

SHIMNA INTEGRATED COLLEGE

COUNSELLING POLICY

On a whole school level, effective teachers use counselling skills in their everyday classroom teaching, and in their pastoral relationships with their form class. The relationship of the principal with the whole school through assemblies and through the Students' Council, and with individual students, is also a counselling relationship.

However, sometimes we can become overwhelmed by some of our thoughts and feelings, finding it difficult to think clearly. A counsellor helps anchor us and supports us whilst we consider the thoughts and feelings that are distracting us from moving on in life. The college provides counselling to enable students to feel content within themselves and to achieve their full academic potential.

The school has a fully qualified professional counsellor 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 & 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 specified 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 by:

- E-mail or the Help button on the college website;
- 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;

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- 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 has access to the college counsellors for advice on pastoral matters.

Listening Ear Service at Shimna College

One in three people are 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 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.

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 here at Shimna can help individuals to do this and can be the link to the appropriate support that is needed. There are 8 sixth form students and 11 staff volunteers at present. The LES training is offered annually to staff and year 13 students.

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 students who may be at risk of self harm. We also have a number of staff who have attended Self Harm awareness training.