



East Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir an Ear

East Ayrshire School Counselling Service

School Staff Feedback June 2024

The Exchange

Background

Responses were received from 27 members of school staff in East Ayrshire in total. Out of the responses received, 17 of them were from staff in Primary schools and 10 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.

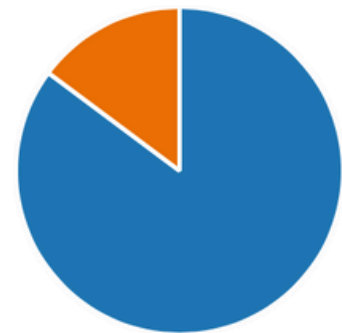
Q1. Did you find it easy to request assistance from the School Counselling Service?

1. Do you find it easy to request assistance from the Exchange?

[More Details](#)

 Insights

| | | |
|---|-------------|----|
|  | Yes, always | 23 |
|  | Yes, Mostly | 4 |
|  | Sometimes | 0 |
|  | No | 0 |







“It is very helpful to be able to re-refer quickly and for children to be seen when a particular situation has arisen” Primary HT

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

2. Were children and young people seen quickly by the Exchange

[More Details](#)

 Insights

| | | |
|--|-------------|----|
|  | Yes, always | 5 |
|  | Yes, mostly | 17 |
|  | Sometimes | 4 |
|  | No | 1 |



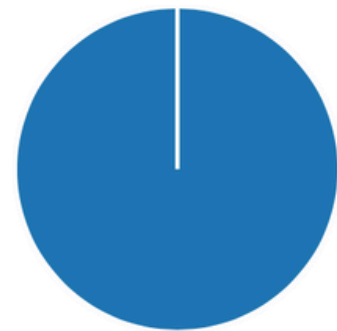
“Generally the speed at which counselling support can be accessed is excellent.” (Pupil Support Teacher, Secondary)

Q3. Would you like to see this service continue?

3. Would you like to see this service continue?

[More Details](#)

| | |
|-------|----|
| ● Yes | 27 |
| ● No | 0 |

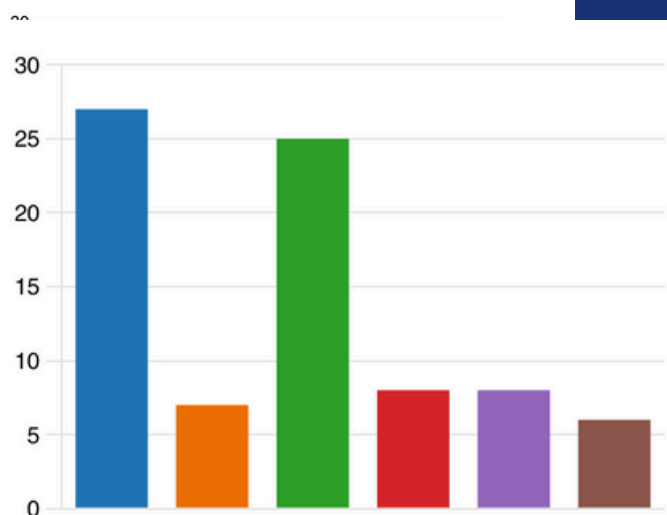


“The impact on some of the young people who have worked with the Exchange has been great - motivation, strategies in place that they can use.” (Primary DHT)

A vital service, HWB and mental health is in crisis in schools at the moment and we desperately need more help for these students, exchange has been a life line for many students. (Primary PT)

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

| | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Mental Health and Wellbeing | 27 |
| Attendance | 7 |
| Ability to cope when problems a... | 25 |
| Behaviour | 8 |
| Motivation | 8 |
| Ability to concentrate in class | 6 |



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 benefit of having 1-1 support and a safe space with a trusted adult they could talk to. They commented on the impact the Exchange have had on reducing anxiety levels within schools and helping children to regulate their own emotions. They appreciated the follow up strategies that children and parents were given. They felt it was important that the service was confidential and bespoke to each child.

In **Secondary schools**, staff commented on the importance of having face to face counselling in a comfortable environment within their own school. They recognised that there were very positive relationships between counsellors and pupils and that staff also often seek advice/guidance. All secondary staff commented on the quick turnaround of the service.

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



“Individual 1 to 1 counselling service to help pupils cope with bereavements, break ups, and difficult transition periods. Makes pupils feel heard and supported, particularly from adults out with their daily routine a fresh new face to hear events from their perspective only without the interference of other adults.”

“Providing children with strategies to help them address their wellbeing needs”

“Having a consistent person to talk to in a safe space”

“Following sessions pupils seem to be able to deal more positively with difficult situations, particularly around friendships and conflicts with peers. Behaviour has definitely improved for pupils who can regulate their emotions more effectively.”

“Being able to re-refer quickly and for children to be seen when a particular situation has arisen. Children being able to have follow-up sessions. Helping the children has also helped some parents manage when they have been in crisis or worried about a situation. The service is bespoke to the child and their needs. The children know, unless a Child Protection matter, that what they say is between them and the counsellor.”

“The impact on some of the young people who have worked with the Exchange has been great - motivation, strategies in place that they can use. Referral system is easy to use. Staff are friendly and professional.”

“Reducing anxiety levels and providing coping mechanisms and strategies children can use in class and at home”.

“The one-to-one sessions are pivotal in helping the children talk freely and openly about their problems”.

“It has provided a safe space for children to have a voice. Pupils have benefited from having tools to help them manage their emotions and reactions.”

“Giving the young person the opportunity to discuss their thoughts, feelings and emotions with someone other than school staff. This has allowed a more honest discussion, and a tool box of strategies to use without directly involving the teacher, promoting ownership and responsibility.”



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



Pupils who have attended counselling with The Exchange always say it was helpful. Pupils' education is no longer impacted by attendance at The Exchange since staff started ensuring pupils are not taken from the same subjects every week.

F2F counselling, the relationships built between the counsellors and the pupils, quick turnaround.

Ease of access and the comfort of familiar surroundings are a big bonus for pupils. Generally the speed at which counselling support can be accessed is excellent.

Quick and easy access Flexible booking and taking on the needs of the pupils (requests) Counsellors who connect with our pupils and understand the area from which our pupils come from

The pupils have enjoyed the ability to see the counsellor 1:1 during the school day.

This year lead times have been less than in previous years which I know has been appreciated by pupils and parents.

When spaces become available our counsellors are pro-active in seeking kids from the waiting list to fill the space and have initial consultations. Our counsellors are warm, friendly, and approachable which young people really like and respond well too.

Having the counselling service in school for 4 out of 5 days has made a difference for both staff and pupils. The waiting lists have been shorter and staff are reassured knowing that young people are being supported by professionals. Staff also speak with the counsellors in school if they are looking for a bit of advice about pupils/situations and the counsellors are always happy to help, often going above and beyond to source extra information or to check in with us.

Often with pupils with ASN they have to experience something practically to know if it would be suitable for them, also for some 1-1 counselling is not likely to be the best approach, thereby small groups approaches have been utilised. These have had the additional benefit of pupils building a relationship with the counsellor and therefore feeling more able to access the supports offered by 1-1 counselling.



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

Primary Staff have commented on the benefit of strategies/resources being shared by counsellors. A number of staff also commented positively on the resilience framework and BEAR cards training and the impact it has had on their own ability to assess and support pupil wellbeing. Staff commented positively on being part of the counselling leads meetings and also on the impact of the online materials shared during these meetings and on the Exchange Website.

However, it was noted that class teachers don't get the chance to interact with counsellors. This is something we will discuss as a service going forward.

Secondary Staff commented on the value of discussions between counsellors and pupil support staff. Counsellors often suggest supports that may benefit the pupils in school and are always on hand to give information and signpost. Some secondary teachers welcomed the whole school HWB events that counsellors were part of and highlighted that these increased their confidence when having their own wellbeing conversations with pupils. Secondary staff appreciated the School Counselling Leads meetings, especially getting the opportunity to share practice with other schools and hear from other services. Some secondary staff felt they had a better understanding of the areas their pupils struggled with due to conversations with the counsellors and data received from the service.

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



Sharing strategies and how they can be implemented.

Being part of the Counselling Leads Meetings is extremely beneficial in understanding the services available. The follow up resources are a great tool to remind pupils of strategies they can use and it's useful to get the follow up report.

"I have undertaken the training using the BEAR cards. It has helped us all as a staff to better understand the need to help children develop their resilience and coping mechanisms. It compliments the work we have done on nurture/ACES/ Trauma and DDP."

We now have two staff members trained in using the Resilience Bear Cards - which is having a positive impact on the school. I have adapted my approach to wellbeing due to the School Counselling Service.

Provided staff training and provided follow up strategies which staff can use with identified pupils in school.

The training that was provided for the BEAR cards was very helpful and allowed us to have something concrete to assess the Well-Being of the children that we support in our WB room.

Excellent materials available for all staff to support pupils.

The exchange have provided strategies and resources that can be used in and around the school with many of our pupils.

Resources and reading materials have been shared to allow for a greater understanding.



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



The counsellors in school are proactive in letting me know if there are supports that may benefit my pupils in school.

Yes, information particularly around resilience and wellbeing. The counsellors are always on hand to provide information and sign post information.

Additional go to for tiered support

The service has given me a better overview of the areas in which our pupils are struggling to cope.

Information sharing between counselor and pupil support teacher (where consent given by pupil) has allowed key pieces of information to be shared to better support young people. For example, issues a young person may be having in a particular subject/department.

Support via HWB events to whole school gives a greater understanding for all.

It has increased my confidence in having wellbeing conversations with young people. The counselling leads meetings have allowed me to listen to ideas from other schools that I can then discuss at our school and also to other agencies and what they can offer. It has also encouraged me to seek out more information to enhance my knowledge when supporting young people both 1-2-1 and within our PSE curriculum.

Yes absolutely, as the sole Guidance Teacher at Park School, it has been helpful to have the school counsellor to work with in a collegiate fashion.



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

Primary Staff said they would like to see better communication between teachers and counsellors. They wanted to see more consistency in the sharing of outcomes (where possible) and strategies to support the child in school and at home. Primary staff would like inset activities/training for teachers and parents to help them better understand the services that the Exchange can offer.

Some staff felt that the 6 week intervention could be longer. A number of staff asked for more counsellors as they would like to see reduced waiting times. Another common theme was staff wishing to receive an email with start and finish times so they can update the local authority Tracking and Monitoring System.

Secondary Staff commented on the frustrations of not being able to access the online diary this year. This is something that as a local authority we are committed to working with the Exchange to find a solution. Secondary staff would like to see more regular input from counsellors at Assemblies, Parents nights and PSE classes. One Pupil Support teacher requested some CLPL from the Exchange to help up-skill all staff within the school. The PT Pupil Support Teacher from our Special school requested some play based, art based or music based approaches to better support the YP with ASN who didn't engage well with talking therapy. One Secondary school would like to see more regular pupil focus groups to ensure we capture the voice and experiences of Young People.

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



As above perhaps a way to communicate sessions, suggestions and strategies between the different services as often teachers in class and don't get to share with the counsellor what child has disclosed or shared.

It would be easy to say, more counsellors please, but in reality we do have a good level of resource. More opportunities for the counsellors to share the strategies with class teacher/parents

More information shared about success/outcomes More counsellors so that more children can be seen Inset activities for teachers and parents to gain full understanding of the services Exchange can offer Is the 6 week cap long enough for some children?

An email re start dates and worker's name consistently to support with transferring start dates to our tracking and monitoring system.

After making the RfA, I am often just told when the sessions will begin. I don't always receive an end date so it makes it difficult to keep track of who is being seen by the service and when. I haven't had any written feedback on impact or strategies to support for any pupils this session. These were issued last session.

Just to have the service continuing, particularly for our primary school age pupils.

It would be great to have more counsellors to reduce the waiting time.

More regular updates - can take a wee while for some children to be seen (understandably) and regular check ins about where they are in the waiting list would be helpful. Receipting referrals has been a positive change made.

We would love to refer more children as CAMHS are not providing any support at the moment and there is also very little for Care Experienced children.



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

When doing a re-referral, would it be possible to access a previous application rather than completing a new one? Staff do feel it would be beneficial to know a bit more information about how a pupils are getting on in counselling but understand the confidentiality procedures around this.

The diary has been problematic to access this year since the addition of two factor authentication from The Exchange. This has impacted my ability to update the Monitoring and Tracking tool for EAC.

Less questioning of re-referrals.

Some pupils worry about peers knowing they attend counselling sessions. Due to the layout of the school and availability of space this can be difficult to avoid.

- 1) Improvements to the diary system as I cannot access it, this would be my biggest plea!*
- 2) Time to be scheduled for the counsellors to visit PSE/Assemblies each session (school to organise this along with Wilma- more consistently)*
- 3) Could the exchange provide leaflets to keep at reception, hand out at assemblies?*
- 4) Parents evenings- continue with this for all S1-S6 next term. Added to the diary to ensure someone attends along with me.*
- 5) Regular pupil focus groups to gain pupils experiences and feedback.*

Perhaps dates and times of appointments shared

Inputs to assemblies or PSE.

Perhaps some upskilling opportunities for all staff.

A counsellor present in school 5 days to become part of our pastoral team moving forward. More flexibility for group work/PSE inputs (understand that 1-2-1 must take priority).

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

Counsellors are fantastic, always communicate well with the school and parents. Very child centred and skilled.

A vital service, HWB and mental health is in crisis in schools at the moment and we desperately need more help for these students, exchange has been a life line for many students. I would love to see a trained mental health practitioner in every partnership if not every school!

The counselling service has had a positive impact on the life of our school and has very much become part of our offer of support at Team with the Family meetings or during phone meetings with parents. Attendance and wellbeing will remain our priority moving forward and the service that The Exchange provides is integral to our success with this.

We REALLY value this service and cannot state strongly enough how much it is needed by pupils, parents and staff to support our young people.

A very valuable resource that is helping to support the wellbeing needs of the children and young people. Kieran is an excellent partner of the school and I think having a young, positive male role model for many of our boys is valuable.

The counselling service has supported identified pupils to manage anxiety and has provided valuable support in a timely manner. Staff are friendly, approachable and able to give advice and training to staff. This benefits the health and well-being of all pupils as well as the identified child. It is an essential service in education and has developed the confidence of pupils and reduced their anxieties, making them more ready to learn and raising their attainment.

Improved scores on GMWP and/or greater perception of feelings and emotions and moods. Improved attendance. A child with multiple school moves did not move so much more settled. Realise better to develop skills than keep 'running away' from difficulties. This was one package of supports that helped a parent to help their child develop skills rather than 'run away'. Children with ASN - more relaxed, more engaged with school work, developing positive peer relationships. Children more able to cope with change. Fits in and compliments other in-school supports e.g. LIAM/Seasons for Growth. The staff are brilliant and I have really enjoyed working with this service. The staff are astute and perceptive. The children love working with them.

Our young people are more reflective and more likely to seek assistance out with their support network in the school. Our pupils can become very reliant on the staff they know and have a strong relationship with. They are used to those members of staff aiding them and assisting them to co-regulate.

Having the service available in school, coupled with ease of access and prompt response times has been invaluable to us. I believe that the pupils appreciate having access to this support if and when they require it and we have regular requests from both pupils and parents who are looking to access support.