

# Counselling, Confidentiality & Consent Policy

**This document is to work in accordance with the current & reviewed Counselling Policy of 2012.**

Victoria Education Centre offers Counselling to students and staff through the School Counselling service. Currently, the school hires a qualified Counsellor for 2 days per week (Tuesday & Wednesday), or 15 contracted hours.

## **What is counselling?**

Taken from the NHS website

“Counselling is a talking therapy that involves a trained therapist listening to you and helping you find ways to deal with emotional issues.”

Counselling provides a safe, impartial and confidential space to which to explore your feelings.

## **Confidentiality: boundaries & limits of confidentiality**

Counselling is a space for sharing personal information about yourself or another person. In these sessions, the Counsellor is offering unconditional positive regard, a space to experience non-judgement and congruence.

A significant part of attending counselling is to ensure the space is confidential. The Counsellor has a set of ethical guidelines to adhere to regarding confidentiality and their limits to this:

- “Gillick Competency” states a child who has the ability to make an informed choice has the right to confidentiality and privacy. A child can be under the legal age of consent, 18yrs. If a child is under the legal age of consent and does not meet the criteria for Gillick competency then full parental/guardian involvement is necessary.

However, if the student does meet these criteria then the parents/guardians have no legal right to breach confidentiality unless there is a serious cause for concern (see below for descriptor of serious concern).

- The Therapist will disclose any causes for concern around safeguarding to a client nominated party. In some circumstances, the parent/guardian may not be that person. If the student is at serious risk of harm to him/herself or others or there is a disclosure regarding any information around terrorism, money laundering, radicalisation and current child abuse.
- Where possible the Therapist will communicate session progress e.g. after 6 sessions, but this will only be what the child wishes to disclose.
- If parents/guardians have concerns regarding counselling a request must be made in writing to your son/daughter's Counsellor. This request will be submitted to the Counsellor's Supervisor and dealt with considering solely the welfare of the child.
- Supervision is mandatory for all Counsellors. This space is for Counsellor's to anonymously describe all client cases to ensure the Counsellor is acting ethically and within their qualified parameters. Supervisors have the ability to withdraw Counsellor's from their work or support the Counsellor to refer the client on.

### **Parental/Guardian consent**

Victoria Education Centre offers a transparent service whereby a request for consent of the parent/guardian is sent at the start of the academic year for the duration of that year. If a child then wishes to attend counselling they do not have to wait and can refer themselves or be referred into the service. Some Children under 18yrs will require parental consent to access counselling, however Gillick Competent children have the right to access counselling without parental consent. Students are encouraged to talk openly to parents, but at times, this may not be appropriate. There may be occasions where a child is in therapy and the parent/guardian does not know.

### **Gillick Competent:**

Taken from Care Quality Commission – Independent regulator of Health & Social Care in England and CINAPS (Cambridge Independent Neuroscience and Psychiatry Services).

Is a term used in law to decide whether a child is able to consent to his or her own medical treatment without the need for parental permission or knowledge.

To be considered as Gillick Competent a young person:

- Understands the problem and implications
- Understands the risks and benefits of treatment
- Understands the consequences if not treated
- Understands the alternative options
- Understands the implications on the family
- Is able to retain the information
- Is able to weigh the pros and cons
- Is able to make and communicate a reasoned and weighed decision regarding their wishes.

If a young person who is Gillick competent, asks professionals not to share information about treatment, their wishes can be honoured, unless we feel there are safety issues that require us to share information.

Young people who are Gillick competent can make decisions regarding their treatment and can give consent to treatment, even though their parents are not in agreement.

## Referral process

Students & staff can attend counselling at any point whilst within Victoria Education Centre (considering consent). A referral can be made using the referral form online or by collecting one from in school.

The referral is sent to the on-site Counsellor and an assessment of priority is undertaken. If the student or staff member disclose issues around serious risk to self or others, then they are a high priority.

Written By

Naomi David – Centre Counsellor	Dated: September 2019.
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