



## **HUNTERHOUSE COLLEGE**

# **COUNSELLING POLICY**

**Date/date Reviewed: 2020**

**Date Ratified: 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

**Previous: 2017**

**Next Review due: 2023**

This policy is available in pdf format from the school website

[www.hunterhousecollege.org.uk](http://www.hunterhousecollege.org.uk)

or on request from the School Office 028 9061 2293

[info@hunterhouse.belfast.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@hunterhouse.belfast.ni.sch.uk)

**Inclusion & Diversity:**

The College aims to establish an inclusive community where all students and staff are treated with dignity and respect, regardless of individual differences including, but not limited to, culture, race, religion, beliefs, sexual or gender orientation, appearance, ability or disability.

**Rationale:**

Counselling is an integral part of the support available to students at Hunterhouse College and, as such, it is highly valued within the College with a strong demand from students for the service.

Counselling gives students the opportunity to talk about issues which are concerning them, in confidence, with a qualified Counsellor. What is spoken about will depend on the individual, but common themes are anxiety, family issues and friendship difficulties.

Counselling for post-primary schools is delivered through the Department of Education Independent Counselling Service for Schools through Familyworks.

**Raising Awareness of the Counselling Service within the College Community:**

- As part of the Induction Process for incoming Y8 students and their parents/carers, time is spent outlining the support structure within the College and reference is made both visually and verbally to the role of familyworks within this
- The support structure diagram, which includes reference to the school counsellor, is in all student planners
- Reference is made visually to familyworks on the Safeguarding Team poster which is in all student planners and on display in all classrooms
- Reference is made to familyworks as a source of support for students as part of the safeguarding assemblies which take place twice a year
- There is an area in the Hexagon with a poster advertising familyworks and a box for students to place self-referral forms into
- There is a direct link on the school website to the Familyworks website
- All new staff are made aware of the Counselling service.

**How can a Student Access Familyworks?**

A student can access familyworks counselling in one of three ways:

- By self-referral, either through placing a note into the self-referral box in the Hexagon (which is emptied by the Counsellor weekly), requesting an appointment through Pupil Reception or by asking a member of staff to set up an appointment for them.
- By being referred to the service by a member of staff, usually at the request of a student
- By a parent/carer who contacts the College and requests that an appointment is made for their child.

It is important to note that attendance at counselling sessions is entirely voluntary. Where a student is referred by a parent/carer or member of staff and this has not been requested by them, they may decide not to attend. This decision will be respected.

**Guidance on Practice:**

Counselling is a non-compulsory service. As stated above, attendance is entirely voluntary and a student may withdraw themselves from it at any time.

While each individual is different, in all instances the focus is on empowering students to formulate their own ways of dealing with the circumstances in which they find themselves.

Any information relayed to the Counsellor by a student will remain confidential unless it involves the disclosure of a Safeguarding/Child Protection concern. If this occurs, the Counsellor will speak with the Designated Teacher for the student's Key Stage (or another member of the Safeguarding Team if they are unavailable) who will take appropriate action as required by law and in accordance with the College's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.

During counselling sessions, the Counsellor will make professional judgments about how best to proceed. The strategies will be explained at a level appropriate to the age of the student and will not be initiated without their consent.

Respecting the student's right to confidentiality means that information from counselling sessions will not be shared with staff or parents/carers, except in the case of safeguarding or Child Protection concerns.

The demand for familyworks from students is high and, for most of the year, there is a waiting list in operation. The familyworks counsellor(s) use a triaging system to prioritise students with the most urgent need for the service.

It is important to note that familyworks is a Tier 2 service and is therefore not able to engage with students who have been identified as needing Tier 3 support, for example, from CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services).

**Additional Information:**

Additional information about Familyworks Counselling may be found on the organisation's website [www.familyworksni.com](http://www.familyworksni.com)

**Linked Documents:**

Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

SEN Policy

Student Progress Policy

**\*\*** At time of writing, the College is currently in the period of closure as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak and is anticipating working with a Blended Learning system for the foreseeable future. The College will continue to work in partnership with familyworks to enable students to access counselling during this period as far as is possible. At the moment, familyworks are continuing to provide counselling to students via telephone sessions. Please see the familyworks website for more information on how they have adapted their practices and to access the letter they have produced for parents/carers. **\*\***