

SHIMNA INTEGRATED COLLEGE

COUNSELLING POLICY

On a whole school level, effective teachers use some counselling skills in their everyday classroom teaching, and in their pastoral relationships with their students. The principal counsels students on a daily basis through assemblies and the Student Council, and his work with individual students, is also in part a counselling role.

However, sometimes people can become overwhelmed and find it difficult to think clearly. A counsellor helps to anchor and support us whilst we consider the thoughts and feelings that are distracting us from moving on in life. The college provides professional counselling to enable students to feel content within themselves and to achieve their full academic potential. A fully qualified professional counsellor is available for students for one-to-one meetings, 1 day a week. The student has an initial meeting with the counsellor to work out what help would suit them best, and they then agree between them how long they will work together. A maximum of 8 sessions will be offered initially and then further sessions if appropriate. The counsellor also has access to relevant external support agencies.

Timing

The timing of sessions is planned to minimise disruption to class attendance. This is particularly important in the case of long term need. The number of sessions offered to an individual will be determined between the counsellor and the individual and may be short or long term depending on the circumstances.

Counselling takes place in the designated counselling room, which is a safe and neutral environment.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be preserved within the counselling relationship. The exception to this is in the case where the counsellor suspects neglect or abuse or the person is at risk of harm to themselves or others. In this case, confidentiality is subordinate to the need to protect the child, and the designated staff member must be informed.

Referrals

Counselling can only take place on a voluntary basis. After the first meeting, further counselling can only take place with the student's agreement.

Access to our college counsellor may be made:

- using the post box at the bottom of the stairwell near the student entrance;
- through any member of staff;
- through the key contact Danella Goodman.

Referrals can be made in the following ways:

- self-referral;
- from a friend;
- from a parent/guardian;
- from a member of staff.

By routine:

- following bereavement;
- following family issues;
- following suspension;
- after long term absence through illness;
- joining the school other than in September of year 8;
- being on a behaviour contract.

Counselling for staff

Counselling for staff, both teaching and non-teaching, is available through our subscription to Carecall Services, where staff have access to confidential counselling and critical incident support. The free phone number is 0808 800 0002. This service is confidential and the school is not told who uses the service.

Support for staff in supporting students

Our staff has access to courses such as bereavement, guidance, bullying, suicide intervention etc. Staff also have access to the college counsellor for advice on pastoral matters.

Listening Ear Service at Shimna College

One in three people is affected by cancer in their lifetime which equates to 40,000 people living with cancer in Northern Ireland at any one time.

A cancer diagnosis has a huge impact on the individual's life and also those around them, both emotionally and practically. Shimna Integrated College and local charity Action Cancer have worked together to train staff and senior students to offer a Listening Ear Service for students and staff within the college. Aine Harrison is now trained to train Listening Ears and offers the course to year 13 each year.

This service aims to help with the worries, confusion and reactions at this time and can also act as a sign posting service for more ongoing support where applicable such as counselling.

Sometimes it's not easy to confide in those closest to you, so being able to talk to someone detached from your situation can be the help a person needs to manage the journey better. The Listening Ear volunteers in Shimna can help individuals to do this and can be the link to the appropriate support that is needed. There are sixth form students and staff volunteers at present.

Suicide Awareness

Several of our staff members are Safetalk (Tell Ask Listen Keepsafe) and 4 are ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) trained and are available to talk to staff or students who may be at risk of self harm. We also have a number of staff who have attended Self Harm awareness training.