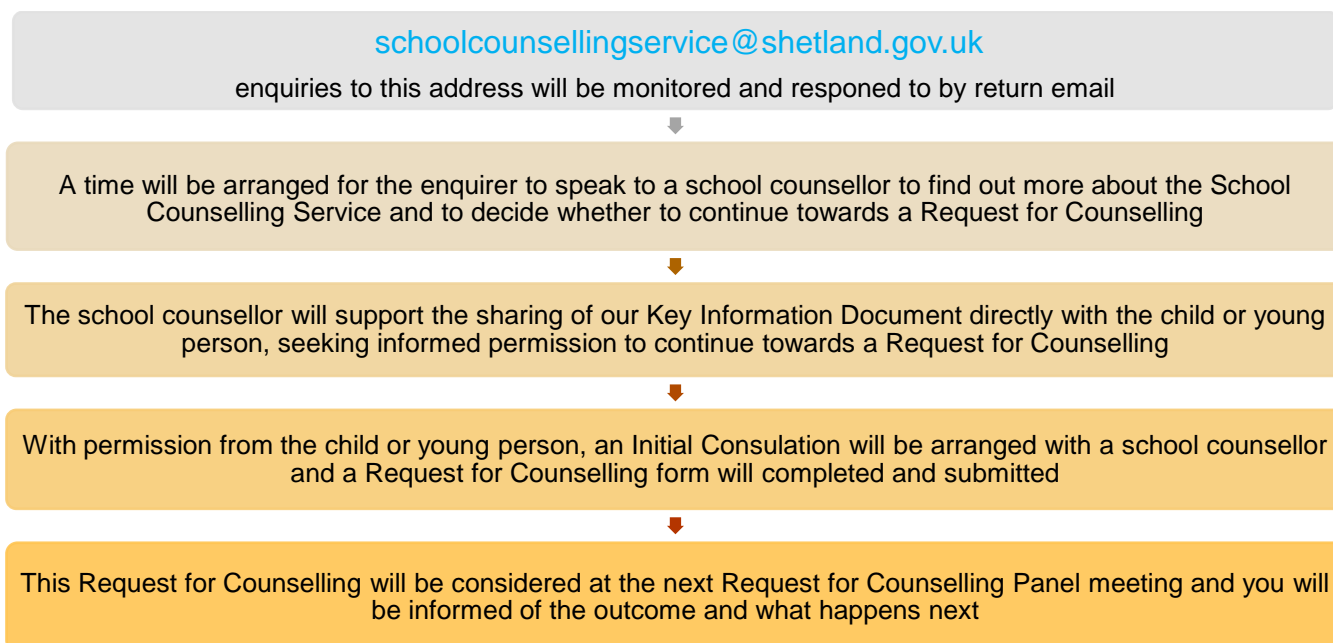
Waiting List

There are changes most weeks to children and young people on our waiting list, it is not a static number. Those waiting for their counselling to begin are managed actively. Regular communications keep them informed and provide general well-being support. We ask for any significant changes that may impact upon a child or young person's ability to engage with counselling to be passed on to identified school LINKs or during holiday periods, directly to the School Counselling Service (schoolcounsellingservice@shetland.gov.uk).

New Enquiries

With the absence of the school structure during holiday periods, the School Counselling Service will continue to respond to direct enquiries from children and young people themselves or from parents/carers. New enquiries should be emailed to: schoolcounsellingservice@shetland.gov.uk.

The following diagram illustrates what will happen once we receive a new enquiry:



When considering if school counselling might be appropriate it is helpful to note:

- The child or young person must be between the ages of 10yrs and 18yrs
- The child or young person must be on a school role at the end of the school term
- The child or young person is experiencing mild, moderate or severe levels of emotional dysregulation or psychological distress
- The child or young person recognises that there is a difficulty or issue
- The child or young person wants to do something about this difficulty or issue
- Of the range of things that could be done; they are willing to try counselling
- The child or young person has the language skills to undertake a talking approach to therapy
- The child or young person has the cognitive skills to reflect and engage in the dynamic process of counselling

There may be some instances where it *may* not be appropriate for a child or young person to be offered counselling at a given time:

- They are not ready to engage in the process
- They are already engaged in counselling or therapy elsewhere
- They are already receiving treatment or intervention from higher tiered service
- Their current level of involvement with another support intervention is high
- They are involved in current or impending legal proceedings

As a parent or carer you are very welcome to contact us directly with any queries about the School Counselling Service or for extended information. I have attached a document which captures some commonly asked questions and answers that might also be useful for you to have a look at.

Myself, Rhonda and Lindsey would like to thank you for the warm welcome we have received so far and for your continued support for the School Counselling Service. We are committed to working together with you to ensure the delivery of a quality, safe and effective School Counselling Service in view of supporting and improving mental health and wellbeing for all.

Yours sincerely

Louise Wood
Senior Practitioner for School Counselling

Shetlands School Counselling Service

Parents and Carers Frequently Asked Questions....

My child/young person has been allocated a school counsellor, what does this mean?

This means that they will be offered regular counselling sessions with one of the school counsellors. The school counsellor is a fully qualified, professionally registered Person Centred counsellor with integrity, experience and competency in working with children and young people. Sessions normally take place weekly for up to 50 minutes and are accessed from a safe, confidential base. The purpose is to enable the child/young person to express how they feel, become clearer in their thinking and then use both to discover what behaviours work best for them.

Why can't my child just speak to me?

Having a safe space to talk to a trained, caring adult outside of the family can be easier because there is no need to protect anyone's feelings. Supporting your child to express him or herself openly in sessions will greatly enable him or her to get the most out of counselling. Our main aim is to enable your child to feel happier, safer and more able to make the most of life now and into the future. The Person Centred approaches works with the belief that each individual has an innate capacity and tendency to fulfil their best potential.

Is it OK to talk to my child about their sessions?

Confidentiality is paramount for the trust that is needed for counselling to be effective. Some children/young people choose to talk about their sessions at home, while others may not. It is best to take your lead from them. Your child may sometimes be more emotional when feelings have emerged, but that is generally a positive and necessary step towards change.

Can I be in touch about how the sessions are going or if I am worried about my child?

If you feel concerned about your child or have important information concerning his or her wellbeing or safety then please don't hesitate to be in touch with the school counsellor, directly or through your child's identified school LINK. If ever a counsellor has a safeguarding concern, while seeking to preserve trust and gain a child's consent before involving others, the counsellor will always follow Shetlands Inter-agency Child Protection Procedures. Safeguarding is monitored responsibly and sensitively and the boundaries of confidentiality are explained clearly in the Working Together Agreement made between the school counsellor and a child/young person.

How do I get in touch with the School Counselling Service?

If you have any further questions about what is involved in counselling or about your child accessing counselling, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the School Counselling Service.

Directly by email schoolcounselling@shetland.gov.uk
or; phone the Senior Practitioner, School Counselling Service Louise Wood on 01595 745594
or you can make contact through your schools identified LINK.

