



East Ayrshire Council  
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir an Ear

# East Ayrshire School Counselling Service

## School Staff Feedback December 2022

The Exchange

# Background

Responses were received from 34 members of school staff in East Ayrshire in total. Out of the responses recieved, 17 of them were from staff in Primary schools and 17 were from staff in Secondary schools. In Primary schools the form was completed either by a Head Teacher or Depute Teacher and in secondary schools the form was completed either by the PT of Pupil Support or Pupil Support/Guidance Teachers.

Feedback was gathered using a Glow form.

The form was not anonymous to allow us to follow up on any issues brought to our attention in the survey. Forms took staff an average of 4 minutes to complete.

# Q1. Did you find it easy to request assistance from the School Counselling Service?

Yes always	26
Yes mostly	7
Sometimes	1
No	0



*"The clear process of accessing the service has made it easy to refer pupils."*

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

Yes always	16
Yes mostly	17
Sometimes	1
No	0



*"We have been most impressed by how quickly the students can access the service"*

# Q3. Would you like to see this service continue?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

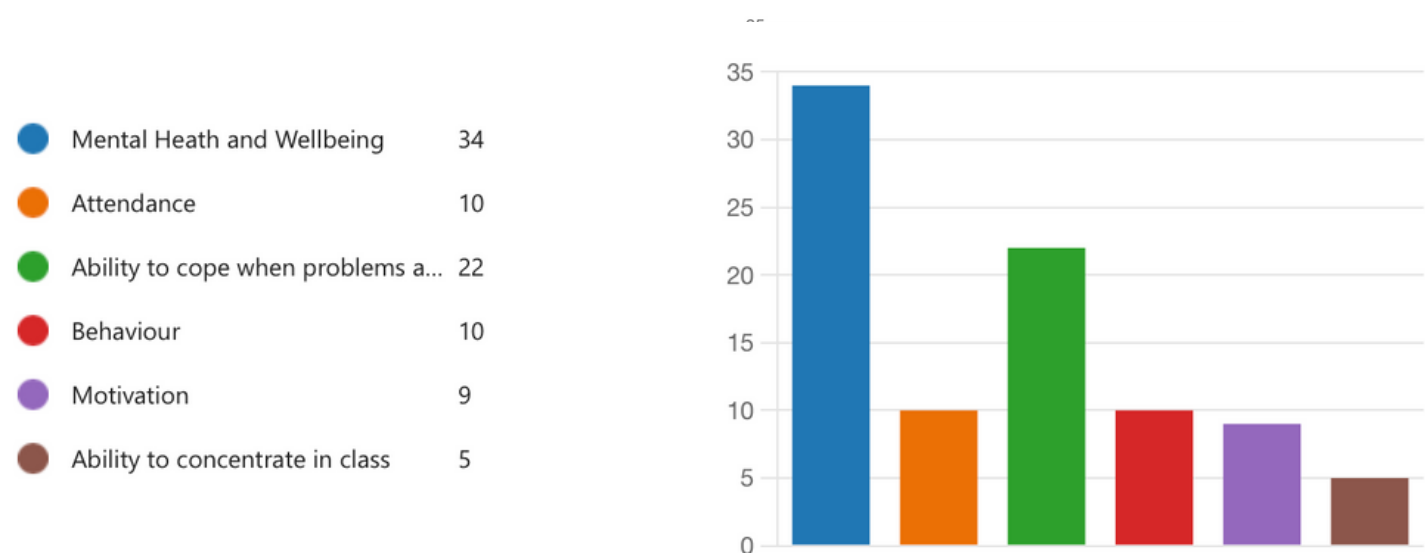
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***"This service is an astounding additional to us. It prevents most issues escalating to camhs"***

***"This service is invaluable!"***

## Q4. Do you think the school counselling service has had a positive impact on any of the following?



100% of teachers who completed the survey felt that the Service has had a positive impact on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of Children and Young People in their school.

## Q5. What aspects of the service have worked particularly well for pupils in your school?

In **Primary schools**, staff commented on the support provided by the Exchange during periods of transition, positive relationships and communication with parents/families and the importance of having a dedicated professional in school who can provide 1-1 support for pupils.

In **Secondary schools**, staff commented on the importance of having a dedicated time for Young People to talk about their wellbeing. They liked the confidentiality of the service and thought that Young People responded well to being able to make a self-referral. They commented on positive feedback from Young People on the Service and the impact it has made on supporting them with anxiety.

# Sample of Feedback from Primary School Staff on aspects of service which have worked particularly well



Children transitioning when the service manages to organise sessions during the transition.

Children now open up more to staff and have shared worries when previous to counselling had not.

Having a dedicated person to talk to is invaluable.

The clear process of accessing the service has made it easy to refer pupils. A clear programme set out for the pupils provides continuity and sets expectations. The pupils speak positively of their experiences.

P7 programme was used and enjoyed by P7 pupils last year to support transition Individual support to pupils has been invaluable

Children with trauma especially react positively to this resource and the people who visit them. The counsellors from the exchange are excellent at communicating with our families as well.

Having someone who is seen as being impartial to talk to. The Exchange service has become more important as the waiting times for CAMHS has increased.

Children responded well to the counsellors that they met with and have been applying strategies within the school setting. Parents/Carers also feel supported throughout the process.

A trusted adult outwith school for children. Support for staff in school.

Having someone outside of the school with specific counselling experience to support the child and link with the family - families value the service

Allowing the children to feel they have been listened to. Giving them the time to speak to a counsellor about the issues that are concerning them.

Resilience





# Sample of Feedback from Secondary School Staff on aspects of service which have worked particularly well



We have excellent counselors. They engage well with kids and staff. This has been the best additional service I've seen in teaching

1-1 support Professional advice How quickly the young people could access the service.

1) having the same meeting at the same time for the duration of the sessions 2) Being able to request a certain counsellor 3) The discreet nature of those attending counselling

Self-referral - ownership of how they are feeling and being able to feel in control The Exchange have participated in the wider school and have become part of our school community, allowing young people to see who they are before making a referral and parents/carers too Online referrals that can be completed quickly with staff supporting that also facilitates a conversation about how they are, issues arising and gives the PTPS a chance to come back and check-in

The young people feel supported and have a very positive response to the supports. The warm and inviting safe space created by the counsellors is very well received.

The text service, confidentiality, the structure and the privacy of the rooms. Pupils have valued the support and I think the quick turnaround between booking and apt has been the big difference in supporting young people

Developing a relationship with the counsellor helps the pupils both seek assistance when required and also when they are in sessions with the counsellor after referral. Having a strong relationship is key for pupils with ASN.

I feel that this support and service is extremely valuable. I feel that the pupils who have referred to the exchange genuinely feel listened to and after sessions are able to use supports to allow them to access school successfully. Additionally, the way the service is set up allows pupils to access this independently. I believe part of this is down to the communication the counselors have with the young people.

It is good for the pupils to have that dedicated time each week which as a PTG I cannot always make available.

Coping strategies for anxiety



## Q6. How has the school counselling service helped you as a practitioner to better understand pupils' wellbeing?

**Primary Staff** have commented on the value of discussions with practitioners from the Exchange, the blog and the training that has been provided with the Exchange. Some staff have commented positively on the feedback report provided by the Exchange after an intervention and on the sharing of strategies they can use with children. However, this has been inconsistent and something that as a service we want to improve on in 2023.

**Secondary Staff** commented on learning a lot through positive relationships and regular dialogue with the counsellors. Many commented on learning more about active listening and the right types of questions to ask. *"I now know I don't need to fix everything, sometimes the YP just need time to talk."* Many staff commented on the impact of the resilience framework training to upskill staff. Secondary staff commented on the value of the feedback they received after an intervention which allowed the guidance staff to continue to put supports in place in school. Finally the schools who had received the "reflective practice" sessions from the Exchange commented on the value this had on their own wellbeing.

# Sample of Feedback from Primary School Staff on how the school counselling service has helped them to better understand pupils' wellbeing?



Open up conversations

The resources available on the Blog, as well as discussions with professionals from the counselling service have been helpful.

There is little liaison with staff and the counsellor

All staff have completed the framework training. 2 P7 teachers have completed The Adventure training. I have recently completed the resilience training using the Bear Cards. All of these have had a very positive effect on practioners and their understanding of wellbeing and implementing a variety of strategies in each class across the school to support.

They can then relate any important info back to the CT which then feeds into supporting the child better in the class

They have provided inservice training on resilience to staff and access to online resources to support pupils in school.

The team provide a full report on the sessions and explain strategies they have used. This ensures I can encourage the children to utilise what they have been taught once sessions have ended.

Feedback and content of report for staff understanding & development.

The training sessions offered from the Exchange staff have been informative, with very practical guidance on how to understand and support pupils' wellbeing.

Strategies for children



# Sample of Feedback from Secondary School Staff on how the school counselling service has helped them to better understand pupils' wellbeing?



Yes. I don't try fix every problem now. I didn't realise how unhealthy that can be. Not everything needs me to fix it

Been a support to the guidance staff and a reliable agency that we can use.

It has given me, as a professional, a layer of support in helping me in my position cater for the health and wellbeing needs of the pupils I serve. It is reassuring to know that professional and experienced support is easily accessible.

Positive relationships built with in-school counsellors - PTPS can go to speak with them for general help with how we are helping young people and advice to help us when dealing with mental health and wellbeing issues. The Exchange have also been in school providing training to help upskill staff. The Exchange also provide regular reports which they present at meetings and give a copy to schools. This has allowed us to see what referrals are being made for and when and has allowed us to be reactive to this.

I have been upskilled in some aspects of listening and the types of questions to ask. The suggested supports that we could put in place as Pastoral Staff after the sessions have finished have been a great help.

Last session having 'supervision' helped me personally appreciate the benefit of having time with a trained counsellor. During those sessions I thought about my own wellbeing as key to aiding the pupils. Normally I don't think of myself.

It has supported Pastoral Staff as often we can be solution focused when all a young person sometimes needs is time and more specialist support.

yes, as some of the counsellors provide feedback and advise if the input of other agencies is required.

it has opened dialogue and gives structure for conversations around their wellbeing

1) Allowing us 1-1 to speak to the counsellor about how best to support a pupil. 2) Realising that our job is not always to fix a pupil but just to listen to them

Amy O'Hare's staff session was brilliant and having a counsellor to ask q's to is handy.



## Q7. What improvements would you like to see made to the School Counselling Service?

**Primary Staff** said they would like to see different approaches used to engage with harder to reach children and those who had Additional Support Needs. A common theme amongst primary staff was that they are looking for better communication and more feedback from the counsellors. They also commented on wanting more capacity and more sessions and would love to see the service further extended to include support for parents and Under 5's. Primary staff felt very strongly about continuing the Service for Under 10's and mentioned the impact of this in their feedback.

**Secondary Staff** overwhelmingly reported that they were happy with the way the service was running and most improvements they would like to see related to extra capacity. Almost all schools said they would like the counsellors to have more days in schools, drop in sessions, capacity to run information sessions for parents and more time to get to know staff and all pupils. A couple commented on communication and wanted to see this further improved, this was namely related to wanting to know dates of appointments for those pupils they had referred and also more consistent feedback after a pupil had finished an intervention with the Exchange.

# Sample of Feedback from Primary School Staff on improvements they would like to see made to the School Counselling Service



Approaches to better engage children who may struggle or refuse.

I would like more communication about who is working with a child and when they will be in school. I know the sessions are confidential but tools used could be shared with school staff to carry on the input or strategies suggested. It would be good to know who the service is working with if parents have referred so that we can continue to support in school.

We tend to refer straight away and on occasion the parent reports have not been returned. The case is then closed. Could the timeframe be extended.

Our one referral who ended up using the service felt that the block of visits was too short. Maybe an option to extend these if they are still needed. The parent felt they were working for their child, but stopped too quickly.

More feedback on strategies being used.

Feedback from the sessions when complete and next steps that we could try at school

Different approaches for ASN pupils

More staff available to support the ever growing number of children needing help with their mental health.

I would like the service to continue and am pleased that it now sees children from age 5. It may be beneficial to extend the support to the pre-5/ parents.

Same counsellor for a session if possible. Opportunity for work with parents & children together.

The availability of parents to refer their own child without having to go through us. I feel that we have to then act a middle man when sometimes the issue is confidential and the parent would rather not share the reason for referral with us. It also adds to our workload when it feels unnecessary.

More counsellors - such a need just now and although the service is doing a wonderful job it would be good to continue with this support in a wider manner

Continuation of this service for under 10s.



# Sample of Feedback from Secondary School Staff on improvements they would like to see made to the School Counselling Service



I think we have a working model.

The RfA set up, don't like that it disappears and it can not be accessed again.

More days within school.

Here 5 days instead of 3! They have become such a vital support within our school and I'm unsure now what we did without them. Their specialised help has helped not only our young people but also us as PTPS and the pressure we've been under in trying to source help and information for pupils who have been struggling.

None. Our counsellors are a great support - if we could have them for another day a week that might be beneficial to allow for drop in sessions or for perhaps some group work.

Staff in school full time. The service seems very positive for pupils and supporting for PTPS.

I would love for the counsellor to have time to both get to know the pupils and staff in the school.

More availability. We are often referring young people. Support with upcoming events which have already been discussed.

Let referring staff know the dates of appointments

1) Better communication at the end of sessions with pupils about how we can support them going forward, do we refer after the 6 week period. 2) Counselling exchange to maybe be available to deliver information sessions to parents on particular topics, exam stress, bullying, anxiety- perhaps with other partners involved?

More capacity to see pupils. Increased feedback on how sessions went

Counsellors are overcoming issues with accommodation but it would be nice to have the space to have an area where pupils could have a little more privacy.



# Q8. Additional comments about your experience with the School Counselling Service and the impact it has had on your school and young people.

This service is an astounding additional to us. It prevents most issues escalating to camhs

Our counsellors are lovely and attend whole school events and inputs. They are a great addition to the universal supports within the school and provide us with desperately needed expertise to help our young people.

This service is invaluable!

I cannot praise the exchange enough and the work that they do. They are absolutely a big part of the jigsaw that some of children need!

I feel that this has been of immense support in helping young people cope with their mental health

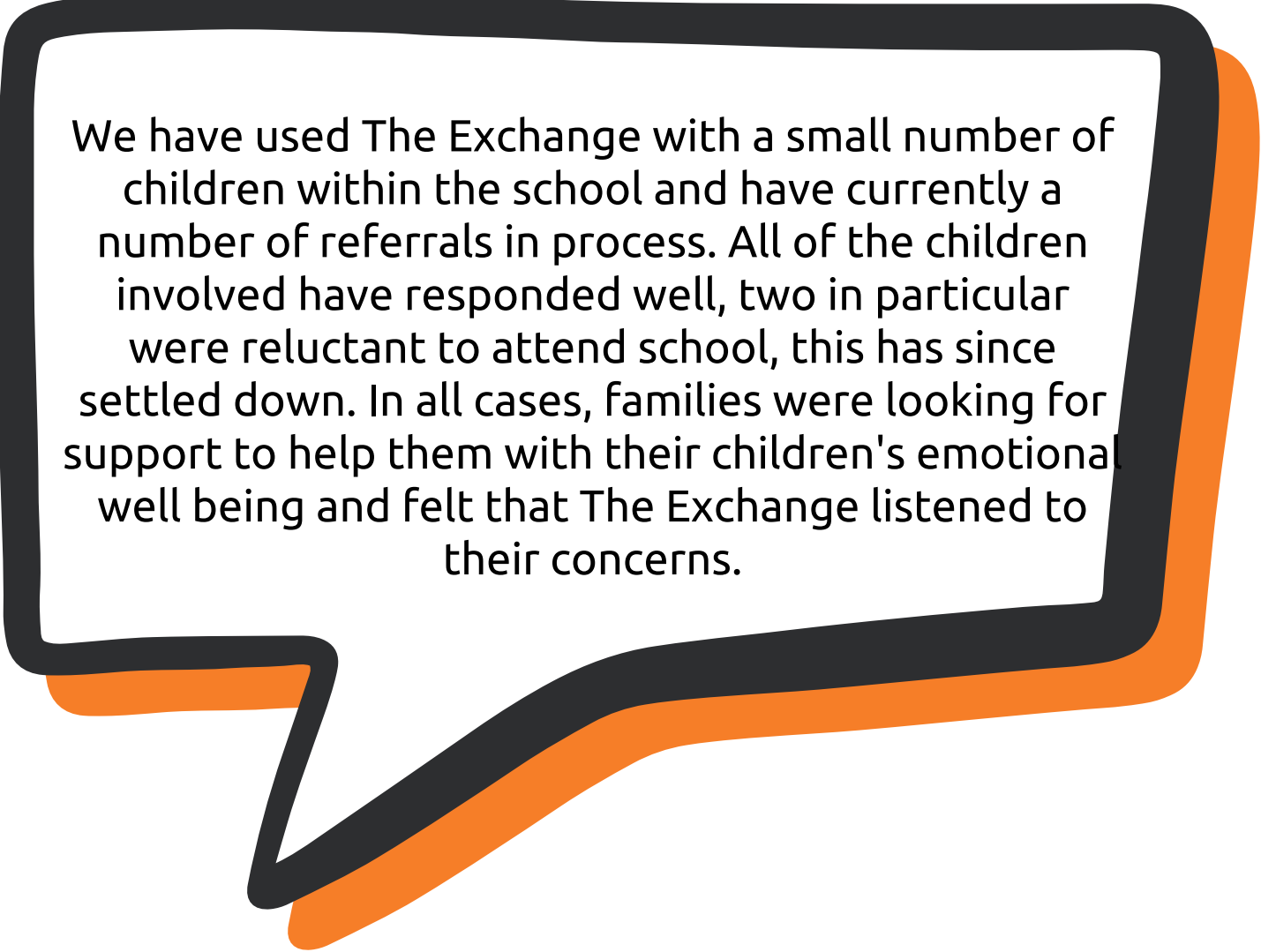
This service has been proactive, communication is very good and the process well explained to staff, pupils and parents.

I think this is such an invaluable service and our pupils/families are seeing the impact of it. It really has made the difference for so many of my pupils. They are coming into school, they have someone to talk to, they are understanding themselves and they are able to discuss how they are feeling

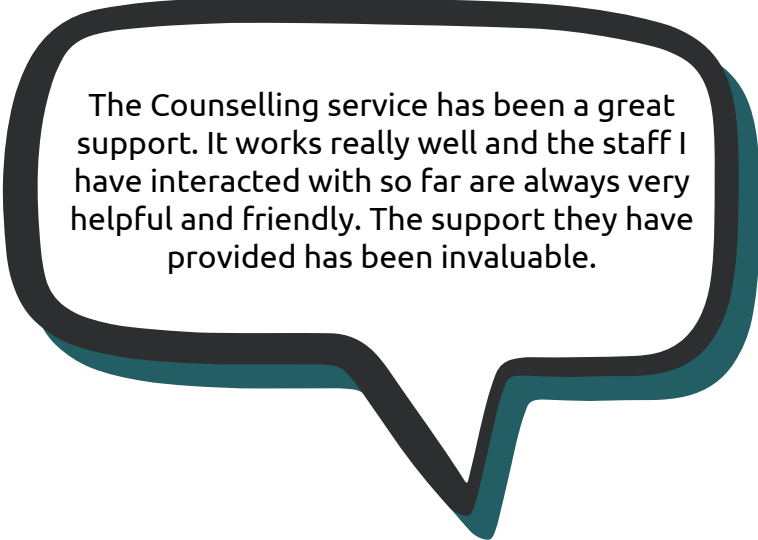
A vital service that will be needed even more in the coming months and years,

Counsellors are willing to help and are as flexible as possible. Having the service available in school has been of great benefit to me as a PTG. Most pupil seem to have benefited from their allocated sessions, I have rarely had to re-refer.






We have used The Exchange with a small number of children within the school and have currently a number of referrals in process. All of the children involved have responded well, two in particular were reluctant to attend school, this has since settled down. In all cases, families were looking for support to help them with their children's emotional well being and felt that The Exchange listened to their concerns.



The Counselling service has been a great support. It works really well and the staff I have interacted with so far are always very helpful and friendly. The support they have provided has been invaluable.



This service has been proactive, communication is very good and the process well explained to staff, pupils and parents.