 

East Ayrshire School Counselling Service

School Staff Feedback Glow Form, December 2021

Responses were received from 32 members of School Staff in East Ayrshire in total. Out of the responses received, 21 of them were from staff in Secondary schools and 11 were from staff in Primary schools. In Primary schools, the form was completed either by a Head Teacher, Depute Head Teacher or Principal Teacher and in secondary schools the form was completed either by a Depute Head Teacher, Principal Teacher of Pupil Support or Guidance Teacher.

**5. What would you say have been the benefits of having the school counselling service?**

In **Primary Schools**, staff commented on how quick support was from the school counselling Service and felt they benefited from having support for parents, as well as pupils.

Sample of Feedback from Primary School Staff on benefits of Service

“The school counselling service has been a huge support to some of our most vulnerable pupils. Support has been quick and we have not had to wait for months to receive it. Counsellor support has also helped our parents as well as pupils.”

“Support for pupils from an independent counsellor and a much faster way of accessing support than going through CAMHS”

“Only just begun the journey but pupils who attend and their families seem thrilled at finally being able to access support for their struggling child.”

“It has been absolutely amazing to work with such a responsive service. Madi is always so helpful and Katie who has been in our school supporting pupils has been fantastic. The young people Katie has worked with have benefited greatly from the counselling sessions.”

“Having a specialist service to support children who are struggling with a variety of needs. Bridging the gap between in house support and CAMHS.”

In **Secondary Schools** staff also felt that being able to access support quickly was a huge benefit of having the School Counselling Service. Guidance staff commented on the fact that the counsellors had skills and expertise that they did not and were also able to provide Young People with the time to talk. Guidance staff noted that they themselves couldn’t always provide this time due to the pressures and demands of their role so felt that this was a huge benefit. Staff liked the fact that pupils were equipped with strategies to support their own HWB and as a result, felt Young People were more settled in school. Staff at **Grange Academy** commented on how they had benefited from professional discussion with counsellors

Sample of Feedback from Secondary School Staff on benefits of Service

“Fast moving supportive service. Very quickly pick up Level 2 issues that we can’t deal with in Guidance”

“Expertise when needed - more skilled than I am to support young people.”

“Often as guidance teachers we have to be a counsellor and although we have training we are still teachers; also we have limited time to afford each pupil and can struggle to have regular scheduled slots to address issues. The exchange offers this time, expertise and reliable appointments to assist our young people. Also pupils have an outlet that is independent from school and in some way I think this encourages them perhaps to see beyond school as their only support.”

“An invaluable resource. To have quick and easy access on site for the growing numbers of mental health issues has been an amazing help and the counsellors have been very supportive throughout.”

“Been of immense benefit in helping vulnerable pupils and those who require specialist input.”

“Giving our pupils a person they feel comfortable to speak in school however, they're not members of staff meaning more of our pupils are more likely to open up as they don't have to be worried about seeing the person everyday.”

“Pupils feel valued and supported in their wellbeing.”

“Mental health support for our pupils where there hasn't been. It allows pupils to take ownership over how they feel and seek support. Pupils are seen quickly Provides parents/carer with reassurance that their child's mental health is being supported by a professional”

“A very good service that is accessible in a good timescale. Staff appear to operate well with our pupils.”

“Pupils quite often will seek support not in the wrong up to crisis but during - so having a service that, although not immediate, is much more accessible than others has made a huge difference.”

“Reduces the pressure on pastoral staff. Young people are better supported by professionals who can advise. Allows pastoral staff to signpost on confidently for young people during TAC meetings and supportive conversations with parents. Signposting within PSE courses that young people can access almost immediately without having to go to a local GP or CAMHS. Young people are empowered to talk about their mental health and to take control of the referral or re-referral process. Using this as part of the conversation in PSE allows us to normalise mental health and reduce the stigma of counselling that some people experience.”

**6. Is there anything you would like to see done differently with the School Counselling Service?**

In **Primary schools** staff wanted to see greater communication from the Service, requesting that they receivefeedback on the progress of referral. Another common theme from Staff feedback in Primary schools is that they would like to see the service extended to provide support for younger pupils.

Sample of Feedback from Primary School Staff on suggested improvements to Service

“Would like feedback to school to find out what is happening with the referral, especially as the young person keeps asking.”

“It would be great to support younger pupils.”

“It would be great to be able to refer younger pupils.”

“Information shared wider with a range of colleagues instead of just the appointed 'counselling person' - if this person does not share information or does not think the system is useful then children are not able to access this vital resource. It was easy to request support and complete online referrals once I knew about the service, but before that I would have been unaware such a service even existed.”

“Would love is there was a service for younger pupils.”

In **Secondary schools** staff also commented that they would like to see greater Feedback from the Service on the progress of the referral (has YP been seen, dropped out etc). The would also like to this feedback to include strategies to support Young People. A few of the Secondary school staff highlighted that they would like counsellors to be more visible in schools, this could include drop in sessions and group counselling sessions. They were also keen to see the service extended to provide support for parents (workshops, family sessions). Finally secondary staff felt that it would be helpful if the Service could let the referring teacher know the date/time of appointment so they can remind the young person, where appropriate.

Sample of Feedback from Secondary School Staff on suggested improvements to Service

“Some feedback to say if counselling has been successfully completed. Or indeed if the kid has dropped out.”

“The opportunity for feedback from the counsellor on strategies to support young people - some training to upskill us.”

“It would be good for the counsellors to be more visible in school. I’m not sure how this would work in practice though. Perhaps attending assemblies but I’m unsure of how this would work with the scheduling system. Is there any capacity for a drop in slot for young people who have attended previously and feel they need a top up/check in but don’t require a referral?”

“Support for parents. For example workshops on supporting children at home.”

“Longer than 6 weeks for pupils. Saving of referrals when submitted. Group counselling sessions.”

“Pupils to be seen quicker. The weeks that pupils to be seen not limited and then having to re-refer.”

“Liaising more with guidance team- guidance staff to liaise more with counsellors. Recording attendance to sessions- something perhaps to be discussed in school. Is it possible to have guidance staff have access to the diary online?”

“Would like to know when they have initial started their appointments or being accepted. I don't always know. Just an email to say pupil has been accepted and has a screening appointment.”

“I think having information more easily available on appointment times/date (especially when it is due to start) would be of benefit - then as a Guidance teacher I know the level of input I would need to make available to each young person. Also for pupils with anxiety attendance is an issue so being able to remind them of times would be useful.”

**7. Additional comments about your experience with the counselling service and the impact it has had on your school and young people.**

Sample of additional comments from Secondary School Staff

“Great service, great staff. The best service to come into schools in my time teaching.”

“The counselling service is a much needed resource which has been extremely valuable, I can’t foresee any possibility of the service becoming either less required or undersubscribed. The counsellors have all been very good at working with young people with an ASN which has required a bit of flexibility in their approaches.”

“Excellent service for our young people. Our counsellors have tried really hard to see pupils if we feel it is urgent. We need this to continue. There is a higher level of need in terms of the impact of covid on hwb, family finances and pressure on families. Could the service be extended to some parents or family counselling?”

“Please, please Do Not take this resource away. The kids are at breaking point and access to cahms is not readily available and GP is directing parents to schools for help. We need this service and every school in Scotland should have this.”

“The pupils have responded very well to the service and my pupils who have attended have all commented that they have benefited from this service.”

“Personally I have seen the service made a huge difference to pupil wellbeing, as stated although not immediate it is a service which is available to young people when needed - this reassures them that when they need support they should open up and talk about it. Rather than remain on a waiting list and feeling ignored which can be what happens with other services.”

Sample of additional comments from Primary School Staff

“I would like to see the service made available to younger children.”

“I have found the experience extremely beneficial to the school. Our counsellor has also supported a whole class support around friendship and we are working in partnership.”

“Think it’s a great service to have!”

“The School Counselling service has provided prompt support and has been able to give children an opportunity to talk with someone who they see as being for them. Parents and the school have been pleased with the speed of the support put in place. From a staff viewpoint it allows us to support children in a more specialised way to reduce anxiety and support their emotional wellbeing. Given the long delays with CAMHS the counselling service is a very worthwhile resource.”

“The mental health crisis within East Ayrshire is rapidly coming to a head with many, many children in nearly every class now reporting some form of mental health struggle - there will be a day where we need to adopt the American system of having a school counsellor for every individual school. Just like all schools have head teachers, teachers, EAST Team, clerical catering staff, janitors... I very much see a need for all schools to have a dedicated counsellor.”

“The young people supported have engaged extremely well with the counselling sessions. They are able to use strategies discussed and implement them into every day challenges. They have developed increased resilience and this is evident through observations and discussions.”

“The young person that we had attending has now completed his sessions and he thoroughly enjoyed them. I t was a real confidence builder for him and also allowed his mum and gran to feel more confident about him going out independently, despite his medical condition.”