

BISHOPSHALT SCHOOL COUNSELLING SERVICE

Information for Users

WHAT IS COUNSELLING ALL ABOUT?

A student's description of their experience; "If somebody said to me 'what's counselling?' I'd say it's when someone listens to how you feel. They listen to what you say. They won't tell you that you're wrong, or just being silly. You're allowed to feel how you want to feel. You don't have to pretend, or have to hear someone say "Cheer up, surely things aren't that bad."

CONFIDENTIALITY

What you say to the counsellor will not be passed on to anyone else without your agreement. Confidentiality would only be broken if you were considered to be at serious risk of harm. At your first session, your counsellor will explain carefully the (rare) circumstances in which she would have to break confidentiality. Confidentiality is never broken without telling the client first.

HOW CAN I BENEFIT FROM COUNSELLING?

Students find counselling helpful in various ways. Maybe you want to talk about the things that are worrying you. You may feel confused about certain parts of your life. You may feel as if you can trust no-one but feel as if just talking about things would be helpful. Your counsellor will not judge you, shout at you or make assumptions. The counsellor is there for you, not for the school or for your parent(s) or carer(s).

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The counsellor won't tell you what to do or try to change you – that is up to you. However, she may ask you questions, discuss options with you, talk about your feelings and, above all, listen carefully. Most people find that by talking to a counsellor about their concerns, they start to understand themselves better.

WHY DO PEOPLE HAVE COUNSELLING?

Most people come because they are experiencing temporary - but sometimes more long-term – stress, often as a result of factors outside their control.

Counselling can help you to cope during these difficult periods; sometimes a few sessions will do the trick, others choose to visit the counsellor regularly for a few months or longer. No problem is too big or small to talk about. Below are some common issues students discuss;

- Feelings of anxiety, sadness, depression
- Relationships with family, friends or partners
- Eating-related issues
- Family break-up/problems with step-parents
- Coping with illness/disability
- Loss or death of someone close
- Drugs or alcohol issues (self or family)
- Self-injury
- Lack of confidence/low self-esteem
- Bullying
- Sexuality/gender issues; Identifying as lesbian/gay/bi/trans
- Sexualhealth/contraception

And many more we don't have the space to list!

WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN I PUT MY NAME DOWN TO BE SEEN?

Sometimes students get seen within a few days; but often there is a waiting list (see note at the bottom of this information sheet). As soon as there is a space, a note will be passed to you in the morning of the day you are to be seen (in an envelope to keep it private). You will need to excuse yourself from your lesson, showing the note if necessary. Teachers will not ask why you are having counselling. Most sessions are held in the Lavender Room, at the top of the small staircase opposite Mr Cockcroft's office. Your note will say where and when your session is to be and will give the name of the counsellor.

The session will last up to 50 minutes. After a brief introduction, the counsellor will listen to why you feel you would like counselling. Some people do not find it easy to talk – the counsellor will support you to find a way of telling your story. At the end of your first session, you will be asked if you want to carry on next week. Your answer might be 'yes,' 'no' or 'I need a few days to think it over'. Remember, the choice is *yours*; counselling is not designed to please your teacher or parent. If, like most first-timers, you *do* want to come back, then you will be seen weekly initially. Most clients move to two-weekly sessions when they feel they are on the road to recovery. The session times are varied, to avoid missing the same lesson. If there are particular lessons you would like never to miss, you can tell the counsellor and she will do her best to make sure you don't.

Counselling sessions for sixth-formers are scheduled in study or free periods except in crisis situations.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Our aim at all times is to offer a professional service of the highest quality. In the event of serious dissatisfaction, there is a formal complaints procedure and information is available from the Counselling Service or from Mrs King.

WAITING LIST UP-DATE

(Counsellor please delete as appropriate)

* At present there is no waiting list. You can expect to be seen within days.

* At present you are numberon the waiting list. This could mean waiting several weeks or even months. It is not possible for us to predict how long.