



September 2011

Dear Parent/Guardian

Re: Counselling Service within Campbell College

The following is guidance provided by New Life Counselling

New Life Counselling organisation has over 16 years experience of supplying therapeutic counselling in schools. Their staff are highly trained and experienced counsellors. They are either accredited or working towards accreditation, and monitored/regulated by appropriate professional bodies aligned to their specialism such as BACP (British Association of Counsellors & Psychotherapists), IACP (Irish Association of Counsellors & Psychotherapists), HPC (Heath Professional Council). On 2nd July 2009 they were awarded the Independent Counselling for Schools Service (ICSS) contract in our area by the Department of Education.

Your child/children will have access to the counselling service at the College. In our experience pupils have benefited in the past from preventive, interventive and postvention therapeutic support.

What is Counselling?

1. The opportunity to talk about things that are concerning us, in confidence, with a qualified counsellor. What is spoken about will depend on the individual, but common themes are stress, relationships, change, loss and distressing, traumatic events.

What does a Counsellor do?

2. Counsellors are trained to listen without judging and to help people sort their thoughts and feelings about whatever is concerning them.

Who are the Counsellors?

3. They are a team of professionally qualified and experienced counsellors who also have experience working with children and young people in a variety of settings.

The counsellor's name for Campbell College is:- Ms Debbie McLarnon

4. Few of us are able to work well when we are stressed or unhappy. The impact of distressing or difficult situations can be felt even more acutely by young people than by adults. Our experience is that young people find counselling useful in the same way as adults. Also, that they bring similar issues to counselling, with split family situations, bullying, anger and peer difficulties occurring most frequently. If children and young

people are able to receive emotional support from a qualified professional they will have greater opportunity to fulfil their potential.

How long will counselling last?

5. Counselling may be for a few sessions, or longer term. It is reviewed regularly between the counsellor and the young person.

6. Where and when does it take place?

A small, private room is made available in school during the day. Sessions last up to fifty minutes, and appointment times are varied so that time is not lost from any one subject.

7. Is it confidential?

A key feature of our service is that information is treated confidentially with three exceptions, namely:-

- a) if child abuse is suspected or reported
- b) if there is a risk of harm to the child or other people
- c) if there is suspected or disclosed criminal acts

Counselling is a time when it's OK to talk about concerns without fear of them being discussed elsewhere. This includes not discussing the work with parents, unless the young person requests or gives consent for this. This can be hard for parents to accept at times, but ensuring the confidentiality of the work is crucial for establishing trust so that the young people feel confident to speak openly and freely about what is concerning them.

8. However, if a pupil appears to be at risk of significant harm it may be appropriate to seek help from other agencies to keep them safe. The counsellors would discuss this first with the pupil concerned.

9. All counsellors receive supervision of their work, to ensure the quality of their practice, and these sessions involve the anonymous presentation of casework.

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

10. If a child or young person 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. We would, however, prefer that we have your support for the work, and we are always happy to talk with you about any concerns that you may have about the idea of counselling.

What if my child refuses to have Counselling?

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

Can I support the Counselling work?

12. Yes and we welcome this. Our experience shows that the most helpful thing a parent can do is to show an acceptance of counselling as a normal and useful activity, and to show an interest if your son 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.

13. It is always our hope that talking with one of us will lead to greater openness with yourselves, but you may need to allow a little time for this to happen.

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

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

How are referrals made to the Counselling Service?

15. Referrals are made through the school's pastoral system to the Counsellor, but the request may come from you, your child or a teacher. If a teacher makes the request we expect them to speak with the child or young person about why they think this may be a good idea. If interest is shown they will then suggest that it is discussed with you at home.

Data Protection Procedures and Evaluation

16. All information about counselling work undertaken is kept securely by the Counselling Service in line with current data protection regulations. After the counselling has finished your child will be sent an evaluation form that they can complete anonymously and return. This lets us know how well we are helping the children and young people that we see. If there is any cause for complaint, you and your child are welcome to contact the Counsellor or the regional Manager who will try to resolve any issues of concern.

If after reading this information you have any more questions please contact New Life Counselling on 02890 391630/02890 746184. Alternatively you can contact me on 028 9076 3076.

Yours faithfully

David Johnston
Vice-Principal Pastoral