



East Ayrshire Council  
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir an Ear

# Primary School Counselling Service

Good Practice Guide for Schools



Examples of Good  
Practice in School  
Counselling Provision  
from Primary schools  
across East Ayrshire

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# 1

## Purpose

School Counselling in East Ayrshire Secondary schools has been provided by Exchange Wellbeing since January 2021. In April 2022, the Service was extended to provide support for children under 10. As the service has developed, it has been crucial for school counselling leads to meet up with each other to discuss challenges they have faced and share solutions and good practice with each other. This document is intended to be used either by current school counselling leads to help them reflect on practice within their own schools, or as a reference guide for any new staff that take on the role.

The document provides some practical suggestions for counselling leads on how to effectively set up and support a counselling service within their establishment. All examples of good practice have come from Schools in East Ayrshire through discussions, observation and focus groups with School Counselling leads.

The guidance will provide:

- Practical suggestions for how to effectively support and develop School Counselling within your own establishment
- Examples of resources schools can use to support the implementation of School Counselling within your own establishment

This guidance should be used in conjunction with the “East Ayrshire Counselling and Wellbeing Supports for Children and Young People - Guidelines to support effective implementation in Primary Schools” document, which can be found in the School Counselling Coordinators team or on the Glow tile.

# 2

## Universal Supports

As part of their Inclusion and positive relationships policy, Annanhill Primary have developed Whole School/Classroom Approaches . All teaching staff have the responsibility to ensure the following areas are part of their classroom daily practice and these will also be reinforced within whole school assemblies.

### **Circle Framework**

The Circle Framework has been developed to support the expertise of our teachers in creating an inclusive environment for all learners. The framework provides comprehensive checklists which explore the Physical and Social Environment, Rules and Routines, Motivation and Skills in connection with inclusion. All teachers will complete checklists throughout the year linked to our ASN calendar.

### **Communication Friendly Strategies**

Each class teacher should ensure their learning environment is accessible to all. All areas of the classroom should be labelled appropriately and resources available to support the learning of pupils in their class. This area is closely linked with the Circle Framework Checklists.

### **Rights Respecting Schools (RSS) – Class Charters**

As part of being a Rights Respecting School, and in line with UNCRC Article 12, pupils should be full partners in agreeing what the shared expectations and boundaries are within their class through the creation of a Class Charter. This aims to create a positive learning environment for pupils, as well as, building shared values and trusting relationships. Charters should be seen as a framework for both adults and children on how to respect each other's rights.

### **SHANARRI**

Supporting pupil's wellbeing is paramount to Getting it Right for Every Child and as a school we ensure we are following Standard Circular 76. With this in mind all pupils will explore the wellbeing indicators and what this means to them through whole class activities. Pupils should be familiar with the Wellbeing Web. This can be used to support pupils who may be displaying difficulties with their social, emotional, and physical wellbeing.

### **Glasgow Motivational and Wellbeing Profile (GMWP)**

This is a 20 question survey which is completed by pupils in primary 3 to 7. Analysis of results of the questionnaire will allow for individual targets to be created. This will be completed twice throughout the year in September and May.

# Targeted Supports within School

## Group Supports

If pupils are finding aspects of the curriculum difficult or struggling with their wellbeing, and areas explored within whole school approaches have not successfully reduced barriers to learning, as a school, Annanhill will explore further interventions and supports.

**Teacher Assessment** – Following the school flow chart for ASN, staff will ensure that they gather a robust amount of evidence to support the learning needs of the pupils. This process will be supported by SMT, parents, pupils and outside agencies if required. Following the assessment process, we may explore some of the following next steps of support:

- Classroom Assistant Support – Our classroom assistants support pupils as part of their class, within small groups or on a one to one basis if required. Our classroom assistants can deliver a range of interventions such as Active Literacy and Numeracy, Talk Boost Groups, 5 minute box intervention as well as other individualised wellbeing supports for pupils.
- EAST – Each term our SMT meet with our EAST member of staff to discuss pupils who may already have an identified need. Pupils receiving this support may have a child plan or ILP in place and require specific learning strategies and approaches tailored to their needs. The EAST team also provide short term interventions to support pupils who may have small gaps in their learning.
- SALT – Speech and Language Therapy – As a school we can explore a Request for Assistance for this service to support language and communication needs. Staff from this service come into the school to work with pupils and their teachers.
- Educational Psychologist – Each term our SMT meet with our educational psychologist to discuss key worries and concerns linked to pupils. Our educational psychologist can support us through observations, assessments and further interventions and strategies for pupils who may require more specialist supports.
- Junior Duke Award – This award is provided by our classroom assistant team. Class teachers can identify pupils who may require support with life skills and would benefit from small group intervention. This award has also been successful in enhancing pupil wellbeing through increased motivation and enthusiasm for learning.
- Adventure Programme – This programme is specifically designed to support our primary 7 pupils who may need enhanced preparation for their next big step to secondary. This explores aspects of anxiety, confidence and having a positive mindset. Primary 7 staff will be asked to identify pupils who may require this support during term 2 of the year.
- Seasons For Growth – This programme helps pupils to build knowledge and skills to strengthen their emotional wellbeing and resilience following a significant change or loss. Information sessions are given to both pupils and parents before pupils accessing this programme to ensure it is suitable for individuals.

## Individualised Supports

If pupils continue to find accessing the curriculum difficult and assessments carried out show a need for more specialist supports, we have a range of individualised learning opportunities that pupils can access.

## Our Sunflower Room

- Soft Start - We offer pupils the opportunity to have a soft start to their day if required. Pupils can come into school from 8.45am to 9am and can access a safe space with a range of self-regulation activities.
- Breakfast Club – We provide breakfast for some of our pupils from 9am to 9.30am this also provides an opportunity for anyone who may require some wellbeing support before the start of their day.
- Lunch Club – Our dinner hall can be very overwhelming for some pupils therefore our Sunflower Room offers a calm, quiet space for the children to have their lunch if required. This is very flexible to individual needs and can change fluidly throughout the year.

- Dysregulation Analyse Tool – This will be used to monitor and track the behaviours of a child who may be showing dysregulated behaviours. From the evidence gathered, we will be able to analysis and explore possible triggers to behaviour, then support with relevant strategies and interventions. This is a new strategy which we will be piloted within the school and will be supported by East Ayrshire Inclusion Team.
- Nurture Provision – As a school we provide a nurture environment for pupils who require a more bespoke package of learning. Our nurture group runs every morning for designated groups. This provision is underpinned by robust assessment and evaluation of need, and is supported through the 6 principles of nurture. Within our nurture class we set each pupil individual targets linked to the Boxall Assessment as well as ensuring the children have the opportunity to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Targets are reviewed regularly within ILPs and Child plans through a TEAM approach involving staff, parents and pupils. We have found that nurture improves attendance, behaviour and attainment, and ensures every child is able to learn.
- Bespoke Timetables - This timetable may be a combination of activities such as whole class learning, small group activities and 1:1 intervention. The bespoke timetable provides opportunities that are different from or in addition to what is ordinarily available for a pupil within the class. Class Teachers work very closely with the nurture team and SMT to ensure pupils still have a sense of belonging to their class.

# 3

## Assessing and supporting Wellbeing using the BEAR cards

Mauchline and Hurlford Primary Schools have integrated the “BEAR” cards as part of their whole school approach to the assessment and support of wellbeing.

The “BEAR” cards are a comprehensive toolkit from the Exchange for assessing the 15 elements of resilience. Staff in both schools use the cards to identify under-resourced areas of a child's psychological wellbeing and then create a personalised action plan for pupils to improve resilience which is targeted and measurable.

In Mauchline Primary school, the PEF funded classroom assistant carries out the assessment in the wellbeing room. The Depute HT and Principal Teacher are also trained and have used the cards to assess the wellbeing of children at various stages within the school. In Hurlford Primary school this is carried out by the Depute Headteacher and a class teacher. The CT completed their Level 1 in Therapy with The Exchange and they use PEF funding to release her to provide this service.

In both schools, folders of resources have been developed with activities that can be used to support the identified under-resourced areas of resilience.

In both schools the use of the BEAR cards has had a positive impact on the volume of referrals to the Exchange and also the appropriateness of the referrals.



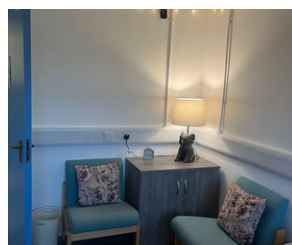
# 4

## The Counselling Environment

The Depute Headteacher at Onthank Primary school and Supported Learning Centre (SLC) had reflected on the importance of having a safe, welcoming and confidential space for pupils to access counselling and psychological wellbeing support. She wanted to make it a welcoming and calm space for children and ensure it had helpful resources for them to access in it. The room is situated in a quiet part of the school, next to the supported learning centre, so sessions are not interrupted. Counsellors, wellbeing practitioners and children have commented positively on the room at Onthank. The room is bright, welcoming and private.

Currently the room has the following items:

- Couch
- Natural Lighting
- Phone (can make external calls or internal)
- Tissues
- Fidget toys / stress balls
- Small table
- Colouring books
- Coloured pencils





# 5

## Effective Triage of Requests in school

Hurlford Primary school have put sound processes in place to ensure that their requests to the School Counselling Service are appropriate and that all children receive the support that is best suited to their needs.

When a class teacher highlights a wellbeing concern about a child the named person will:

- Discuss concerns with the staff
- Meet with the pupils to have a conversation. Decide if further intervention is necessary or monitor with daily / weekly check ins.
- Use either the wellbeing web or the resilience bear cards to identify area of concern
- Speak with parents
- Refer to internal supports - circle of friends, seasons of growth, wellbeing groups, Theraplay sessions
- Refer to external supports - The Exchange, Barnadoes, Young Carers etc

In addition they also use the GMWP twice a year and identify pupils who have scored low and monitor / support as required.

They also have worry boxes in class, calm corners and are trialling environmental factors to support regulation (pastel paper/ fidgets, breathing cards etc)

They have a whole school approach via the Respectful Relationships which focuses on Regulate, Relate, Reason, Repair through restorative and nurturing approaches.

# 6

# Effective Partnerships

Patna Primary school have established very effective partnerships with a range of local organisations and 3rd sector partners including the Exchange. These partnerships are pivotal in terms of supporting the wellbeing provision and supports they have within their school.

The Exchange have been invited to attend parents evenings, open afternoons and information evenings. This has helped parents/carers at Patna Primary to feel more informed about the service including how to access their online resources. As a result of this, both staff and parents are more confident at using universal supports and resources to support children's wellbeing before requesting 1-1 support from the Exchange. This has meant referrals to the service are more appropriate.



# 7

## Acknowledgements

Huge thank you to all of the Primary School Teachers, Depute Heads and Head Teachers in East Ayrshire who contributed to this document:

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