



Counselling Service/Independent Listener Policy

at

Bedstone College

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Staff	Head/Medical Centre
Gov	M Hayman

This policy applies to all members of our college community, including boarders and those in our EYFS setting. Bedstone College is fully committed to ensuring that the application of this policy is non-discriminatory in line with the [UK Equality Act \(2010\)](#). Further details are available in the college's Equality and Diversity Policy document.

Bedstone College is pleased to offer a counselling service to our students and which is offered at no additional cost to parents when the sessions are on site.

Counselling does not replace the excellent pastoral care that is offered by the College. Rather it enhances what is offered when the needs of students are such that they need additional support.

The service is run by an experienced and qualified counsellor who is available throughout term time to help manage the psychological well-being of all students at Bedstone. Maria (Mary-Lou) Prentice will be on site approximately once every two weeks to run a clinic at the Medical Centre. Mary-Lou is a qualified counsellor and holds a diploma in Therapeutic Counselling. She is a current registered member of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). As such she has met a series of professional standards and is bound to an agreed code of ethics.

More information can be found at www.bacp.co.uk

What is counselling and how may it help?

- It can help us to understand our relationships better and improve them
- It can help us to increase our level of self awareness
- It can help us to explore our feelings, and understand and manage them better
- It can help us to recognise unhelpful thought patterns and adopt new ones
- It can help us recognize the past and current behaviours which we do not want to take into the future
- It can help us to improve our communication skills
- It offers a place to reflect upon oneself and our relationship with the world

Young people clearly face many challenges whilst growing up, and may find at times that they need someone to talk to external to either home or school. Counselling is a process which offers support and guidance when things feel particularly difficult. The counsellor will provide a safe and confidential place for a young person to explore thoughts and feelings which perhaps are overwhelming and upsetting, in a drive to enable change.

Issues young people may be struggling with include:

- Bullying
- Academic pressure
- Parental divorce or separation
- Peer pressure
- Drugs and/or alcohol
- Sexual health
- Arrival of new sibling
- Low mood
- Anxiety
- Exam stress
- Bereavement
- Confusion
- Anxiety about the future
- Self harm

Referrals and Assessments

Students can make either make appointments directly with the counsellor, or alternatively they can speak to any member of staff who can make an appointment on their behalf in consultation with their houseparents. Parents may also feel that their child may benefit from counseling and so may contact houseparents to discuss the issues further.

All referrals made by a member of staff will have to be made in writing using the College referral form. This form needs to be given to the counselor before an appointment is made. Please see attached form. This can be accessed via the school website, or alternatively the College Medical Centre.

The referral acts as a primary link to understanding the issues that the young person is facing. The young person may have needs that are not appropriate for counselling and require alternative intervention. These may be more complex needs such as youth offending, long term school absences, or psychiatric needs, all of which may require signposting to other agencies outside of school.

Once the referral has been made the counsellor will meet and assess the student. This process is important to identify the needs of the young person, and ensure that they have agreed to come along. Counselling must be voluntary. Students can be encouraged to attend, or a recommendation can be made, but ultimately young people have the choice. The assessment also provides an opportunity for both student and counsellor to meet to decide on the best course of action.

Students can come for counselling for as long as is required which will often be discussed at the first session with the counsellor. This can vary between a one-off session in order to offload, or may lead to regular sessions throughout the term. It is more common in schools that young people will attend for a maximum of six sessions.

Due to the nature of the counselling process, students are encouraged to come alone for their counselling, though will be seen alongside friends, or teachers as appropriate. Counselling involves an active drive to build family relationships so it may be that the counsellor will ask permission from the student to talk to a parent on the phone or will invite a parent in to meet with them (where practicable) and the young person to discuss how changes can be implemented.

Confidentiality

All young people are entitled to confidentiality as outlined by the BACP Code of Ethics. This means that the information they bring to the session will be held in confidence between themselves and the counsellor. Information will not be shared unless the young person has agreed to it.

The counsellor will however state that they may need to break confidentiality should they deem the young person at **significant risk** to themselves or others. At this point information may need to be shared with another party, either within school, or with an appropriate referral to an outside agency.

The counsellor is aware of Child Protection/Safeguarding procedures that exists with the school and will adhere to those as appropriate. The Designated persons for safeguarding are the Head and the Deputy Heads.

Gillick Competence

“As a general principle it is legal and acceptable for a young person to ask for confidential counselling without parental consent providing they are of sufficient understanding and intelligence.” (Gillick v West Norfolk AHA, House of Lords 1985)

Since this ruling all young people are entitled to confidential counselling. Gillick competence will be assessed by the School Counsellor in the primary meeting with the young person and if deemed competent the young person will be able to give consent to counselling. Assessment of competence

based on the Gillick principle depends on:

- The maturity of the young person
- The young person having sufficient intelligence and understanding of the consequences of his or her actions
- The young person having sufficient understanding and intelligence to enable them to understand what is being proposed, i.e. counselling.

As a rule most secondary students are deemed mature and intelligent enough to understand the counselling process, but there are occasionally those who are not. It is critical at this point that parental consent is obtained. Every effort is made to engage parents and where appropriate, young people are encouraged to inform their parents that they are receiving counselling. We will provide signposting and guidance, as appropriate, to all staff.

For any further information about the counselling service, please contact Mary Lou Prentice who would be happy to help.

Mobile number: 07974-767106
e-mail: maryloup@zefyrgroup.com

[Referrals, Confidentiality and Parental Consent](#)

[Referrals](#)

Referrals for counselling are likely to follow the identification of a specific area of concern.

The Model for Pastoral Support, (Appendix A) gives an indication of the available interventions.

A sample referral form is included as Appendix B. Consent and confidentiality issues as outlined below are also a crucial part of the referral process.

[Why is confidentiality important?](#)

Confidentiality is essential to the formal counselling process:

- To enable the young person to develop a trusting relationship with the counsellor
- To allow the young person to open up and share feelings without fear of blame or reprisal.
- To allow the young person to speak freely about issues concerning them
- To encourage others to come forward for counselling.

A young person's right to privacy and confidentiality is legally established in the [Human Rights Act 1998 article 8](#). Problems in maintaining confidentiality are unlikely to occur if there is mutual trust, goodwill and respect between counsellor, school, staff and parents. The young person is free to talk to anyone about their counselling sessions if they wish, but should not be directly questioned by school staff.

The counsellor will not pass on any detailed accounts of sessions, but may communicate periodically with school pastoral staff about general progress, with the child's permission. It would be reasonable to expect the school counsellor to record issues raised by children and young people in general, in order to inform school development and policy. For the young person to feel supported between counselling sessions, they may wish a trusted member of staff to know they are receiving counselling.

Sometimes, it may be necessary to liaise with or refer the young person to another agency for further help, for example, when there are mental health concerns. This will be with the young person's express permission and/or parental consent.

Similar principles apply in cases of child protection but the need to safeguard the child or
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young person's welfare and safety may override these principles.

What limitations are there to confidentiality?

The Head has a right to make decisions about sharing information and confidentiality. This needs to be done in a reasonable way and in the best interest of the child. It is also subject to the Data Protection Act 1998 and the duty of confidentiality inherent in any counselling service. **Bedstone believes that "Any attempt to remove the principle of confidentiality in counselling will rapidly undermine the overall ethos of the school as a caring educational community".** (Roger Casemore, *Confidentiality & School Counselling*, BACP 1995) An individual's wishes about confidentiality may be overridden by a paramount duty to protect a child's welfare. **(A child is defined as anyone under the age of 18, Children Act 1989)** Bedstone's counsellor has a duty to work within the child protection procedures of the school. The above principles would apply to other services providing counselling support in school (e.g. Youth Offending Team, other local authority services), in view of the Head's over-riding responsibility for Child Protection and supervisory accountability for all pupils in school.

Breaching confidentiality

At the outset, the counsellor should make it clear to the young person that they may need to breach confidentiality (i.e. tell someone and seek help). This may happen when the young person or any other person (adult or child) is at risk of significant harm. The counsellor will discuss this with the young person again if the need arises, and, if the child is "Gillick competent", try to gain their consent to disclosing concerns. Where possible, the counsellor will keep them informed and involve them in this process. Bedstone's counsellor will be familiar with, and work within, school child protection/safe guarding procedures and know how to contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead in school. Even without the child's consent, it may be necessary to disclose information they have revealed. In the case of a young person threatening suicide or serious self-harm, there is a general acceptance of the need for intervention even when this involves breaking confidentiality. More minor concerns will remain confidential unless the young person wants them shared to seek further help. The counsellor is not required to pass on information about a young person breaking a school rule or committing an offence, unless it could be deemed that by withholding information the counsellor was aiding and abetting a crime (e.g. a young person dealing drugs in school). Young people who are considered "Gillick-competent" can have access to counselling without their parents' permission or against their parents' wishes (see section on parental consent).

School Counselling - Information for parents/Guardians

Introduction

All parents have the responsibility of helping their children to grow and develop. Children may need help with their problems and worries. Sometimes, no matter how well they get on with their parents, they may find it hard to talk to them. Children often get help and support by talking to someone they trust. Maybe a friend, a teacher, a relative or neighbour can help. Often having a problem or concern can affect a child's behaviour and school-work, and the school counsellor may be able to help.

In this document, 'child' means any child or young person of statutory school age or attending a school 6th Form.

How can school counsellors help?

School counsellors are carefully selected for their experience and counselling qualifications. Counsellors are good at relating to children and are trained to listen without judging. They can help people sort out their thoughts and feelings about what is worrying them. Counsellors usually provide short-term counselling, up to six sessions, on school premises, and usually in school time. The length of the sessions varies. With younger children, the sessions may involve play materials.

What is discussed during the sessions is confidential, but the child is told that the counsellor may discuss their problems with other people and agencies and get help from them if he or she thinks the child is at risk or in danger. The counsellor is independent from the school staff but understands the

school and works with teachers and other staff to help your child, while at the same time keeping confidentiality. Sometimes the counsellor, with the child's knowledge and agreement, may refer the child to other agencies who can give more help.

[How does my son or daughter get to see a school counsellor?](#)

Your child may ask to see the counsellor, or you or a teacher may recommend it. Counselling needs to be a voluntary process. When counselling is offered to younger children, you will be asked to sign a form to say that you agree to your child having counselling. Older children who ask for counselling and are capable of fully understanding what is involved may get counselling in their own right, without permission from a parent.

[What issues can school counsellors help with?](#)

There can be lots of pressures on young people growing up, for example friendships, teasing and bullying; exams and school work; family relationships, separations and changes; as well as illness, loss or death of someone close. Young people also have to cope with adolescence and the strong feelings and physical changes that go with it. Even quite young children can find that the time and space they get from counselling helps them feel better, and cope better at home and in school.

[How can a parent or guardian support the counselling?](#)

It will help your child if you accept counselling as a normal and useful activity, and show an interest if they want to talk to you about it, without pushing it if they prefer not to discuss it. If your child is in the Junior school, you will be asked to meet the counsellor at the start, to explain the process, and keep in touch with you. Counselling is not a magic solution, and sometimes it takes a while to feel the benefit.

[Who are the counsellors?](#)

School counsellors are trained for this special type of work and are professionally managed and supervised. They work closely with school staff and other agencies. All counsellors work within a recognised code of ethics and practice such as that of the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (BACP). All counsellors provide references to show their suitability for the post and pass appropriate police checks. They should have obtained, or be aiming for, BACP accreditation and United Kingdom Register of Counsellors registration or equivalent.

[How can parents and guardians find out more?](#)

Your child's teacher or tutor will give you more information. The link member of staff for our counselling service is the Head. The school counselling service is co-ordinated through- [The Medical Centre](#) For more details you can contact – The Medical Team at Bedstone: 01547-530303 ext 230 or 07811-904430

[School Counselling -Information for young people](#)

Sometimes life can be tough, and people growing up can be under pressure. Having someone you can really talk to may be a help - perhaps a friend, a teacher, your parents, or someone in the family. At times, everyone feels worried or has problems that may be hard to talk about with the people close to you. You may worry about whether they will understand, whether you can trust them, whether they will blame you, or ignore your feelings. That is when you may think about talking to the school counsellor.

How are counsellors different?

- we don't blame or judge you
- we don't tell you what to do
- we are there for you - whatever the problem
- we are good at listening carefully
- we can see you in school time
- we help you sort things out in a way which suits you
- we understand how your school works and can get you more help and information if you need it

- we can give you the time and space you need
- we have had plenty of training and practice to help us do our job well.

Will the counsellor tell anyone about what I say?

We don't ordinarily tell other people about you or your situation without your permission. But if we think that you or someone else may be at risk or in danger, there may be a need to get help from others to keep you safe. We will talk with you about this and together we will try to find the best thing to do for you.

What kind of things can I tell the counsellor about?

Whatever is on your mind, problems, decisions, worries, and changes. It could be lots of different things - making friends and relationships, parents separating, losing your temper and getting into trouble at home and at school, teasing and bullying, losing someone special, mixed-up feelings, health worries, exams and coursework. All these things can affect how you feel and how you behave. Talking with you about your worries and problems is the start of helping you sort them out.

How does it work?

Seeing a counsellor might be your idea, or your parents or a teacher might suggest it. You don't have to decide straight away. You can meet the counsellor first, to ask questions and find out more.

Counselling is voluntary - it's your choice, and whatever you decide is OK.

You are likely to be offered appointments for regular sessions for several weeks at a room in school where you won't be disturbed. The school would like to contact your parents/carers to let them know you are seeing a counsellor, but will not go into details. It may still be possible to come to counselling without your parents being told, and you can discuss this with the counsellor.

How do I find out more or ask to see the counsellor?

Ask a teacher or your houseparents. You can also speak to one of the nurses in the Medical centre.

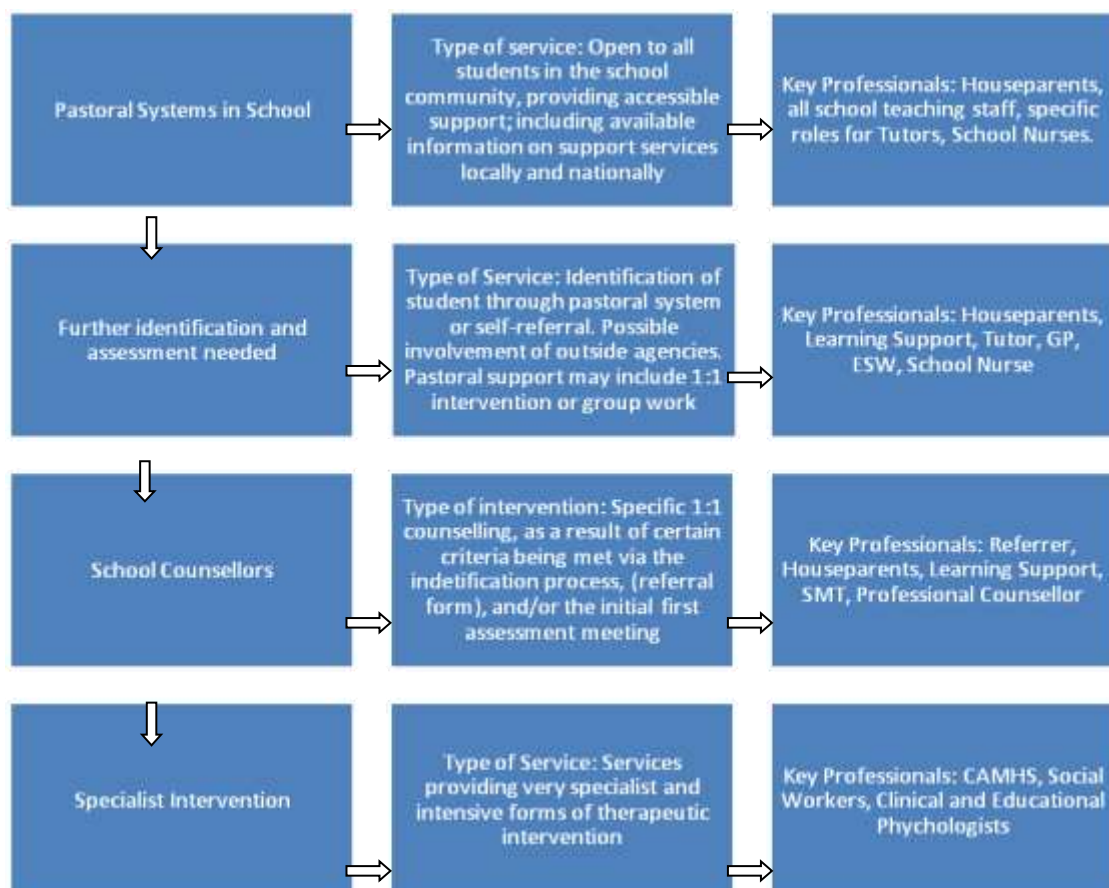
Other ways to get help:

Instead of seeing the counsellor, you might want to simply talk to someone who is not part of the school on the phone, or indeed seek further information from an outside agency before you take matters further:

CHILDLINE:	http://www.childline.org.uk Tel: 0800-1111
THE SAMARITANS	http://www.samaritans.org/ Tel: 08457-909090
SHROPSHIRE EARLY-HELP	https://shropshire.gov.uk/early-help/
MIND:	https://www.mind.org.uk/ Tel: 020 8519 2122
BULLYING:	https://www.bullying.co.uk/ Tel: 0808 800 2222

(Appendix A)

Bedstone College
Model for Pastoral Support and Counselling for students in School (April 2012)



Bedstone College
Confidential Counselling Referral Form (April 2012)

Name of referrer:	
Date of referral:	
Name of student:	
Date of Birth:	
Year and Tutor Group:	
Is the student aware of this referral, and if yes, are they consenting to it?	
Are the parents/Guardians aware of this referral?	
Please provide a brief description of the problem/s, and the reason/s for a referral to counselling:	
Please provide details of any intervention/s the school has already made to alleviate the problem/s the student faces:	
List any other professional agencies involved in the care of this student (Social Services, Youth Offending Team etc.)	
Does the student have any additional educational needs?	

Please return to Mary-Lou Prentice via the Medical Centre in a sealed envelope marked **confidential**.

[Bedstone College Independent Listener](#)

In addition to the College Counsellor, boarding students have access to an 'Independent Listener'.
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This adult is a volunteer and not on the college payroll.

Their role is to offer support to students if they feel that they wish to speak to someone who is independent of the school staff group.

The independent listener will be subject to an enhanced DBS check and be inducted into school policies and procedures on safeguarding before they commence their role at Bedstone College.

They will be subject to the same regulations regarding confidentiality as the College Counsellor as outlined above.

Students will not need to be 'referred'; they may contact the independent listener at a time convenient to them via telephone or e-mail.

Tel: 01547-510360

e-mail: richardlewis668@btinternet.com

The independent listener attends college supper once a month and is available for face-to-face meetings with students on that evening if appropriate. These meetings will take place in the common room of the boarding house when other students are in prep.

The independent listener will contact houseparents, (or the duty boarding tutor), on arrival to and on departure from a boarding house.

The independent listener is currently:

Mr Richard Lewis

Written 1st September 2012

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Reviewed April 2016

Reviewed September 2018