



East Ayrshire Council  
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir an Ear

# East Ayrshire School Counselling Service

## **Impact Report**

### August 2021-June 2022

June 2022

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# 1. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- Over the course of the academic year, a total of 1130 pupils from 38 primary schools, 7 secondary schools and 1 special school in East Ayrshire were referred to The-Exchange for counselling and psychological wellbeing support.
- Anxiety continues to be the most common reason for requesting assistance from The-Exchange in East Ayrshire. Referrals in Secondary schools are highest in S3, closely followed by S2 where referrals have significantly increased over the past year. In Primary schools, requests are higher in P6 than in P7, a trend that has continued to rise throughout the year. Females in East Ayrshire are more likely to seek support from the service than males with females accounting for 62.5% of referrals.
- 94% of secondary school pupils supported by The-Exchange, registered with a significant clinical distress score at initial assessment. This is measured using CORE-YP. 86% of young people registered a reduced significant score in the mild to moderate range at the end of counselling.
- 90% of all primary pupils accessing our support registered an improvement in their psychological wellbeing through the completion of the Child Outcome Rating Scale (CORS).
- 83% of primary parents/carers noted an improvement in the psychological wellbeing of their child through completing the SDQ measurement tool.
- Following engagement with The-Exchange, 96% of pupils stated that they found counselling helpful. Benefits from attending the service included being more able to deal with their problems and their feelings, improved confidence and a better understanding of self.
- 100% of teachers said they found it easy to request assistance from the School Counselling Service and 88% said that young people were seen quickly by the service. 100% of teachers said they wanted to see the service continue.
- Children and Young People in East Ayrshire welcomed the opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions on the School Counselling Service by attending Pupil Focus Groups. Key feedback from pupils was that they want to see the service better promoted in their school, including how they self refer if needed. The actions which followed from this feedback are detailed in the report.
- A need was identified for psychological wellbeing support in East Ayrshire for children under the age of 10. This is now being provided by The-Exchange and requests from children in the 5-10 age group have been steady since the service was extended in April 2022.
- The structured reflective practice groups, which were piloted in one secondary school and one special school, had a positive impact on staff wellbeing, relationships with colleagues and staff morale. Staff reported improvements in their ability to make decisions, identify their next steps for professional learning and to implement positive changes in terms of work/life balance.
- P7 pupils across East Ayrshire benefitted from participating in the P7 transition “Adventure Programme.” This was delivered by class teachers who attended training from The-Exchange. After taking part in the programme, pupils reported having new strategies they could use when they felt worried, sad or angry.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

School Counselling in East Ayrshire has been provided by The-Exchange for children and young people aged 10 and over since 25th January 2021 and provides a low level, preventative, support within the context of Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC). The-Exchange specialises in providing psychological support to children and young people. Their approach focuses on improving the overall resilience and psychological wellbeing of the young person and, where appropriate, the whole family. The-Exchange provide 1-1 counselling, small group targeted interventions, support and advice for families, capacity building for staff and arms-length support for schools and families where needed. The service is coordinated centrally with each secondary school receiving an allocation of counselling time per week and primary schools receiving support on a needs-led basis. This allocation is reviewed on a regular basis and adjustments are made where appropriate.

Currently there are 13 counsellors in post, working across schools in East Ayrshire, providing 192 hours of counselling/psychological wellbeing sessions per week. The delivery and impact of School Counselling continues to be reviewed on a monthly basis by a multi-agency group. This group includes colleagues from Education and the Health & Social Care Partnership.

Funded by the Scottish Government, work undertaken by The-Exchange aims to ensure that Children and Young people are provided with effective and timely support for their mental health and wellbeing within the context of a “Whole School Approach”. A key priority for the service is to ensure key adults within the school feel confident about knowing when and how to seek additional support from the Counselling Service. The service is used to complement, and not as a replacement to the many other universal and targeted supports that we already have to help support the mental, emotional, social and physical health of Children and Young people (C&YP)

**Over the past academic year, the service has supported/delivered:**

- **1130 pupils**
- **5029 1-1 counselling or psychological wellbeing sessions**



# IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES FOR 2021-2022

## 1. Effective Implementation of the School Counselling Service:

- Working together with school staff, C&YP, parents and other partners to ensure the service provides effective and timely support that fits with the “whole school approach” towards mental health and wellbeing.
- Ensuring staff feel confident when supporting C&YP with mental wellbeing concerns and that they can easily access other supports including the school counselling service, where appropriate.
- Ensuring C&YP, parents, school staff and other services are kept well informed about the service.

## 2. Evaluation of the impact of the service

- Impact and effectiveness of school counselling service to be evaluated and developed as appropriate through thorough collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data.
- C&YP are more resilient and mentally healthier
- Staff in schools find it easy to access the school counselling service
- Young People are seen quickly by the school counselling service

## 3. Building capacity amongst staff to ensure they are better equipped with the skills needed to support Children and Young people’s mental health and wellbeing

- To embed the resilience framework in all primary schools within East Ayrshire and provide staff with the tools, resources and strategies to confidently support the psychological wellbeing of children and young people
- To provide all Guidance/Pupil support staff with the opportunity to be part of a structured, reflective learning group, supported by The-Exchange and the EA Educational Psychology team
- To provide transition support training to all P7 teachers in East Ayrshire so that they can effectively support children through this challenging period of change

### 3. COMMUNICATION

Each school has a school counselling lead, usually a Head Teacher or Depute Head Teacher in Primary schools and a Depute Head Teacher or Principal Teacher in Secondary schools. The School Counselling Coordinator, Principal Educational Psychologist and Exchange Managers meet with the school leads on a termly basis. These meetings ensure that staff are up to date on the service and that requests are appropriate. It also allows schools to share feedback on the service and be part of the ongoing review and evaluation process. There is also a smaller focus group of school counselling leads who meet on a regular basis to contribute more directly to the gathering and evaluation of impact data. Each school has access to the School Counselling Guidance documents, which include all the information that schools need to be able to access the service effectively.

Since the service commenced, schools have used various platforms including school websites and school apps to share information about the School Counselling Service to young people, parents and wider partners. Leaflets are available to provide parents and Young People (YP) with further information about the support available to them and how they can access this support. Monthly newsletters are shared with all relevant stakeholders to ensure they are kept informed and updated about developments in the service. A self-referral poster with QR code taking YP directly to the online request form has been displayed in all schools and on school websites.

At Local Authority level, the School Counselling website and Twitter account provide YP, parents, schools and other partners with further information about the service.





## 4. GOVERNANCE & PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The delivery and impact of School Counselling continues to be reviewed on a monthly basis by a multi- agency group. This group includes colleagues from the Health & Social Care Partnership, CAMHS the GIRFEC Education Manager and Principal Educational Psychologist.

The School Counselling Coordinator meets regularly with Children's 1st, the Children and Young People's Occupational Therapist, the HWB Education Manager and the Mental Wellbeing Health Promotion Officer (NHS Public Health) to ensure meaningful links between the services/supports.

In November 2021, one of the school counsellors attended the East Ayrshire junior and senior youth conferences. The conference provided rich opportunities for pupil voice to directly impact the development of the service. It was also an opportunity for the service to share key information about the service. Meaningful conversations about Children's Rights and the right to self-refer to the Counselling Service were a key focus point.

As a follow up to the discussions at the youth conferences, the School Counselling Service shared a "Question and Answer" session in their monthly newsletter and on their social media platforms. These were then shared with a wider audience of YP schools. The following recommendations given by YP at the conferences were considered by the service and improvements were made as a result of this feedback. The following graphic was shared with YP to let them know about improvements we made:

## You said.....

Just under half of us didn't know the Service existed. We'd like it to be better promoted in our school.

We did not know that we were able to self-refer to the Service. How do we do this?

We would like our School Counsellor to be part of the School Team and be more visible.

## We did.....

Posters and leaflets issued to all schools. Monthly Newsletters and updates about the service sent out on School App. Schools being supported to distribute info via GLOW and Teams.

Self-Referral Posters with QR codes issued to all schools and displayed on school websites/GLOW blogs.

With restrictions easing, Counsellors are beginning to attend assemblies and PSE classes. Counsellors are attending breakfast clubs and have set up exam stress support groups in some of our schools.

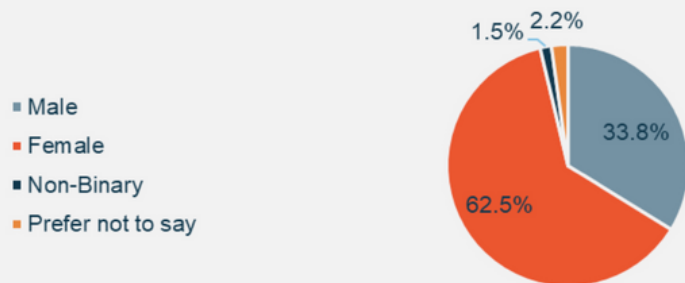


## 5. CORE DATA

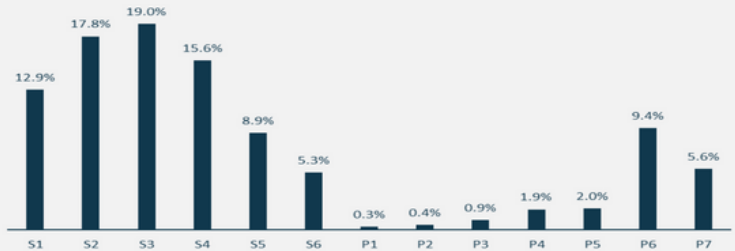
Between August 2021 and June 2022 7531 counselling/psychological wellbeing sessions have been offered to CYP in East Ayrshire schools. Out of these sessions offered:

- 5029 were attended.
- 1 Child protection concern raised at point of referral.
- Average wait time from referral to first appointment is 2 weeks
- Average attendance rate was 77%. This is lower than the national average and is thought to be a direct result of the pandemic.
- 25 Self Referrals
- 150 Re-referrals
- 27 Requests from Care Experienced Young People. This figure is taken from the data we have available this session. We are exploring how we better capture this data at point of referral and expect that the number of care experienced YP accessing the service will be higher.
- 44 Onward Referrals to other services including CAMHS and Children's 1st

Requests By Gender



Requests by year group



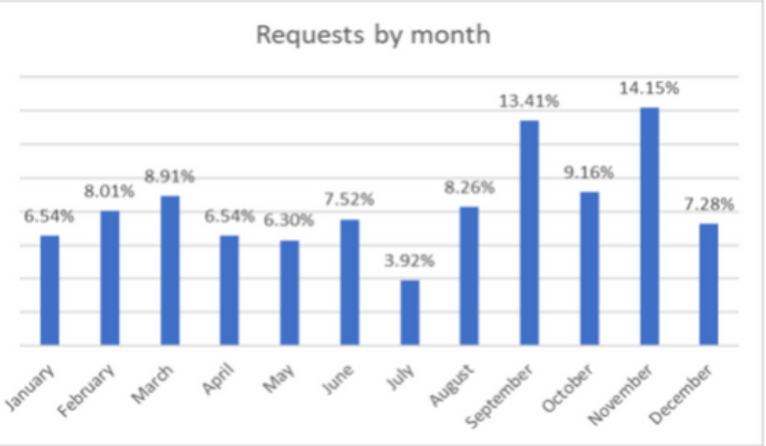
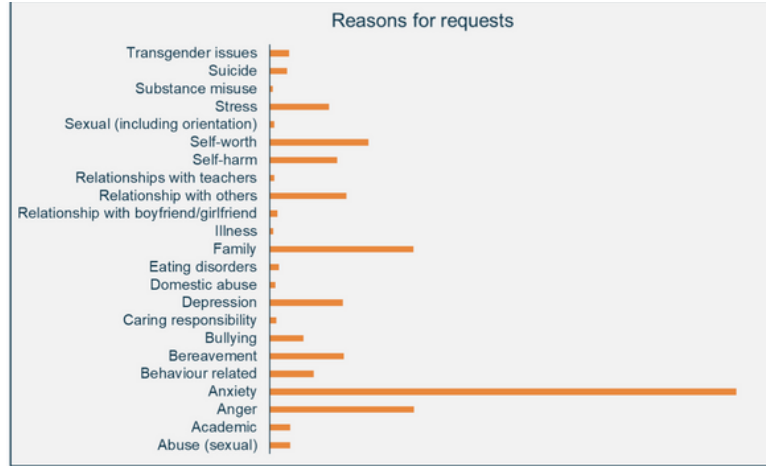
The graphs on the left illustrate request data and trends over the past academic year. Requests from males are higher in Primary schools than in Secondary schools and this reflects the national trend. In East Ayrshire, over the past year requests from young people in S1 and S2 have significantly increased. From research gathered, we have found this has largely been due to the impact of the pandemic and in particular the absence of transition events. YP have fed back that this has had a direct impact on their wellbeing, self-esteem and relationships with peers.

Over the past academic year, Anxiety continues to be the most common reason for requesting assistance in East Ayrshire but there has also been an increase in requests linked to anger. Again feedback from YP and school staff indicate that this has been a direct impact of the pandemic and the frustrations young people have felt.

Requests were high in September and this reflects national trends of high levels of anxiety from young people upon the return to school. However, requests to the service were at their highest point in November 2021, which does not reflect any previous trends nationally. Feedback from counsellors and YP indicate that this was the peak for school related anxiety with many YP suffering the impacts from the pandemic including worrying about being behind with schoolwork and suffering from social anxiety due to lockdowns.

22% of those attending counselling in East Ayrshire over the past year had additional support needs and 26% received free school meals. The table below shows the SIMD demographic of YP in East Ayrshire who have attended school counselling over the past academic year

SIMD	No. of YP attending Counselling
1	435
2	295
3	178
4	144
5	78





**C&YP in EA Primary schools who registered an improvement in psychological wellbeing after support from The-Exchange**

## 6. Impact Data

The data provided will outline the impact of the service from August 2021 until June 2022. Seven data sources will be utilised to demonstrate the impact:

- Resilience Assessment Profile (RAP)
- Child Outcome Rating Scale (CORS)
- Case Studies
- Evaluations (Pupil and Teacher)
- CORE YP
- Pupil and Parent Focus Groups
- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

### Data Source 1 – Pupils

#### Primary School Data – Resilience Assessment Profile (RAP), Child Outcome Rating Scale (CORS), Case Studies and Evaluations

Over the course of the academic year, a total of 159 Primary School pupils engaged with The-Exchange from 38 primary schools within East Ayrshire. During engagement with The-Exchange, pupils complete a resilience measurement tool (a variation of the CYRM: child and Youth Resilience Measure ) at the beginning and end of the support. The therapists facilitate the child to communicate their view of how the struggles are affecting them using picture cards. Each card is linked to the 15 resources of resilience. The assessment aims to generate a resilience profile, which highlights the specific areas that the child is under- resourced, as reported by the child. Support is put in place to target the resources identified. The same process is repeated at the end to capture 'distance travelled' from the perspective of the child. 83% of children reported an improvement.

The Child Outcome Rating Scale (CORS) is used to measure weekly progress reported by the child. 90% of all primary pupils accessing our support registered an improvement in their psychological wellbeing through the completion of the Child Outcome Rating Scale (CORS).

## **Primary Case Study**

### **Request Reason**

Self-worth, self-confidence and emotional regulation difficulties

### **Resilience Audit**

The resilience profile indicated that the child was under-resourced across the internal resources of resilience (self-esteem, self-confidence and optimism) and social resources (emotional intelligence and self-regulation). The child's narrative referenced sadness and anxiety with parental separation appearing to be a source of disturbance for the child

### **Assessment scores**

Start- Low resilience SDQ High difficulty

End-Moderate/High resilience SDQ Slight difficulty

### **Therapeutic Agenda**

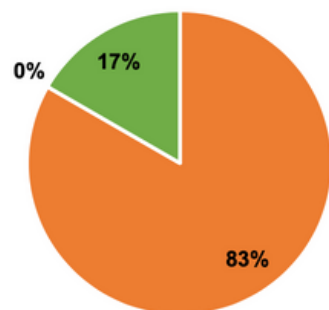
Theraplay activities focusing on helping the child to externalise emotions, explore character strengths and promote strategies for self-monitoring and self-soothing techniques.

### **Outcome**

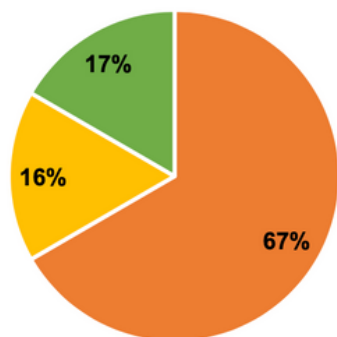
- Child was able to identify individual qualities and who (friends and family) valued these qualities
- Child developed a language for their worries and used writing and collage work to express and communicate worries to others
- Child reported feeling happier and less worried by the end of the intervention
- Parent commented that child appeared to be happier and more able to manage their worries.
- Self-esteem, confidence and emotional intelligence resources had increased by the end of intervention.

## Sample of Primary Pupil Feedback (12 responses)

Were you happy with how quickly you were seen by the counselling service?



Do you think attending the sessions has improved your mental health/wellbeing?



In an attempt to add qualitative feedback to add to the clinical data from The-Exchange and to ensure Pupil Voice is paramount to the continued development of the service, we took the decision to send out our own surveys to YP who have engaged with the school Counselling Service. Unfortunately, response rates were quite low so we do not want to draw any conclusions based on 12 responses; however, we will continue to focus on gathering robust feedback from C&YP.

92% of Primary school aged pupils who have used The-Exchange said they would recommend the service to a friend.

### Sample of Feedback Quotes from Primary Pupils:

*"We can talk and I can share things. Easier to talk to them than my mum as I don't want to upset my mum."*

*"It really helped me stay calm in times I got anxious and it was better being able to say my feelings out instead of hiding them. I really think that it helped with my anxiety."*

Please see **Appendix 1** for the rest of the graphs and feedback from the Primary Surveys.

## Secondary School Data

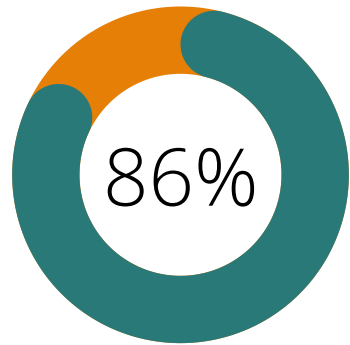
Secondary School pupils who have engaged with The-Exchange, are supported to complete CORE-YP forms. The CORE-YP form is a 10-item session-by-session monitoring tool designed for use with 11-17 year olds measuring items including anxiety, depression, trauma, physical problems, functioning and risk to self. CORE-YP forms are used with young people at the beginning, middle and end of counselling, but can be used at every session if the young person has scored particularly low or the Counsellor has risk concerns. The CORE-YP form asks pupils to rate how things are for them in four dimensions:

- Subject Wellbeing
- Problems/Symptoms
- Life functioning
- Risk/harm

Core-YP is an important indicator of how each young person is feeling about their life and importantly their happiness and wellbeing as well as highlighting any experiences of distress. Clinical Distress, as described above, is indicated when CORE-YP scores are 10 or above with scores above 25 being classified as severe distress.

178 registered with a 'severe' score  
239 registered with a 'moderate to severe'  
234 registered with a 'moderate' clinical score  
49 registered with a 'healthy' score and other routes of support were discussed

86% of YP registered a reduced clinical score (significant = more than 5 points) of which 26% registered with a score of 'healthy'. 11% registered a non-significant reduced score

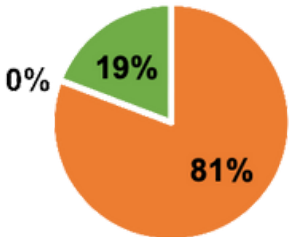


**Secondary  
C&YP in EA  
registered a  
reduced  
clinical score  
following  
sessions with  
The-Exchange**



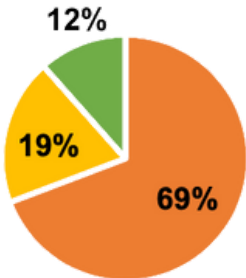
# Sample of Secondary School Feedback from Glow Surveys (27 Responses)

Were you happy with how quickly you were seen by the counselling service?



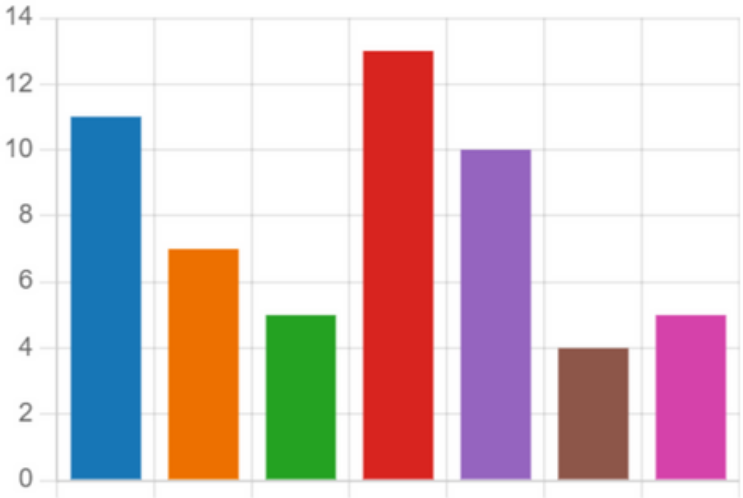
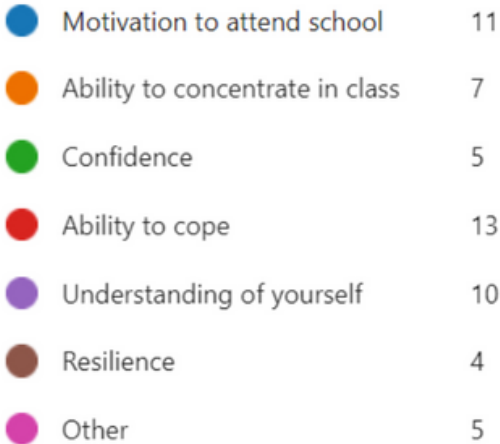
Yes No Not Sure

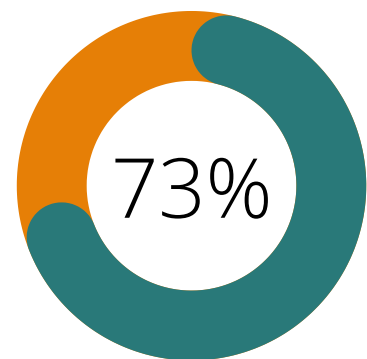
Do you think attending the sessions has improved your mental health/wellbeing?



Yes No Not Sure

The graph below shows the responses from Secondary pupils to the question “Do you think attending counselling has had a positive impact on any of the following?” Pupils were able to select as many options as they like. The options were presented in a random order with no specific order.





**Secondary  
C&YP in EA  
would  
recommend  
the service to a  
friend**

### **Sample of Feedback Quotes from Secondary Pupils:**

*"It makes me feel happier inside and outside of school; it also helps with my mental health, gives me reassurance that I have someone to talk to and makes me have a more positive attitude."*

*"I learned a lot about myself and why I was feeling the way I was feeling. I got given coping strategies to help me in my classes and it has helped massively. I still struggle with anxiety but I think I have learned that it is normal to feel like this and I've also learned to talk about my feelings with my family and guidance teacher."*

More examples of feedback from Secondary school pupils are available in **Appendix 2**.

### **Pupil Focus Groups**

Between April 2022 and June 2022, the School Counselling Coordinator met with Pupil Groups from St Joseph's Academy, Loudoun Academy and Kilmarnock Academy. The aim of these groups was to ensure that Pupil voice was reflected when making decisions about developments and improvements in the School Counselling Service. The YP who participated in the focus groups were a representative group from each school and not ones who had necessarily attended school counselling.

KEY POINTS RAISED	ACTIONS
<p>There is a huge need for the Counselling Service in schools especially given the impact of the pandemic on pupil wellbeing. Key issues identified by the Young People were social anxiety, exam related anxiety and low self-esteem and confidence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exam Stress Groups delivered by Exchange counsellors</li> <li>• Whole class workshops delivered by Exchange Counsellors on social anxiety and self esteem</li> <li>• Pilot to run in Robert Burns Academy and Kilmarnock academy to target S2 and S3 pupils who missed out on transition events due to lockdown. This will take the format of a 6 week programme delivered to PSE classes and focuses on boosting resilience and giving YP coping strategies</li> </ul>
<p>There is still a stigma around accessing school counselling. School Counsellors need to be more visible.</p>	<p>Counsellors have attended Assemblies,PSE classes, breakfast clubs and have participated in whole school wellbeing days.</p>
<p>The Counselling Service is not well enough advertised within the Secondary schools</p>	<p>School Counselling coordinator working with wellbeing champions to help them take ownership for promoting the service within their schools.</p>
<p>In some schools the counselling room is not welcoming and/or in a confidential enough environment.</p>	<p>Suggestions for how to improve the counselling room shared with all counsellors and school counselling leads. Counselling Coordinator is working with schools to put these ideas into practice.</p>

## Data Source 2 - Parents

Parents of pupils in Primary Schools receiving support from The-Exchange were asked to complete the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire at the initial parent screening and again once counselling sessions had been completed in order for comparisons to be drawn. Of the 159 Primary School Pupils who engaged with The-Exchange 150 Parent/Carers completed both the Initial and Follow-up SDQ's allowing for comparisons for 150 of the pupils engaging with support.

144 baseline assessments scored "Very high difficulty" [20-40]

5 baseline assessments scored "High difficulty" [17-20]

1 baseline assessments scored "Slight difficulty" [14-17]

2 reduced from "Slight difficulty to "Normal" [0-13]

50 reduced from "Very high difficulty" to "Normal" [0-13]

92 reduced from "Very high difficulty" to "Slight difficulty" [14-17]

### Parent Focus Groups

In January 2022, the School Counselling Coordinator met with a group of parents from the Robert Burns Education Group to hear what was important to them in terms of supporting mental health and wellbeing. This was facilitated by What Matters to you and allowed the School Counselling Coordinator to get some feedback on the service. A more detailed outline of the discussion with parents can be found in **Appendix 3**.

### Case Study from Parent Focus Group:

**Overview:** Daughter with experiencing diabetes burnout which was causing a significant impact on her emotional wellbeing. She was hiding snacks, upset with her appearance, skin, weight, just basically giving herself a really hard time and hating her diabetes.

Diabetic team suggested a request to The-Exchange until a psychology appointment was received.

**Examples strategies/interventions:**CORE test scales on how she was feeling, coping, leaflets, card exercise. General talking about how she was feeling.

**Improvements:** Someone different to talk to, made her feel better just being able to talk about how she was feeling.

**Value:** I think this service is crucial in schools, our kid's are struggling more than ever with their emotions, wellbeing and the impacts on them can be huge. Anything from bullying, self worth, impact of accepting medical conditions. Giving young people someone else to speak to in a safe environment is so important

## Data Source 2 - Teachers

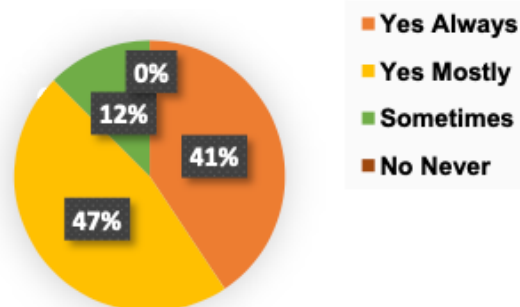
Following engagement with The-Exchange, Teachers were asked to give their feedback on the service. In total responses were received from 32 members of School Staff. Out of the responses received, 21 of them were from staff in Secondary schools and 11 were from staff in Primary schools. In Primary schools, the form was completed either by a Head Teacher, Depute Head Teacher or Principal Teacher or in secondary schools the form was completed by either a Depute Head Teacher, Principal Teacher or Pupil Support or Guidance Teacher. **100% of teachers stated that they wish to see the service continue.**

### Sample of Teacher Feedback from Surveys:

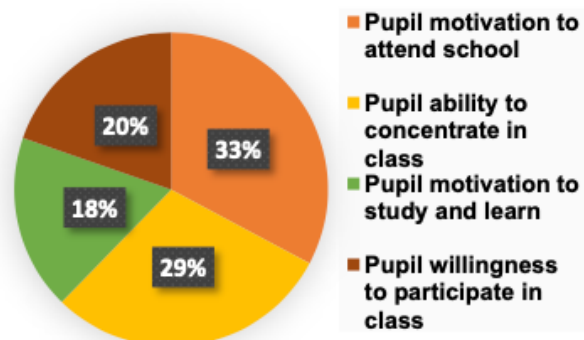
- "The school counselling service has been a huge support to some of our most vulnerable pupils. Support has been quick and we have not had to wait for months to receive it. Counsellor support has also helped our parents as well as pupils."*
- "It has been absolutely amazing to work with such a responsive service. The young people the counsellor has worked with have benefited greatly from the sessions."*
- "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."*

More examples of Teacher feedback can be found in **Appendix 4**.

### Q2. Were Young People seen quickly by the School Counselling Service?



### Q3. Do you think having the School Counselling Service has had a positive impact on any of the following?



## 7. Opportunities & Enhancements

### **Psychological Wellbeing Support for Under 10s**

In April 2022, in response to a gap identified by a variety of qualitative and quantitative data, the service was extended to include psychological wellbeing supports for children under the age of 10. The concept of 'counselling' has been adapted by The-Exchange to provide a "Whole School Approach" to promoting and supporting psychological wellbeing in Primary Schools. The-Exchange model is highly collaborative, focusing on resilience building interventions aimed at developing emotional intelligence, self-regulation, confidence, self-esteem, optimism, problem solving and social competence in the child. The-Exchange focus on the protective factors and the strength resources a child needs to manage adversity, "bounce back" and strengthen their psychological wellbeing so as to thrive into the future by managing their own mental health and emotional wellbeing. The-exchange work collaboratively with school staff to support existing approaches.

### **Children and Young People Not Attending School**

The-Exchange recognised that there was a need in East Ayrshire for psychological wellbeing support amongst C&YP not attending school. Currently some of these YP access counselling support from The-Exchange in the central office, which provides them a safe space to talk to a counsellor, outside of the school environment. However, for many, leaving the house has been identified as a barrier to accessing support. In response to this, The-Exchange pulled a team together to complete further research in this area and have created an online, 6 week structured learning programme. Firstly, it looks at coping strategies and gives the YP an experience of counselling. The course will cover the main research of reasons why a YP doesn't attend school and will support them with emotional wellbeing and coping strategies.

### **Building Capacity**

A key improvement aim this year was to begin to build capacity amongst staff so that they are better equipped with the skills needed to support children and young people with psychological wellbeing at an earlier stage. Through discussions and the collection of data from schools, we identified 4 areas we wanted to focus on:

1. Embedding the resilience framework used by The-Exchange in all primary schools within East Ayrshire and providing staff with the tools, resources and strategies to confidently support the psychological wellbeing of children and young people
2. Providing all Guidance/Pupil support staff with the opportunity to be part of a structured, reflective learning group, supported by The-Exchange
3. Providing transition support training to all P7 teachers in East Ayrshire so that they can effectively support children through this challenging period of change.
4. Delivering a range of resilience based interventions to directly boost the mental wellbeing of YP in S2 across East Ayrshire schools



## Resilience Framework Training

To date, resilience framework training has been delivered to 4 secondary schools, 1 special school and 15 Primary schools in East Ayrshire. By 2023, we intend for each primary and secondary school in East Ayrshire to have completed the training. 96% of those who attended the training stated that the course had a positive impact on their understanding of how to support psychological wellbeing in their school.

## Sample of Feedback from Training

*"Just wanted to say how much we enjoyed the Resilience Training with Amy from The-Exchange - it fits in so well with our Nurture Approaches and DDP/PACE."*

*"The most effective part of the programme for me was seeing the building blocks and recognising pupils who require support with external/inner/interpersonal issue."*

## Structured Reflective Practice Groups

In response to a need identified for wellbeing support for pastoral staff, 2 pilot groups for the Structured Reflective Practice Programme from The-Exchange were carried out. The programmes are due to finish in September 2022 but staff in both schools have commented positively on the impact these groups have had both on their own wellbeing and on their capacity to support pupil wellbeing.

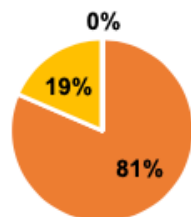
## Sample of Feedback from Sessions so far:

*"I think I know more about myself and how I work. I have also identified areas that I'd like to work on and those that I'm interested in. It has allowed us to look our department and what development needs we have."*

*"I have loved attending these sessions and getting to know my colleagues better. The space to talk and listen to each other without the usual pressures and daily challenges has been hugely beneficial in our working relationship and discussing the issues we have as a department. I do think this type of space for PTPS is invaluable and is something we should have as routine."*

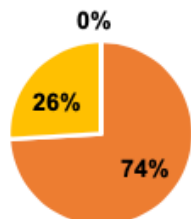
More Feedback from the Pilot of the Reflective Practice Groups can be found in **Appendix 5.**

**Taking Part in the Programme helped me to know the people in my life I can talk to or go to for help**



- Strongly Agree or Agree
- Not Sure
- Disagree

**Taking part in the programme helped me to create strategies I can use when I feel sad, worried or angry**



- Strongly Agree or Agree
- Not Sure
- Disagree

## P7 Transition Training

“The Adventure Programme” Training was delivered to 28 P7 teachers in East Ayrshire prior to the transition period this year. Following this training, these teachers delivered the 6-week programme to their P7 classes. P7 pupils completed evaluations after they had completed the programme to ascertain the impact this had on their wellbeing and anxieties around going to secondary school.

### Pupil Feedback Quotes:

*“Making dream boards and the comfort menu was very helpful it gives me ideas of something to do when I’m upset or when I’m bored.”*

*“My comfort menu because it helped me to come up with ideas to cheer me up and calm down and it was also calming.”*

### Teacher Feedback Quotes:

*“Pupils who have been more reserved came out their shell and were able to chat and open up when previously they wouldn’t have. They were able to take ownership of their own emotions and how to cope in tricky situations.”*

More feedback from “The Adventure Programme” is available in **Appendix 6**.

## **S2 Resilience Booster Programme**

In response to an identified need in wellbeing amongst the S1/S2 cohort, a pilot was planned to deliver a 6- week resilience booster programme to PSE classes in Kilmarnock and Robert Burns Academies.

The Resilience Booster programme is a strengths-based programme designed to enhance the 15 resilience resources necessary for health psychological well-being. Exchange staff deliver a series of resilience interventions to young people directly to boost mental health.

The programme aims to teach participants about resilience and positive mental health. The sessions are non-threatening, interactive, and the content sensitively promotes the development of personal resources such as self-belief, self-esteem, self-confidence and social competence aimed at enhancing their ability to reach their full potential.

Sessions are proactive and encourage participants to build their own portfolio of achievements in order to gain a certificated training award. The programme promotes the concepts of resilience and participants are empowered to share their newly learned skills in their own networks and in their own language."

The programme was postponed until September 2022 due to other commitments within the schools and will be reported upon in the next impact report.

## **The Whole School Approach**

As well as delivering 1-1 counselling and group work sessions, The-Exchange Counsellors have made it a priority this year to embed themselves in the school community and ensure they are visible and approachable. Counsellors across the local authority have attended PSE classes, delivered assemblies, joined breakfast clubs and delivered workshops at Whole School Wellbeing days.

## 8. Moving Forward

Following the delivery of school counselling and psychological wellbeing support across primary, secondary and special sector over the last academic year a review of this service has been undertaken. Based on feedback provided by YP, parents and teachers the following improvement priorities have been identified.

### **Key Priorities for 2022-2023**

#### **1. Continued Effective Implementation of the School Counselling Service:**

- Working together with school staff, children and young people, parents and other partners to ensure the service provides effective and timely support that fits with the “whole school approach” towards mental health and wellbeing.
- Ensuring staff feel confident when supporting C&YP with mental wellbeing concerns and that they can easily access other supports including the school counselling service, where appropriate.
- Ensuring C&YP, parents, school staff and other services are kept well informed about the service.

#### **2. Extend Involvement of Young People to support Inclusion of Pupil Voice and Co- production of the School Counselling Service**

- Local authority Pupil Group with representatives from each school established and meetings to be held on a termly basis
- Pupil Improvement Plan to be produced which will include opportunities for co-production

#### **3. Evaluation of the impact of the service:**

- Robust Qualitative and quantitative data showing the usage, demographics and impact of the service is collected and analysed on a termly basis. This data is used to continually develop and improve the service in order to meet the needs of C&YP in East Ayrshire

#### **4. Building Capacity Amongst School Staff**

- Embedding the resilience framework in all schools within East Ayrshire and provide staff with the tools, resources and strategies to confidently assess and support the psychological wellbeing of children and young people
- Supporting staff wellbeing through the delivery of structured, reflective practice groups
- Provide transition support training to all P7 teachers in East Ayrshire so that they can effectively
- support children through this challenging period of change

#### **5. Supporting the Psychological Wellbeing Needs of C&YP with Additional Support Needs (ASN)**

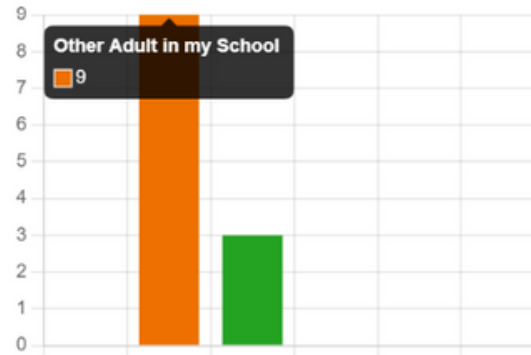
- Developing and adapting current service delivery to meet the needs of C&YP with more complex additional support needs including ASD and non-verbal C&YP

## 9. Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Primary Pupil Glow Form Survey Feedback (12 Responses)

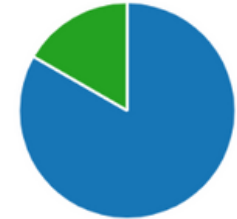
How did you find out about the school counselling service? (0 point)

[More Details](#)



Were you happy with how quickly you were seen by the Counsellor/Resilience Coach? (0 point)

[More Details](#)



Do you think attending the sessions has helped improve your mental health/wellbeing?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)



How helpful did you find the sessions? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

11  
Responses



3.82 Average Rating

Do you think the School Counselling Service should continue? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)



**Can you list 2 things you found helpful about the sessions?**

*"Being able to tell how I felt and doing the activities, I think they both really helped."*

*"Being able to share stuff with people that I normally wouldn't. Have the sessions once per week."*

*"I was able to talk about my Dad, good to share how I was feeling"*

*"I got to speak to someone that knew about my worries and gave me some good strategies."*

*"I got to express my feelings on paper and using other props. I finally got the chance to feel honest about my feelings."*

*"I can tell my feelings. Feels good to have someone to talk to and understands."*

*"We can talk and I can share things. Easier to talk to them than my mum as I don't want to upset my mum."*

**Can you list one thing that could have been better about your counselling/wellbeing sessions?**

*"Maybe if it went for a week or two longer but even with the time I got it really helped."*

*"More than one day a week would have been better."*

*"It could have been a bit bigger session."*

*"All the sessions were amazing but I would have loved a round of golf!!" :)*

**Please use this space to share any other feedback you have on the school counselling service and the impact it's had on you**

*"It really helped me stay calm in times I got anxious and It was better being able to say my feeling out instead of hiding them. I really think that it helped with my anxiety."*

*"Helped me understand my feelings better." "More confident when talking to people."*

*"My mum and gran let me go out to play on my own now - I could not have done this before the Counselling Service helped me out."*

*"Calmed me down a wee bit - I don't get into as many fights."*



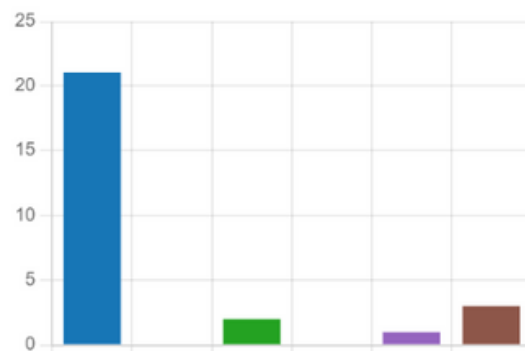
## Appendix 2 – Secondary Pupil Glow Form Survey Feedback (27 Responses)

How did you find out about the School Counselling Service? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

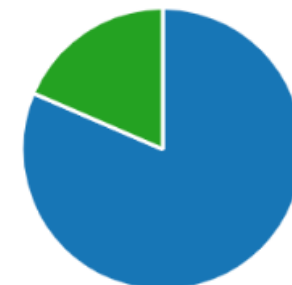
Guidance Teacher	21
Other Adult in School	0
Parent/Carer	2
Friend	0
Posters/Social Media/School We...	1
Other	3



Were you happy with how quickly you were seen by a counsellor? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

Yes	22
No	0
Not sure	5



Were the counselling sessions helpful? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

Yes	14
No	3
Not sure	4



Would you like to see the School Counselling Service continue? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

Yes	21
No	2
Not sure	4



Would you recommend the School Counselling Service to others? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

Yes	19
No	4
Not Sure	4



## **What was the most helpful thing about attending counselling? (Sample of Responses)**

*"A safety net for is something was wrong."*

*"They listen to you about what you have to say then they will help you with what you have told them."*

*"I didn't feel judged. And they gave me suggestions on how to be more confident."*

*"Being able to talk about what's bothering me without feeling bad and being advised on how to handle my emotions in a healthy way"*

*"It gave me a break from all the school stress and allowed me to talk to someone about everything that was bothering or upsetting me"*

*"We worked through different coping strategies on how to cope with the past."*

## **Is there anything that could be improved about the School Counselling Service? Please give details.**

*"More sessions."*

*"Hard to answer ° more sessions ° a choice to go in person or not ° a choice to go to group counselling ( with friends or just people also in the service) I feel that group counselling could encourage a safer environment with people you know and not just a random person you've never met."*

*"The service only really deals with minor anxiety problems and struggles with school. It would be better if they helped people cope with severe mental health problems such as depression, ocd and severe anxiety etc."*

*"Personally I like how it is."*

*"I think it could be improved by having a calmer environment we had it an interview room where others used it so it was quite empty and not very calming."*

***Please use this space to write any additional comments about your experience with the School Counselling Service and the impact it has had on you.***

*"I started going to the counsellor to help with anxiety and confidence. And it has helped."*

*"I learned a lot about myself and why I was feeling the way I was feeling. I got given coping strategies to help me in my classes and it has helped massively. I still struggle with anxiety but I think I have learned that it's normal to feel like this and I've also learned to talk about my feelings with my family and guidance teacher."*

*"The Counsellor was really nice and helped me find ways to cope with many different things such as bereavement, stress, anxiety and self esteem."*

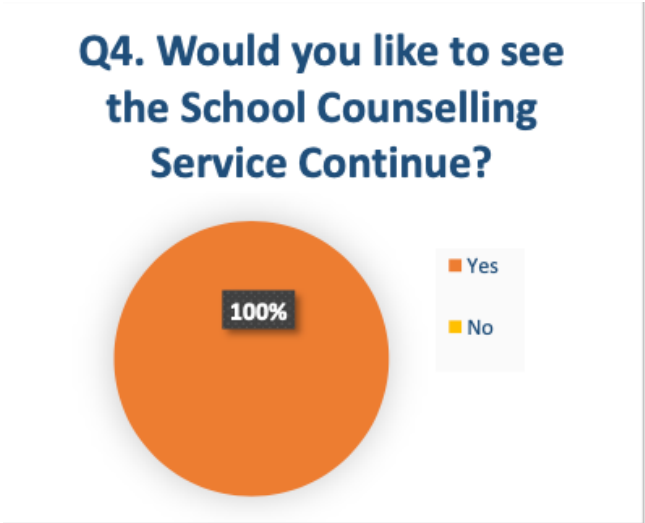
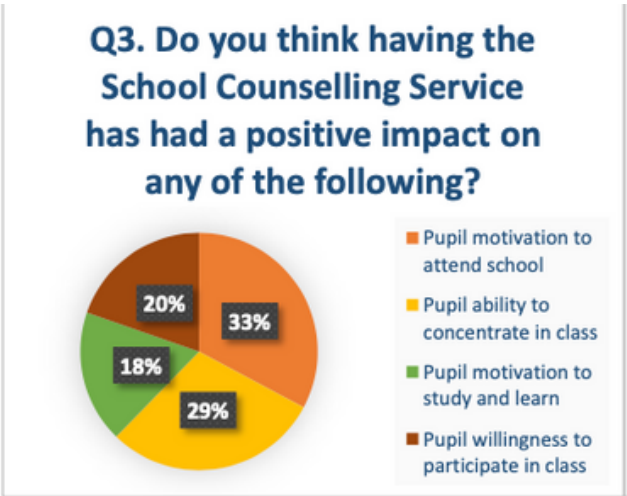
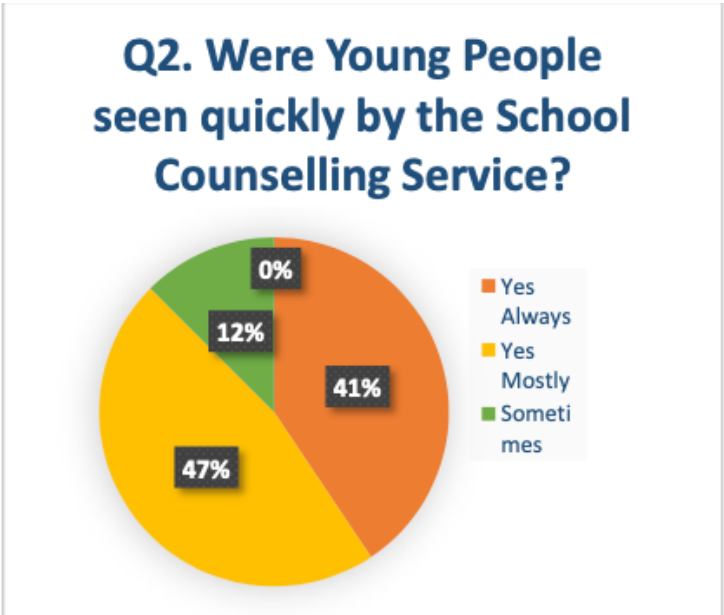
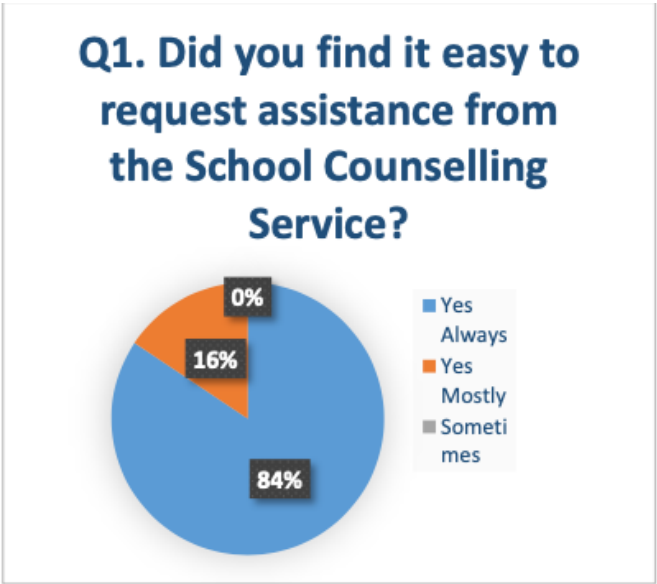
*"I liked going to it counselling impacted me as I was given some confidence and supported me through everything."*

### Appendix 3 – Discussion Points from Parent Focus Group

- Clarity on local supports available for children under the age of 10 years old
- Clarity for parents on how appropriate school counselling may be a child/young person if they are accessing another service
- Mental health and well-being is a priority for parents, why is training not mandatory and prioritised in all schools?
- How we share information on the school counselling service is important, local school apps are not always accessible. Think about sharing information at a more local level through local community news letters linked to action plans, noticeboards and social media, including facebook. F to share information on services and supports via whatsapp and facebook page following the meeting.
- Consider how children may feel when discussing “feelings” as part of the curriculum and the impact of trauma which may be unknown to teaching staff. How do we support teaching staff about the context of when/how feelings are talked about?
- Clarity on the role of the school nurse Clarity on the role of how the school nurse and school counsellors work together.
- Developing parent to parent support
- Think about how the use of outdoor environments could be used in a different way to support children and young people who may need counselling, especially if they have an additional support need
- How are young people reached at an earlier stage before the need for school counselling?
- Keep things fun for children and keep a focus on being creative
- Children and young people should have a say on how school counselling is run. Parents will go back and chat to their own children about their thoughts.
- How can parents support other parents in their understanding of mental health and how can parents be included within the training offered to teachers? They would like to deliver workshops to other parents.
- How can community space be used for school counselling? Does it need to be based in school, particularly if there is no space?
- Arrange a meeting with DC, NHS Ayrshire and Arran for parents and link K into this
- How do we share information about what is available for parents?
- Parents felt that confidentiality was important for their children and felt it was important to make this message clearer when sharing information about the service.

Appendix 4 – School Staff Glow Form Survey Feedback (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."*

*"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/carers 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."*



**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 receive feedback 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). They 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."*

*"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?"*



## **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 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 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."*

### **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 Exchange

## Feedback – Self-Reflective Practice group.

On a scale of 1-10, do you feel the 3 Aims of the Group (mentioned below) are being met?

(1 not being met at all, 10 being met completely)

### Personal Wellbeing

Did the process support you to promote your own wellbeing **10**

1

10

### Comments

As a staff, we don't always have the space to talk, listen and reflect on our own and definitely not as a group. This has given me a chance to do all of these and has eased some of the pressures in my working life. It allows us as a group to air issues in a supportive environment.

### Personal Reflectiveness

Did the process support your understanding about; Yourself and your role in school  
(e.g. challenges you face and how these impact on you) **8**

1

10

### Comments

It has reassured me of my role both within school and as part of the guidance team. As a department we are looking out for each other more, checking in on each other and reminding us to take our breaks!

### Your Learning

Did the process support your learning and personal development? **10**

1

10

### Comments

I think I know more about myself and how I work. I have also identified areas that I'd like to work on and those that I'm interested in. It has allowed us to look at our department and what development needs we have.

# The Exchange

## Usefulness

On a scale of 1-10, how useful do you find the Self-Reflective group?  
(1 not useful, 10 very useful) **10**

1

10

## Support and connectedness

Did you feel safe and comfortable to discuss feelings and concerns in the group? (1 not at all, 10 yes, very safe, and comfortable) **7**

1

10

## Effectiveness of the facilitator

Do you feel the counsellor is effective and professional? (1 not at all, 10 very effective and professional) **10**

1

10

## Beneficial to others?

Do you feel other colleagues would benefit from sessions like this? (1 not at all, 10 yes definitely) **10**

1

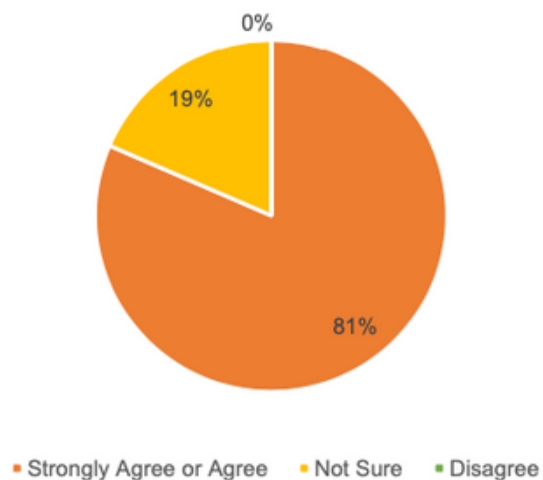
10

Is there anything else you would like to mention? (any additional feedback, ideas to improve the group or anything else)

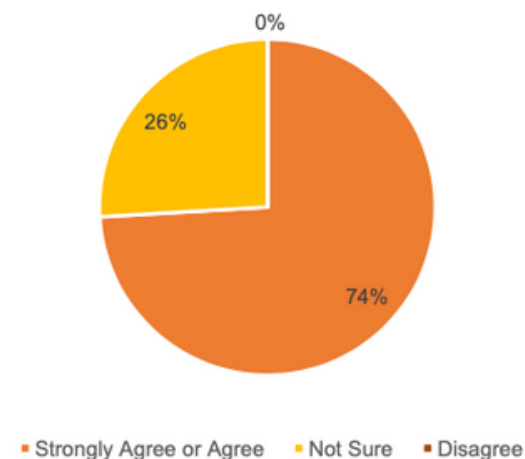
I have loved attending these sessions and getting to know my colleagues better. The space to talk and listen to each other without the usual pressures and daily challenges has been hugely beneficial in our working relationship and discussing the issues we have as a department. The chance to self-reflect on the decisions we make as a team and as individuals has allowed me to take time to really think and to try and initiate change to make day-to-day life in work easier. Monica challenges our thinking in a supportive way but has really given us a chance to look at our practice. **I do think this type of space for PTPS is invaluable and is something we should have as routine.**

## Appendix 6 – The Adventure Programme – Pupil Feedback

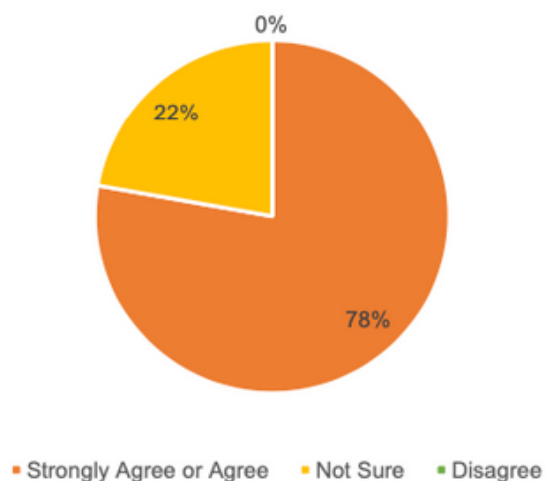
Taking Part in the Programme helped me to know the people in my life I can talk to or go to for help



Taking part in the programme helped me to create strategies I can use when I feel sad, worried or angry



Participating in the Programme helped me reflect on positive memories from Primary School



Taking part in the adventure programme made me feel more positive about going to secondary school

[More Details](#)

Strongly Agree	5
Agree	14
Not sure	5
Disagree	3



**Can you tell us some of the strategies you learned in the Adventure Programme?**

*"Box breathing so that is where you inhale ( 3 sec ) hold ( 3 sec ) exhale ( 3 sec ) hold ( 3 sec ) and continue ( that's for when you are angry or stressed .)"*

*"Talking to someone, writing it down then ripping it up or going a walk to clear my head."*

*"Making dream boards and the comfort menu was very helpful it gives me ideas of something to do when I'm upset or when I'm bored."*

**What was your favourite activity? Can you tell us why you liked it and how it has helped you?**

*"My favourite activity was the dream board because it made me feel better if I felt sad worried or angry."*

*"I liked comfort menu because it helped me figure out ways to control my emotions."*

*"Solar system activity. I know that feeling can change during time and nothing is set forever."*

*"My favourite activity was the dream & Memories boards because it reminded me of the things i have done."*

*"I liked doing the comfort menu because it made me realise how many things i could do to help me."*