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COUNSELLING in SCHOOLS PROJECT

EVALUATION REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An evaluation of the Counselling in Schools Project, funded by Greater Glasgow NHS Board and managed by the Counselling Unit, University of Strathclyde, was conducted between September 2002 and June 2004, using a multi-method, pluralistic design.

• One hundred and ninety seven referrals were made to the counselling service: a total of 1102 hours of counselling offered, with 82% attendance.

• Indications from a range of sources indicate that the counselling service was beneficial to the young people involved:

· pre- and post-counselling psychometric tests show a significant reduction in levels of psychological distress following counselling;

· eighty-eight percent of participants wrote that they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the counselling service, 74 percent said that the counselling had helped them 'a lot' or 'quite a lot', and 91 percent said that they would 'definitely' or 'probably' use the counselling service again;

· seventy-nine percent of clients, interviewed in-depth, reported that the counselling had been either helpful or very helpful, 21 percent said that it had been of some help, and none said that it had been predominantly unhelpful;

· guidance teachers gave the counselling service an average rating of 7.34 in the first year, and 8.47 in the second year, on a one-to-ten scale indicating how helpful or unhelpful they felt the counselling service had been to their pupils (1 = 'extremely unhelpful', 10 = 'extremely helpful');

· guidance coordinators at each of the three secondary schools stated that they felt the counselling service was of substantial benefit to those pupils involved, as did both counsellors involved in the service.

• Clients, teachers and pupils across the three schools judged it as important to have a counsellor in their school, with means of 8.64, 7.47 and 6.08 respectively on a zero to ten scale from 'not at all important' to 'essential'.

• Clients and other pupils stated that an opportunity to be listened and to 'get things off their chest' was the predominant reason why they valued the existence of a counselling service; though many also valued the opportunity to receive suggestions and guidance.

• A strong preference for locating the counselling service within the school environment was expressed by both clients and pupils from across the schools, with 73 percent of the latter group expressing a preference for this arrangement.

• A strong preference for one-to-one work, as opposed to group-counselling, was expressed by both clients and pupils from across the schools, with 86 percent of the latter group expressing a preference for this arrangement.

• In terms of the development of the Project, the main issue that emerged was the need for greater communication and establishment of protocols between counsellors and guidance staff – particularly at the commencement of the service. Other issues for development included increasing the profile of the counselling service.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Within the inevitable financial constraints, consideration should be given to maintaining – and where possible, extending – the Counselling in Schools Project, primarily in its current format.

Explicit consideration needs to be given to establishing and developing the self-referral component of the counselling service.

On-going efforts need to be made to ensure that, as far as possible, pupils' attendance at the counselling service is always kept private from other pupils: for instance, by ensuring that counselling rooms do not open on to main school thoroughfares, and that teachers are sensitive to this matter in releasing pupils from class for counselling appointments.

A referral system should continue to operate in which parents/carers are not routinely informed of their child's attendance at counselling, although counsellors should continue to explore this possibility with the pupil involved.

The counselling service should continue to be located within a school context.

The central hub of the counselling service should continue to be one-to-one counselling.

The counselling service should continue to be based upon a person-centred model of counselling with an emphasis on the counsellor's flexibility, openness and responsiveness to the individual client's needs.

For future implementations, clearly defined protocols should be discussed, negotiated and agreed between the counselling service and the school prior to the commencement of the counselling service, covering such issues as confidentiality, disclosures, and referral procedures.

For future implementations, regular contact between counsellors and key members of the guidance staff should be established at an early stage in the counselling project, and maintained throughout the lifespan of the project.

For future implementations, teachers across the schools should be informed about the nature of the counselling service, and the procedures by which they can refer pupils in to it.

Within the limits of current or future resources, greater attention should be paid to the promotion of the counselling service: pupils should be informed, or reminded, of the existence of the service and how to contact it; negative assumptions about counselling should be counteracted; and counsellors should strive to be seen as a familiar and friendly face within the school community.

For on-going and future implementations, evaluation strategies – at a minimum, post-counselling satisfaction questionnaires and pre- and post-counselling psychometric tests – should be adopted, based on clear and consistent protocols.

For on-going and future implementations, ethnic backgrounds of pupils using the service should be monitored – along with such other characteristics as level of disability – such that it

is possible to assess whether or not a representative number of pupils from these groups are using the counselling service.

Relative proportions of male and female clients using the counselling service should be closely monitored, and consideration should be given to finding ways of encouraging more male pupils to use the service.

CONTENT

PREFACE

The provision of counselling services for young people represents one of the most rapidly expanding areas within the counselling profession in Britain at the present time. It is clear that young people in contemporary society are faced with an ever-increasing range and intensity of pressures. At the same time, there is a growing awareness that counselling may have a part to play in supporting young people in not only living and coping with these pressures, but in actually learning important things about themselves and their relationships, through having the opportunity to reflect on difficult events within a safe counselling environment.

It is apparent to everyone involved in the field of counselling for young people that the design and delivery of appropriate services involves overcoming many challenges, for example around the type of counselling that is offered, voluntary participation, the maintenance of confidentiality, and much else. The University of Strathclyde's *Counselling in Schools Project* reflects one of the most comprehensive and detailed attempts to explore the issues around schools counselling, and to evaluate its effectiveness. The evaluation team have approached their task in a balanced way, seeking to combine qualitative and quantitative evidence from young people, teachers and counsellors. It is unusual to come across an evaluation report that so effectively conveys the lived sense of the experience of those participating in the project, as well as arrives at straightforward and practical conclusions and recommendations. I commend the team for their efforts, and feel sure that their report will serve as a benchmark for future work in this area.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE COUNSELLING SERVICE

Background[1]

The Counselling Unit's interest in this project was initially inspired by Susan McGinnis, a member of the Executive of 'Counselling in Education', a division of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and editor of their journal. She drew the attention of the Unit Director to the Glasgow Council publication, *Children's Services Plan 1998-2001*. This included a research review and analysis which dramatically recorded the high incidence of depression in secondary school pupils and begged the question of a response. The Director, who had long previously co-directed the Scottish Social Education Project and the Guidance and Home Project, was reminded that this had been a long-term concern in Scottish Education. In a previous publication *Home from School* (1986) his research team had concluded that counselling was an inappropriate role to expect of teachers. In the years that had passed, however, the independent profession of therapeutic counselling had become established. Questions on the clinical effectiveness of counselling had dissipated with the establishment of postgraduate counselling training and evaluations that focused on trained counsellors. The Counselling Unit, since 1996, had been contracted by Lanarkshire Primary Care Trust to run a therapeutic counselling service now in 61 general medical practices. The Unit knew that context, but young people do not use general medical practices in the same way as adults. The logical context was schools. Hence, the concept was born of a counselling service that was to be *in* the school, but not *of* the school.

Greater Glasgow NHS Board funded the pilot Counselling in Schools Project for an initial period of two years from September 2002. This was subsequently extended for a further six months. A Project Manager was identified from within the existing team of academic staff of the Unit and two counsellors were appointed in September 2002. The basis of the Project was the piloting of a counsellor to work in three schools for an initial period of a day a week for the first year, rising to a day and a half per week for the second year. The counsellors, together with the Project Manager, undertook preliminary contact with the three schools in September 2002 and the first pupil clients were seen in October 2002.

The Health Board, in consultation with the Education Departments of two local authorities, Glasgow and East Dunbartonshire, identified three schools to take part in the pilot project. In Glasgow, the schools selected were two that had already expressed a willingness to have a counsellor on site; and in East Dunbartonshire, the school selected had expressed a similar interest.

At the start of the Project, as with all secondary schools in Scotland, each school had a team of promoted staff charged with the pastoral care of pupils in addition to their teaching duties. This 'guidance,' 'pupil support,' or 'pastoral care' team, including its coordinator, was the natural referring agency within the school, with whom the counsellor would work[2].

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[1] This sub-section on the background to the counselling service was written by Mike Hough, Project Manager and Senior Lecturer in Counselling, University of Strathclyde; and Dave Mearns, Director of the Counselling Unit and Professor of Counselling, University of Strathclyde.

[2] For the purposes of this evaluation, the term 'guidance' – as in 'guidance teams,' 'guidance teachers,' and 'coordinators of guidance' – will be used throughout this report, as it was the term primarily used during the period of the evaluation. However, it should be noted that in the three schools – and, indeed, across Scotland – the terms 'pastoral care' or 'pupil support' are becomingly increasingly common.

The actual working arrangements of each guidance team were to some extent locally determined, and it was envisaged that the counsellors would spend an initial period of time familiarising themselves with both the staff and the procedures that they used. In addition, there was a strong commitment from the Health Board, Counselling Unit and counsellors that self referral would be a feature of the service offered, and that the views of the young people themselves would influence the shape of the service. To this end focus groups were run in each of the three schools and the views of young people gathered by the counsellors and project manager both to gauge the degree of enthusiasm for the Project and identify particular features of the counselling service that the young people felt would be important.

In order to identify the lines of communication and create working procedure for the counsellors, meetings were held with each of the three headteachers and with members of the guidance teams. From all these meetings – with young people, headteachers and members of the guidance staff – it was hoped that protocols would be established that would create the context and working arrangements for the counsellors. In the event, in one of the schools, such was the perceived demand for counselling, that, after an initial meeting with key members of promoted staff, the counsellor was asked to start to see pupils immediately; and in the other two schools, they were asked to start seeing pupils within two weeks of the counsellor making a first visit to the school. From interviews at the time it was clear that the key members of school staff took on trust the goodwill and authenticity of the counsellors and were grateful that a trained and experienced counsellor could offer support that they as teachers, albeit with some counselling skills training, felt unable to offer. It was only subsequently that protocols were agreed. That they were derived from practice was a feature of how the project developed.

The schools
The three schools involved in the Project were:
> • School A: a Roman Catholic school serving a mixed community in the city, roll: 1345;
> • School B: an urban comprehensive, roll: 965;
> • School C: located in a largely middle class suburban area, roll: 1040.

The counsellors
Both counsellors were qualified at Diploma level, and accredited, by the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and had previous experience of working with young people. One of the counsellors was appointed to work in one school and the other counsellor in the other two schools.

The counselling approach
Both counsellors were trained in, and predominantly practiced, a 'person-centred' approach to therapy, though other elements of therapeutic practice were brought into their work, such as the teaching of relaxation methods.

The person-centred approach to counselling, also referred to as 'client-centred counselling,' is based on the work of the American psychologist Carl Rogers (see, in particular 1951; 1959; 1961). In this approach, the counsellor aims to create a particular kind of relationship with his or her clients within which the client is enabled to discover his or her own resources for moving towards a more satisfying way of being. The counsellor attempts to offer a relationship which, by its quality of respect, understanding and openness, makes possible for the client a new appraisal of self and an opportunity for change and development. Central to

the therapeutic activity is the practitioner's capacity and willingness to identify and relinquish prejudice and responses which impede the growth of others through the abuse, however subtle, of personal power. Person-centred counselling has been shown to be effective with adults across a range of psychological difficulties (see recent meta-analysis by Elliott, Greenberg, & Lietaer, 2004); although its effectiveness and efficacy with young people has yet to be rigorously examined.

Supervision

Two types of supervision for counsellors were used in the Counselling Project. As per BACP requirements, the counsellors were in clinical supervision, which involves a regular one-to-one meeting with an experienced colleague in which the counsellor is invited to bring and explore issues that are impacting on their capacity to work effectively with clients. This both supports the counsellors and protects the client. This form of supervision is distinct from line-management supervision, and counsellors were resourced to have up to one hour per week of clinical supervision.

In addition the counsellors met together with the Project manager on a six weekly basis for line-managerial supervision. Still concerned with the functioning of the counsellors and the service, this type of supervision also dealt with day to day and practical issues. It also provided a forum for developmental issues relating to the service to be aired, explored and action agreed.

The referral process

The referral process varied slightly across the three schools. However, in each instance, a central waiting list was held by the school's guidance coordinator. He or she would then ask – or receive from – guidance teachers, senior managers, year heads, and/or joint assessment teams the names of pupils that these colleagues felt would benefit from counselling. The guidance coordinator would then go through a process of prioritising pupils – generally in consultation with the referring individual and/or the counsellor – and, once a slot was available for the pupil, they would be asked by the referring guidance coordinator whether they wanted to attend counselling.

In addition to this process, pupils in each of the schools had the opportunity to refer themselves directly to the counselling service. In these instances, it was incumbent on the counsellor to inform the designated person that the pupil was attending counselling. Where possible and appropriate, the counsellor also encouraged the pupil to use the existing support mechanisms that were already available at the school.

Pupils who attended counselling were generally issued with a 'guidance slip' that gave them permission to be absent from class. To maintain confidentiality, these guidance slips did not specifically mention that the pupil would be attending counselling.

On-going appointments made by the counsellors with pupils were generally confirmed with the guidance coordinator at the end of each day, so that a guidance slip could be issued for subsequent sessions. The counsellor and school endeavoured to vary the actual timing of sessions over a period of weeks so as not to disadvantage the pupil by being regularly absent from one particular class.

Parental/carer consent

The issue of whether parents/carers should be informed – or asked for permission – when their child was attending counselling was a complex one, which was addressed in different ways in the different schools. Typically, the schools informed parents and carers, at a general level, that a counselling service had been established in their school. Once a pupil then attended counselling, the counsellor would generally encourage the pupil to explore the issue of whether or not they wanted to talk to their parents or carers about their attendance at counselling, and the issues that they were discussing. However, the counsellors did not routinely require parental/carer permission before proceeding with the counselling, though in some cases (see interview findings) the schools did request such permission.

Communication between counsellors and guidance staff

Regular contact between the counsellors and members of the guidance staff was maintained across the three schools, though the form and frequency of this contact again varied. In some instances, the counsellor would meet with the guidance coordinator at regular times – in the mornings or over lunch – and discuss referrals and any other issues that had arisen. In one school, the counsellor also attended the regular guidance team meetings. In another school, contact between counsellor and guidance coordinator was frequent, but primarily by written message.

In terms of feedback to the guidance staff about the pupils, this was again negotiated on a school-by-school basis by counsellors and guidance teams. In general, the counsellors would inform the guidance staff as to whether pupils had started to attend counselling, whether they had completed counselling, whether the counselling seemed to have been of value to them, and any onward referrals that were made. Beyond this, however, strict levels of confidentiality were maintained by the counsellors, as per BACP criteria. The one exception to this, following extensive discussion with the schools, was with regard to the Education Department's Circular 57, whereby counsellors were required to disclose instances of abuse to a nominated person, following discussion with the pupil involved. Under conditions in which the counsellor had grave concerns for the safety of the pupil, it was also agreed that she would inform the school's coordinator of guidance (again, following discussion with the pupil involved).

Sessions

Counselling sessions were generally timetabled according to the school's periods, which varied in length from 45 minutes to one hour. It was intended that counsellors should have a maximum of five client contact hours per working day with an additional two-and-a-half hours for supporting work.

Accommodation

Specific rooms in each of the schools were chosen for the counselling to take place in. These were generally small, and as far as possible discrete and away from the main school thoroughfares, though limitations in space availability meant that this was not always entirely possible.

Onward referral

Joint support teams, or joint assessment teams, were seen as the appropriate medium of onwards referral. Where these did not exist, however, it was left to the school and counsellor to agree specific procedures. In this instance the counsellor themselves established working contact with other agencies and liaised with guidance staff as appropriate.

Record keeping

Counsellors maintained individual, anonymous and confidential records of pupils' attendance at counselling, which were used to monitor and record the uptake of the service over time.

Record sheets were completed for each client referred to counselling (see final version in appendix one). These forms asked the counsellors to record:
- the sex of the client;
- his or her school year;
- the source of referral;
- who the client had been referred on to (if at all);
- whether or not the client's parents/carers were aware that he or she was attending counselling;
- the client's presenting issue(s) and its severity;
- the client's developing issue(s) and its severity;
- the number of sessions offered to the client;
- the dates of sessions offered to the client, and whether or not these sessions had been attended, not attended, cancelled by the client, cancelled by the counsellor, or for which the client had been absent from school.

Promotion of the counselling service

A variety of methods were used by the counsellors and the schools to promote the counselling service to pupils and teachers. One of the counsellors spoke about the service at school assemblies as well as at staff meetings. Other means of publicising the service included posters, distributing leaflets and being present at parents' evenings. However, in one of the schools, the counselling service was not promoted actively beyond the pastoral care team for fear of creating demands for a service that could not be met on a one and a half day per week basis.

Steering group

A steering group met roughly bi-monthly to monitor and record the progress of the Project. Members of the steering group included headteachers, coordinators of guidance, members of the health board, representatives of the education department, the counsellors, the manager of the Project, the director of the Counselling Unit, and the Project evaluator.

CLIENT DATA

Use of service

According to records, 197 pupils, in total, were referred to the counselling service between its inception in September 2002 and the end of the summer term, 2004[3]. Sixty one of these pupils attended School C, 56 of these pupils attended School B, and 80 of these pupils attended School A. In four instances, these were noted as re-referrals of pupils who had previously attended the counselling service[4].

Figure one presents the number of clients from each of the school years at time of commencement of counselling. As can be seen from this figure, the highest number of clients came from S3 (n = 46), and the lowest from S6 (n = 6). Data was not available for 17 pupils.
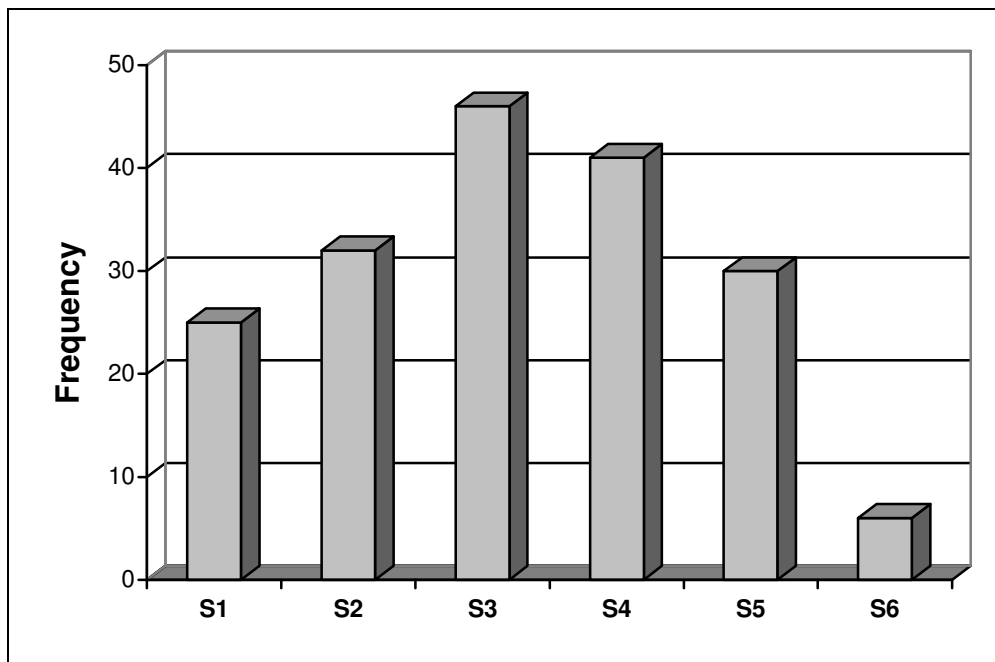
Figure 1: Clients by year

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[3] In some instances, records were not kept of pupils who were referred to the counselling service but failed to attend any sessions. The number of pupils actually referred to the counselling service, therefore, is likely to be somewhat greater than 197.

[4] Due to slight variations in how client records were kept, in one of the schools, no distinction was recorded between pupils returning to counselling after a holiday break, and pupils being re-referred to counselling. Pupils who fell into the latter category, therefore, of whom there were about three, were recorded as one, rather than two, entries. This means that, in total, approximately 196 individual pupils passed through the three counselling services.

Figure two presents the percentages of male and female clients attending the counselling service, with frequencies of 88 and 109, respectively.
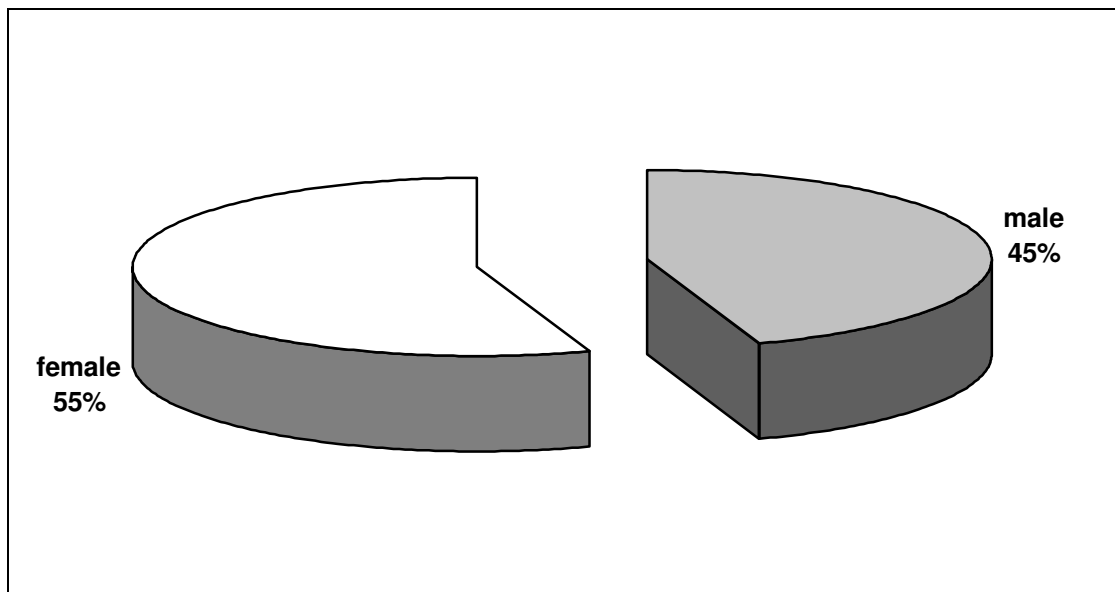
Figure 2: Clients by sex

In total, 1102 hours of counselling were offered to clients across the three schools. Clients were offered between one and 45 sessions, with a mean average of 5.62 sessions, a median average of three sessions, and a modal average of two sessions[5]. Number of sessions offered to clients can be seen in figure three.
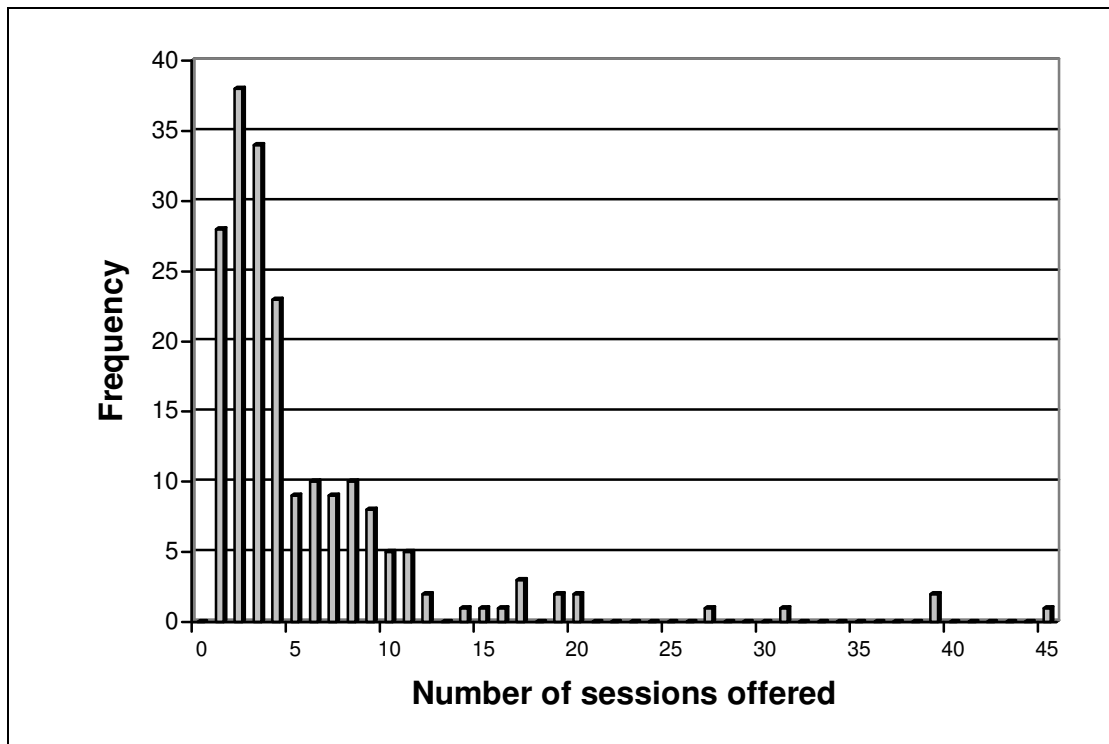
Figure 3: Number of sessions offered to clients

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[5] The *mean* response is the mathematical average; the *median* response is the value that lies in the middle of the distribution; and the *modal* response is the most frequent one.

The mean number of sessions offered to female clients was 6.45, compared with 4.60 for male clients. This difference is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Of the 1102 hours offered to clients, then, 697 were offered to female clients (63% of all sessions), and 405 were offered to male clients (37% of all sessions).

Of the 1102 sessions offered, 906 were attended by clients. Percentages of attendance and forms of non-attendance can be seen in figure four (DNA means 'did not attend' with no reason given). In total, then, eighteen percent of sessions offered were not attended, though it should be borne in mind here that these time-slots may have been filled by other pupils. There were no significant differences across the sexes in mean proportion of sessions attended.
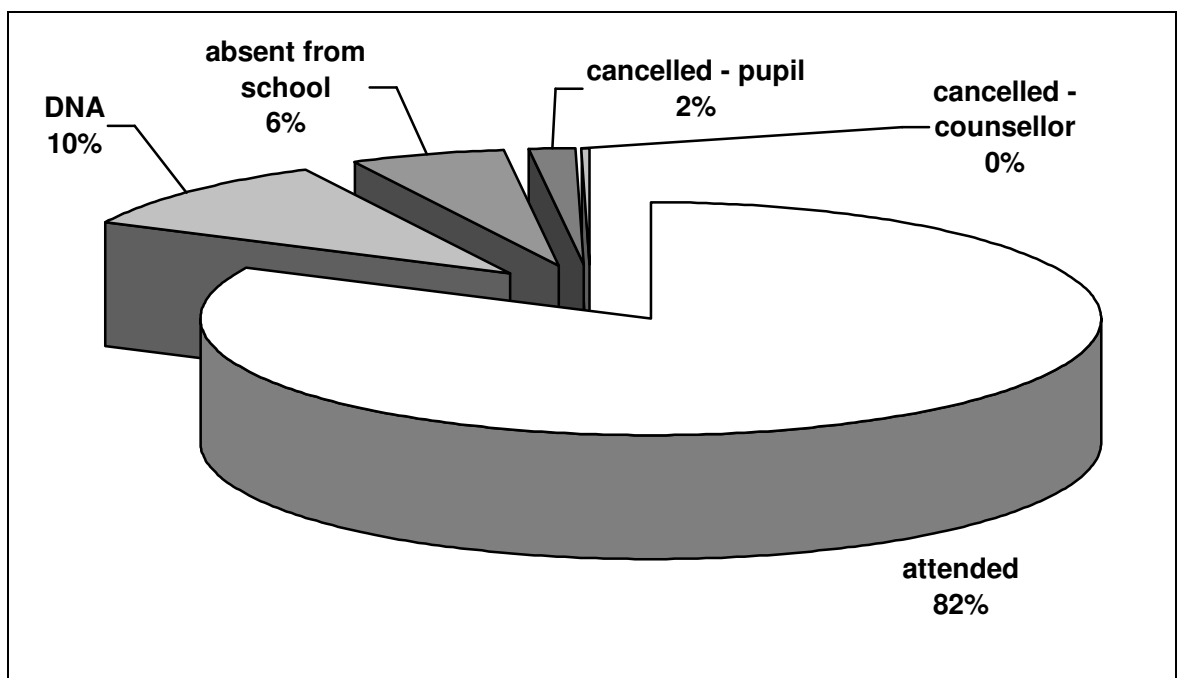
Figure 4: Proportion of sessions attended and missed[6]

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[6] Two sessions in total were cancelled by the counsellor, or 0.2%.

Sources of referral

Sources of referral can be seen in figure five, which shows that guidance teachers were the most common point of entry into the counselling service: involved in 72 percent of all referrals (note that the total number of referral sources is somewhat more than 197, as counsellors may have indicated more than one source of referral). In only eight instances (4%) was the referral sources indicated solely as 'self': consisting of six females and two males.
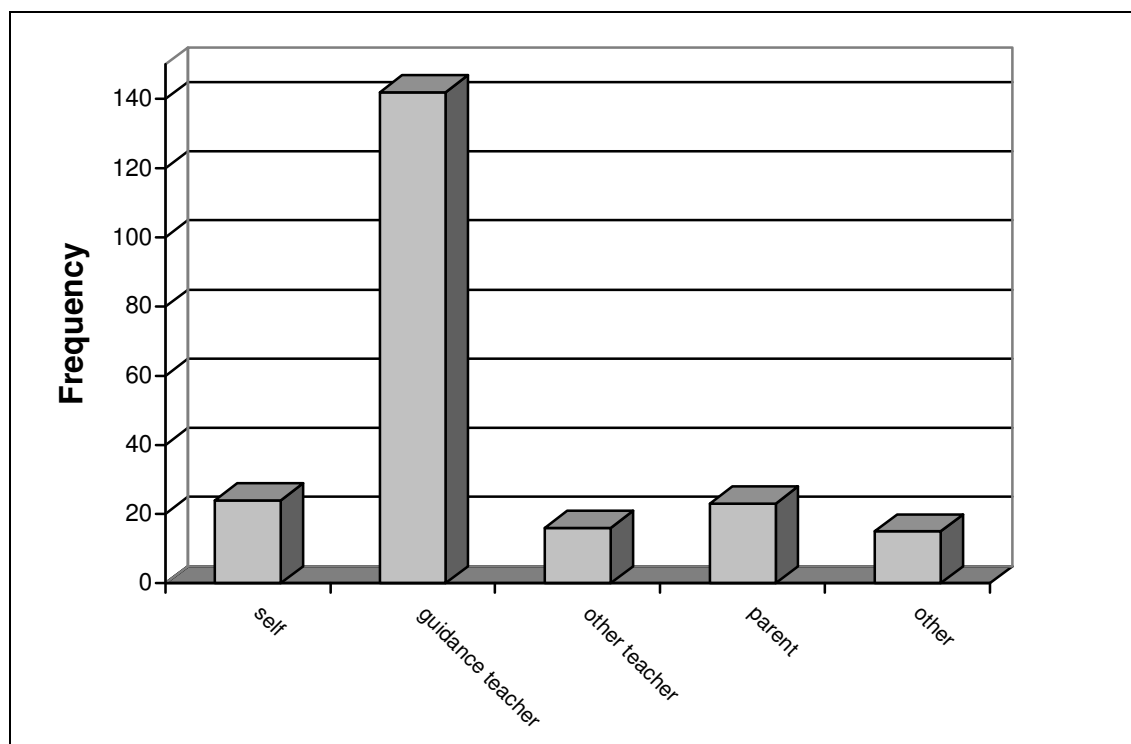
Figure 5: Sources of referral

Onward referrals

Just twelve of the clients across the three schools (6%) were referred to another agency, either after or during the counselling. Five of these were referred to psychiatric services, one to their GP, and two to welfare and social services. In addition, during or following counselling, four clients were referred by their GP to psychiatric services.

Parental awareness

Figure six presents the counsellors' recordings of whether or not their clients' parents/carers were aware that he or she was attending counselling. As can be seen, in over half of these cases, the counsellor did not, or was not able to, establish whether or not this was the case (this includes eleven instances in which no recording was made). However, in 91 percent of the cases where the counsellor did establish whether or not parents/carers were aware that their child was in counselling, parents were recorded as being aware. Because of the small number of pupils whose parents/carers were recorded as not being aware, it was not possible to see if this level of awareness differed significantly across sexes. However, of the eight cases in which parents/carers were not aware, six were female (5.9% of females) and two were male (2.4% of males).
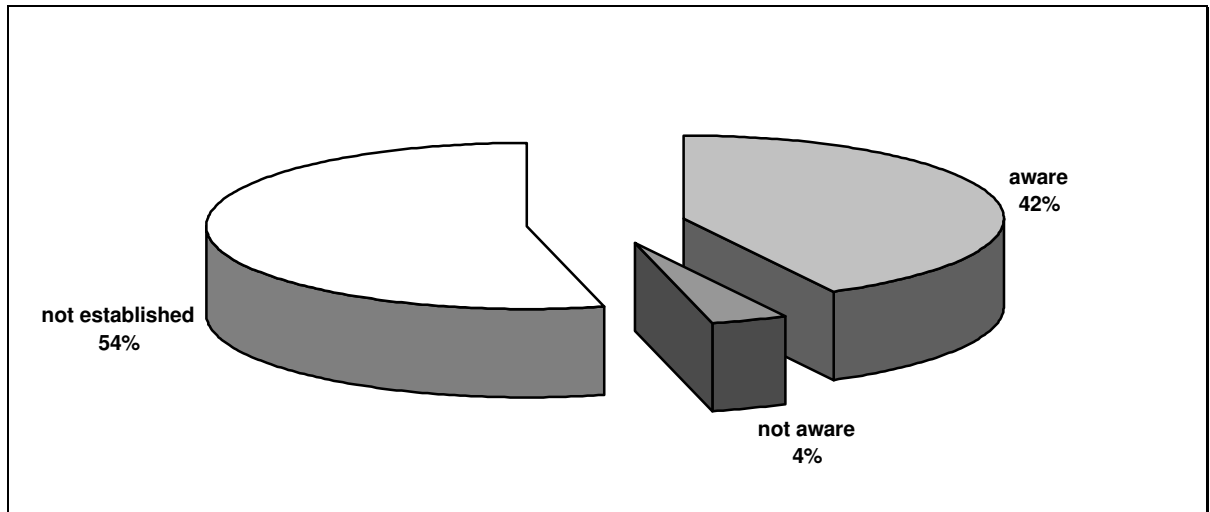
Figure 6: Parental awareness that client was attending counselling

Presenting and developing issues

Figure seven shows the presenting issues that clients brought in to counselling, broken down by sex. These presenting issues were recorded by the counsellor, and then coded into a fixed number of categories by the evaluator, who used a modified list of categories developed by the BACP's Association of University and College Counsellors.
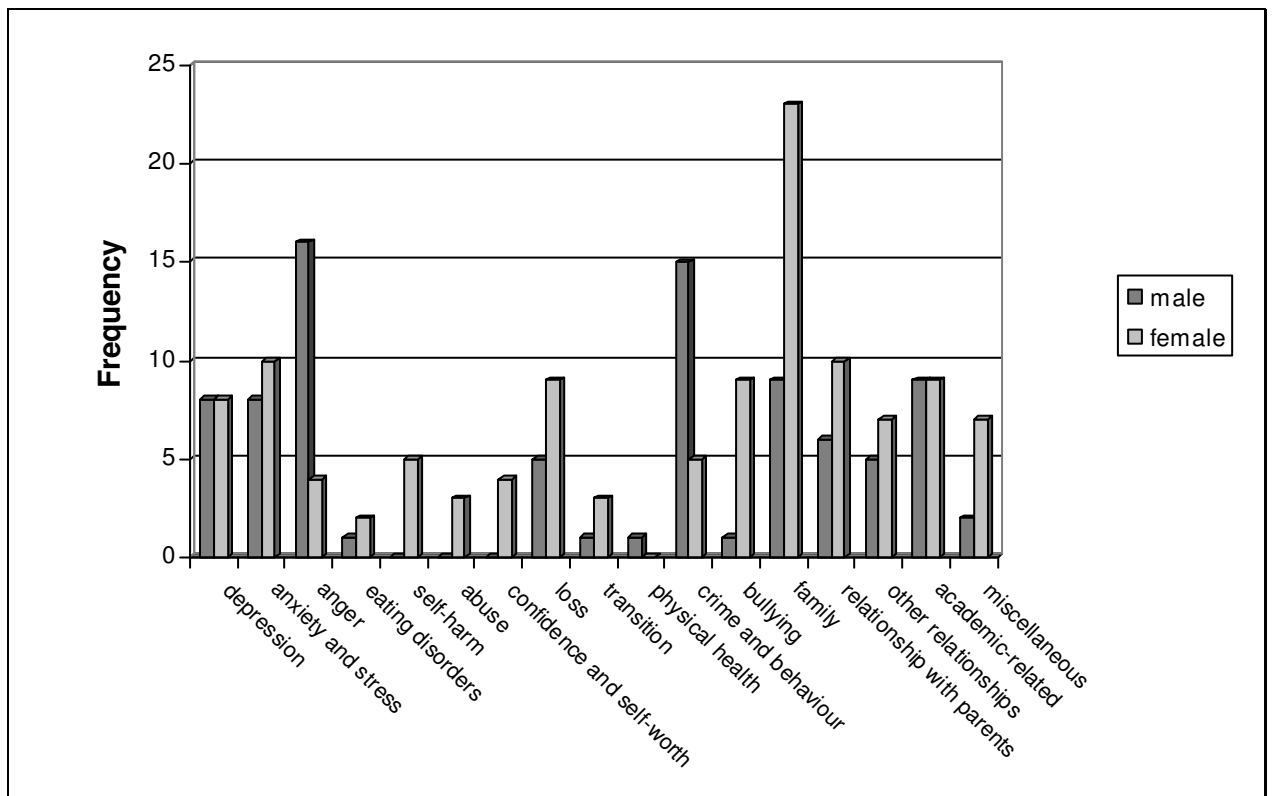
Figure 7: Presenting issues by sex

Across the sexes, the most common presenting issues were: family (n = 32); behaviour, misbehaviour and crime (n = 20); anger (n = 20); anxiety and stress (n = 18); academic-related (n = 18); depression (n = 16); relationships with parents (n = 16); loss (n = 14); other-

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relationships or relationships in general (n = 12) and bullying (n = 10) (as earlier, these figures add up to more than the total number of clients, as some clients were recorded as bringing more than one issue). However, as figure seven shows, whilst the top issues for females, in descending order, were family; anxiety and stress; and relationships with parents: the top issues for males, in descending order, were anger; behaviour, misbehaviour and crime; academic-related and family.

Figure eight shows the developing issues that emerged in counselling, as defined by the counsellors, broken down by sex.
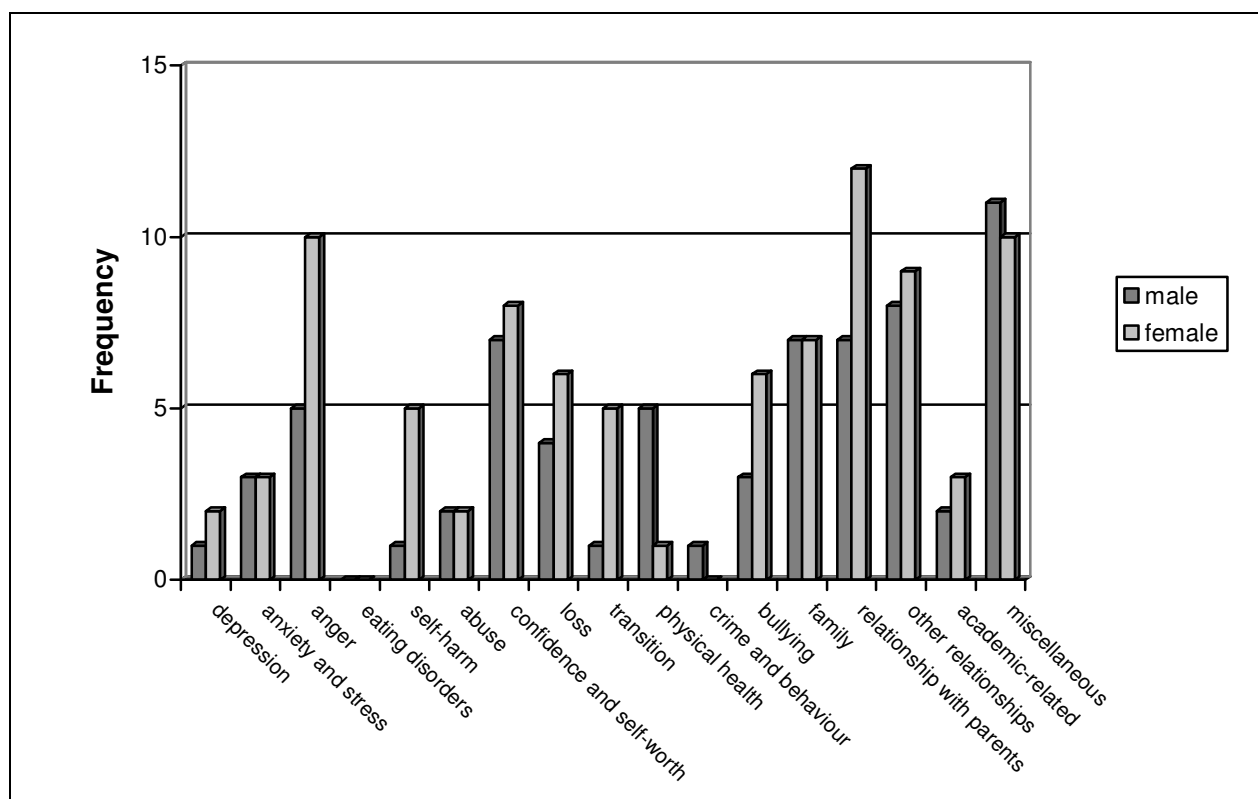
Figure 8: Developing issues by sex

Across the sexes, the most common developing issues, after those in the miscellaneous category, were: relationships with parents (n = 19); other relationship and relationships in general (n = 17); confidence and self-worth (n = 15); anger (n = 15); and family (n = 14). However, as this figure shows, whilst the top developing issues for females, in descending order, were relationships with parents; anger; and other relationship or relationships in general: the top three developing issues for males, in descending order, were other relationships and relationships in general; relationships with parents; family; and confidence and self-worth.

Combining presenting and developing issues, the most frequently raised in counselling were: family (n = 46); anger (n = 35); relationship with parents (n = 35); and other relationships or relationships in general (n = 24).

Waiting lists

During the collection of the data, guidance coordinators were asked at roughly two month intervals to inform the evaluators as to the size and length of their waiting lists for counselling.

Throughout this period, there was no, or only a minimal, waiting list at either School B and School C, and pupils were nearly always seen within two to three weeks of referral. By contrast, at School A, the waiting list averaged around 18 pupils with an approximate seven month wait for counselling, though urgent referrals could be seen sooner. By the end of the summer term 2004, however, this waiting list had decreased to zero.

Summary of findings

• One hundred and ninety seven recorded referrals were made to the Counselling in Schools Project across the three schools
• The greatest numbers of pupils attending the service came from the mid-school years, in particular S3 and S4
• Fifty-five percent of the clients using the service were female and forty-five percent were male
• The mean number of sessions offered to clients was 5.62 with a median number of three
• Clients attended 82 percent of sessions offered
• Guidance teachers were involved in 72 percent of all referrals
• Only four percent of referrals were solely self-referrals
• Relationship- and family-related concerns were the most common issues that clients presented and explored in counselling
• In one school there was an extensive wait for counselling, whilst waiting times were relatively short for the other two schools

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AIMS OF THE EVALUATION

The University of Strathclyde Counselling Unit's initial tender paper for the schools counselling service proposed that the evaluation of the service should aim to audit levels of user satisfaction, assess clinical outcomes, and 'look at all aspects of the project…from the perspective of all the stakeholders involved.' These primary aims were revised and refined through consultation and discussion with the Greater Glasgow NHS Board and the Project's Steering Group, where it was suggested that the primary aim of the counselling service should be that the schools involved were satisfied with the service. On this basis, two strategies were adopted to identify what the schools and their staff members would consider appropriate criteria for success. First, as part of a questionnaire that was sent to all teachers in each of the three schools, teachers were asked: 'If the counselling service were judged a success after 18 months, what one criterion would you recommend that it meets?' Second, a similar question was asked to headteachers and guidance coordinators as part of a series of in-depth interviews conducted prior to the commencement of the counselling service.

TEACHERS' VIEWS

Fifty two of the 71 teachers who responded to the teachers' attitude questionnaire (73% of participants) answered the question regarding criterion for success.

The most common response to this question, given by sixteen of the teachers, was that the criterion should be whether the pupils, *themselves*, experienced the service as helpful: whether, for instance, they felt that it had met their needs, or had been useful or beneficial.

The second most frequent response, given by fifteen of the teachers, was that the criterion should be whether the service had increased the pupils' feelings of well-being: for instance, whether they felt happier, more confident, more positive about themselves, and more able to deal with their problems.

Four teachers said that the criterion should be that the counsellor would be available for more time and on more days by the end of the eighteen months. Four teachers also said that the criterion should be that, by the end of the eighteen months, the counselling service was seen as a resource and a support by pupils – and also by teachers (n = 1). In addition, four teachers said that the criterion should be that the service was used – or used more frequently – by pupils. Two teachers said that the criterion for success should be a closer relationship between the service and guidance teachers; and similar numbers said that 'confidentiality', increased numbers of self-referrals, and more pupils staying in school were criterion for success.

HEADTEACHERS' AND GUIDANCE COORDINATORS' VIEWS

From the interviews with headteachers and coordinators of guidance, there was a general acknowledgement that it was difficult to measure the success of a counselling service, and that no one criterion – such as a behavioural measure or mental health indicator – could be used as a generic measure of success. As one headteacher put it: 'The success can only be measured in terms of individual pupils.'

One headteacher and one guidance coordinator said that they felt pupil feedback on the counselling service was an important indicator of success. Indeed, this particular guidance coordinator felt that, if clients rated the service positively, then this was 'enough' for him/her. Other criterion for success identified by the headteachers and guidance coordinators included the clients feeling happier and more at ease with themselves and making educational progress. One of the guidance coordinators also said that a criterion for success would be the school pupils feeling that the school cares for them and provides something for them that they require. Alongside these pupil-orientated criteria, headteachers and guidance coordinators stated that feedback from teachers, parents and counsellors would be an important source of information regarding the success of the counselling project.

COMPONENTS OF THE EVALUATION

On the basis of these responses, it was decided that a central component of the evaluation strategy should be pupils' own evaluations of the counselling service: how much they felt it had helped them and how satisfied they were with it. A post-counselling satisfaction questionnaire and an interview schedule were therefore developed, to ascertain both a broad and in-depth understanding of how helpful the clients felt the counselling service had been.

In addition, it was decided to use a psychometric measure to assess more 'objective' changes in psychological well-being. From the stakeholders' responses it also seemed clear that it was important to evaluate the project from a variety of perspectives, and therefore guidance coordinators, guidance teachers and counsellors were also asked about their views on how much they felt the service had helped the young people involved.

Here, it should be noted that, because of limited funding for the evaluation, not all measures of success identified by the schools could be assessed. For instance, no attempt was made to ascertain parental views on the success of the counselling, either through general feedback or through more detailed instruments such as the Child Behaviour Checklist. Also, no follow-up studies were conducted to ascertain the long-term psychological benefits of the counselling work, although evidence suggest that young people's post-treatment gains tend to be maintained at follow-up (Kazdin, 2004). Due to limited funding, it was also not possible to ascertain the views of external and onward referral agencies, such as psychiatric services, regarding the successfulness or unsuccessfulness of the counselling service. This meant that it was not possible to see whether the existence of the school counselling service had increased, or reduced, the pressures on such services.

As well as assessing the extent to which the Counselling in Schools Project has achieved the criteria for success laid down for it, an important part of this evaluation process was to identify ways in which the counselling service could be improved, particularly with a view to future roll-out. Hence, within each of the above evaluation strategies, questions were also asked that could help the Project team to identify means of enhancing the service for future implementations. To further aid this development, a school-wide questionnaire study was conducted, such that more general questions like, 'What might pupils want from a counselling service?' and 'What might inhibit pupils from using a counselling service?' could be examined.

In terms of designing the evaluation, a primary concern was to try and ensure that the methodology was as unobtrusive as possible to the actual clients participating in counselling. Hence, there was an emphasis on using questionnaires and tests that were as brief as possible. This was particularly important given that many of the clients may have only been

attending counselling for one or two sessions, such that a lengthy post-counselling questionnaire or psychometric test could have taken up a substantial part of their counselling time. More broadly, though, a primary commitment of this evaluation was to try and ensure, as far as possible, that the evaluation strategies used would not in any way be detrimental to the clients and other participants involved; and would, ideally, be to their benefit. Hence, for instance, we decided not to send out Teen-CORE forms to clients who 'dropped out' of counselling, even though this would have improved our response rates, because we were concerned that a small handful may have become distressed answering the Teen-CORE questions without any professional support. We also paid scrupulous attention to maintaining the anonymity of the participants, even though, in some cases, this meant that we were unable to carry out analytical procedures that may have produced some informative findings[7].

Table one presents a summary of the key evaluation questions, and the research strategies used to address these questions.

Table 1: Summary of key evaluation questions and evaluation strategies

Evaluation questions	Evaluation strategies (primary strategies in bold)
1. Were clients satisfied with the counselling service/Did they feel that it had helped them?	**Post-counselling satisfaction questionnaires** **Interviews with clients**
2. Did the counselling service bring about improvements in the clients' psychological well-being?	**Pre- and post-counselling psychometric tests** **Guidance teachers' questionnaires** Post-counselling satisfaction questionnaires Interviews with clients Interviews with counsellors Interviews with guidance coordinators
3. How might the counselling service be improved for current and future implementations?	**Interviews with guidance coordinators** **Interviews with clients** **Interviews with counsellors** **School-wide questionnaire** Post-counselling satisfaction questionnaires Guidance teachers' questionnaires

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[7] For instance, client codes were not written on to the post-counselling evaluation forms, to ensure the absolute anonymity of these responses. However, this meant that clients' evaluation forms could not be linked to their Teen-CORE forms, such that we were unable to answer questions like, 'Is there a correlation between levels of satisfaction and reductions in psychological distress?'

METHODOLOGY

The basic design for this evaluation was a pluralistic one (see, for instance, Goss & Mearns, 1997), which aimed to combine elements of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, as well as obtaining multiple perspectives on the key issues under consideration. As is being increasingly recognised in the fields of social and psychological inquiry (for instance, McLeod, 2003) such an approach, through increasing the possibility of triangulation (i.e. viewing the same phenomenon from a range of angles), has the potential to enhance the reliability of the findings.

To further enhance the validity of this study, an external specialist in the field of counselling research – Professor John McLeod of the University of Abertay, Dundee – was asked to audit the results of the study prior to publication.

In-depth descriptions of the methodological steps adopted for the evaluation process can be found in appendix two, which presents the final version of the protocols used for the study. Below is a brief summary of each of the different evaluation strategies.

PRE- AND POST-COUNSELLING PSYCHOMETRIC MEASURE

Pupils who began counselling after the 24th of February[8] were also asked to complete a pre- and post-counselling Teen-CORE v.1 form (see appendix three).

Teen-CORE v.1 is a fourteen-item psychometric test which intends to measure adolescents' levels of psychological health. It was adapted for the 11-plus age group by Ian Wilkinson, a clinical psychologist based in Durham, from the CORE system (Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation) developed by the Psychological Therapies Research Centre at the University of Leeds (see, for instance, Barkham et al., 2001). CORE has proved to be a highly reliable and valid clinical measure, and is used widely within the National Health Service and other agencies providing therapeutic interventions for adults. Teen-CORE is now gaining an increasing profile within the field of young people's counselling, and has been used in a number of evaluations projects, such as the evaluation of the NSPCC's Schools Teams Service (Baginsky, 2004; Fox & Butler, 2003); and the evaluation of school counselling within the Northfield Associated School Group, Aberdeen (Loynd, 2002).

Analysis of a nation-wide data set (Twigg, 2004) suggests that the Teen-CORE has a satisfactory level of internal reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.75 (i.e., the fourteen items are predominantly measuring the same thing).

As a psychometric measure, Teen-CORE v.1 has a number of advantages. It is relatively easy for young people to complete, and is also relatively brief and therefore not too intrusive. Its main limitation, however, is that it is still a measure in development (the Counselling Unit at the University of Strathclyde is currently working closely with the CORE team and other professionals in the field to develop Teen-CORE v.2). This means that findings from this measure must be treated with some caution, and that a lack of clinical and non-clinical norms makes it impossible to establish levels of clinically significant change (only reliable change).

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[8] This date, as with the date for the commencement of using the post-counselling satisfaction questionnaires, does not correspond to the commencement of the counselling service, as the evaluator for the Project only arrived in post in January 2003.

At present, however, only a few self-report measures are available and well-tested for young people of secondary school age (Kazdin, 2004); and each of these have their own limitations. Some young people's counselling services, for instance, have attempted to use adult CORE to measure pre- and post-counselling changes, but, with a reading age of fifteen (Mellor, Clark, 2003, personal communication), it is not entirely appropriate for pupils in the younger secondary school years; nor has it been validated for this age group, and it is also about twice the length of Teen-CORE. Another general psychometric test that is sometimes used with young people is Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (see http://www.sdqinfo.com/), which has received preliminary validation and has published norms for clinical and non-clinical population (e.g. Goodman, 2001). However, this test requires young people to state their name (hence compromising anonymity) and also asks participants to rate their feelings *over the past month*, which would be problematic in assessing the impact of two or three week counselling interventions, as sometimes occurs in the Counselling in Schools Project. Finally, there is the American Youth Outcome Questionnaire (http://www.oqfamily.com/yoq-sr.htm) which has also received preliminary validation, but this is only for an American population, and the YO-Q also includes language that may be unfamiliar or off-putting for Glaswegian youth. Hence, despite its limitations, it was decided that the Teen-CORE v.1 was the most appropriate measure to use for the present evaluation.

POST-COUNSELLING SATISFACTION QUESTIONNAIRES

All pupils who completed counselling after the 24th of February, 2003 were asked to complete a post-counselling satisfaction questionnaire (see appendix four). This questionnaire contained both quantitative rating items and open-ended qualitative items, and was intended primarily to ascertain the pupils' levels of satisfaction with the counselling service, and the extent to which they felt it had helped them with their difficulties. It also gave the pupils an opportunity to describe *how* they felt the counselling service had helped them, and also any ways in which they felt the counselling service could be improved. A number of relatively standard satisfaction questionnaire items were also included in this questionnaire to enhance the reliability of the measure. Qualitative items from this questionnaire were coded and analysed by the evaluator into one or more categories.

INTERVIEWS WITH CLIENTS

To obtain a more in-depth understanding of how clients experienced counselling and the extent to which they found it helpful or unhelpful, a series of in-depth interviews were conducted with clients who had completed counselling. Due to the particularly sensitive nature of this aspect of the evaluation, additional ethical approval was sought, and obtained, from both the University of Strathclyde's Department of Educational Studies[9] ethics sub-committee and the University Ethics Committee.

To identify clients who might be willing to take part in these interviews, all pupils were asked, at the commencement of their counselling, whether or not they would be willing to talk to a researcher about their experience of counselling, and this was noted on their record form. The reason that this question was asked at the commencement of the counselling, rather than at its termination, was to increase the probability of interviewing clients who subsequently

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[9] Now the Department of Educational and Professional Studies.

dropped out of counselling, thus increasing the representativeness of the sample, and reducing any pro-counselling bias.

Around December 2003 and June 2004, the evaluator contacted the guidance coordinators at each of the three schools to set up interviews with the former clients. Names of all pupils who had agreed to be interviewed were passed from the counsellor to the guidance coordinator, and all of these pupils were then sent a letter (see appendix five) asking if they still wished to be interviewed. All pupils who assented where then assigned an interview time.

All of the interviews were conducted by the evaluator, and followed the principles of an in-depth, qualitative inquiry (Kvale, 1996), although a relatively structured interview schedule was used (see appendix six for the final version). At the commencement of the interview, the aims and nature of the research were explained to the interviewee, and he or she was given a further opportunity to withdraw from the study. He or she was then asked a series of questions. As a further ethical precaution, the first three interviewees were all asked how they had experienced the interview process, and all reported that it had been 'OK' or 'fine.'

The interviews were recorded electronically, transcribed by secretarial staff working for the Counselling Unit, and then checked by the evaluator. They were then analysed with the aid of 'NVivo,' a qualitative analysis software package[10]. The procedure used for this analysis was as follows. First, the evaluator read through each of the interviews and identified some common themes. These were then entered into the NVivo program as categories and sub-categories (or, in NVivo terms, 'nodes'), and each of the interviews were coded according to these categories, with substantial revision, refinement, deletion, and addition of categories throughout this process. The evaluator then went through each of the categories, checking the correspondence between category and data: a process which, again, entailed substantial re-coding of interview data and rearrangement of categories and sub-categories. The next stage was for the evaluator to go back through each of the interviews, and re-code any additional material on the basis of the revised categories. Category by category, the responses were then written up in the form of a narrative (generally excluding nodes where only one participant had given that response): a process which, again, involved some re-coding of material and rearrangement of categories.

GUIDANCE TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRES

In June 2003 and June 2004, guidance teachers at each of the three schools were asked to complete a brief evaluation form, indicating how helpful they felt the counselling service had been to their pupils over the preceding year (see appendices seven for the 2004 form). The key question on this form asked guidance teachers to rate, on a one to ten scale, how helpful or unhelpful they felt the counselling service had been to those pupils of theirs that they were aware had used it. The questionnaire also asked participants to indicate how many of their guidance pupils, as far as they knew, had attended the counselling service; their views on how the counselling service might be improved; and any other comments that they had on the counselling service. Qualitative responses to this questionnaire were coded by the evaluator.

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[10] Like word processing packages, qualitative analysis software can help in the organisation of data. However, unlike a quantitative analysis package, it can not in any way indicate the meaning of the findings, or compute results.

INTERVIEWS WITH COORDINATORS OF GUIDANCE

In March 2003, all coordinators of guidance at each of the three schools participated in in-depth interviews, lasting approximately forty-five minutes (in one of these interviews, a senior colleague in the school's guidance program also participated) (see appendix eight for interview schedule). As with the other aspects of the evaluation process, these interviews had two main foci. First, guidance coordinators were asked their views on how the Counselling in Schools Project was progressing, and whether they believed that it was helpful to their pupils. Second, they were asked about particular obstacles that they had encountered in the development of the Project, and ways in which they felt that the Project might be improved for future implementations. Towards the end of the Project, in June 2004, guidance coordinators were re-interviewed and given an opportunity to revise and update any comments they had made the previous year. Interviews were coded and analysed by the evaluator using NVivo, as per the client interviews.

INTERVIEWS WITH COUNSELLORS

In June 2003, both counsellors also participated in in-depth interviews, lasting approximately 35 minutes each. The questions here were similar to those questions asked to the guidance coordinators: Did they feel that the counselling was helping their clients? What obstacles had they encountered in the establishment of the counselling service? And, What had they learned for future implementations? (see appendix nine for interview schedule). Again, in June 2004, the counsellors were then offered an opportunity to revise and update any comments they had made the year previously.

SCHOOL-WIDE QUESTIONNAIRE

To develop a wider understanding of how pupils across the schools perceived counselling, a school-wide questionnaire was developed (see appendix ten). This questionnaire contained a mixture of qualitative and quantitative response-format items, and attempted to identify answers to many of the questions that had been raised in the steering group meetings, and other aspects of the evaluation. For instance: How aware are pupils of the counselling services at their schools? Would they use these services? What do they imagine that a counsellor does? What might they want from a counsellor? What would stop them using the counselling service? What would make them more likely to use the counselling service? Would they rather see a male or female counsellor? Would they rather see a counsellor in the school or outside? Would they rather see a counsellor alone or in a group? And, How important, overall, did they think a counselling service was? Pupils were also asked to give details about their year, sex and ethnic origin.

Pre-given, fixed responses to the quantitative format items were generated through examining previous studies in this area, discussions with the steering group, and also on the basis of responses given in the client interviews. An initial version of the questionnaire was then piloted with a focus group of approximately eight pupils, who gave detailed feedback on the questionnaire. This led to some further revisions.

A final version of the questionnaire was then given to guidance coordinators, who were asked to distribute the forms to one class of pupils per year per school during PSE lessons.

Qualitative responses to the questionnaire were coded and analysed by a research assistant brought in specifically for this purpose, and audited by the evaluator.

RESULTS

PSYCHOMETRIC TESTS

Pre- and post-counselling scores on Teen-CORE v.1 were obtained from 73 of the clients. This represents approximately 68 percent of the clients who began counselling after the 24th February 2003 and met the criteria for involvement in the Teen-CORE evaluation[11]. Thirty of these clients were males and 43 females; 35 from School A, 14 from School B, and 24 from School C. Twelve of these clients were 12 years old at the time of commencing counselling, 16 were 13 years old, 23 were 14 years old, 17 were 15 years old, three were 16 years old and two were 17 years old.

Internal reliability for the scores on the Teen-CORE v.1 measure for the Counselling in Schools Project dataset was identical to those from the nation-wide data set – a Cronbach's alpha of .75 – suggesting sufficient levels of internal reliability.

Overall, t-tests revealed a significant reduction in levels of psychological distress from pre- to post-counselling ($p < .01$), with a pre-counselling mean of 1.88 (standard deviation (sd) = 0.65) and a post-counselling mean of 1.38 (sd = 0.73) (see figure 9).
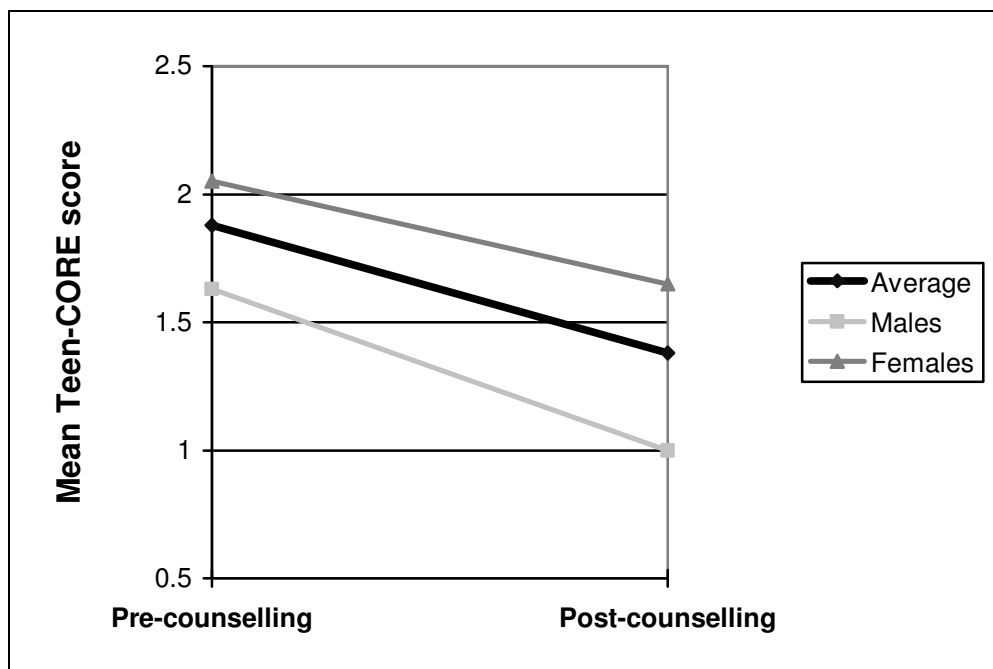
Figure 9: Pre- and post-counselling Teen-CORE scores (higher scores = more distressed)

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[11] This figure is approximate as dates of attendance had not been included on the initial client record sheets, such that it was not possible to identify which clients had commenced counselling after 24th February 2003. However, the numbers that had begun counselling prior to this date was known (n = 52), and this figure was subtracted from the overall number of clients, giving 145 clients who had commenced counselling after this date. An overall percentage of clients who attended two or more sessions was then calculated (74%), such that an approximate percentage of clients attending two or more sessions, and commencing after February 2003, could be calculated: 107.

This gives an overall mean reduction of 0.50 on the Teen-CORE scores, which does not differ significantly from the mean reduction in these scores on the nation-wide data set, of 0.64[12] (Twigg, 2004). Such a reduction equates to a pre- to post-counselling 'effect size' (d) of 0.73, which is in the 'medium' to 'large' range (Cohen, 1988).

In terms of reliable change, calculations from the Teen-CORE v.1 pilot evaluation (Twigg, 2004) suggest that pre- to post-counselling changes can be considered 'reliable' if participants' scores have changed by at least .8796 from pre- to post-counselling. On this basis, 28.8% of our clients showed reliable improvement following counselling, 69.9% showed no reliable change, and 1.4% showed a reliable deterioration. Again, this does not differ significantly from the national average (Twigg, 2004).

Male and female clients did not differ significantly in the extent to which their levels of psychological distress were reduced following counselling (see figure 9), although females scored significantly higher on the measure of psychological distress at both the pre- and post-counselling stage ($p < 0.01$). A similar finding emerged for differences across age: that whilst older and younger pupils did not differ significantly in the extent to which their levels of psychological distress were reduced following counselling, a significant positive correlation existed between age and overall levels of psychological distress ($p < 0.01$), with older pupils rating themselves as having more distress. These findings are similar to those obtained from the national data-set (Twigg, 2004). No significant differences were found in reductions of levels of psychological distress across schools, age of clients, whether clients had completed counselling or not, and the number of sessions that clients had had.

Figure ten presents the pre- and post-counselling Teen-Core scores for the individual Teen-Core items, in descending order of extent of pre- to post-counselling change. As can be seen from this figure, the greatest change was on the item 'I have felt unhappy,' where the reduction from a score of 2.49 to 1.47 reflects, in qualitative terms, a reduction from an average rating midway between 'Sometimes' and 'Often' feeling unhappy over the last week, to midway between 'Only occasionally' and 'Sometimes'. Other individual items that showed significant reductions from pre- to post-counselling were: 'I have done very well this week,' 'It has been hard to go to sleep or stay asleep,' 'I have quite liked myself,' 'I have felt a bit nervous or scared,' 'I have felt I can get over it when things go wrong,' 'I have done very well this week,' and 'There has been someone I can ask for help' ($p < 0.01$). At the other end of the scale, the one item that showed a non-significant increase from pre- to post-counselling was, 'I have felt good about someone close to me.'

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[12] This slight, albeit non-significant, difference between mean reductions of Teen-CORE scores in the present sample and the national sample is probably due to two factors: the higher response rate in the present evaluation (such that it includes the scores of clients who might not have otherwise completed post-counselling forms); and the fact that the minimum number of sessions for pre- and post-testing to take place was set at two, compared with higher minimums in other studies.
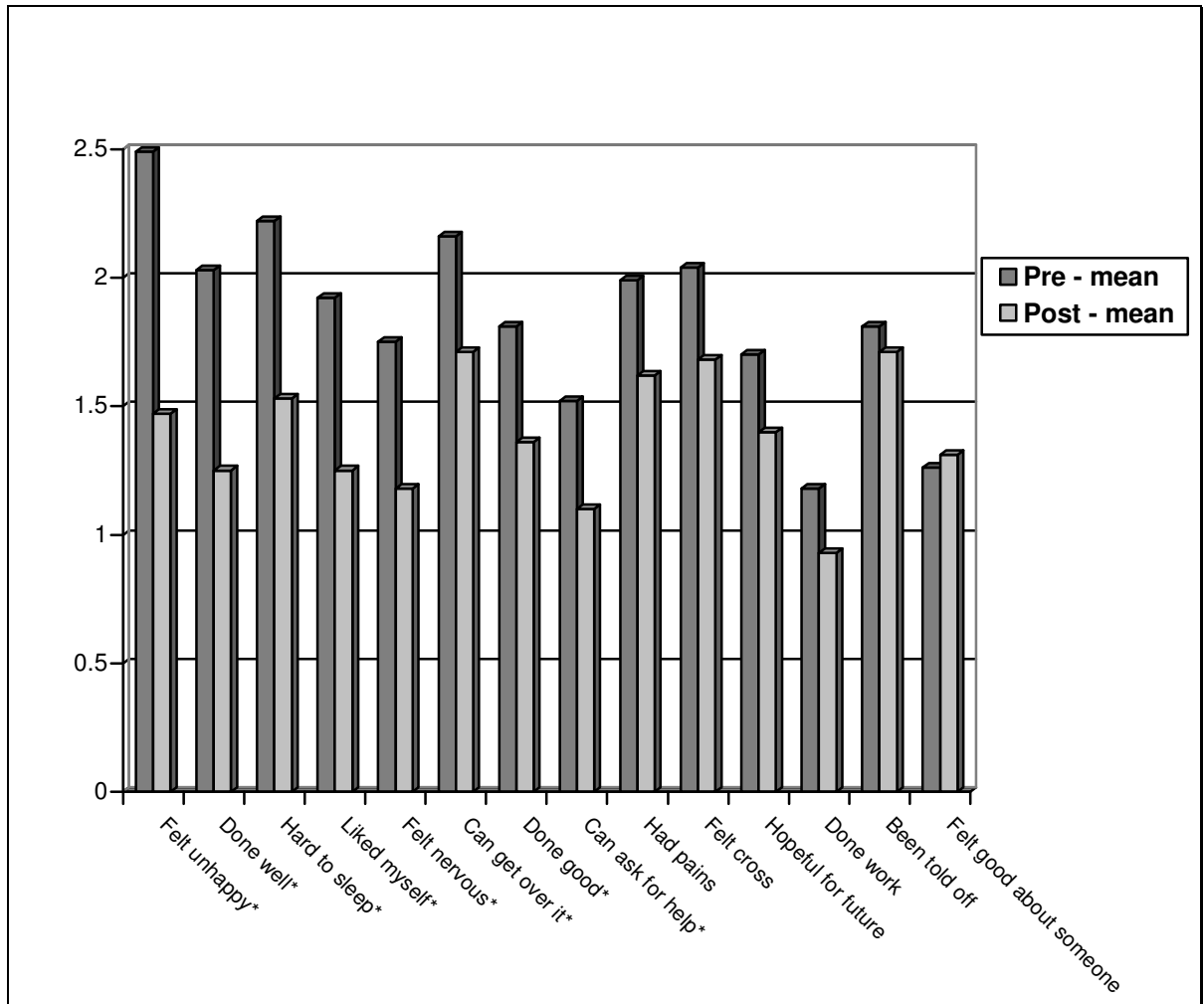
Figure 10: Pre- and post-counselling Teen-Core scores for individual items

Summary of findings
• Counselling brought about significant reductions in levels of psychological distress, with an overall effect size in the medium to large range
• Just under one third of clients showed reliable improvement following counselling, with only one percent showing a reliable deterioration
• Reductions in levels of psychological distress were in line with national averages

CLIENT SATISFACTION QUESTIONNAIRES

One hundred and seventeen pupils completed service evaluation forms, representing 69% of those pupils who completed counselling after the designated date of 24th February 2003. Of these, sixty-one were female and fifty six were male. Fifty-eight of these respondents were from School A (87% of clients from this school), 25 were from School B (52% of clients from this school), and 34 were from School C (63% of clients from this school). Sixteen of the respondents were in S1, 21 were in S2, 36 were in S3, 28 were in S4, ten were in S5, and six were in S6.

Eight percent of the total respondents said that they had seen the counsellor once, 51 percent said that they had seen the counsellor between two and five times, 27 percent said that they had seen the counsellor between six and ten times, and 13 percent said that they had seen the counsellor 11 or more times.

Eighty-five percent of the total respondents said that they had heard about the counselling service through their guidance teacher; three percent said that they had heard about it through a presentation; and one percent said that they had heard about it through a friend. Seventeen respondents (15%) said that they had heard about the counselling through an other source: year head (n = 6), guidance coordinator (n = 4), teacher (n = 2), mum (n = 2), 'school' (n = 1), focus group (n = 1) and headteacher (n = 1).

Pre-counselling information

Ninety-nine of the respondents (85% of the total respondents) said that they felt that they had had enough information about the counselling service before they had met their counsellors, with fourteen (12%) saying that they felt that they did not. Of these latter respondents, five said that they would have liked to have known what actually happens in counselling, three said they would have liked to have known how the counselling might help them, three said that they would have liked to have known that the school had a counsellor, and one said that they would have liked to have known where the counsellor was.

Levels of satisfaction

One hundred and sixteen of the total respondents answered the question, 'Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied with the counselling service were you?' (see figure 11). As can be seen from this figure, the modal response was 'very satisfied,' with 103 of the respondents (88% of the total respondents) saying that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the counselling service. The mean score on the -2 to +2 scale was 1.35 (sd = .76).

A three way analysis of variance using sex, school and year as fixed factors found no significant differences in levels of satisfaction across these variables. However, a one way analysis of variance found that levels of satisfaction with the counselling did vary positively with number of visits (p < 0.01). Specifically, the mean satisfaction rating for respondents who had visited the counsellor once was 1.22, for respondents who had visited the counsellor two to five times was 1.20, for respondents who had visited the counsellor six to ten times was 1.48, and for respondents who had visited the counsellor eleven or more times was 1.80.
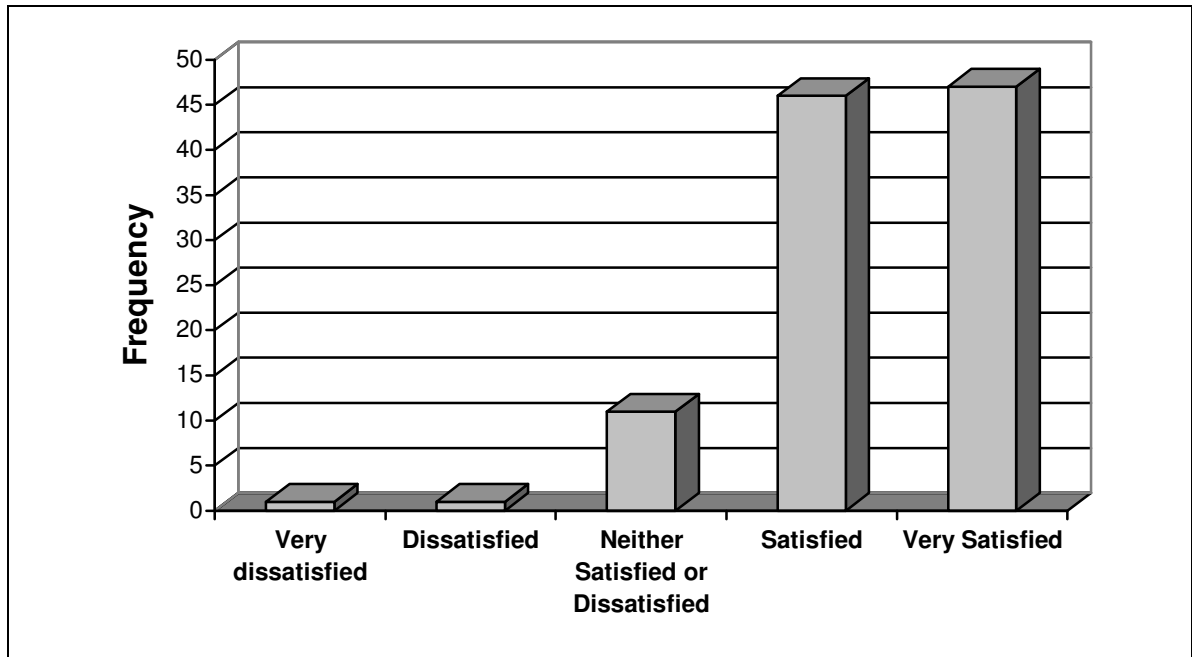
Figure 11: Levels of satisfaction

Helpfulness and unhelpfulness

One hundred and sixteen of the total respondents answered the question, 'Overall, to what extent do you think counselling has helped you?' Here, the modal response was 'quite a lot,' with 86 of the respondents (74% of the total respondents) saying that it had helped them either 'A lot' or 'Quite a lot,' and five respondents (4%) saying that it had not helped them at all (see figure 12).
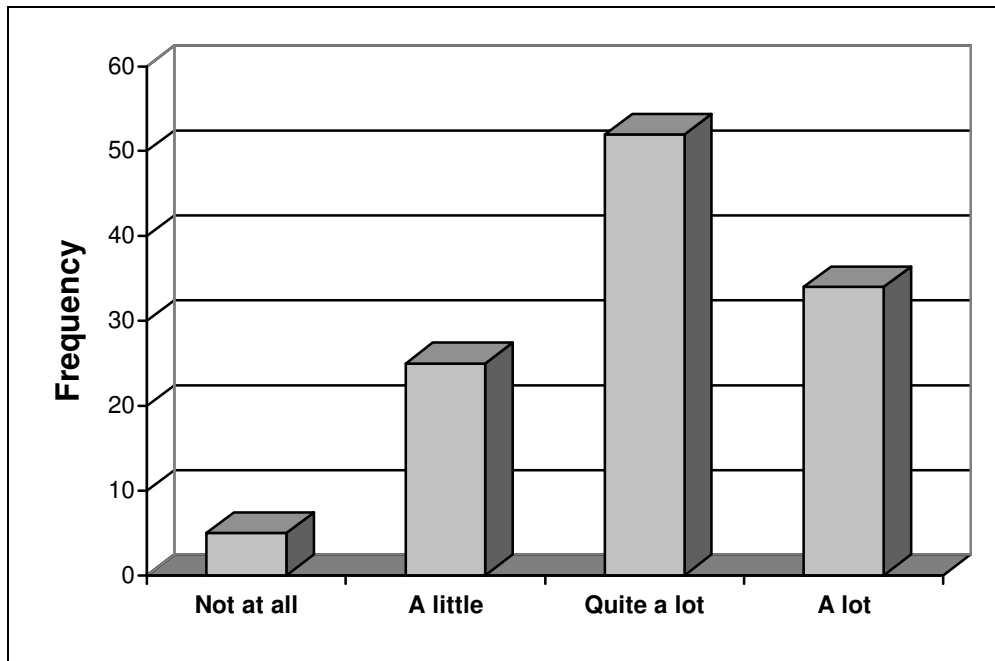
Figure 12: Perceived helpfulness of service

A three way analysis of variance using sex, school and year as fixed factors found no significant differences in levels of perceived helpfulness across these variables. Again,

however, significant differences did exist in levels of helpfulness for number of visits ($p < 0.01$), with a mean helpfulness rating of 1.56 for respondents who had visited the counsellor once, 1.82 for respondents who had visited the counsellor two to five times, 2.16 for respondents who had visited the counsellor six to ten times, and 2.53 for respondents who had visited the counsellor eleven or more times.

In terms of the extent to which the counselling had helped them in specific areas, 77 of the respondents (65.8% of the total respondents) said that the counselling had helped them deal more effectively with their problems 'a lot' or 'quite a lot.' In subsequent descending order, 66 (56.4%) said that the counselling had helped them improve how things are at school to this extent; 65 (55.6%) said that the counselling had helped them improve how things are at home to this extent; 62 (53%) said that the counselling had helped them improve their relationships with others to this extent; and 59 (50.4%) said that the counselling had helped them feel better about themselves to this extent. Here, a principal components factor analysis on the scores for these five items identified one factor accounting for 64% of the variance, suggesting that respondents had primarily responded to these items along a single helpful-unhelpful dimension, rather than discriminating between the helpfulness of the counselling in these different domains.

With respect to differences across sex, school, year and number of visits for these five items, a multivariate analysis of variance found significant differences only for sex. Univariate tests showed that males, as compared with females, were significantly more likely to rate the counselling as helping them to feel better about themselves (male mean = 1.98, female mean = 1.35, $p < 0.05$), and improve how things are at school (male mean = 2.00, female mean = 1.49, $p < 0.05$).

How the counselling helped
Ninety-seven of the respondents (83%) gave an answer to the open-ended question, 'If counselling helped you, please write how it was useful to you.' Responses were coded into one or more of the categories (see summary in table one at end of section).

Talking and being listened to
The largest category was 'talking and being listened to,' in to which 33 of the respondents' responses (28% of the total responses) were coded. Here, respondents indicated that the counselling was useful because they had a chance to talk about their problems to someone who listened (spellings and grammar as per original):

> It just helped having someone at school who I could talk to.

> It just let me talk about things which was good.

> The counselling was very good, as it helped me to talk to someone who actually wanted to listen and help me and I didn't feel as though I was wasting someone's time.

Feeling understood

Closely related to this, seven of the respondents (6%) said that what had been useful was to feel that there was someone who understood their difficulties, and that they were not alone with their problems:

> I felt less stressed to know that people understood and could listen to me.

> The counsellor knew what I was going through, so I felt happy to know that someone knew what I was going through.

> I feel safer knowing someone knows what your going with your problems.

Getting things off one's chest

Also related to being able to talk was a response given by 19 of the respondents (16%), that the counselling was useful because it helped them 'get things off their chest.' Respondents, here, used numerous metaphors to convey this experience of being able to express the things that they normally kept private:

> It let out what was inside me.

> It…felt like a weight being lifted.

> I felt that it was good for me to pour out my problems to the councellor.

> It made me get my problems out of my system.

Insight and awareness

For six of the respondents (5%), the value of counselling was that it helped them develop greater insight and awareness into their thoughts, feelings and behaviours, as well as the particular situation that they were in.

> It made me realise why I had done certain things.

> I have understood my problems and what is the root of them.

> Made me more aware of feelings + other peoples.

Problem-solving

Seven of the respondents (6%) described how the counselling had helped them to solve their problems, and to find answers to the difficulties facing them:

> It creates a place for me to work through my problems and my thoughts.

> It helped me by finding out about different ways of how to deal with things.

It helped me make a lot of good decisions.

Closely related to this, two additional respondents (2%) described how the counselling had helped them think more clearly about their problems.

Guidance and advice

Nine of the respondents (8%) said that the counselling had been helpful because of the guidance and advice that they had received from the counsellor:

She gave me good information and guidance.

I was given indirect advice as to stop certain features of myself which I disliked.

I know councillors can't tell you what to do with your life, but having someones opinion would give you a better idea of how to tackle a situation in which you are in. Just having someone to tell you the options and possibilities which you can choose from helps a lot especially if you don't know how to cope with something which has really go you down.

Confidentiality

When indicating how the counselling had been useful to them, nine of the respondents (8%) remarked on the confidentiality of the counselling service: that the counsellor was someone 'anonymous,' who they could tell things to without worrying that others would find out.

Specific improvements

Twenty-eight of the respondents (24%) answered the question of how the counselling had been useful to them by describing how it had helped them deal with specific problems: such as anger; bullying; and difficulties with school, relationships and feelings:

It helped me get over the death of my granddad and when I was getting bulled.

Extremely useful as I have now overcome my eating disorder, I'm a lot happier and feel good about my life and myself.

I've not had any punishments or referals.

The counciler helped me solve my problem to tell my guidy [guidance teacher] about a gang of boy's wanted to batter me.

It help me because I am not cheeky any more.

Self-esteem

Closely linked to these specific changes, nine of the respondents (8%) said that the counselling had helped them feel better about themselves and their lives.

It made me feel much more confident about myself.

It's taught me I can get through things when stuff go bad.

Sex differences in helpful factors

Table two presents a summary of the 'helpful' factors in descending order, with percentages of total male and female questionnaire respondents whose answers were coded under these categories. As can be seen here, females' responses tended to be coded more under 'talking and being listened to,' 'feeling understood,' 'getting things off one's chest,' and 'problem-solving;' whilst the males responses tended to be coded more under 'specific improvements,' and to a slight extent 'guidance and advice' and 'self-esteem.'

Table 2: Summary of helpful factors in descending order of total frequency

Category	Female %	Male %	Total %
1. Talking and being listened to	34	21	**28**
2. Specific improvements	20	30	**24**
3. Getting things off one's chest	20	13	**16**
4. Self-esteem	7	9	**8**
5. Guidance and advice	7	9	**8**
6. Confidentiality	8	7	**8**
7. Problem-solving	8	4	**6**
8. Feeling understood	11	0	**6**
9. Insight and awareness	5	5	**5**

Not helpful

Seven of the respondents (6%) gave an answer to the question 'If counselling didn't help you, please write why you think that was' (in addition, one of the respondents wrote a relatively critical comment in the 'how was counselling useful to you' box.)

In two instances, these respondents said that they felt that the counselling service was not as confidential as it should have been. These were the two clients who had rated themselves as 'dissatisfied, and 'very dissatisfied' with the counselling service. One wrote that the counsellor had betrayed their trust and that this had made things worse at home. The other wrote that they felt they couldn't tell the counsellor anything without it being passed on to someone else.

Two respondents said that they would have liked more input from the counsellor.

Although it was good to talk about my problems there was no feedback i.e. – did not discuss the way to go forward.

I thought I could have been given advice on how to cope with my matters.

In terms of why the counselling wasn't helpful, other responses given were:

It makes me more upset and think about the past.

It didn't help too much because I didn't talk a lot at the meetings. I don't think I was ready to talk about what happened.

Because I was too stubborn to pay attention to what the counsellor said.

Counselling didn't give me much confidence and by going to a counsellor it did not help me make friends.

Additional comments

Twenty-four of the respondents (21%) gave an answer to the question: 'If you have any comments that you think might help to improve the service, please write them below.'

Nine of these were positive comments about the service, or pupils expressing their thanks:

I am greatfull that my head teacher [name of guidance coordinator] got me into counselling with [name of counsellor] and I thank [name of counsellor] for what she done for me.

I think it was brilliant [Name of counsellor] was a great help to me!

In addition, four of the respondents (3%) said that the counsellor should be available for longer periods of time; four (3%) said that the counselling service should be better publicised and more information made available; three (2%) proposed different formats and strategies that the counsellor might like to use, such as groups, 'bean bag games,' and inviting pupils to write down their problems. One participant suggested that everyone should have an initial meeting with the counsellor to see if they want to come again.

Re-using the service

One hundred and fifteen of the respondents answered the question: 'On the basis of your experience, would you use the counselling service again?' (see figure 13). The modal response here was 'yes, definitely,' with one hundred and seven of the respondents (91% of the total respondents) saying that they would definitely or probably use the service again, and one participant (1%) saying that they definitely would not. As with levels of satisfaction and feeling helped, a three-way analysis of variance found no significant differences in responses across sex, year and school, but a significant effect for number of visits to the counsellor, with respondents who had visit the counsellor more times more willing to re-use the service ($p < 0.01$).
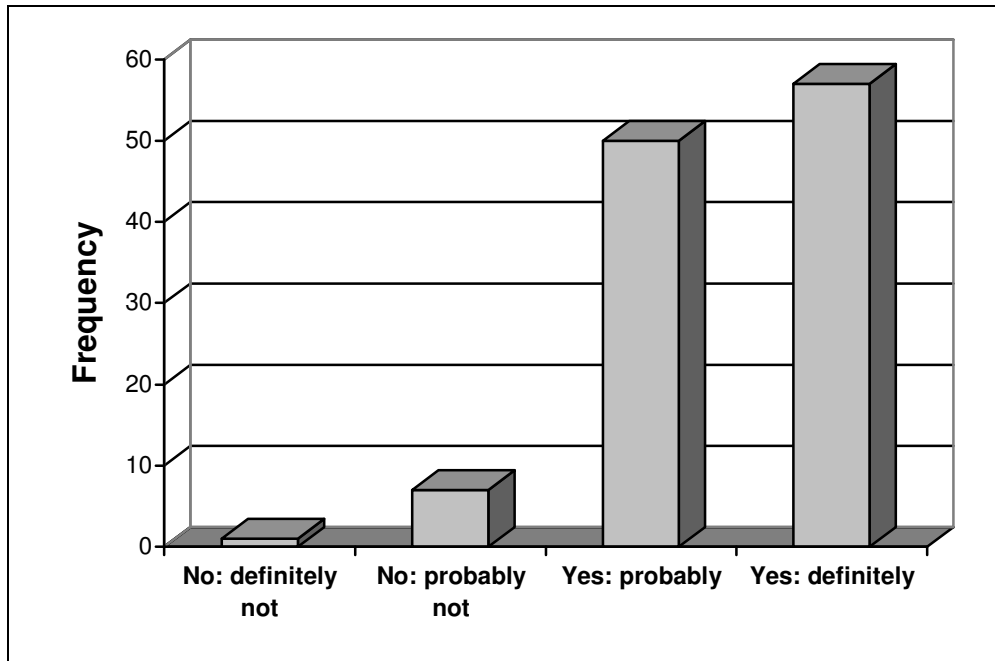
Figure 13: Willingness to re-use service

Recommending to a friend

One hundred and eleven of the respondents answered the question: 'On the basis of your experience, would you recommend the service to a friend?' (see figure 14).
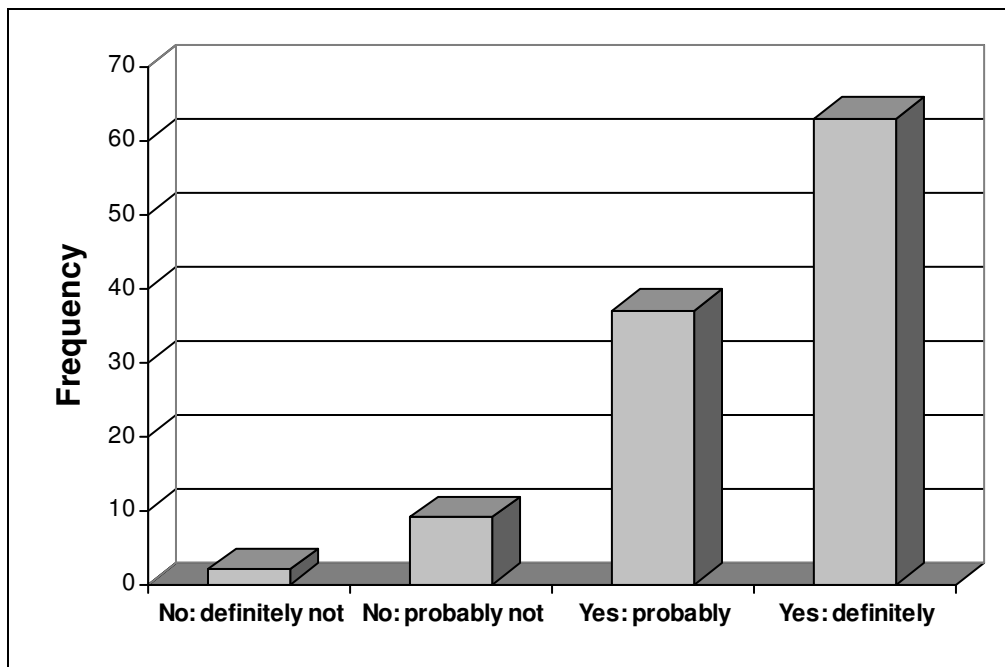
Figure 14: Willingness to recommend service to a friend

The modal response here was again 'yes, definitely,' with one hundred of the respondents (85% of the total respondents) saying that they would definitely or probably recommend the service to a friend, and two respondents (2%) saying that they definitely would not. Again, an analysis of variance found no significant differences in responses across sex, year and

school, but a significant effect for number of visits to the counsellor, with respondents who had visited the counsellor more times more willing to recommend the service to a friend ($p < 0.05$).

Importance of having a counselling service

All 117 respondents answered the question, 'Overall, on a scale of 0 to 10, how important do you judge it to be to have a school counsellor?' (see figure 15). The modal response here was 10 (n = 49) with a mean of 8.64 and a median score of 9 (0 = 'not at all important', 10 = 'essential'). Again, an analysis of variance found no significant differences in responses across sex, year and school, but a significant effect for number of visits to the counsellor, with respondents who had visit the counsellor more times rating the importance of having a counselling service as higher ($p < 0.01$).
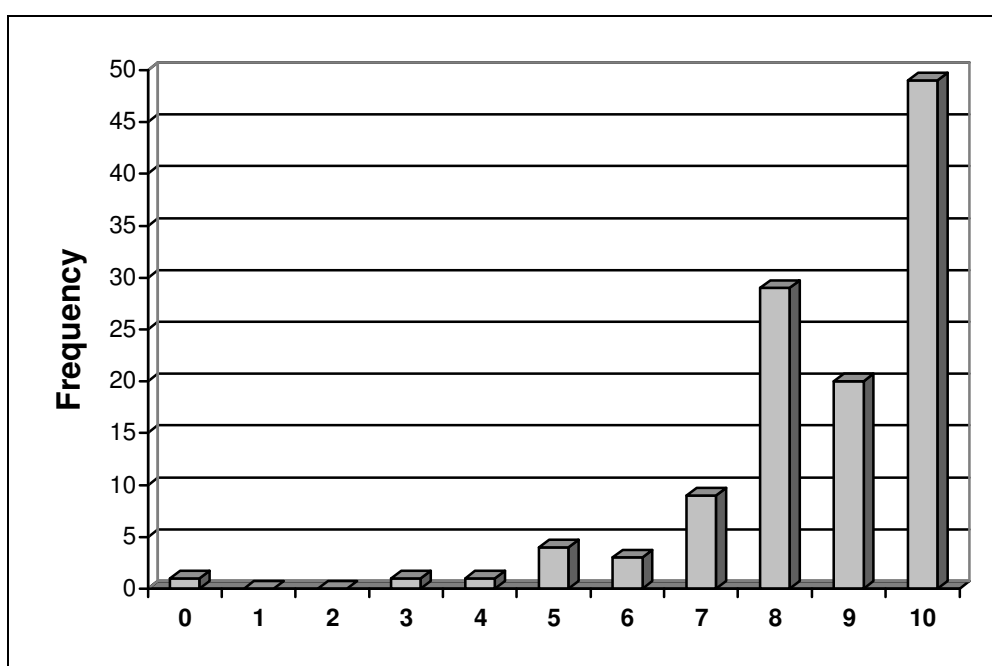
Figure 15: Ratings of the overall importance of having a school counsellor

Summary of findings

• Eighty-five percent of respondents said that they had had enough information about the counselling service prior to meeting the counsellor
• Eighty-eight percent of respondents said that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the counselling service
• Seventy-four percent of respondents said that the counselling had helped them either 'A lot' or 'Quite a lot'
• Males, as compared with females, were significantly more likely to rate the counselling as helping them to feel better about themselves and improve how things were at school
• Respondents most frequently said that the opportunity to talk and be listened to was the reason why the counselling had helped them, with 'getting things off one's chest' also a frequently-given response
• Ninety-one percent of respondents said that they would definitely or probably use the service again

• Eighty-five percent of respondents said that they would definitely or probably recommend the service to a friend
• On a zero to ten scale, clients gave the counselling service a mean rating of 8.64 in terms of importance

INTERVIEWS WITH CLIENTS

Nineteen ex-clients were interviewed for the evaluation between December 2003 and June 2004. Eleven of these interviewees were male and eight were female; seven were from School A, seven were from School C, and five were from School B. At the time of counselling, four of these interviewees had been in S1, seven had been in S2, five had been in S4, two had been in S5, and one had been in S6. On average, the participants had attended six sessions of counselling, with a maximum of 25 sessions and a minimum of two. On average, participants had ended counselling eight weeks prior to the date of interview, with a maximum of twenty weeks and a minimum of one week[13]. The interviews ranged in length from ten minutes and 31 seconds to 31 minutes and 38 seconds, with a mean average of sixteen minutes and seven seconds.

The referral process

Fourteen of the participants (68%) said that they had been referred to counselling by their guidance teacher or guidance coordinator, and that they had agreed to go. A further two participants (11%) said that they had been *instructed* to go by their guidance teacher or guidance coordinator. Both of these participants, however, described the counselling as a positive experience, and did not express any concerns over their mode of referral.

Two of the participants (11%) said that they had been referred to counselling by their year group head, and one (5%) said that the 'school' had told him about the counselling. In two instances (11%) the pupils reported that the process of being referred to the counselling service had been initiated by their head teacher.

Ten of the participants commented on how they had found the referral process, and all said that, overall, it was 'fine' or 'OK.'

In one instance, a participant reported that his mother's permission had been asked for by the year head teacher before he had started counselling. For the other participants, there were no indications that this was the case.

In fifteen of these interviews, participants were asked how they would have felt if their parents' or carers' permission had been sought. Here, six of the participants (40% of those asked this question) said that they would have been less likely to use the counselling service if parental permission had been sought, with three of these (20%) saying that, had this been the case, they probably wouldn't have attended counselling at all. One of the main reasons for this, given by four of the participants, was a concern that their parents/carers would then start to ask lots of questions about what they were talking about in counselling. Three of the participants (20%) said that it would have undermined their sense of control and free will:

> [I]f I'd felt like that school had gone over my head, I would probably have refused to go, because I'm like that kind of person, you know, like 'You're not putting me in therapy,' kind of…

In contrast, eight of the participants (53%) said that the seeking of parental permissions would not have made any difference to their willingness to attend counselling; and one participant

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[13] These maximums, minimums and averages are approximates, and based on participant recall.

(6%) said that it might have made it more likely that he would use the counselling service, on the grounds that his parents might then worry less about him.

Expectations

Nine of the participants (47%) expressed predominantly negative expectations of counselling:

> I didn't really think it would be much use.

> I thought that I would only go once and I wouldn't want to go back.

This was related to a number of expectations as to what might happen in counselling. Four of the participants (21% of the total participants) said that they had expected the counsellor to tell them what to do:

> Participant: [I] Thought it would be- she would be talking about my behaviour in class and…

> Interviewer: Did you think that she would be supportive or did you think she would be critical?

> Participant: I thought she would be, like, telling me what to do, rather than, like, supporting, like telling me what to do in class…

As well as telling them how to behave, one of the participants said that she thought the counsellor would try to change who she was, and 'take her personality away from her.'

Three of the participants (16%) said that they expected that they would be asked lots of personal questions by the counsellor, and would be pressurised into answering.

Three of the participants (16%) said that they had expected to have to lie down on a couch – as they had seen in films and on the television – with one participant going on to describe his expectation of a classic Freudian psychoanalysis:

> I thought it might be like 'lie down on a couch' or something…a bit, kind of, like, them having, sort of, like theories and stuff and obviously seeing the TV […][14] 'I think, you must hate your father', something like that, you know what I mean, that whole kind of thing, just the sort of thing you'd maybe get from TV.

Two of the participants (11%) said that they had expected the counselling to be in a group, where pupils would discuss their problems together.

Five of the participants (26%) described holding neither positive or negative expectations of counselling, four of the participants (21%) said that they had no expectations of what would happen in counselling, and just one of the participants (5%) said that he had expected the counselling to be a primarily positive experience.

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[14] Elipses in square brackets means that the transcriber was unable to identify what was spoken here.

Once they had started, ten of the participants (53%) said that they had found the counselling better than they had expected:

> I thought that I would only go once and I wouldn't want to go back, but, see, when I went once, I wanted to go back and talk more and everything.

> It was worth going, even if you don't want to go in the first place. Quite a lot of people would be apprehensive about it, but it does help once you go. I think it would help anyone who was having problems.

> [I]t was a lot more relaxed and a lot more friendly and made me feel better that it was like that, I could speak about what I wanted, when I wanted and not be pressured into answering what I didn't want to. It helped me a lot.

Four participants (21%) described the counselling as 'different' from what they had expected, two (11%) said that it was roughly the same, and three (16%) did not comment on how the counselling varied from their expectations. None of the participants said that the counselling was worse than what they had expected.

The counselling experience

Helpful aspects
Fifteen of the participants (79%) described their experience of counselling in predominantly – or entirely – positive terms, indicating that it had helped them quite a lot or a lot.

> I thought it was good, it helped me. It's improved my way in school, so I think it was good.

> I thought it was really, really good. It sorted myself out big time, so it was really good.

> It helped a lot with them [the problems], a lot of them. I don't, erm, have the same problems since I've been in counselling.

> I don't think it could be any better, I thought it was top standards, and if anybody was under depression, I recommend it to go to [name of counsellor]. I mean she did everything. She just listens to you, she doesn't say a word, she's just listening, it's really good. I mean, I think that's probably top you could get, the best, probably, and it was, like, really good. I mean, I've come over all that bit and I could recommend it to anybody. She was good.

To try and make some sense of why this counselling had been helpful to the clients, participants' responses regarding helpful activities were broken down into three 'domains':

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what the counsellors had done that seemed to be helpful; what they had done, as clients, that seemed to be helpful; and what the helpful outcomes were. Diagram one presents, in simplified graphical form, a model of the main categories that emerged in this analysis, and the hypothesised relationships between them. To give some idea of the frequency of responses, the font size of category labels in this diagram is proportional to the number of respondents whose responses were coded under that category.

The counsellor...

Listens

Expresses understanding

Doesn't criticise or judge

Doesn't direct

Doesn't try to
sort things out

Asks questions

Offers
suggestions
and advice

The client...

Reflects

Talks

Gets things off chest

Explores alternative
ways of behaving

The outcome...

Greater insight

Clearer in head

Reduction in tension

Positive changes
In behaviour
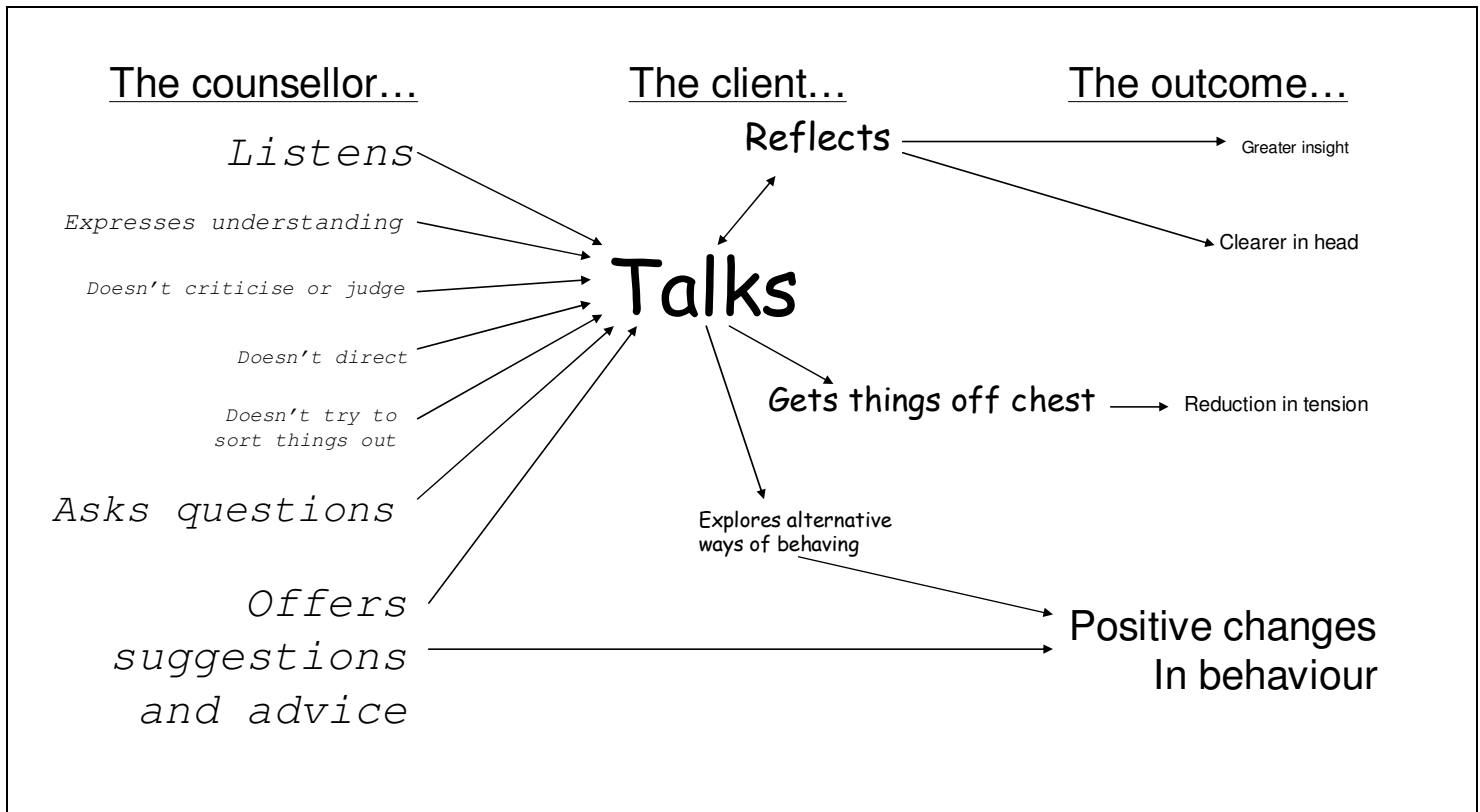
Diagram 1: Helpful aspects of therapy

COUNSELLOR ACTIVITIES

In terms of what the counsellor did that was helpful, eleven of the participants (58%) talked about the value of the counsellor simply *listening* to them:

> She just listens to you, she doesn't say a word, she's just listening, it's really good.

> [U]sually, when teenagers talk to, like, adults, they usually jump in mid-sentence and say, 'No, this is happening' or not doing what you want, but [name of counsellor] actually listened to what I had to say and then waited until I was finished to speak.

One of the participants compared this with her experience of psychiatric interventions:

> [W]ith the psychiatrist, it was all kind of– just bombarding me with things and it wasn't really getting to the root of the problem, but with [name of counsellor], it gave me time to talk about what I wanted to talk about and somebody just sitting there, listening to me.

With respect to listening, two of the participants (11%) added that they liked the fact that the counsellor didn't 'analyse' the things they said or 'jump to conclusions,' but focused on the things that they wanted to talk about. Three of the participants (16%) also commented on the fact that the counsellor seemed to have time to listen to them; and another three (16%) said that they valued the availability of the counsellor: that they could contact her and talk to her even during the summer break.

Closely related to this, six of the participants (32%) talked about the way in which the counsellor seemed to *understand* them: to see things from their perspective and empathise with what they were going through:

> [Y]ou could tell them how you felt and then they would understand, it was like they knew what you were talking about and they could understand you– that they knew where you were coming from.

Two of these participants (11%) described how, in feeling understood in this way, they began to feel more positive about themselves:

> [H]aving somebody understanding it from your point of view made you feel a bit better about yourself…and maybe that you weren't getting things wrong and doing something wrong but that it was– you know, you were doing your best and that– that was helpful.

> [I]t makes you feel kind of like…someone is recognising what I'm going through, and, like, understands, and I'm not just being silly and it's not all in my mind, there is actually a good reason for me to be feeling like this, which is, like, a very comforting thought, so I think that was really good.

Five of the participants (26%) also talked about the value of talking to someone who was *not critical or judgemental*:

> [I]t was good to know that someone was listening to me and not making fun of me or saying things.

> I just thought that if I told certain people they might just think I'm a freak or something like that, em, and I just didn't feel like that with the counsellor.

Five of the participants (26%) said that they liked the fact that the counsellor had *not directed* them to talk about any particular subjects or in any particular way:

> It helped me knowing that she was there and I could talk to her about whatever I wanted to talk about, and not feel that I needed to talk to her, only when I wanted to.

> [S]he wouldn't ask me questions or steer me in any kind of thought-train. She would just let me talk about what I wanted to.

Closely related to this, five of the participants (26%) said that the counselling was helpful because the counsellor was someone that they could tell things to, *without worrying that she would try to 'sort things out'*, or interfere, with their outside lives. They contrasted this with parents, teachers and guidance teachers.

> [I]f someone was bullying you, eh, they [a guidance teacher] would go out and sort it and it wouldn't be just in that room again, it would be involving others and that's what's not really that happy, but with the guidance– with the couns– [Interviewer: With the counsellor?] With the counsellor, sorry, thank you, eh, it's just basically just those two people and it's really calm, it's nice, it's basically wonderful.

Along these lines, two participants also said that, in contrast to other people in their lives, the counsellor was someone who they could tell things to without worrying that the counsellor would make it 'all about them':

> [I]f you were, like, talking…even to your brother or something, or your mum…they might sort of twist what you say, or take it the wrong way, and like their personal feelings will be, you know, at stake, but they [the counsellors] are just completely focused on you, which is good, so you feel you can sort, of, like divulge more.

Whilst many of the participants, as seen above, valued the counsellor's non-directivity, ten of them (53%) also said that they valued the *questions* that the counsellor asked them:

> I thought it was really good because it was somebody who would ask you questions.

> She'd ask me, like, 'What class is the worst?' and I'd say, like, ehm– well, 'English was one of my worst in second year, 'til I changed teachers'– and, like, 'What could I do to change that?' If it was 'cause my pals were in there or was it 'cause I was annoyed about something? Or, like, she'd ask me questions and I'd say then; she'd– like, we'd discuss if it would– what would– what we could do to help that in classrooms.

> [I]f you give one detail, they ask for more detail– they're just extracting so much information out of you and that's what– you're really getting so much out

and you're also thinking about it yourself and that's where you get the answers from.

Further along a 'directivity continuum', eleven of the participants (58%) indicated that one of the main reasons that counselling had helped them was because of the *suggestions or advice* that the counsellor had provided:

> [S]he sort of makes a few suggestions, and then that will, like, make you think a bit more.

> I just took her advice and it seemed to work.

> [T]he advice she gave me, I couldn't go to anyone else for– it was top-class, the advice.

Participants were generally clear, here, that the suggestions were, indeed, coming from the counsellors:

> Interviewer: …some of the ideas about how you could behave differently– was that helpful [Participant: Aye, some of it was, aye] and was that your ideas or was it [name of counsellor]– the counsellor's ideas, or did it come out…?

> Participant: No, it was [name of counsellor]'s.

> Interviewer: It was mostly [name of counsellor]'s ideas [Participant: Yeah]. So it was mainly [name of counsellor] suggesting ideas [Participant: Mm] about how you can control your temper [Participant: Aye, yeah] and that that was– and were they helpful ideas? [Participant: Mm hm] and has that changed… [Participant: Mm hm, aye, a little bit, a little bit].

These participants were also clear, however, that what the counsellor was offering them were *suggestions* and possibilities, rather than directions on how to behave:

> It wasn't like, 'You need to do this,' 'You need to do that,' just gave me a couple of suggestions…at first, counselling– I thought, 'Oh, you need to do that and that will make it better,' but she never– she just said, 'Oh you could try this, but I'm not saying it will work, but if you try it, see how it goes,' and that was helpful.

> [S]he didn't, kind of, put her opinion on to you about the problems you were having, but she gave you advice on trying to, kind of, get yourself to cope with them and that was quite good.

With respect to receiving suggestions and advice, six of these pupils (32% of the total participants) specifically talked about the value of being given advice on how to behave: for

instance, standing up to bullies, or telling adults about their problems. One participant described in detail how the counsellor had helped them find different ways of responding to problems in the family – a response which, again, highlights how the pupils experienced the advice as coming from the counsellor, but in a non-imposing and respectful way:

> She just, sort of, looked at it from her point of view and, sort of, tried to help me along in everything, 'cause I've gone through quite a bit recently, with deaths in the family and big family break-up, so she just, sort of, waited until I said what I had to say and looked at it from her point of view and said what she would do and gave me options on what to do about it.

> Interviewer: So, you would talk about how you saw things [Participant: Yeah] and then she would say how she saw things from [Participant: Yeah] her perspective [Participant: Yeah] and then she would suggest to you different options about how [Participant: Yeah] to behave?

> Participant: How to behave and deal with it, basically.

> Interviewer: And were those options coming from her or were they things that you'd already suggested?

> Participant: No, they were all coming from her. All from her head. There were a couple that I'd already thought of, but I didn't really put them into action until she mentioned them and after she did mention them, once I started using them, everything, sort of, cleared up– I mean, got a lot clearer in my head. 'Cause my head was just– everything was just buzzing about, and when I went to see the counsellor, everything just, sort of, straightened out and got a lot better.

> I: So, do you know, what was it about the counselling that helped that happen?

> R: I'm not sure, really, I– I'm thinking it was the advice.

Closely related to being given advice on how to behave, five of the pupils (26% of the total participants) said that they particularly valued the *relaxation techniques* that they were taught during the counselling, such as breathing exercises, guided visualisation and progressive muscular relaxation:

> [T]he one I thought was good, because it actually– you know, where you, like, tense your feet and then your calves and then your quads and all that, like, slowly, but then you feel the sort of relaxed feeling after that, I thought that was really good.

For three of the participants (16%), the suggestions and advice that they particularly valued were insights into their psychological processes and feelings.

[Name of counsellor]…helped me understand why I was feeling the way I was towards different people and asked me what I thought of things and then helped me work out what I thought. Like, kept offering her perspective of why things were the way they were, so…

Interviewer: Right. So she would kind of say why she thought things might be the way–

Participant: Mm hmm, like, 'Maybe it's because this' or, 'Do you think it might be because of that?'

Three of the participants (16%) also said that they valued the reassurances that the counsellor had given them:

I felt quite down, and like she kind of brought me back up and said like, 'We'll get through it and everything.'

[S]he just explained to me and stuff that it wasn't my fault…. she said there was nothing to be scared of.

With respect to the positive aspects of their counselling experiences, many of the participants also talked about their perceptions of *the counsellors' personal qualities*. Ten of the participants (53%) said that they experienced their counsellor as someone who was nice and friendly: 'she's helpful and, em, really nice to talk to,' 'I thought she was a nice woman,' 'She was great, um, really nice person.' Three of the participants (16%) said that they found their counsellor a 'good listener,' and said that they felt they could trust her. Other terms that the participants used to describe the counsellor included: open, informed, able to have a laugh, happy, relaxed, enthusiastic, and comforting.

CLIENT ACTIVITIES

In exploring with the participants what it was that they did in counselling that made the process useful, eighteen of the pupils (95%) indicated that they valued having *an opportunity to talk*. More specifically, eight of the participants (42%) said that they really valued the opportunity to 'get things off their chest': to 'just talk about whatever was stressing you or whatever', to 'let it all out.'

I spent the whole hour in there getting things off my chest and all that, and I talked about what happened the whole week, discussed what happened, what I'd been doing and all that. It was a good help.

It felt quite good…it just felt like someone was there and I could, like, talk to them and I didn't have to worry about what I was saying and just let it all out– let all my feelings out and everything.

> [Y]ou tell them all your troubles and, em, eh, you try to clear all these troubles away.

Closely related to this, two of the participants (11%) said that in the counselling you could just be yourself, and be honest about what you were really feeling.

For nine of the participants (47%), what had been helpful to them was *reflecting* on why they felt, thought and behaved in the way that they did: exploring aspects of their being that they had been hitherto unaware of.

For five of the participants (26%), it was the chance to *explore alternative – and potentially more constructive – ways of behaving* and responding to situations that was particularly of value to them:

> [W]e talked about eh... eh... what sort of things make me lose my temper and, eh, if there's anything that I can do to stop– if I can hold my temper, kind of, to stop it from coming on.

> [W]e discussed what my main problems were and...how to improve them. Like, if I liked reading or not, and if I could do different things from what– what people– when people were reading– like, more [funnier] things– and see if that would help or not.

For three of the participants (16%), it was an opportunity to *find answers for themselves*, and not being told what to do, that made the counselling particularly valuable:

> [I]t's satisfying once you've got that answer, you're like, 'Now I know how to stop it, as well, stop that happening again.' Um, so yeah, it's brilliant the way that that's set up.

> Interviewer: And it was satisfying because you came up with the answer rather than the counsellor coming up with the answer.

> Participant: It's not quite that– it's– yeah– well, in a way 'yes' and in a way 'no'... it's more the detail that you're getting from being able to answer it yourself. You know exactly what it was, em, I think that's why.

In terms of the experience of counselling and what had been helpful, five of the participants (26%) also said that they found it *relaxing*.

POSITIVE OUTCOMES

What were the specific benefits of participating in counselling? The most frequent answer here, given by ten of the participants (53%), was that it led to *positive changes in the way they behaved*. Three of the participants, for instance, described acting in more assertive ways following counselling: more willing to tell other people how they were feeling, ask for help, and face up to bullies. Another two said that, after counselling, they were less reactive: more able

to walk away from situations when they felt angry, or to stop and think before 'blurting' things out.

Five of the participants (26%) said that, as a consequence of the counselling, they felt less burdened by their thoughts and feelings – a reduced sense of inner tension and pressure. For instance:

> I just felt like a load had been lifted from me when I was talking to her.

> [E]verything builds up inside, so then it releases in, like, the classrooms and it just makes it worse in classrooms, and if you're just talking about things that you don't talk about, it calms you down a lot.

Four of the participants (21%) described how, as a consequence of the counselling, they developed a *greater insight* into their feelings and behaviours.

> [The counselling] helped me understand why I was feeling the way I was towards different people and asked me what I thought of things and then helped me work out what I thought.

> [The counselling] made me, kind of, learn about myself a bit, it did, it made me see about why I was doing it and things like that. It did kind of make me understand a little bit more.

Closely related to this, five of the participants (26%) said that, as a consequence of the counselling, their minds became *clearer*: less confused and tangled up:

> It kind of like cleared my head.

> [I] got a lot clearer in my head. 'cause my head was just– everything was just buzzing about, and when I went to see the counsellor, everything just, sort of, straightened out and got a lot better.

Several other positive outcomes of counselling were mentioned by the participants. Four of the participants (21%) said that the counselling *helped them feel better about themselves*: increased feelings of self-worth and confidence. Three of the participants (16%) said that the counselling helped them to *feel less alone*, and that there were other people that they could talk to. Two of the participants (11%) said that, as a consequence of the counselling, they became *better able at directing themselves*: telling themselves what to do and thinking through things on their own.

Mixed responses

Four of the participants (21%) gave a more qualified answer to the question, 'How helpful did you find the counselling?' describing it as being only somewhat helpful. For instance:

> I'd say…it was some help, but maybe of limited help.

> A wee bit it wasn't helpful, a wee bit it was, a wee bit not helpful, but it was quite helpful.

These participants identified aspects of the counselling that they found less helpful, as well as those aspects of it that they valued. For two of these participants, and one other participant who was otherwise positive towards the counselling, a main area of difficulty was a *lack of input* or direction from the counsellor:

> [I]t was quite difficult, 'cause you just had to talk without, like, questions being asked of you and things, like, it was kind of funny, 'cause just talking's very odd, but it's quite good at the same time. I don't know…. Sometimes you felt a bit stupid when it was really quiet and you were just supposed to talk and you didn't know what to talk about and the– that was the first time I went, I was just kind of like, 'So… I… did…' or something, you know, I was just like, I didn't know what to talk about and it might have been better if she'd just, kind of, gone– just asked you a question to start you off– which I think she eventually did 'cause I wasn't talking…

> I'm the kind of person who just doesn't like to, kind of, sit talking on my own, and hear people listening. I like to, kind of, join in conversations. So I didn't really like that that much…. I might have liked her to talk to me a bit more.

> [S]he could've spoken a wee bit more and, sort of, gone into things in a wee bit more detail…. Ask more questions and try and give more advice.

Aside from three participants saying that they wanted more input, all other criticisms were raised by just one of the pupils. These included: a desire for longer sessions, a desire for more sessions, a feeling that the counsellor was too serious and intense, a feeling that some of the things the counsellor said were clichéd, a dislike of missing classes, a feeling that the counselling took too long, a feeling that the teachers were insufficiently discrete in informing pupils that it was their time to attend counselling, and a concern that the counselling room was too publicly visible. In addition to this, eight of the participants (42%) said that they were initially 'uncomfortable,' 'nervous,' or 'wary' when first attending counselling, though they all reported that these feelings rapidly subsided. Eleven of the participants (58%) said that there was nothing unhelpful about the counselling, and they could not see any way in which it could be improved.

All interviewees asked said that they felt they had about the right number of counselling sessions.

Confidentiality

In general, twelve of the participants (63%) said that it was important to them that the counselling was confidential:

> I liked it– it was conf– you know, confidential, 'cause whatever I said, it was just between me and her, rather that getting everybody else involved. That made me feel a lot better.

Five of the participants (26%) said that the confidentiality wasn't particularly important, and two (11%) indicated that it very much depended on the person to whom disclosures might be made.

Of those participants who indicated that confidentiality was important, five said that it helped them to talk more freely and openly; and three said that the confidentiality was important because that is what they had expected from a counselling service, and any breach of this would have felt like a betrayal.

To parents

With respect to parents knowing what was being discussed in counselling, nine of the participants (47%) indicated that it was important or very important that they did not know, and ten (53%) indicated that it wasn't particularly important that they did not know. In many of the latter instances, the pupils reported that their parents were aware that they were going to counselling and what they were discussing with the counsellor, and were quite happy with this.

In terms of why some participants didn't want their parents to know what they were discussing with their counsellors, six of the participants (32% of the total participants) expressed concerns that their parents would become increasingly worried or anxious:

> Mum's got enough problems of her own and that, ehm, looking after, like, my Nan and Grandda, and if I'm not keeping well all the time…. I just didn't want her lumbered with more problems, ehm, 'cause it's not fair and that.

> I wouldn't have wanted that [her mother to know what she was talking about] because my mum's eight months pregnant, so that would've just worried her completely.

Three of the participants (16%) emphasised the importance of being able to sort out their problems by themselves, without interference from their parents, or their parents trying to take over:

> I just felt that it was something I needed to do on my own, without them talking about it at home and asking what was happening and– it was more really time to help me get my head sorted out on my own, without… them butting in on it.

To teachers

With respect to teachers knowing what was being discussed in counselling, six of the participants (32%) indicated that it was important or very important that they didn't know, seven (37%) indicated that it wasn't particularly important that they didn't know, and six of the participants (32%) indicated that this was highly dependent on the particular teacher that information might be disclosed to. Here, three of the participants specifically identified their

guidance teachers as the person who they would not mind knowing about what they were saying in counselling:

> I would've– I wouldn't have minded if she [the counsellor] told somebody like [name of guidance teacher] or [name of guidance coordinator]– I wouldn't have minded that, just as long as it didn't go any further than them.

To other pupils

With respect to other pupils knowing what was being discussed in counselling, fifteen of the participants (79%) indicated that it was important or very important that they didn't know, and four (21%) indicated that it wasn't particularly important that they didn't know. In terms of why it was important that other pupils did not know, the main response here, given by three of the participants, was that this might lead to gossiping and 'things going round the school.' However, five of the participants (26% of the total participants) said that their friends were aware that they were going to counselling, and a further eight (42%) said that at least one or two of their closest friends were aware that they were going, with six participants (32%) indicating that none of their friends were aware of their attendance at counselling. Interestingly, of those who said that one or more friends were aware, six highlighted how supportive and encouraging they had been (with none indicating that their friends were consistently unsupportive):

> At the start they were kind of, like, 'What's going on here, why is she going to a counsellor, what's wrong with her?' Em, but then, once they found out they were fine, they were really supportive.

> [S]ometimes, I felt like I didn't want to go and then they just told me, 'Go on, 'cause it'll make your life much easier.'

Location of counselling

Eleven of the participants (58%) said that they would have rather seen a counsellor in the school than in an external setting (such as a GP practice or a youth centre), with three of these saying that they probably wouldn't have gone to counselling if it had been outside. Seven of the participants (37%) expressed no preference, or perceived advantages and disadvantages with both arrangements; and one participant said that he liked seeing the counsellor in school, but would have liked it outside of class hours: for instance, at the weekend or during an evening. None of the participants expressed an overall preference for seeing a counsellor outside of the school environment.

In terms of the advantages of having the counselling in school, nine of the participants (47% of total participants) spoke about the convenience of such an arrangement. For instance:

> I don't think I would have gone [if the counselling had been outside the school]…. 'cause, I didn't want to go in the first place, but the idea that it was just here– I thought I would just try it out and see what it was like, but if I, like, had to go to the effort, sort of, to go to the place, I don't think I would have done.

> [S]ay I had a– an appointment with her [the counsellor] after interval, it [having a counsellor outside] means I'd have to go out for interval, go all the way to where I've to meet her and come all the way back for the rest of the day. But, because it's in school, it's quite good, 'cause that means I can go to class and say, 'I'm going to the counsellor' and then come back later on, which is quite handy 'cause it's, like, only round the corner, so it's not a big journey to go from anywhere really.

Three of the participants (16%) said that the advantage of having a counsellor in the school was that you could more quickly arrange to see him or her if you were in immediate need. Two of the participants (11%) said that they liked having the counselling in school because of the greater sense of familiarity and safety:

> I think it made me feel better because it was, like, other people that I knew around, if I didn't like it or whatever then I could go and talk to them, rather. And if I went to [a GP's] surgery or something then, you know, there would be different people that I don't know and then I would feel a bit, like, confined to the counselling rather than, you know, have other stuff going on.

In terms of the disadvantages of having the counselling in school, two of the participants (11%) said that they felt it was more discrete to attend counselling outside, and that there was less anxiety about other pupils knowing they were attending.

Individual or group counselling

Twelve of the participants (63%) said that they would have rather seen a counsellor on a one-to-one basis than in a group, and seven participants (37%) expressed no preference or said that they could see advantages and disadvantages with both arrangements. None of the participants said that, overall, they would have rather seen a counsellor in a group context.

In terms of the advantages of one-to-one counselling, six of the participants (32% of the total participants) said that, had they been in a group, they would have felt more nervous and uncomfortable, worrying about what others thought of them, and consequently disclosing less. Closely related to this, five of the participants (26%) said that they felt a group format would have been more inhibiting because it would have been less confidential.

In terms of the advantages of a group format, however, four of the participants (21% of the total participants) said that they would have valued the opportunity to hear others' experiences: both how they dealt with their problems, how they experienced the counselling; and two of the participants (11%) said that having a group format would have helped them feel less alone with their problems.

The evaluation process

Twelve of the interviewees were asked about how they had found the evaluation process: specifically, completing the post-counselling satisfaction questionnaires and the Teen-CORE forms. Eight of these participants (67% of those asked this question) said that it was fine: for instance, 'I didn't feel too bad about it,' 'it wasn't a problem,' 'It didn't make much difference,' 'I didn't mind that at all.' The other four participants (33% of those asked this question) indicated

that they had found completing the Teen-CORE forms a beneficial experience, with one participant saying that filling in the 'wee progress sheets' was one of the three most helpful aspects of the counselling. With this, and with another interviewee, these responses were given prior to any questions about the evaluation process being asked:

> Interviewer: And anything else you liked [Participant: Em…] Or that you did find helpful?

> Participant: I think she gave me a questionnaire of how I was, like, feeling today and stuff, and that just made me think about what I was actually like, feeling. Usually I don't think about it, you just get on with it. You had to put, like, 'average' or 'good,' 'bad…' [Interviewer: So…] so that was quite helpful actually.

Along with stimulating reflection, these participants said that the Teen-CORE forms helped them to identify areas that they needed to improve upon, and to see what improvements they had made over the course of counselling.

Improvements to the counselling service

In terms of how the counselling service could be improved, three of the participants (16%) said that they felt the counsellor should be around more often:

> [T]he fact that she was only in, like, two days a week, that didn't really help, 'cause she had a lot of people to see and two days a week isn't really enough to help some of the people in the school, so I think, like, being in more often could've, like, helped everything more and I could have got more sessions in with her. Not that I believe that I needed them, but if I did, then I could have got more in, and two days doesn't really do much.

Two of the participants (11%) said that it would be good if people could contact the counsellor directly:

> [M]aybe like put some posters up saying, 'If you're under depression,' you can put, like, a wee […] in a box, so see if you can go and see her. Maybe get a wee room for her, because she does help a lot and […]– there's a lot of people in the school do get bullied, I've seen them, so if you get, like, a wee box– don't know, just standing, it's there, just put your name on it and […] she would go and just pick them up, ask to see them, you know, and I think that would be good, too.

> Interviewer: Do you mean somewhere people could directly contact her?

> Participant: Contact her, yeah, like get a piece of paper and put your name in, you know, and then [name of guidance teacher] would call you to go to her. Because I mean you will get a lot more pupils in from the school if you just do that and get them […] thereself.

Two of the participants (11%) said that they thought there should be a shorter waiting time before seeing the counsellor:

> I got told about it when I was in the start of second year and I only started getting it just at the end of second year, so it nearly took a whole year before I could get it, so it could– if I got it earlier it could have helped because to get it quicker it would have been better.

Summary of findings

• Participants were generally happy with the referral process
• Forty percent of those participants asked said that they would have been less likely to attend the counselling service if parental permission had been sought, whilst just over half said that it would not have made any difference
• Just under half of the participants indicated that their expectations of counselling had been predominantly negative, with only one participant holding positive expectations
• Just over half of the participants said that the counselling was better than expected, with none saying that it was worse
• Seventy-nine percent of the participants described their experience of counselling in predominantly – or entirely – positive terms, with none describing it in primarily negative terms
• Participants primarily valued the fact that the counsellor listened, asked questions, and offered suggestions and advice
• Participants primarily valued the fact that they had an opportunity to talk, as well as to get things off their chest and to reflect
• Participants described positive outcomes of counselling primarily in behavioural terms
• Around fifteen percent of the participants said that a lack of input by the counsellor had been one of the limitations of the counselling
• Confidentiality was an important aspect of the counselling service for around 60 percent of the participants; most notably confidentiality with regard to other pupils
• Over half of the participants expressed a preference for seeing a counselling within the school, with no participants expressing an overall preference for seeing a counsellor in an external location
• Almost two-thirds of the participants expressed a preference for one-to-one counselling, with no participants expressing an overall preference for group counselling
• Around two-thirds of the participants indicated that the evaluation process had been fine, with around one-third saying that they had positively valued the experience

GUIDANCE TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

For the 2002-3 academic year, 25 guidance teachers completed the guidance teacher questionnaire; and for 2003-4, 15 guidance teachers completed the questionnaire[15]. In both cases, this was a one hundred percent response rate. For both years, the largest proportion of guidance teachers said that between two and five of their pupils were attending counselling (see table three).

Table 3: Numbers of guidance teachers' pupils referred to counselling

Year	Numbers of pupils referred to counselling				
	None	One	Two to five	Six to ten	> ten
2002-3	2	2	18	1	1
2003-4	0	0	9	4	2

Helpfulness and unhelpfulness

For 2002-3, twenty-two of the 25 respondents answered the question: 'Based on any changes that you have witnessed in these pupils, Overall, how helpful or unhelpful do you think the counselling service has been (1 = Extremely unhelpful, 5 - 6 = Neither helpful or unhelpful, 10 = Extremely helpful)?' Here, the mean response was 7.34 (sd = 1.69). In 2003-4, all fifteen respondents answered this question, giving a mean response of 8.47 (sd = 1.06). This represents a significant increase in ratings of helpfulness from 2002-3 to 2003-4 ($p < 0.05$). Response percentages can be seen in figure 16.
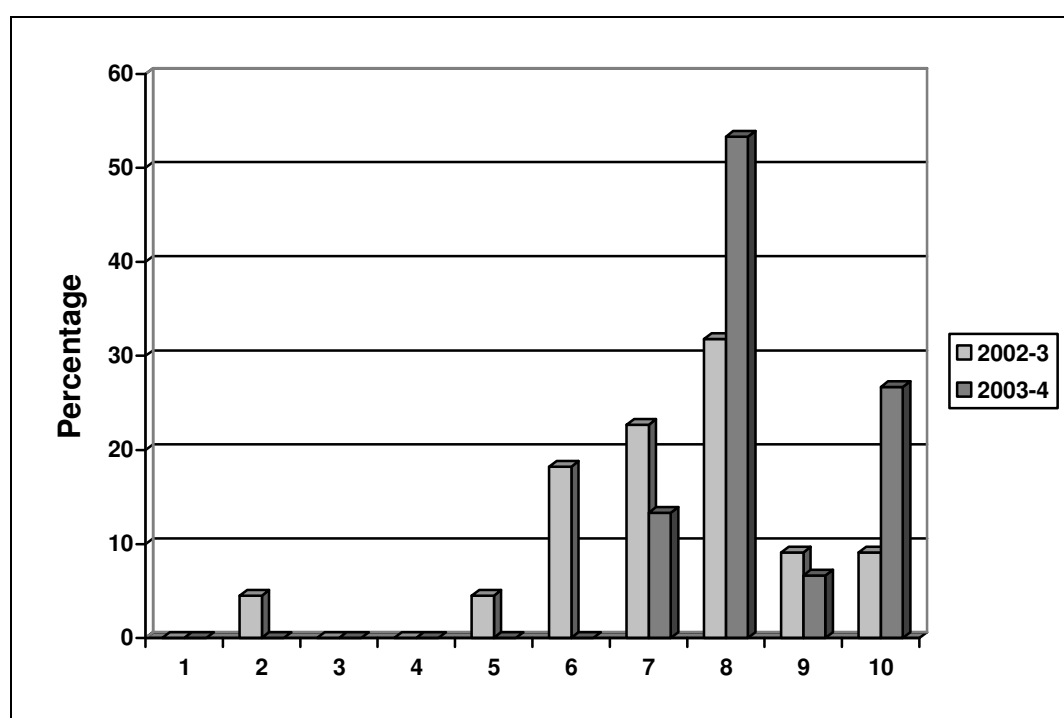

Figure 16: Guidance teacher ratings of helpfulness of counselling service to pupils

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[15] During the period 2002-2004 the report chaired by Prof McCrone, *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century*, was published, which set down a new structure for the organisation of promoted posts in Scottish schools. For largely managerial reasons it removed the post of Assistant Principal Teacher (APT). In many schools across Scotland, it was the APT who was undertaking specific work in Guidance. As a consequence of this, over a two year period, the number of staff involved in Guidance across Scotland was reduced by nearly 50 percent although the actual numbers vary from authority to authority. Hence the discrepancy in the numbers quoted.

Combining responses across the two years, a one-way analysis of variance found significant differences between the ratings of the counselling service across the three schools (means of 8.3, 8.0 and 6.9) ($p < 0.01$).

A one-way analysis of variance and subsequent post-hoc analysis also found that guidance teachers who reported a greater number of their pupils attending counselling rated the helpfulness of the counselling service significantly higher than those who reported a lesser number of their pupils attending counselling ($p < 0.05$). Specifically, whilst the mean helpfulness rating of guidance teachers who reported six or more of their pupils attending counselling was 9.0, the mean helpfulness rating of guidance teachers who reported five or less pupils attending counselling was 7.6.

Qualitative responses

2002-3

With respect to the open-ended question, 'Are there any ways in which you feel that we could improve the counselling service in your school?' 20 percent of the teachers, for 2002-3, said that they felt it was difficult to say, either because it was too early in the development of the service (n = 3), or because of the confidential nature of the service and a lack of feedback (n = 2).

Thirty-six percent of the teachers said that they felt that more time should be allocated to the counselling service, with the specific suggestions of more frequent appointments (n = 1), and the counsellor being in placement for a greater number of days (n = 3). Here, however, it should be noted that almost four-fifths of these respondents came from one school, in which the average waiting time substantially exceeded that of the other two schools.

Twelve percent of the teachers said that they felt the counselling service needed a higher profile: making the pupils more aware of the service so that they can self-refer (n = 1), and 'reminder[s] to pupils/parents/guardians every so often that service is available'.

Over half of the guidance teachers (56%) commented on the need for greater communication, links and collaboration between the counsellors and the guidance teachers. Seven of the guidance teachers specifically stated that the service could be improved if the counsellors gave more feedback on their work with the pupils to the guidance teachers; whilst one specifically stated that guidance teachers should be giving more background information on the pupils to the counsellors. Here, it should be noted that five of these respondents also highlighted the importance of giving such feedback within the boundaries of confidentiality and the 'discretion' of the service.

In response to the request for additional comments, forty percent of the guidance teachers said that they felt the counselling service was of value and benefit to their pupils: for instance, a 'much needed' service, 'A very positive asset to the school', something that has 'proved beneficial to the pupils.' One guidance teacher wrote: 'It's brilliant to have such a specialised resource in the school and I have found it very useful for dealing with issues that I am not skilled or trained in.'

2003-4

Guidance teachers' comments on the counselling service, for 2003-4, reiterated many of the points made in the previous year. Forty percent of the total respondents said that more time should be allocated to the counselling service – in this case, however, this was exclusively from the one school with longer waiting lists. Thirteen percent of the respondents said that feedback was still an issue for them. Thirty-three percent of the respondents again stated that they appreciated the counselling service and felt that it was 'very valuable;' and twenty percent of the respondents said that they were happy with the service as it was and couldn't see any ways in which it could be improved.

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Summary of findings

• On a one to ten scale of helpfulness, guidance teachers gave the counselling service a mean rating of 7.34 in 2002-3 and 8.47 in 2003-4, representing a significant increase in perceived levels of helpfulness over the two years
• Over half of the guidance teachers in 2002-3 commented on the need for greater communication, links and collaboration between the counsellors and the guidance teachers

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INTERVIEWS WITH GUIDANCE COORDINATORS

Overall

At the most general level, each of the guidance coordinators interviewed were positive about the Counselling in Schools Project:

> It's been absolutely excellent.

> I think, generally speaking it's going well.

> I think it's an excellent thing. It's really worthwhile.

There was also general agreement that the young people involved with obtaining positive benefits from the counselling:

> The children are certainly getting an awful lot out of it.

> I've also been doing some evaluation and I do it just informally, I ask them: how do they think its going, do they find it helpful…. And the feedback for the most part is 'Yes'.

The guidance coordinators also commented on how integral the counselling service had become to their overall guidance systems. As the initial period of the Project came to a close, one of the guidance coordinators stated:

> We would be lost without it now. Actually, we are starting to rely on it quite heavily…we really don't know what we would do if we didn't have it. It's a huge part of our– our whole team now.

Each of the guidance coordinators were also generally happy with the system of referral that they had established with the counsellor at their particular school.

Value of having a counsellor

In terms of the specific value of having a counsellor in place at the school, the guidance teachers talked about it being a much needed additional resource, which meant that the school could respond more quickly if a pupil was in distress – including the possibility of a quicker referral onwards to other services. Indeed, one of the guidance coordinators said that the counselling service had acted as a 'catalyst', encouraging the school's guidance team to think more fully about issues of referral and the psychological needs of their pupils. The guidance coordinators also spoke of the value of having someone who could give feedback on the school ethos as a whole: for instance, where some teachers were continuing to label certain children as 'troublemakers' even if they have changed their behaviours as a consequence of counselling. One of the guidance coordinators also stated that a few of the pupils really seemed to value the fact that the counsellor was someone from outside school, someone their parents could not come in and see, and someone they had a confidential relationship with. The guidance coordinators also praised the flexibility and responsiveness of the counsellors as well as the Project manager; and two of the three guidance coordinators

talked about a good working relationship being established between the counsellors and the guidance teams at their schools.

Areas for development

More communication and feedback from counsellor to guidance staff

In terms of areas for development, one guidance coordinator, in particular, talked about the need to establish clearer lines of communication between counsellor and guidance staff – particularly at the commencement of the Project. In particular, this guidance coordinator said that a number of their guidance staff would have liked more feedback as to how their pupils were progressing in counselling. Without this, s/he reported that the guidance staff had felt excluded from trying to help the pupils, had a sense of not knowing 'where to start' when talking to their pupils, and had even felt that it was taboo to talk to their pupils about personal issues, lest they should inadvertently touch on something that the pupil had discussed with their counsellor, and thereby give the pupil the impression that the counsellor was breaking their 'oath' of confidentiality. According to this guidance coordinator, it was also leaving the guidance staff with a concern that, should one of their pupils experience a sudden deterioration in mental well-being, they would not be told about it, and therefore would not be able to help the pupil to the best of their abilities – for instance, by offering them additional support or keeping an eye out for them. As this guidance coordinator explained:

> [I]t's our fear of not knowing something which could– …you know, we do have children, still, who are suicidal or whatever else and we need to know if they're having a bad time…. I don't want a child coming and having self-harmed […] which could be really bad, and I didn't know, or whoever needed to know, didn't know that that was a possibility, and yet [name of counsellor] did.

This concern was echoed by a second guidance coordinator, who reported a case in which the guidance staff had not been informed about the difficulties experienced by a young pupil who had referred herself to counselling. According to this guidance coordinator, had they been informed about this difficulty by the counsellor, they would have been able to implement the appropriate policy, and in so doing ameliorate the situation.

Each of the guidance coordinators also said that it would be – or had been – useful to receive feedback about the appropriateness of their referrals to counselling: 'We need to know whether it is a good referral. I think we have always had an anxiety about whether or not we are wasting her time.' For this guidance coordinator, it had been particularly useful for her and her team to meet with the counsellor in the early stages of the Project to discuss appropriate criterion for referral, and also to 'listen in' to the counsellor as she went through the list of referrals, such that they had an idea of what she was looking for. The guidance coordinators also said that it would be – or had been – helpful to know whether a pupil was still seeing the counsellor or whether they had been 'signed off', how many sessions a client might have had, and whether a client had been referred onwards. In cases of suspected child abuse, the guidance coordinators also said that it was essential that they were informed about this by the counsellor – as per their management circular 57.

Each of the guidance coordinators, however, acknowledged the importance of confidentiality within the counselling relationship, and made it clear that they were not interested in knowing about the specific details or content of a client's issues. Two of the guidance coordinators also

said that they were generally happy – or very happy – with the level of feedback that they were receiving from the counsellor. In the case of the third guidance coordinator, s/he reported that a meeting had been arranged between the guidance team, the counsellor and the counselling Project manager, and that this had gone some way to addressing their concerns. By the summer of 2004, this guidance coordinator reported that 'Most of the initial problems have all been sorted out,' though s/he added that links between the counsellor and guidance teachers could still be strengthened: in particular, feedback from the counsellor to the guidance teachers on whether pupils had been 'signed off,' and any other information that the guidance staff might find useful.

More feedback from guidance staff to counsellor

One of the guidance coordinators also wanted the lines of communication from guidance staff *to* counsellor to be stronger: with the guidance staff feeling that they could give the counsellor more information about their understanding of the clients' difficulties, and what they had referred the pupils to counselling for. This guidance coordinator felt that such increased communication would be of benefit to the pupil: enhancing the counsellor's ability to help the pupil address the specific, practical problems that they had been referred to counselling for.

More time to establish protocols

In terms of developing the counselling Project and addressing some of the issues above, a number of the guidance coordinators talked about the importance of having more time at the beginning of the counselling Project to talk through these issues, and to agree on clear and transparent protocols. For instance, this might involve agreeing rules about the levels of confidentiality, and clarifying exactly what can be shared by both parties and what can't. It would also involve discussing and agreeing the kind of criteria on which a client would be referred to counselling; as opposed to, say, psychological services or social work. Along similar lines, one of the guidance coordinators said that they thought that it was very important that the counsellor should give the teaching staff a clear and practical introduction to the nature of counselling. This would be along the lines of: 'This is the kind of thing I do, these are the kinds of people that I would be wanting to see, this is the kind of service we offer, and this is how I'm going to go about it.'

Higher profile

In terms of the development of the Counselling in Schools Project, this guidance coordinator also thought that it was important for the counsellor to establish a higher profile within the school: becoming a more visible part of the school community; for instance, by standing outside of her room at break time. As well as being more visible to the pupils, this guidance coordinator also felt that the counsellor and her work needed to be more known by the teaching staff; for instance, by giving the teaching staff a fuller introduction to the practicalities of the counselling service and how it might benefit pupils, and by spending more time in the staff room chatting to guidance staff. As the initial period of the counselling Project came to a close, another guidance coordinator also stated that s/he felt it was important for the counselling service to raise its profile within the school: for instance, by the counsellor taking PSE classes, and by producing the leaflets on the counselling service that had been agreed at the commencement of the Project.

Developing and facilitating other groups

Another means by which one of the guidance coordinators felt that the profile of the counselling service could be enhanced was through running other groups in the school, such as a group for young people with addictions. This idea of involving the counsellor in wider

school-based initiatives was also mentioned by one of the other guidance coordinators, who said that, given the resources, s/he would very much like to involve the counsellor in the establishment of protocols and structures for an in-school crisis-response service.

Greater availability

For this latter guidance coordinator, speaking mid-way through the Project, the primary way in which s/he felt that the counselling Project could be enhanced would be simply by having the counsellor available for more hours per week. 'I'm sitting with a waiting list of over 20 at the moment, and…. I'm quite confident that the 20 that are on the books just now are also very needy cases.'

Summary of findings

• At a general level, all three guidance coordinators were positive about the counselling service, and felt that it had been of benefit to those pupils involved
• During the first year of the Project, one of the guidance coordinator, in particular, felt that there was a need for much greater communication between the counsellor and members of the guidance staff
• Guidance coordinators also commented on the need for more time at the start of the projects to establish protocols, and the need for the counselling service to raise its profile within the schools

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INTERVIEWS WITH COUNSELLORS

Overall

Both counsellors believed that the Counselling in Schools Project generally had a positive impact on the pupils involved:

> The actual counselling work is going well and I feel it's making a difference.

> The majority [of pupils] that I've seen I would say have made significant changes in themselves in the way they managed the difficulties that they are experiencing.

Value of having a counselling service

In terms of why the counselling might be helpful to the young people involved, both of the counsellors said they thought that, primarily, it provided the pupils with an opportunity to talk about their real thoughts and feelings, without being given advice, told what to do, interrupted, emptily reassured, or feeling that they would have to deal with someone 'freaking out' or rushing off to sort out the problem. One of the counsellors reported:

> One boy said, 'My mum listens to me but she doesn't listen to me like you do…. Well, she listens but then she tells me what to do about it, or tells me not to worry about it, or "That's what always happens when you are 14," and that's not helpful,' and he has actually told his mother to listen to him.

Through being heard in this way, the counsellors suggested that the pupils could find the solutions to their problems that were right for them, and 'let off steam'. Along these lines, one of the counsellors added:

> One thing that has surprised me is that probably I have more males crying in my counselling room than females and what they've said is, 'I can't do this at home, I have to be strong because, you know, my mum is worried about this or my dad is sick or whatever,' and so they can come in my room and they can actually allow themselves to have that emotion.

As with one of the guidance teachers, one of the counsellors also felt that the counselling service could provide an important role by giving the school feedback on more general school issues, such as the labelling of pupils.

Both counsellors said that they felt the relationships with the schools were going well, with generally good levels of communication between the counsellors and guidance staff, and initial difficulties generally overcome over the period of the pilot Project.

Areas for development

Greater communication

In terms of the development of the Counselling in Schools Project, one of the counsellors, like the guidance coordinators, talked about the need for more interaction and discussion between counsellors and guidance staff at the commencement of the Project:

> I think we need to perhaps sit down with each school and say, 'What are you expecting from the service, what are you looking for in the service?'…to find out whether it's going to be a good fit or not.

In practical terms, this counsellor suggested that it could be done as a group facilitation, asking the teaching staff questions like, '"What do you imagine it [counselling] would be?" "What do you think about it?" "Is it a good or bad idea?" "What are your anxieties about it?"'

Establishing protocols

In addition to discussing expectations, the counsellors talked about the importance of discussing and agreeing such issues as the system of referral, how much feedback should be given to the institution as a whole, what the complaints procedure might be if clients are unhappy with their counselling, how pupils could best leave their classes to attend counselling, and the crucial issue of how much information about the client gets disclosed from counsellor to guidance teacher, and vice versa. Here, one of the counsellors stated that she felt it was important to explain to the teaching staff what counselling confidentiality was about, but she also acknowledged that it was 'appropriate to give some kind of feedback to referrers' provided there is permission from the client. Indeed, this counsellor suggested that in some cases, if it was the pupil's wishes, the counsellor might act as a conduit for the client, relaying information to the client's guidance teacher that could then be dissimulated more widely to the teaching staff. Similarly, whilst this counsellor felt that she did not want to be told everything about a client by the guidance staff, she also acknowledged that there might be times when it would be useful to know certain details about the clients, such as the presence of a neuropsychological condition. As with the guidance coordinators, then, this counsellor acknowledged the importance of agreeing together levels of confidentiality that would best benefit the pupils involved: ensuring that the pupils felt as safe as possible to talk about their issues, whilst at the same time maximising the positive impact that involved adults could have. Furthermore, for this counsellor, this dialogue was essential because each school was unique, with 'its own culture, its own everything.' Hence, it could not be assumed that protocols established at one school would be appropriate for another school environment.

Self-referrals

In terms of other areas in which the Project could be developed, one of the counsellors talked about exploring ways of increasing the numbers of self-referrals.

Summary of findings

• Overall, the counsellors felt that the counselling service had had a positive impact on the pupils involved
• In terms of future developments, the counsellors commented on the need for more communications between counsellors and guidance staff, earlier establishment of protocols, and development of the self-referral component of the services

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SCHOOL-WIDE QUESTIONNAIRE

The school-wide questionnaire was distributed to 457 pupils across the three schools, 454 of whom (99.3%) completed it. Of these, 194 were from School A, 154 were from School C and 106 were from School B. Two hundred and fourteen of the respondents stated that they were female (47.1%), 226 stated that they were male (49.8%), and fourteen (3.1%) did not answer this question or gave a spoilt response. School years of respondents are given in table four, and ethnic origin is given in table five.

Table 4: School years of respondents

	Frequency	%
S1	83	18.3
S2	69	15.2
S3	79	17.4
S4	135	29.7
S5	53	11.7
S6	28	6.2
Missing/spoilt	7	1.5

Table 5: Ethnic origin of respondents

	Frequency	%
Indian	7	1.5
Pakistani	12	2.6
Bangladeshi	6	1.3
Chinese	4	0.9
Asian other	0	0
Caribbean	3	0.7
African	1	0.2
Black other	1	0.2
Scottish	356	78.4
Irish	7	1.5
British other	18	4.0
White other	12	2.6
Mixed background	7	1.5
Other	2	0.4
Missing/spoilt	18	4.0

Awareness of counselling

Overall, 259 pupils (57%) said that they were aware of the counselling service in their school, 192 pupils (43%) said that they were not, and 3 pupils gave missing or spoilt responses to this question.

A three way analysis of variance using sex, school and year as fixed factors found significant differences in awareness of the service across schools ($p < 0.01$), sex ($p < 0.01$) and year ($p < 0.05$), as well as a significant school by year interaction ($p < 0.01$). Post hoc tests[16] found

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[16] Post-hoc tests are a means of identifying the specific groups or interactions between which significant differences exist, once a more general level of significant difference has been found. For the present analysis, the Tukey HSD test was used.

that pupils at School B were significantly more aware of the existence of the counselling service than pupils at either School C or School A, with 75%, 58% and 48% of the pupils saying that they were aware of the service, respectively. However, an analysis of the significant school by year interaction suggests that this is only the case from S3 onwards, with first year pupils at School A actually more aware of the counselling service than either first year pupils at School C or School A. With respect to school year, no consistent trend in the data was found. In terms of sex, 62% of females were aware of the service, compared with 53% of males.

Knowledge about counselling

Overall, the modal average response to the question, 'How much would you say you know about counselling?' was 'A little' (see figure 17) with a mean average of 1.02 (very slightly above the 'A little' marker).
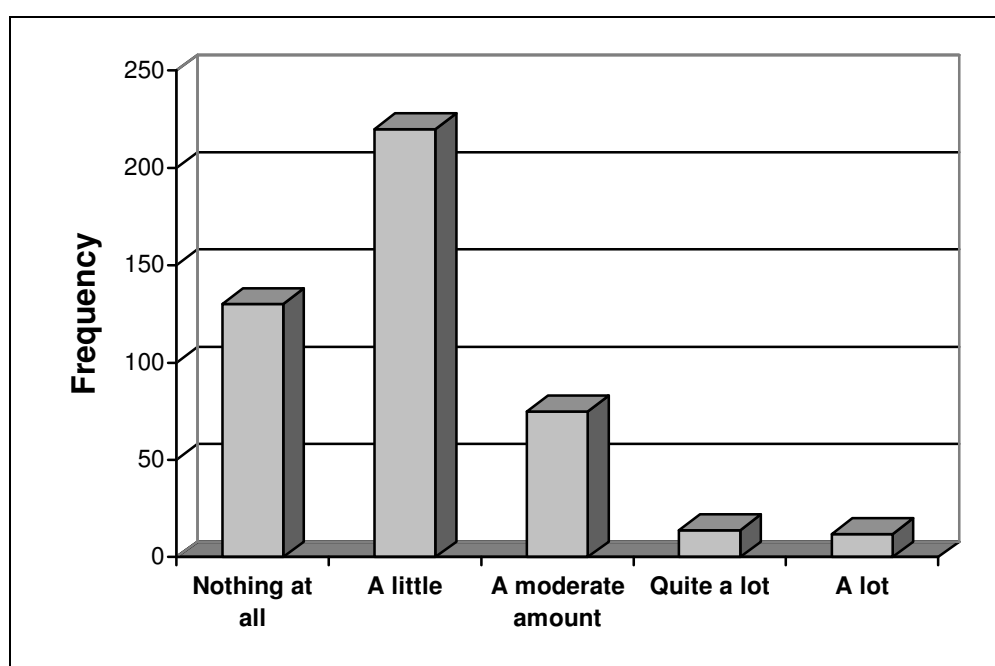
Figure 17: Responses to the question: 'How much would you say you know about counselling?'

A three way analysis of variance using sex, school and year as fixed factors found significant differences in awareness of the service across sex ($p < 0.01$) and year ($p < 0.05$), with pupils in the sixth year rating themselves as knowing significantly more about counselling than pupils in the fifth years, and females rating themselves as significantly more knowledgeable about counselling (mean = 1.13) than males (mean = 0.90). A significant sex and year interaction was also found ($p < 0.05$), with females in the sixth year rating themselves as having a particularly higher knowledge of counselling than males in the equivalent year.

Willingness to talk to a counsellor

Figure 18 presents the overall results to the question, 'If you had a problem that you wanted to talk to someone about, would you see the counsellor in your school?' As can be seen, the modal response here is 'No, probably not,' with a mean of 1.08 (just slightly above the 'No, probably not' anchor); and 77 percent of respondents saying that they probably or definitely wouldn't be willing to talk to a counsellor. A three way analysis of variance using sex, school and year as fixed factors found significant differences in willingness to use the service across

school ($p < 0.05$) and year ($p < 0.01$), but not sex. Post-hoc tests show that pupils at School B were significantly more willing to see a counsellor than pupils at either School A ($p < 0.05$) or School C ($p < 0.01$). No clear trends emerged over school year.
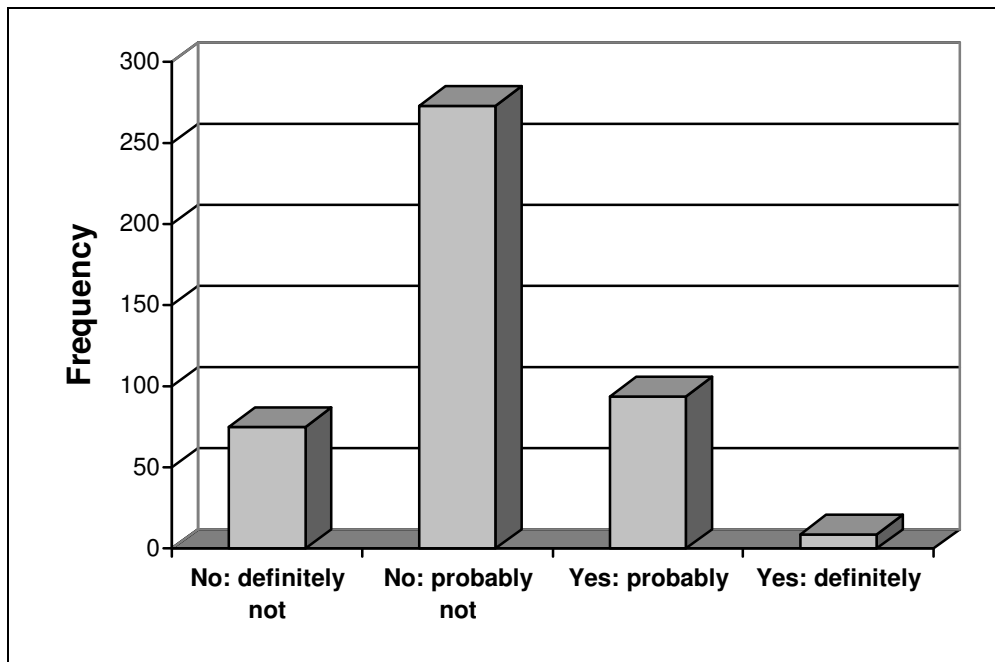

Figure 18: Willingness to talk to a counsellor

Perceived value of a counselling service

Figure 19 presents total responses for the question: 'Overall, on a scale of 0 to 10, how important do you judge it to be to have a school counsellor?' The modal response here is 5 with a mean of 6.08 and a median score of 7.
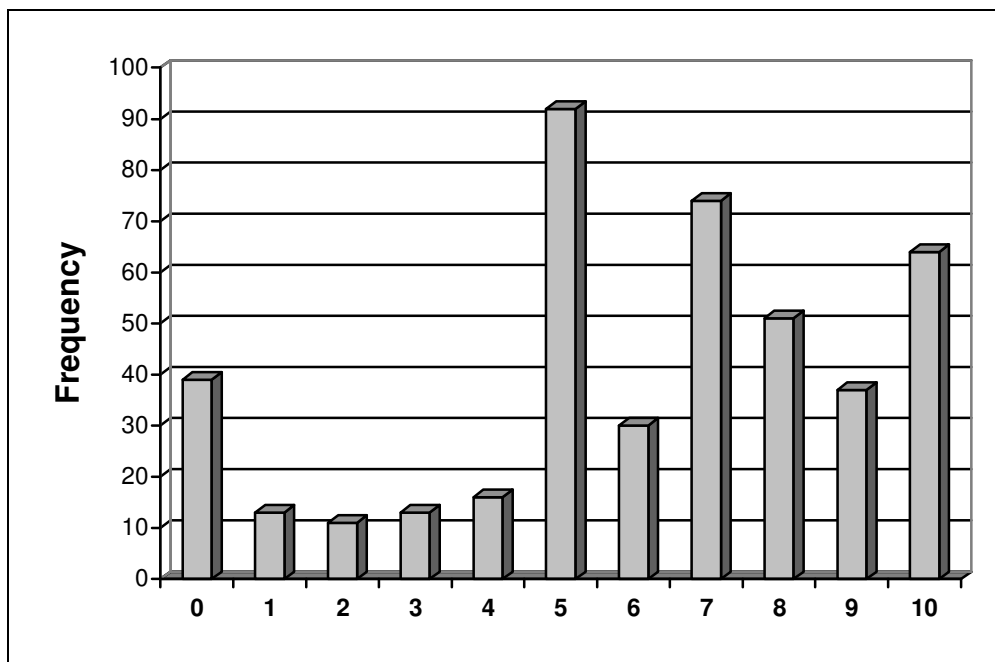
Figure 19: Pupils' ratings of the overall importance of having a school counsellor

A three way analysis of variance using sex, school and year as fixed factors found significant differences in ratings of the overall importance of having a counselling service across sex ($p < 0.01$), with females scoring significantly higher on this item than males (female mean = 6.59, male mean = 5.65). A significant year by school interaction also exists ($p < 0.01$), which is somewhat similar to the interaction regarding awareness of counselling, with younger pupils at School A holding more positive attitudes towards counselling than the equivalent pupils at School C and School B, but this trend reversed for older pupils. As might be expected, a significant positive correlation also existed between ratings of overall importance of the counselling service and awareness of counselling ($\rho = 0.16$, $p < 0.01$), knowledge of counselling ($\rho = 0.23$, $p < 0.01$), and willingness to use the service ($\rho = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$).

Qualitative results

Three hundred and ten pupils (68%) commented on why they had chosen to rate the importance of the counselling service in the way that they had done.

197 pupils (43% of total respondents) gave a response that indicated a positive attitude towards a counselling service in their school. For example:

> I know lots of peple who have problems and it's surprising how many there are. I think it would help them to have one.

> There'll never be a time when everyone in the school doesn't have a problem they want to talk about. I think counselling can help with people's problems efficiently.

> A lot of teenagers need help and if no one listens to them who will.

> Everyone needs the reassurance that they have someone to talk to whenever they need to talk. A councelling service is vital.

Some responses demonstrated clearly the level of importance attached by pupils to the school counselling service:

> Too many people are teased at school for the smallest thing either because they're not as smart etc or too smart- it only takes small things to end a person's confidence, well being & worst case – life.

> Some people have really serious problems and if they don't get them off their chests and get help, they might do something silly.

> I know how it feels to have things bottled up & it's not nice & I also know how good it is to get the problems solved. As long as the service is provided, that's all that matters.

> In short, its a gr8 idea!

Thirty-two of the pupils (7%) who answered this question gave a response that indicated a negative attitude towards a counselling service in their school. Reasons for this negativity were varied and diverse:

> They would get payed to do absolutely bugger all. Don't have a counselling service, it's a waste of taxpayers money. Anyone who thinks they need a counsellor will be prove wrong when the counsellor does nothing for their well being.

> I don't think we should have a counsillir Kids should talk to their parents so they know whats going on.

Some of the responses negative to the idea of a school counselling service demonstrate the misperception of some pupils that the counselling service was run by school teachers:

> [P]eople may not want to talk to teachers.

> I don't trust some teachers.

Also evident were the concerns of pupils that the service might be abused:

> Visiting counsellor may become an excuse for missing classes etc.

> I believe that a lot of people use a counsellor to get out of classes and waste time.

Forty-three pupils (9%) gave a response indicating either an ambivalent or highly polarised attitude towards a counselling service in their school:

> I am sort of half and half.

> It's not essential but it could be helpful for some people.

Twenty-seven pupils (6%) indicated that they felt that the service, should it be provided, would not be effectively utilised:

> It could help some pupils but most won't use the counsellor.

> Some people may have very upsetting or important problems, but not a lot of people would go.

The most common reason given for this perception was the belief that pupils would utilise other means of support, frequently friends, parents, or a member of the school guidance staff:

Probably would prefer to tell their friends or parents/family.

You have parents to do that kind of thing why need someone you don't know.

I feel that most people will work out their problems with friends: like the 'guidance teacher' system'.

Eighteen of the pupils (4%) gave a response guided by the feeling that a counselling service was unimportant, as it would have no perceived use for them personally:

I would put a higher mark if I had problems but at the moment I don't so I don't see it essential.

I don't have any problems so it does not bother me whether or not we have a counsellor.

Perceptions of what a counsellor does, and hopes for what a counsellor might do

Figure 20 presents the results from the two questions: 'To what extent do you **imagine** that the counsellor in your school does the following things': and 'If you were to see the counsellor in your school, to what extent might you **want** the following things from them?' These are ranked in order of how much pupils would want these things from a counsellor: from the highest 'A listening ear' (mean = 2.74), to the lowest, 'To be asked lots of questions' (mean = 1.22).
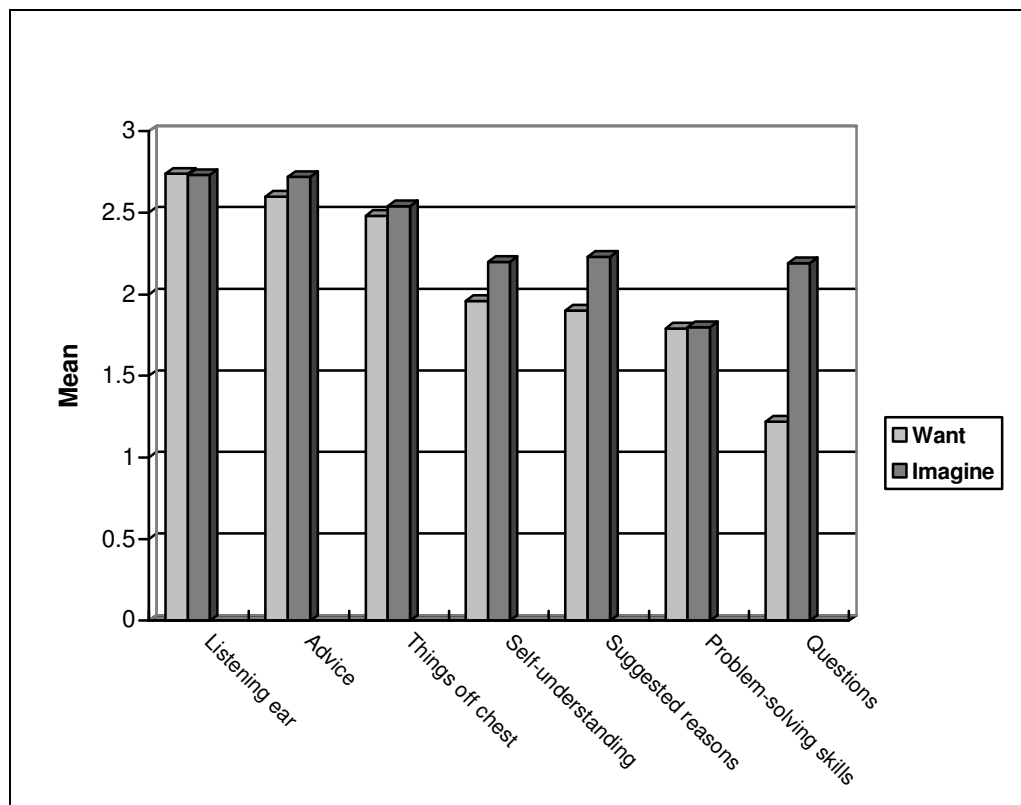
Figure 20: What pupils would want from a counsellor, and what they imagine they would get

A repeated measures multivariate analysis using sex, school and year as fixed factors found significant overall differences between what pupils would expect and what pupils would want from a counsellor ($p < 0.01$). Univariate tests show that, on the three items: 'To be asked lots of questions,' 'Help in understanding more about yourself and your problems,' and 'Suggestions for why you feel and behave in the way you do,' pupils expected these things to happen significantly more than they wanted them to happen ($p < 0.01$).

No significant interactions were found between sex, school and school year, and the want vs. expect dimension, suggesting that these factors did not affect the discrepancy between what pupils wanted from counselling and what they expected to happen. However, a significant difference did exist between the sexes in terms of what they overall wanted and expected from counselling ($p < 0.01$), with females scoring significantly higher on six of the seven pairs. This can be seen more clearly in figure 21, which presents comparative data just for what males and females would *want* from seeing a counsellor.
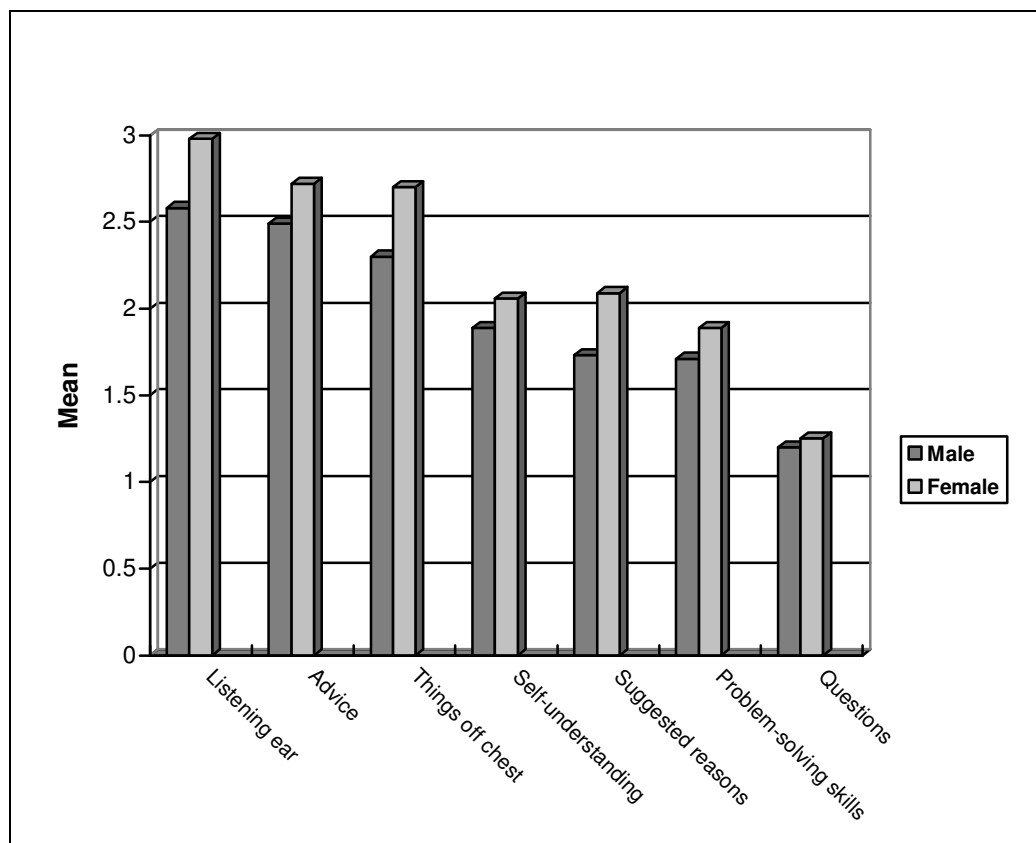
Figure 21: What respondents want from counselling by sex

Inhibiting factors

Table six presents mean responses to the question, 'If you had a problem that you wanted to talk to someone about, to what extent might the following things **put you off** seeing the counsellor in your school,' ranked in descending order. Here, it can be seen that the main reason why pupils might not talk to the counsellor if they had a problem is because they felt there were other people they could talk to. After this, the other five top inhibiting factors were: 'Not wanting to talk to a stranger,' 'Worrying that other pupils might find out what you say to the counsellor,' 'Believing that you should be able to sort out your problems on your own,' and

'Worrying that other pupils might find out that you are going.' With respect to the possibility of others finding out that the pupil was going to counselling and what he or she was saying, pupils had most concerns about other pupils obtaining this information, then parents/guardians, then teachers.

Table 6: Factors that would inhibit pupils from seeing a counsellor

Rk	Factor	Overall Mean	Male Mean	Rk	Female Mean	Rk
1	Feeling that there are other people you could talk to	2.13	2.06	1	2.20	1
2	Not wanting to talk to a stranger	1.87	1.82	3	1.93	4
3	Worrying that other pupils might find out what you say to the counsellor	1.86	1.69	4	2.05**	2
4	Believing that you should be able to sort out your problems on your own	1.80	1.85	2	1.74	9
5	Worrying that other pupils might find out that you are going	1.71	1.55	6	1.88	6
6	Embarrassment about talking about your problems	1.69	1.45	8	1.94**	3
7	Not knowing what the counsellor does	1.62	1.56	5	1.68	11
8	Worrying that your parents/guardians might find out what you say to the counsellor	1.57	1.26	12	1.90**	5
9	Not knowing how to contact the counsellor	1.56	1.50	7	1.63	14
10	Not wanting to admit that you have problems	1.53	1.43	9	1.64	13
11=	Worrying that teachers might find out what you say to the counsellor	1.50	1.19	14=	1.84**	7
12	Worrying that it will be upsetting talking about your problems	1.49	1.21	13	1.81*	8
13	Believing that your problems are not important enough	1.45	1.33	10	1.58*	16
14	Worrying that, if other pupils found out, they would tease or bully you	1.43	1.18	16	1.69*	10
15	Worrying that your parents/guardians might find out that you are going	1.39	1.13	17	1.67**	12
15=	Worrying that counselling will make things worse	1.39	1.19	14=	1.61	15
17	Feeling that an adult would not be able to help you	1.38	1.27	11	1.49	17
18	Worrying that teachers might find out that you are going	1.21	1.00	19	1.43**	18
19	Believing that it is 'weak' to need counselling	0.99	1.03	18	0.96	19
20	Believing that you have to be 'crazy', 'mad' or 'mentally ill' to need counselling	0.92	0.90	20	0.95	20
21	Not wanting to miss classes	0.89	0.87	21	0.91	21

($*p < 0.05$, $**p < 0.01$)
'Rk' = rank

A multivariate analysis of variance using school, year and sex as fixed factors found significant differences across sex ($p < 0.01$), with females rating the inhibitory factors more highly than males. Univariate tests found these differences to be significant on a number of items (see table four). In particular, female respondents were more concerned about others knowing that they were seeing a counsellor and finding out what they said – with respect to parents, pupils and teachers – and also about feeling embarrassed and upset by the counselling. These differences can also be seen in table four by comparing the ranking (rk) of males' and females' mean responses to each of the items. What such a ranking reveals is

that male respondents, relative to other concerns, felt that they should be able to sort out their problems on their own more strongly than females (ranked second as opposed to ninth), were less keen to admit that they have problems, and were more put off by a lack of knowledge about the counselling service.

Qualitative responses

Two hundred and ninety-four of the respondents who completed the questionnaire (64%) gave responses to question three that indicated reasons why they might not be willing to talk to a counsellor. Respondents completed this open question prior to responding to question six, and therefore were not primed by the fixed response categories above. Nevertheless, many of the responses given fall into the pre-defined categories, and prove a useful means of triangulating the quantitative findings. All categories are listed in descending order of frequency.

One hundred and sixteen pupils (25% of total respondents) stated that they would talk to someone else:

> I would talk to someone other than a counsellor.

> There are other people I could talk to.

These responses frequently identified the confidante of choice to be a friend or parent:

> I have a good relationship with my mum & two best friends and would tell them.

> It's better to talk to my sisters or friends.

Twenty-three percent of these also made reference to using their school guidance staff as a means of support:

> I would rather go to my guidance teacher.

> I would rather speak to someone I have known for a while ie guidance teacher.

One hundred and five pupils (23%) indicated that they would not want to talk to a stranger:

> I would not feel comfortable talking to someone I hardly knew about one of my problems. I don't want a stranger to try and help me.

> I prefer not to speak to people I don't know about my problems.

> I probably wouldn't like talking about private things to a stranger.

Thirty of the respondents (7%) stated that they *preferred* to deal with problems by themselves:

> I feel that I can sort out my own problems.

> I prefer to take care of problems by myself.

> I am the only one who can solve my problems.

This latter category includes comments where it is not possible to identify whether the respondents preferred to deal with problems by themselves due to the belief that they *ought to be able to*, as with the pre-given response, or simply that they felt *capable* of doing so without assistance.

Fifteen of the respondents (3%) said that they did not know how to contact the counselling service.

Fourteen respondents (3%) wrote that they were inhibited by not knowing what the counsellor did:

> Not knowing … what happens there would put me off.

> I do not know a lot about counsellers or what they can do for us to help so I don't know how important they are.

Thirteen respondents (3%) felt that they would feel embarrassed talking about their problems:

> I personally would like a counsellor to help me with my problems, but I'm too embarrassed to ask for one.

> It would be embarresing and every time you seen the person you spoke to you would go bright red.

Twelve of the respondents (3%) stated fears related to trust and confidentiality in accessing the school counselling service, but did not directly identify such fears as being related either to a parent, peer or teacher finding out, as within pre-given categories:

> Don't trust them enough.

> I wouldn't know if they could keep our discussions confidential.

Eleven of the respondents (2%) said that they had previously not utilised the school counselling service as they had not known about it:

> I did not know there was a counsellor. I didn't know this service was available.

> What counseller?

Nine pupils (2%) stated a lack of confidence in the ability of either counselling, or the service, to help:

> I don't see how it would really help, talking doesn't solve a problem.

Eight pupils (2%) stated that they had concerns that someone non-specified would find out that they were attending counselling:

> If someone found out the problem would get worse.

All other responses were given by seven or less pupils (>1% of total respondents) and could be coded into the following categories: a teacher would know where they were going; worries about being bullied or teased; concerns about the problem not being important enough; worries that the counselling might make the problem worse; fears that other pupils would find out; concerns that a teacher might find out what they said to the counsellor; not wanting to miss classes; and a feeling that they *ought* to be able to sort out their problems on their own.

Sixteen responses (4%) were categorised under miscellaneous.

Facilitative factors

With respect to the question: 'If you had a problem that you wanted to talk to someone about, to what extent might the following things make it **more** likely that you would go to see a counsellor?' mean responses to the pre-given fixed responses were all relatively high. The mean for 'Being reassured that the counselling is confidential' was 2.16; the mean for 'Being able to contact the counsellor directly, without having to tell a teacher' was 2.34; and the mean for 'Being able to see the counsellor on a drop-in basis' was 2.20. Descriptively, these responses are slightly higher than the marker for 'A moderate amount,' and towards the marker for 'Quite a lot.' A multivariate analysis of variance using school, year and sex as fixed factors found no significant differences.

Qualitative responses

Ninety-six pupils (21%) gave open responses that could be coded as factors that would facilitate their attendance at the counselling service. In a minority of instances, these could be coded under the fixed responses given above.

Ten of the pupils (2% of total respondents) gave answers that could be coded under 'Being reassured that the counselling service is confidential':

> Must be confidential and they must be reassured on that.

For 'being able to contact the counsellor directly,' and 'being able to see the counsellor on a drop-in basis', two responses each could be coded under these categories.

From the open responses, several other 'facilitating factor' categories emerged that had not been given on the original questionnaire. Foremost amongst these, with 34 responses (7%), was the suggestion that the counselling service should be more adequately promoted:

> People in our school aren't really aware of the service, if the service became more noticeable then more pupils would use it.

This is my last year at school. I have been here since 1st year and not once have the school or any teachers mentioned AT ALL about their being a counciller available.

People should be told there is a councillor in the school as I just only found out during this questionaire that the school had a councillor.

More information on the counselling service should be given to a wider number of pupils as many of them do not know enough about it.

Seventeen respondents (4%) requested changes to the physical accessibility of the service:

He/she is never there or about in our school. The councilor is not here at all. He should be around more.

Have the concillor in more regularly rather than only a couple of days a week.

Contacting the counsellor should be more easily done and known about.

Twelve respondents (3%) requested changes to the image of the service with a view to the school counselling service becoming perceived as more friendly/welcoming:

Make it seem a more welcoming friendly thing. Make it seem more user-friendly to pupils. It comes across as something not very pleasant.

Always have an inviting person no-one who looks scary so we can come to them without being uneasy.

Most counselling advertisements are far too formal. Lighten up and advertise more - counselling is for helping not judging - need to re-vamp the image portrayed - ie use more children's experience to let others know its good to receive counselling.

Ten respondents (2%) stated that bribery would provide adequate incentive to access the service:

If there was free buiscits and juice for me to munch on when I am there.

Alternatively, conventionally physically attractive counselling staff were sought:

I would prefer a fit blonde.

Four respondents (<1%) gave responses which requested some form of compulsory counselling or counselling as standard service, for which they did not need to directly request access to:

> If the counsellors had mabie 1 or 2 meetings with all the pupils just to make sure that everyone was ok. Have small meetings with everyone in the school, like a check up.

Fifteen respondents (3%) suggested miscellaneous means of improving the counselling service.

Preferred sex of counsellor

Table six presents responses to the question, 'If you were to see a counsellor in your school, which kind of counsellor would you rather see?' This shows that 9.1% of the total respondents would rather see a male counsellor, 51.6% would rather see a female counsellor, and 39.3% would see either a male or female counsellor.

Table 7: Preferences for sex of counsellor by sex

Count

		gender		
		female	male	Total
preferred gender	a male counsellor	6	34	40
	either a male or a female counsellor	60	112	172
	a female counsellor	147	79	226
Total		213	225	438

Chi-squared tests show that a significant difference exists here across sex of participant ($p < 0.01$), with female respondents showing a particular preference for a female counsellor. Sixty-nine percent of females said that they would rather see a female counsellor compared with 35.1% of males; 15.1% of males said that they would rather see a male counsellor compared with just 2.8% of females; and 49.8% of males said that they would see a male or female counsellor, compared with 28.2% of females.

Location of counselling

Figure 22 presents the responses to the question, 'If you were to see a counsellor, would you rather they were based at your school or outside (for instance, at a youth centre or doctor's surgery?'. This shows a modal and median response of, 'At the school, probably,' with 73.4% of the respondents stating a preference for seeing a counsellor at the school. A three-way analysis of variance using school, year and sex as fixed factors found no significant differences across these variables.
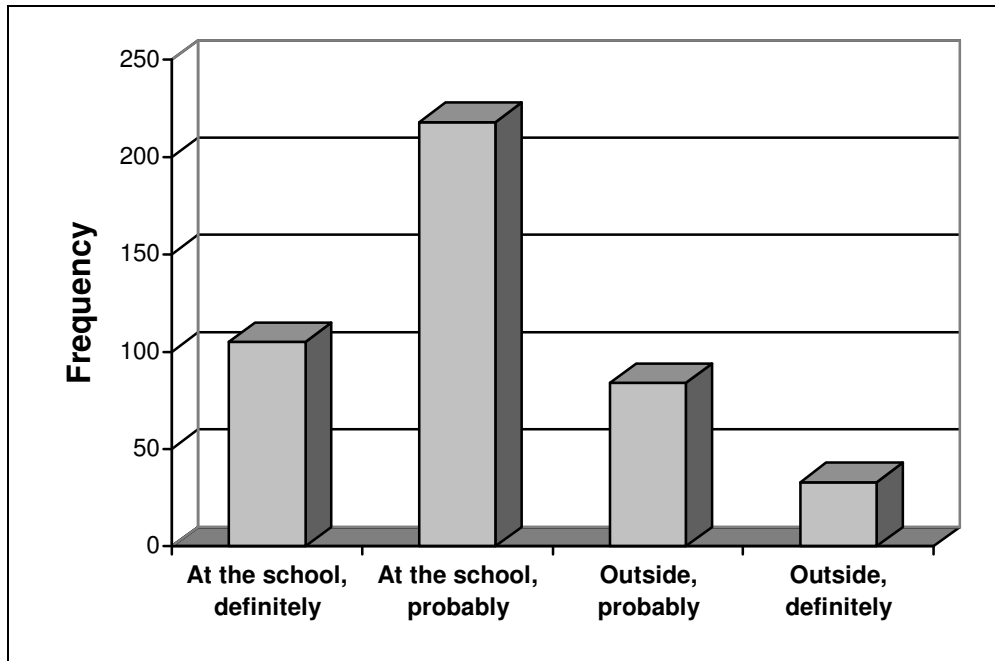
Figure 22: Preference for location of counselling

Individual or group counselling

Figure 23 presents the responses for the question, 'If you were to see a counsellor, would you rather see them on your own, or as part of a small group?' This shows a modal response of 'On my own, definitely' and a median response of 'On my own, probably,' with 86% of the respondents stating a preference for one-to-one counselling. A three-way analysis of variance using school, year and sex as fixed factors found significant differences across year ($p < 0.01$), with older pupils showing a particular preference for seeing a counsellor on their own. However, the mean rating of S1 pupils on this item, 0.94, shows a preference for one-to-one work that is still somewhat greater than the marker for 1: 'On my own, probably.'
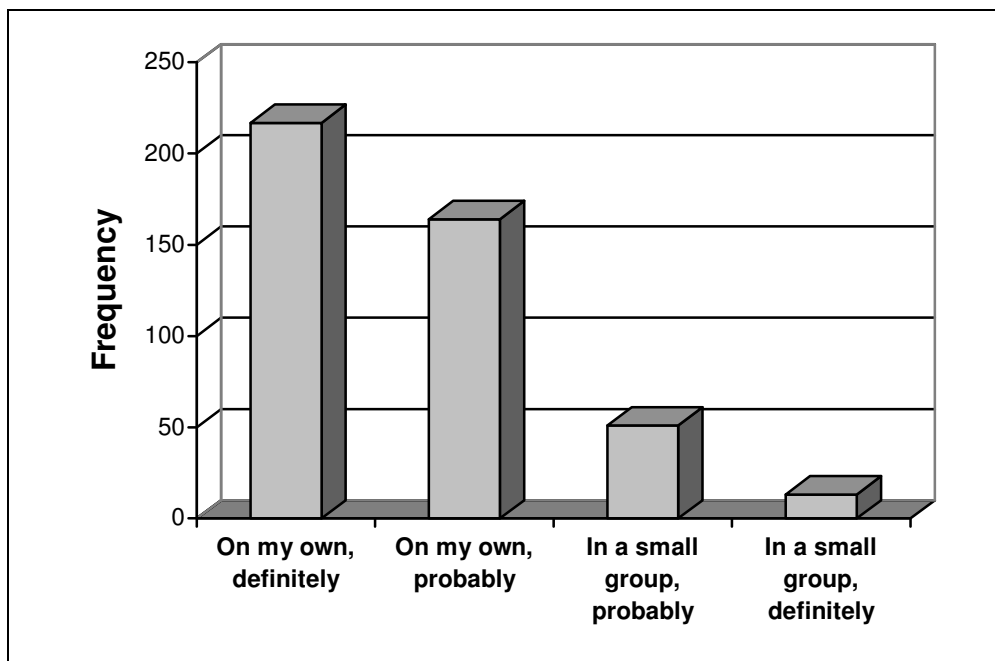
Figure 23: Preferences for format of counselling

Ethnicity

To explore the possible relationship between responses and ethnic origin, respondents were divided into those who had indicated white ethnic origins ('Scottish,' 'Irish,' 'British other' and 'White other' (n = 393)), those who indicated non-British ethnic origins ('Indian,' 'Pakistani,' 'Bangladeshi,' 'Chinese,' 'Asian other,' 'Caribbean,' 'African,' 'Black other' (n = 34)), and those whose ethnic origin, in terms of British or non-British, was indeterminate ('Mixed background,' 'Other' (n = 9)).

T-tests were then conducted on all items to compare the responses of pupils with British, and non-British, ethic origins. This found that pupils with non-British ethnic origins, in contrast to pupils with British ethnic origins, were significantly:
> • less likely to imagine that a counsellor provides a listening ear, gives advice, helps pupils gets things off their chest, and suggests reasons for why they feel and behave in the way they do ($p < 0.05$);
> • less likely to want from a counsellor new coping and problem-solving skills and help getting things off their chest ($p < 0.05$);
> • more likely to want to see a counsellor at school as opposed to outside ($p < 0.05$).

All other comparisons were non-significant. It should be borne in mind, however, that given the number of contrasts being carried out here, one would expect a few to emerge as significant by chance alone. Hence, the above findings must be treated with caution.

Summary of findings

• Fifty-seven percent of the respondents said that they were aware of the counselling service in their school, with females stating significantly higher levels of awareness than males
• On average, respondents rated themselves as knowing 'a little' about counselling, with females rating themselves as significantly more knowledgeable than males
• Seventy-seven percent of the respondents said that, if they had a problem that they wanted to talk to someone about, they probably or definitely wouldn't talk to a counsellor
• On a zero to ten scale, clients gave the counselling service a mean rating of 6.08 in terms of importance
• In terms of what pupils might want from a counselling service, 'a listening ear' was rated most highly, closely followed by 'advice'
• Pupils' expectations that they would be asked lots of questions by the counsellor was much higher than their desire for this form of interaction
• The most common factors that pupils said would inhibit them from seeing a counsellor were a feeling that there were other people that they could talk to and not wanting to talk to a stranger; concerns about confidentiality – particularly with regard to other pupils – were also highly ranked, and particularly by females
• In terms of what might make pupils more likely to attend counselling, reassurances about confidentiality, an ability to contact the counsellor directly, the existence of a drop-in service, and greater promotion of the service were all rated highly by respondents
• Both male and female respondents – though particularly female respondents – expressed a preference for seeing a female counsellor
• Almost three-quarters of the respondents expressed a preference for seeing a counsellor at the school
• Almost ninety percent of the respondents expressed a preference for one-to-one counselling over group counselling

DISCUSSION

In this final part of the report, findings from different elements of the evaluation will be brought together to reach some more general conclusions.

Overall helpfulness

If the primary criterion of success for the counselling Project was whether or not the pupils, themselves, found the service helpful, then the overwhelming finding of this evaluation is that the counselling Project was a great success. Seventy-four percent of participants on the post-counselling satisfaction questionnaires said that the counselling service had helped them either a lot or quite a lot; 88 percent of participants said that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the service; 91 percent of participants said that they would definitely or probably use the counselling service again; and 85 percent said that they would definitely or probably recommend the counselling service again. Here, it should be noted that strongly positive responses to satisfaction questionnaires are by no means uncommon – as McLeod (2003, p.122) writes, 'Clients who complete satisfaction questionnaires tend to give uniformly positive ratings' – but the fact that these findings are supported by the data from the interviews, in which almost eighty percent of participants said that they were either predominantly or wholly satisfied with the counselling service, supports their credibility.

If a second criterion of success was whether or not the counselling service had increased pupils' feelings of well-being then there is also evidence to suggest that this is the case. Findings from the Teen-CORE psychometric evaluation show that there were significant decreases in levels of psychological distress from pre- to post-counselling, and that this is particularly marked on key indicators, such as levels of unhappiness. At the same time, it is important to note that only around 30 percent of the pupils taking part in the service could be said to show a 'reliable' decrease in levels of psychological distress. Given that this figure is within the national norms, it suggests that this relatively low percentage is a feature of counselling with young people per se, rather than a feature of the present service, but it does raise the question of why these percentages tend to be lower than in counselling with adults. One possibility here is that young people tend to be less consistent in the responses that they give to psychometric tests (Barkham, 2004, personal communication), such that establishing reliable levels of change may be more difficult. More research, however, is needed here, and it may be that tests and measures for young people will need to be modified to take account of this greater variation.

Even if one were to question both the value of the psychometric data and of the interviews, on the grounds that those clients who were willing to be interviewed were probably more positively predisposed towards the counselling service, there is still the finding that guidance teachers rated the counselling service as overwhelmingly helpful to their pupils who had taken part, with an overall average rating of 7.79 on a one to ten scale. Given that this survey reflects the views of *all* guidance teachers, it is perhaps the strongest evidence that the counselling service did, indeed, prove helpful to those pupils involved.

Importance of having a counselling service

Data from a range of sources indicates that staff and pupils within the schools generally believe that it is important to have a counselling service in their establishment. Mean ratings on a one to ten scale of importance were 8.64 for clients, 7.47 for teachers (from a pre-

evaluation survey of a sample of teachers across the three schools) and 6.08 for pupils in general. Qualitative responses from these sources also indicate a predominantly positive attitude towards having a counselling service in their schools; although it should be noted that a significant minority of both pupils and teachers (again, from the pre-evaluation survey) expressed strongly negative attitudes towards the existence of a counselling service in their school. It is also interesting to note that pupils, on average, were actually less positive towards the counselling service than teachers. To some extent, however, what the research shows is that this negative attitude towards counselling is linked to a limited knowledge of what counselling is, and there is clear evidence from the cross-school questionnaire, as well as the interviews with clients, that myths and rumours about the counselling service abound. With more knowledge dispersed about the actual nature of counselling, it seems likely that these unfavourable attitudes would be attenuated.

Demand for the service

Open-ended responses on the guidance teacher, satisfaction and school-wide questionnaires indicate that many staff and pupils in the schools believed that the counsellor should be available for more time across more days. Whilst at one of the schools, however, the demand for counselling far exceeded supply, at the other two schools, demand and supply were relatively well-matched, particularly once the counsellors' involvements at the schools rose to one and a half days per week. It is important to note here, however, that this matching arose under conditions in which only a small number of pupils were directly referring themselves to the counselling service. Hence, were the self-referral component of the service adequately developed (see below), it seems likely that the demand for the counsellor would substantially exceed one and a half days per week, though it is also probable that the exact level of demand would vary greatly across schools.

Recommendation: Within the inevitable financial constraints, consideration should be given to maintaining – and where possible, extending – the Counselling in Schools Project, primarily in its current format.

System of referral

Interviews with clients, counsellors and guidance coordinators suggest that all parties were generally happy with the nature of the referral system, although, in one of the schools, the extent of the waiting list was clearly problematic for both guidance teachers and potential clients for much of the Project.

The success of the system of referral is also indicated in the relatively low number of missed sessions: just 18 percent of sessions not attended; and it seems likely that many of these time slots would have been filled by other referrals.

From the client records, it is also evident that a system of self-referral has yet to become a major source of entry into the counselling service, with only around four percent of clients coming in solely through this route. To some extent, this seems to have been deliberate, given the limited amount of counsellor availability and concerns that the counselling service would be swamped with self-referrals as well as referrals through guidance. However, from the cross-school questionnaire, there is evidence that many pupils would value an opportunity to be able to contact the counsellor directly – the most endorsed of the facilitative items, with 30 percent of participants saying that this would make it 'a lot' more likely that they would go to see a counsellor – and it seems likely that some pupils in need of counselling may not access the service if it requires them to go through a guidance teacher.

Recommendation: Explicit consideration needs to be given to establishing and developing the self-referral component of the counselling service.

Onward referral

Despite concerns at the inception of the Project that counsellors might refer on inappropriately causing even greater pressures to existing resources, there was no evidence that this was the case. Just six percent of clients were referred on to another agency – and this includes onward referrals by the school and GPs whilst the pupil was attending counselling – and no concerns were raised by guidance teachers with respect to this area. Unfortunately, as interview or questionnaire studies were not carried out with external agencies such as psychiatric services, it is not possible to validate this finding from the external perspective. Undertaking such research, therefore, would be useful in subsequent evaluations; and not only to see whether the existence of a counselling in schools project increased pressures, but also to see whether it might have actually reduced demands on external services.

Confidentiality

In general, the evidence from a variety of sources suggests that, for some clients – both actual and potential – confidentiality was not a key concern regarding counselling. Around a quarter of the clients interviewed, for instance, said that confidentiality wasn't particularly important to them; and less than five percent of pupils in the cross-school questionnaire spontaneously mentioned confidentiality issues when explaining why they would or would not see a counsellor. On the other hand, a large proportion of actual (around 63% of those interviewed) and potential clients indicated that confidentiality was important to them; and from the interviews, cross-school questionnaires, and satisfaction questionnaires, it was evident that, for some, it was absolutely critical to their use of, and ability to benefit from, the counselling service. Indeed, it is interesting to note that, in the two cases where pupils rated themselves as 'dissatisfied' and 'very dissatisfied' with the counselling service, it was due to feeling that their confidences had been betrayed. From the cross-school questionnaire, it was also evident that reassurances that the counselling was confidential would make many pupils more likely to use the counselling service.

In this evaluation, confidentiality was not examined as a unitary concern, but in terms of 'confidentiality towards pupils,' 'confidentiality towards teachers' and 'confidentiality towards parents,' and this provided a deeper insight into the attitudes towards confidentiality of potential and actual service users.

Surprisingly, perhaps, the evidence from both the interviews with clients and the cross-school questionnaire was that actual and potential clients were most concerned that *other pupils* would find out what they had said to the counsellor – and, to a slightly lesser extent, that they were attending counselling at all. Whilst it was clear from the interviews that, in many cases, clients had told their close friends that they were attending counselling; just under eighty percent made it clear that they would want to keep things private from a wider circle of pupils, for fear of rumours being spread or becoming the target of gossip.

Recommendation: On-going efforts need to be made to ensure that, as far as possible, pupils' attendance at the counselling service is always kept private from other pupils: for instance, by ensuring that counselling rooms do not open on to main school thoroughfares, and that teachers are sensitive to this matter in releasing pupils from class for counselling appointments.

In contrast to other pupils, the evidence from both the interviews with clients and the cross-school questionnaire suggest that clients – both actual and potential – are *least* concerned that other teachers will find out about the things they say to their counsellor, as well as the fact that they are attending counselling. In particular, many of the clients interviewed said that they had few concerns about their guidance teachers knowing what they were saying to their counsellors, and expressed high levels of trust in these members of the school staff. At the same time, around a third of the clients interviewed said that it was important, or very important, that the things they say in counselling were kept confidential from their teachers, and around 27 percent of the participants to the cross-school questionnaire said that worries about teachers finding out what they say to a counsellor would put them off seeing the counsellor 'a lot' or 'quite a lot.' (In a future study of this type, it would be interesting to distinguish between 'teachers' and 'guidance teachers', to establish the degree of differences in feelings towards these members of school staff). Overall, then, the data seem to indicate that some clients have concerns about teachers finding out what they say to the counsellor, but that this is not, in general, a primary concern. Perhaps this relates to the fact that, in most cases, pupils are not coming to the counselling service with school-related concerns, such that there is less anxiety about teachers finding out about the things that they have said.

With respect to parents/carers, it would also seem evident that many of the users of the counselling service were happy for them to know what they were saying in counselling (just over half of the interviewees); and, in the vast majority of cases, where awareness could be established, parents/carers did seem to know that their children were attending counselling. On the other hand, what was also evident was that, for some clients, it was absolutely critical that their parents were not aware that they were attending counselling or what was being said; and, in twenty percent of cases, it seems that these pupils would not have attended counselling if parental permission had been sought. Interestingly, perhaps, the reason for this was rarely that they had 'dark secrets' to hide or were worried that they would be punished by their parents/carers if they found out what they were saying. Rather, the primary concerns were about not wanting to be asked lots of questions, and also wanting to feel that they had entered counselling of their own free will. With respect to confidentiality towards parents, another interesting finding that emerged from both the client and counsellor interviews was that, for many pupils, the main issue was of not wanting to increase the parents' levels of stress and anxiety. Here, then, seems to be a genuine concern for the well-being of parents or carers.

Recommendation: A referral system should continue to operate in which parents/carers are not routinely informed of their child's attendance at counselling, although counsellors should continue to explore this possibility with the pupil involved.

Location

Findings from the in-depth interviews suggest clients have a strong preference for counselling within a school setting, with over fifty percent expressing a preference for this arrangement, and none expressing a preference for an out of school counselling service. To a great extent, the fact that these *were* clients who attended an in-school counselling service suggests that these results may be biased; but the finding that almost three-quarters of participants in the more representative school-wide survey expressed a preference for an in-school counselling strongly indicates that pupils do prefer this arrangement, and would be more likely to use this form of service.

Recommendation: The counselling service should continue to be located within a school context.

Individual or group counselling

Findings from the in-depth interviews suggest clients have a strong preference for one-to-one counselling, with over sixty percent expressing a preference for this arrangement, and none expressing an overall preference for a group format. Again, these findings could partially be accounted for by the fact that these were clients who had, indeed, agreed to undertake one-to-one counselling; but more robust evidence comes from the cross-school questionnaires, with almost nine out of ten participants expressing a preference for an individual format. Whilst this does not rule out the value of group counselling or group work for some pupils – and, indeed, some of the interviewees could see the positive benefits of such a format – it suggests that the main interest for pupils is in meeting the counsellor in a one-to-one manner.

Recommendation: The central hub of the counselling service should continue to be one-to-one counselling.

Sex of counsellor

Interviewees were not asked how they felt about working with a female counsellor; but the evidence from the cross-school questionnaire suggest that, overall, there is a preference for female counsellors, with both male and female participants saying that they would rather work with a female counsellor.

Therapeutic approach

One of the questions that the findings from this evaluation throw some light on is the appropriateness and effectiveness of working with school pupils in a predominantly person-centred way.

Whilst, from these findings, no comparisons of levels of satisfaction and outcome are possible with other therapeutic modalities, it would seem that many of the aspects of the counselling that the clients found helpful were integral to a person-centred way of working. In particular, from both the satisfaction questionnaires and the interviews, it was evident that having an opportunity to talk and be listened to – above all else – was the thing that clients valued most of all. Perhaps more significantly, the fact that a 'listening ear' was rated by pupils across the schools as the thing they would most want from counselling suggests that a person-centred, relatively non-directive approach to interpersonal helping is highly desired by this particular client group. Other findings support this conclusion: for instance, that clients and other pupils valued an opportunity to 'get things off their chest,' to feel understood and accepted and, in some cases, to find answers for themselves. The fact that pupils in the cross-school questionnaire wanted to be asked lots of questions much less than they expected this to happen also suggest that there was a general preference for less intrusive forms of therapy.

On the other hand, perhaps one of the most surprising findings of this study was how much the clients valued the suggestions and advice that they felt that they received from their counsellor – albeit person-centred – as well as the exercises that were probably only a minor element of their counselling sessions. Moreover, the fact that 'advice' was rated second by the pupils across the schools as the thing they would most want from a counsellor suggests that there is a strong desire amongst these young people for some guidance through the maze of family, school and life. Furthermore, where criticisms were levelled against the counselling in the interviews and satisfaction questionnaires, it was primarily due to a lack of

input on behalf of the counsellors. All this suggests that many clients do want, and find useful, guidance, direction and suggestions from the counsellor – although it was also clear from the interviews that *suggestions*, as opposed to *instructions*, were what was required.

Somewhat less consistent with a more 'classical,' client-centred understanding of therapy was also the fact that, in terms of positive therapeutic outcomes, the clients tended to emphasise changes at the specifically behavioural level. By contrast, there was somewhat less emphasis on insight or self-acceptance as meaningful and significant outcomes of the counselling process, with only around a fifth of interviewees mentioning self-understanding as a key outcome of their counselling. In the satisfaction questionnaires too, only about five percent of the participants said that the counselling had helped them by increasing their self-awareness, whilst almost a quarter spoke of particular behavioural improvements, such as not having punishments or being less cheeky.

Recommendation: The counselling service should continue to be based upon a person-centred model of counselling with an emphasis on the counsellor's flexibility, openness and responsiveness to the individual client's needs.

Communication between counsellors and guidance staff

Whilst levels of satisfaction with the communication between counsellor and guidance staff improved over the period of the Project, it seems clear that this was one of the biggest challenges that the Project faced. Over half of the guidance teachers in the 2002-3 survey commented on the need for greater communication between counsellors and guidance staff, as did two of the principle guidance coordinators. The main issue here was of guidance teachers and coordinators feeling that they were receiving insufficient levels of feedback from the counsellors; and, to a lesser extent, wanting to provide the counsellors with more information about the pupils to help them in their work.

The question of what constitutes appropriate levels of feedback between counsellors and guidance teachers, given both the needs of the school and the requirements of confidentiality, is beyond the scope of this evaluation. What can be said here, however, is that, in the main, clients coming into counselling did not seem particularly concerned that their teachers – and particularly their guidance teachers – were aware of what they were discussing with the counsellor. Indeed, none of the nineteen interviewees expressed a strong concern that their guidance teacher would find out what they were talking about.

What would seem most important, though, is that there is a higher level of consultation and discussion between the counselling service and guidance staff at the commencement of the Project, to ensure that there are clear and transparent protocols and guidelines for communication and disclosure once the counselling begins. This was a point raised by both counsellors and guidance coordinators. In particular, the kinds of issues that it would seem useful for counsellors and guidance staff to discuss and agree in more detail would include:
> • the kind, and level, of information that it is appropriate for the counsellor to disclose to the guidance staff about the pupil, for instance:
> > • whether or not the referral is appropriate,
> > • whether or not the pupil is still attending counselling,
> > • who the pupil might have been referred on to,
> > • the number of sessions the pupil has had,
> > • the general kind of progress the pupil is making in counselling,

> • any information that the pupil has explicitly asked the counsellor to convey to the guidance staff;
>
> • who the counsellor would normally disclose information to (e.g. the guidance coordinator or the specific guidance teacher);
>
> • the circumstances under which it might become appropriate, or necessary, for the counsellor to disclose to the guidance staff more details about the pupils' difficulties, or the levels of difficulty that they are facing; and how they will attempt do this in collaboration with the pupil;
>
> • the kind, and level, of information that the guidance staff will disclose to the counsellors about the pupil;
>
> • practicalities of how referrals will take place, how pupils will leave their classes, and what kind of complaints procedure is in place;
>
> • the criteria that would make a pupil an appropriate referral for counselling;
>
> • the extent to which the counsellor will give the school feedback on more general, school-wide issues;
>
> • the extent to which the counsellor will be seen, and be presented to pupils, as an integrated member of the school community;
>
> • the extent to which the counsellor will be involved in school-based, extra-counselling activities.

Recommendation: For future implementations, clearly defined protocols should be discussed, negotiated and agreed between the counselling service and the school prior to the commencement of the counselling service, covering such issues as confidentiality, disclosures, and referral procedures.

Of course, it is almost inevitable that new issues, concerns and difficulties will emerge as the counselling service progresses, and for this reason it would seem essential that there is also some initial discussion and agreement about the establishment of on-going channels of communication between counsellors and guidance staff. Where this has happened in the present schools – for instance, where there have been regular lunch time meetings between the counsellor and the guidance team – this seems to have had a strongly positive effect on the running of the counselling service.

Recommendation: For future implementations, regular contact between counsellors and key members of the guidance staff should be established at an early stage in the counselling project, and maintained throughout the lifespan of the project.

Given that referrals into the counselling service may also come from the wider body of teachers, it would also seem important that the counsellors give the school staff clear, detailed and practical information about the nature of counselling (as the counsellors practice it), covering such issues as what counselling is, what kinds of things happen in a counselling session, who might benefit from a counselling session, why confidentiality is considered so important to counselling, how counselling is thought to help people, and how a system of referrals can be developed. Alongside presentations, detailed leaflets and information sheets covering these topics could serve a valuable function, as could workshops encouraging school staff to explore their hopes, fears and expectations about counselling.

Recommendation: For future implementations, teachers across the schools should be informed about the nature of the counselling service, and the procedures by which they can refer pupils in to it.

Increasing the profile of the counselling service

The issue of promoting the counselling service is a complex one. On the one hand, it is clear from the cross-school questionnaire that a substantial proportion of pupils in the schools – over 40 percent – are not aware of the counselling service; and both clients, guidance teachers, guidance coordinators and pupils across the schools have suggested that the profile of the service should be raised. On the other hand, like the issue of self-referral, there is little point in doing this if it will simply lead to longer waiting lists and more frustrated referees – although, one might argue, such promotion might reach pupils in need of counselling who would not otherwise be referred to the service. Nevertheless, the issue of promotion is intimately tied in with the question of available resources.

Assuming, however, that more resources were made available (or fewer pupils were being referred through the guidance route, such that more spaces became available), greater promotion of the counselling service would seem an important area of development. Here, simply letting the pupils know, or reminding them, of the existence of the counselling service – through leaflets, presentations at assemblies, posters, etc. – would seem a useful first step; as would telling/reminding them about the location of the counselling service, and how they can contact it. However, what is clear from the interviews with the clients and the cross-school questionnaires is that a number of assumptions and myths exist about a counselling service, which may well be acting as a barrier to pupils' willingness to attend such a service. It may also be helpful, then, if promotional material were to convey such messages about the counselling service as:

- clients will not be asked lots of questions and 'interrogated';
- clients will not have to lie down on a couch!
- the counsellor will not tell clients what to do;
- the counsellor is not a teacher;
- counselling gives pupils a chance to talk and be listened to, and to get things off their chest;
- counselling takes place in a one-to-one setting;
- the counselling will be entirely confidential, and only a guidance teacher will know whether they are going;
- although some clients are a bit nervous when they first come to counselling, most say that it was better than what they expected;
- almost nine out of ten pupils say that they are either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the counselling service, and a similar proportion say that they would either 'probably' or 'definitely' recommend it to a friend.

In terms of promoting the service, what would also seem important is counteracting the sense of the counsellor as someone who is a stranger – given that this was the second most frequently endorsed inhibiting factor in the cross-school questionnaire. Here, it seems likely that the number of pupils referring themselves to counselling would increase if the counsellor becomes a more familiar face in the school environment – for instance, through attending assemblies, being seen in the school corridors, or even by putting their picture up – and also one that is friendly and welcoming.

Recommendation: Within the limits of current or future resources, greater attention should be paid to the promotion of the counselling service: pupils should be informed, or reminded, of the existence of the service and how to contact it; negative assumptions about counselling should be counteracted; and counsellors should strive to be seen as a familiar and friendly face within the school community.

Evaluation

Given that response rates for key aspects of this evaluation – in particular, the Teen-CORE measure and the satisfaction questionnaire – were not one hundred percent, it seems likely that the results of this evaluation are skewed in a positive direction. It can be assumed that responders and completers are genuinely more predisposed towards counselling, whilst those who are more disgruntled with the service are less likely to comply with the evaluation[17]. Nevertheless, given the nature of this study, response rates were remarkably high, and compare very favourably with studies of a similar nature, where evaluations have sometimes had to be all but abandoned due to a lack of returns. To a great extent, this can attributed to the openness and the willingness of the counsellors involved, who implemented the evaluation protocols with creativity and commitment, despite some initial concerns regarding the impact that such methods might have on their clients. It is also, of course, attributable to the willingness of the clients to help collaborate in the development of the counselling service, and many of those young people interviewed showed a keen interest in developing and promoting the service as effectively as possible. It also seems likely, however, that the high response rate can be attributed to the fact that clear, detailed and standardised evaluation protocols were in place, such that there was little ambiguity regarding the procedures involved.

It is also relevant to note that, far from experiencing the evaluation as an intrusion, many of the clients involved in the counselling service positively valued the opportunity to complete the psychometric tests.

Recommendation: For on-going and future implementations, evaluation strategies – at a minimum, post-counselling satisfaction questionnaires and pre- and post-counselling psychometric tests – should be adopted, based on clear and consistent protocols.

Differences across client groups

Few differences of interest were found across schools, school years and, provisionally, ethnicities (although there is an urgent need to examine this factor in more detail, and it has now been added to our data record sheet and post-counselling satisfactions forms). Indeed, levels of satisfaction and clinical change were remarkably consistent across the schools; although, in one of the schools, there was a significantly less positive attitude towards counselling amongst both pupils and teachers (as established in the pre-evaluation survey).

Recommendation: For on-going and future implementations, ethnic backgrounds of pupils using the service should be monitored – along with such other characteristics as level of disability – such that it is possible to assess whether or not a representative number of pupils from these groups are using the counselling service.

One area in which some significant differences did emerge, however, was sex. Not only were 55 percent of the clients coming to counselling female, compared with 45 percent males (these percentage are similar to findings from equivalent studies), but when the sex differences were analysed by numbers of sessions offered, the respective percentages increased to 63 percent and 37 percent. From the cross-school questionnaires, females were also significantly more aware of the counselling service, rated themselves as knowing more about counselling, and saw it as more important. However, it should be noted that females

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[17] However, this may not necessarily be the case. Research by Diane Mirabito (2004, private communication) found that few young people who dropped out of counselling did so for reasons of dissatisfaction.

actually endorsed more barriers to seeking help from counselling than males, and also were not significantly more willing to talk to a counsellor if they had a problem. More importantly, perhaps, in terms of outcomes, female clients did not show significantly greater improvements in psychological well-being following counselling, did not rate the counselling as more helpful and were not significantly more satisfied with it. Indeed, with respect to feeling better about themselves and improving how things were at school, it was actually the males who recorded greater improvements. This suggests, then, that whilst females would seem to enter in to the counselling service more frequently and rate themselves as more positive towards it, there is no evidence to suggest that they get more benefits from it.

In terms of the kinds of problems that they brought to counselling, it is interesting to note that the males tended to present with behavioural issues, as well as school-related ones and anger; whilst the females tended to present more with family and relational issues, as well as anxiety. However, as the counselling work progressed, relational issues became more present for male clients, whilst 'anger' became a dominant theme for a substantial number of female clients.

There were also some indications from the cross-school questionnaires and the satisfaction questionnaires that the female respondents tended to value being listened to and understood more, whilst the male respondents showed a slightly greater preference for more practical forms of helping, such as being given advice.

Finally, factors which might inhibit talking to a counsellor also showed interesting variations across the sexes. Perhaps expectedly, a feeling that you should be able to sort out your problems was ranked much more highly by males than females. More surprisingly, perhaps, concerns about confidentiality – towards teachers, pupils and parents/carers – were ranked consistently more highly by females than males. It was not clear why this was the case, and the fact that it was not reflected in the interview data suggests that it may not be of particular significance. However, in future studies, it would be interesting to examine this apparent divergence in more detail.

Recommendation: Relative proportions of male and female clients using the counselling service should be closely monitored, and consideration should be given to finding ways of encouraging more male pupils to use the service.

SUMMARY

Evidence from a range of sources indicate that a counselling service, established by the University of Strathclyde in three Glasgow secondary schools between autumn 2002 and summer 2004, was of benefit to the pupils involved. An overwhelming majority of clients and guidance teachers reported that the pupils had been helped by the service, and psychometric tests indicate that the counselling service did bring about increases in psychological well-being. Clear evidence also existed that clients, pupils, teachers and guidance teachers across the three schools considered it important to have a counselling service located in their school, where pupils could undertake one-to-one counselling work. In general, the person-centred approach to counselling provided by the service appeared to meet the pupils needs, though more 'directive' strategies – such as giving pupils suggestions and teaching them relaxation methods – were also highly valued. In terms of future implementation, the main area of development was the need to establish clear lines of communication between counsellors and guidance staff at the commencement of the Project, as well as protocols regarding such issues as confidentiality and referral procedures.

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APPENDICES

Appendix one: Client record sheet
Appendix two: Evaluation protocol
Appendix three: Teen-CORE form
Appendix four: Post-counselling satisfaction questionnaire
Appendix five: Letter to interviewees
Appendix six: Interview protocols
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Appendix one: Client record sheet

**School Counselling Project
Record Sheet.**

Pupil Reference……………..

Male   Female

School Year   S1   S2   S3   S4   S5   S6   circle

Referred by: Self   P.T. Guidance   Form Teacher/Student Tutor Other teacher
Other (specify)………..

Referred to: specify

Parental awareness: yes   no   don't know.

Presenting issue: Severity

Developing issue: Severity

Sessions: (include date alongside the number.)

1	2	3	4	5	6
7					
8	9	10	11	12	13
14.					

Code
ABS=Absent from school
A= attended.
DNA= Did not attend
C/c=Cancelled by counsellor
C/s= Cancelled by student
L=Last session
Core= Core form issued
E=Evaluation form issued

PROTOCOLS FOR EVALUATION OF PILOT SCHOOL'S COUNSELLING PROJECT

18TH JULY 2003

1. General

1.1   This is a revised draft of the protocols devised by the counselling team for the evaluation of the pilot school's counselling project on the basis of the initial implementation of the evaluation. Feedback on the successfulness/appropriateness of these protocols is very much welcome on an on-going basis, and it is planned to review and revise these protocols again before the completion of the project.

2. Post-Counselling Satisfaction Questionnaires (PCSQ)

2.1   All clients will be asked to complete a post-satisfaction questionnaire at the end of their final counselling session. The only exceptions to this will be in cases where the counsellor judges that such a task would be inappropriate or unhelpful to the client involved, or where a student has only attended a preliminary assessment appointment.

2.2   This final session will be drawn to a close *ten* minutes before its normal ending time, to ensure that clients have sufficient time to complete the PCSQ. This will normally be communicated to clients at the beginning of the session. If a client decides mid-way through a session that they wish to make that session their last session, the counsellor should endeavour to finish the session with time for the client to complete the PCSQ. Where this is not possible, however, either for practical, professional or ethical reasons, the counsellor should follow the procedure outlined in 2.6.

2.3   Counsellors will explain to their clients that the questionnaire provides the service with essential information about their experience of the service, and that we would very much value their feedback. However, counsellors should attempt to present the evaluation in a neutral and un-biased manner, and not communicate to clients that the success of the pilot project is dependent on their *positive* feedback.

2.4   All clients will be informed that they have every right not to complete the questionnaire if they do not wish to do so, and that this will not in any way affect the quality of service that they receive.

2.5   Students will be handed a stamped envelope along with the questionnaire, which will be addressed to the evaluator. They will be asked to place the questionnaire in the envelope once they have completed it, to seal the envelope, and then to leave it on a chair/table in the counselling room so that the counsellor can post it directly back to the evaluator. They should be reassured that the questionnaire is completely anonymous and confidential, and that the counsellor will not be able to identify them from their feedback.

2.6   In circumstances in which it is not apparent that the client wishes to end counselling until the end of the session, the counsellor will give the client the questionnaire and the stamped addressed envelope, ask them to complete it as soon as possible, and ask them to put the envelope in a post-box so that it is returned to the evaluator. In these circumstances, clients should be reminded of how much we value their feedback for the development of the project.

2.7   In circumstances in which clients leave counselling before a finally agreed session, the PCSQ and the stamped addressed envelope will be sent to the student, with a note emphasising to the student how much we would value their feedback on the counselling service. These materials should be sent to the student in such a way that it is not at all apparent from its delivery that its contents are counselling-related. In these cases, the PCSQ should be marked on the top left-hand corner 'N' (for non-agreed ending) by the counsellor before being sent out, so that the evaluator is able to identify – and statistically analyse – those responses from clients who have terminated counselling before an agreed ending.

2.8   In circumstances where a student feels that they have had sufficient counselling 'for now', but would like to leave open the possibility of returning to counselling at some point in the future, they will be asked to complete a PCSQ, but reassured that this does not in any way bar them from returning to counselling at some later date.

2.9   To ensure the highest possible response rate and to minimise the problems of drop-out, at the end of each term, all students who are attending counselling sessions will be asked to complete a PCSQ (i.e. those students who do not explicitly intend to finish counselling at the end of that term as well as those students who do). Ideally, this will happen at the final session of the term, but if this is not possible for organisational reasons, then the student will be asked to attend an additional, brief appointment, to complete the PCSQ (and Teen-CORE form). If the student intends to continue counselling in the subsequent term, it will be explained to them that this in no way means that their counselling is coming to a close. All PCSQ forms completed in this way will be marked with an 'r'. If a student then returns to counselling in the subsequent term *for three or more sessions*, they will be asked to complete a further PCSQ at the termination of their counselling (or at the end of the subsequent term). This will then replace the data from the previous form.

2.10   If students state on their PCSQ both their current year, and the year during which they attended counselling, then the latter statistic will be used.

2.11   PCSQs will be used with all clients completing their counselling from the 24th February 2003 onwards. Copies of the questionnaires and envelopes will be distributed to counsellors before that date.

3.   Pre- and Post-Counselling Measures: Teen-CORE

3.1   At the beginning of the first session of counselling, all clients will be asked to complete a Teen-CORE form. The only exception to this will be in cases where the

counsellor feels that this would be inappropriate or unhelpful to the client involved, or where a student has only attended a preliminary assessment appointment.

3.2 Clients will be informed that we are asking them to complete the form as part of an evaluation of the counselling service, and that it will help us to develop some idea of how helpful the service has been.

3.3 All clients will be told that they can decline to complete the form if they wish to, and that this will not in any way affect the quality of service that they receive.

3.4 Clients should be reminded that the information on the form will be kept completely confidential, and that, although it will be seen by a researcher, he will have no awareness of the identity of the participant.

3.5 Clients should be handed the form to complete on their own, but they can also be offered the opportunity to complete the form with the counsellor.

3.6 Either on completion of the session or prior to the session, the counsellor should write the client's code on the back of the Teen-CORE form. They should also complete the sections recording the 'date form given', 'assistance given?', 'age' (if known), 'gender', and that this form was completed in the first session 'Stage'. Other statistical data from the form will be processed by the evaluator.

3.7 Where counsellor and client have agreed a final session, clients should be asked to re-complete the Teen-CORE form at the *beginning* of this final session. Again, they can be offered assistance with completing the form.

3.8 The counsellor should ensure that, on the back of this form, the client's code is inserted, and that this matches the code that was written on to their pre-counselling form. Other sections on the back of the form, as in 3.6, should also be completed. Counsellors may find this most straightforward to do by completing the sections on the back of the form prior to the session, and then handing the form to the client.

3.9 In circumstances in which it becomes apparent only mid-way though a session that the client wishes to make this the final session, the counsellor should attempt to draw the session to a close *fifteen* minutes before the time that the session would normally end, such that the student can complete both the Teen-CORE form and the PCSQ. Where this is not possible, the counsellor should follow the protocol outlined in 3.10.

3.10 In circumstances in which it is not apparent that the client wishes to end counselling until the end of the session, the counsellor should give the client the Teen-CORE form along with the PCSQ, and ask them to return it in the same stamped addressed envelope. In these circumstances, it is important for the counsellor to ensure that the client's code is on the back of the form, along with other relevant details.

3.11 In circumstances in which clients leave counselling before a finally agreed session, the Teen-CORE form will *not* be sent out to clients.

3.12 Counsellors should return the completed Teen-CORE forms to the evaluator on a regular basis: every month or every couple of months. At all times, they should be kept in locked cabinets.

3.13 In circumstances where a student feels that they have had sufficient counselling 'for now', but would like to leave open the possibility of returning to counselling at some point in the future, they will be asked to complete a Teen-CORE form, but reassured that this does not in any way bar them from returning to counselling at some later date.

3.14 To ensure the highest possible response rate and to minimise the problems of drop-out, at the end of each term, all students who are attending counselling sessions will be asked to complete a Teen-CORE form (i.e. those students who do not explicitly intend to finish counselling at the end of that term as well as those students who do). Ideally, this will happen at the final session of the term, but if this is not possible for organisational reasons, then the student will be asked to attend an additional, brief appointment, to complete the PCSQ (and Teen-CORE form). If the student intends to continue counselling in the subsequent term, it will be explained to them that this in no way means that their counselling is coming to a close. Where Teen-CORE forms are completed in this way, the counsellor should mark in the 'stage' box on the back of the form the number of the session in which the form was completed (or after which the form was completed) or the letter 'd' for 'during therapy'. If a student then returns to counselling in the subsequent term *for three or more sessions*, they will be asked to complete a further Teen-CORE form at the termination of their counselling (or at the end of the subsequent term). This will then replace the data from the previous form.

3.15 The procedure outlined in this section should be introduced with all students starting counselling from the 24th Feburary 2003 (this means that students who have begun counselling before this date will not be asked to complete post-counselling Teen-CORE forms). Copies of the Teen-CORE forms will be distributed to counsellors before that date.

4. Interviews with clients

4.1 In the first session of counselling, clients will be asked whether they would be willing to be contacting about the possibility of being interviewed about their experience of counselling. Counsellors may wish to ask students this after they have completed the Teen-CORE forms, or towards the end of the first session of counselling. Students should be reassured that they will be interviewed about their *experience* of counselling, and not asked about the specific issues that they raised during counselling.

4.2 Students will be told that this interview will take approximately half an hour; that it will take place once the counselling has finished; that if they agree to being contacted at this point, they can still refuse at a later date; and that only a sample of clients agreeing to be contacted will *actually* be contacted for an interview. Students should also be reassured that if they decide that they do not want to be interviewed, this will not affect in any way the quality of service that they receive.

4.3   Students will also be informed that, if they are interested in taking part in these interviews, they will need to be contacted by a guidance tutor; and that this means at least one guidance teacher will need to be aware of their attendance at counselling.

4.4   If the student agrees to be contacted with a view to participating in post-counselling interviews, then the counsellor should make a note of this on the client's record sheet. Once a date for interviewing has been established between the evaluator and the head/coordinator of guidance at the school, the counsellor should then provide the school's head/coordinator of guidance with the list of students who have said that they would be willing to participate in the interviews, such that the school's head/coordinator of guidance can set up a series interviews for the evaluator.

5.   Interviews with heads/coordinators of guidance

5.1   In-depth qualitative interviews will be carried out with heads/coordinators of guidance at each of the participating schools on an annual basis. The central questions for these interviews will be:
              • How do you feel that the pilot counselling service is progressing?
              • Are there any particular obstacles that you feel you have encountered with the service?
              • Are there any ways in which you feel the service could be improved?
              • What do you think could be learned for future implementations of a school's counselling service?
              • Is there anything you are surprised by?
              • Do you feel that the counselling service is of benefit or hindrance to your students?
              • What kind of criteria are you using for referring students to counselling?

5.2   These interviews will be transcribed, checked and revised by the interviewer, and returned to the interviewee for checking and revisions. They will then be coded and analysed using the NVivo software package.

5.3   Heads/coordinators of guidance at each of the participating schools will also be contacted on a roughly two-monthly basis to obtain data on the length of students on the waiting list, and the average length of time that students are waiting.

6.   Questionnaire for guidance teachers

6.1   All guidance tutors at each of the three schools will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire towards the end of each academic year. This questionnaire will ask them to state roughly how many of their students have attended one or more counselling sessions, to evaluate how helpful or unhelpful they think this counselling has been to their students, to state any ways in which they feel the counselling service could be improved, and to write any further comments on the counselling service.

6.2   Coordinators/Heads of guidance will be asked to distribute this questionnaire to their guidance teachers, to collect the anonymous responses, and then to return them to the evaluator.

7.   Interviews with counsellors

7.1   Counsellors will be interviewed at the end of each academic year. The central questions for these interviews will be:
- How do they feel that the pilot counselling service is progressing?
- Are there any particular obstacles that they feel they have encountered with the service?
- Are there any ways in which they feel the service could be improved?
- What do they think could be learned for future implementations of a school's counselling service?
- Is there anything they have been surprised by?
- Do they feel that the counselling service is of benefit or hindrance to the students?
- How have they found the evaluation process – how might it be different in future?

7.2   These interviews will be transcribed, checked and revised by the interviewer, and returned to the interviewee for checking and revisions. They will then be coded and analysed using the NVivo software package.

8.   Links between evaluation and the counselling service

8.1   Regular meetings, on a roughly bi-monthly basis, will be held between the evaluator and the counselling service manager/counsellors, in which anonymised feedback will be given on the progress of the counselling service, and possible means of improving the service will be discussed.

8.2   At these meetings, the evaluator will also receive feedback from the counselling service manager/counsellors on the progress of the evaluation strategy, and possible means of improving the evaluation will be discussed.

Mick Cooper, 18th July 2003

HOW DO I FEEL?

These questions are about HOW YOU HAVE BEEN FEELING OVER THE LAST WEEK. Read each one and think about how often you have felt like that in the last week. Then put a cross in the box you think fits like this ☒

OVER THE LAST WEEK...

	Not at all	Only Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Most or all the time		
1. I have felt a bit nervous or scared	0	1	2	3	4		P
2. There has been someone I can ask for help	4	3	2	1	0		F
3. I have quite liked myself	4	3	2	1	0		W
4. I have felt I can get over it when things go wrong	4	3	2	1	0		F
5. I have had pains (for example headaches or tummy ache)	0	1	2	3	4		P
6. What I've done this week was good	4	3	2	1	0		F
7. It has been hard to go to sleep or stay asleep	0	1	2	3	4		P
8. I have felt good about someone close to me	4	3	2	1	0		F
9. I have done my work this week	4	3	2	1	0		F
10. Other people have told me off	0	1	2	3	4		F
11. I have felt unhappy	0	1	2	3	4		P
12. I have felt cross with other people	0	1	2	3	4		F
13. I have thought the future will be good	4	3	2	1	0		W
14. I have done very well this week	4	3	2	1	0		F

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS !

CLINICAL OUTCOMES in ROUTINE EVALUATION

OUTCOME MEASURE

Site ID — letters only — numbers only

Client ID

Therapist ID — numbers only (1) — numbers only (2)

Sub codes

D D / M M / Y Y Y Y

Date form given

Assistance Given? (please tick)

Age

Male ☐
Female ☐

Stage Completed

S Screening
R Referral
A Assessment
F First Therapy Session
P Pre-therapy (unspecified)
D During Therapy
PN Penultimate Session
L Last therapy session
X Follow up 1
Y Follow up 2
N Normative

Stage

Episode

Total Scores

Mean Scores
(Total score for each dimension divided by
number of items completed in that dimension)

(W)   (P)   (F)   All items

Counselling Service Evaluation Form

We would be very grateful if you could spend a few minutes filling in this evaluation form. The information that you give will be very useful in helping us assess how useful the counselling service has been, and how we can improve it. To help us as much as possible, please be as **honest** as you can in your response. This form is confidential and anonymous, and your counsellor will **not** be able to identify you from your responses. When you have filled it in please put it in the sealed envelope.

To complete this form, please tick the appropriate box and write any comments in the space provided.

1. What is your gender? Female ☐ Male ☐

2. What year are you? S1 ☐ S2 ☐ S3 ☐ S4 ☐ S5 ☐ S6 ☐

3. Roughly how many times did you see the counsellor? 1 ☐ 2 to 5 ☐ 6 to 10 ☐ 11 or more ☐

4. How did you hear about the counselling service? Guidance teacher ☐ Presentation ☐ Other (please say what) Friends ☐ Leaflet ☐ [_____]

5. Do you feel that you had enough information about the counselling service before you met the counsellor? Yes ☐ No ☐
If no, please write what else you would have liked to have known

[_____]

6. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the counselling service?

Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
☐ -2	☐ -1	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2

7. Overall, to what extent do you think counselling has helped you?

Not at all	A little	Quite a lot	A lot
☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3

If counselling helped you, please write how it was useful to you

[_____]

If counselling didn't help you, please write why you think that was

[_____]

8. To what extent has the counselling helped you…

	Not at all	A little	Quite a lot	A lot
a. Feel better about yourself	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
b. Deal more effectively with your problems	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
c. Improve your relationships with others	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
d. Improve how things are at school	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
e. Improve how things are at home	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3

9. On the basis of your experience, would you…

	No: definitely not	No: probably not	Yes: probably	Yes: definitely
a. Use the counselling service again?	☐ -2	☐ -1	☐ 1	☐ 2
b. Recommend the service to a friend?	☐ -2	☐ -1	☐ 1	☐ 2

10. Overall, on a scale of 0 to 10, how important do you judge it to be to have a school counsellor?
(0 = not at all, 10 = essential) (please write your number in the box) [___]

11. If you have any other comments that you think might help to improve the service, please write them below

UNIVERSITY OF
STRATHCLYDE
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Jordanhill Campus

22 October 2004

Dear Student

Some time ago, at the beginning of your counselling, you were asked whether you would be willing to be contacted about the possibility of talking to a researcher about your experiences of counselling. At that time, you said 'yes', and we are now writing to you to see if you would like to talk to us about your experiences.

This interview is part of a wider piece of research that we are doing, looking at how helpful the counselling service is to students. You will have already filled in a brief questionnaire at the end of your counselling sessions, and we are now talking to a smaller number of students to get a more detailed understanding of how they found the counselling: what they found helpful and unhelpful, and how they think the counselling service could be improved. The things that students say in these interviews will be very useful to us in helping us to improve the counselling service.

The interview will last for about half and hour, and will take place on [date of interviews]. You will be asked about your experience of counselling, and also given the chance to say anything that you would like to about the service and your meetings with your counsellor. Please note that, in these interviews, you will not be asked to say anything about the *particular* issues and/or events that brought you in to counselling, or about the *particular* things that you discussed with your counsellor. Rather, it is a chance for you to talk about the counselling itself: what you liked about it, what you didn't like about it, and the ways in which you think it could be improved.

These interviews will be recorded, 'transcribed' (i.e., typed out in words), and 'analysed' (i.e. we'll try and pick out the main things that you, and other students, have said), and then used for our report on the counselling service. If you would like to have a copy of the things that you have said during the interview, please contact me directly on the number or email address below, and I will make sure you are sent one. We may also use some of the things you have said for other research reports. Whenever we use anything you have said, however, we will make absolutely sure that no-one can tell that it is you that has said it: for instance, we will never put your name next to the things that you have said; indeed, the interviewer will not even be keeping a record of your full name.

THE PLACE OF USEFUL LEARNING

COUNSELLING UNIT
76 Southbrae Drive
Glasgow G13 1PP
Tel: 0141-950 3361
Fax: 0141-950 3329
Email: mick.cooper@strath.ac.uk

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Senior Lecturer: Mick Cooper

As far as possible, everything that you say to the researcher during this interview will be completely private and 'confidential'. Your counsellor will not be told about the things that you have said, and nor will your teachers or parents. The only time when this may not be the case is in the exceptional circumstance that, during the interview, new information comes to light about experiences of emotional, physical or sexual abuse, in which case we will need to talk to you about passing this information on to a member of the school's guidance team.

The meeting with the researcher will be recorded right from the start. However, if, at any point during the interview, you want us to stop recording what you are saying, we will do so, and you can also ask us to destroy the recording and type-up of the interview. You are also entirely free to not answer any questions you are not happy with, or to leave the interview at any time.

Because of the personal nature of counselling, there is a very small possibility that you may feel some feelings of discomfort when talking about this experience. If you do so, we will treat these feelings with as much sensitivity as possible. If, at the end of the interview, you are still left with feelings that you are not comfortable with, the counsellor will be available on the day of our interview for you to talk further with.

Please be aware that you are under no obligation, whatsoever, to take part in this interview, but if you are happy to do, please complete the form overleaf, and return it to [name of guidance coordinator] in the enclosed envelope -- either directly or via another member of the guidance staff -- as soon as possible. Please note that this form must be completed and returned before we can carry out the interview. If you agree to be interviewed, you will then be contacted by a member of the guidance staff, who will let you know the time and place of the interview. If you do not want to take part, we would also ask you to complete the form overleaf and return it to us, so that we are aware of your decision.

If you have any further questions about this study, please contact Mick Cooper at the telephone number or email address above.

Yours sincerely.

Mick Cooper, PhD
Senior Lecturer in Counselling

To be completed by the student

I have read the information about the interview study looking at client's experiences of school counselling, and understand the purpose, principles and procedures of the study to my satisfaction.

I agree to take part in this study ☐

I do not agree to take part in this study ☐

(please tick as appropriate)

NAME_____

SIGNATURE_____

DATE_____

Please complete this form, place it in the enclosed envelope, and return it to [name of guidance coordinator] as soon as possible

PROTOCOL FOR INTERVIEWS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

• Welcome
• Many thanks for coming – much appreciated

INFORMED CONSENT

• Just begin by going over a few things
• Introduce who I am:
    • Mick Cooper
    • Researcher, teach counselling, based at University of Strathclyde
    • Looking at young people's experiences of counselling
        • to evaluate counselling service, also for further research
• Aim of interview:
    • to get a more detailed understanding of how you experienced counselling
        • what you found helpful
        • what you didn't
        • your view of counselling in schools
    • help us improve counselling service in your school
        • through publication, also wider developments of counselling in schools
• Just want to quickly go over practicalities of interview before we begin:
    • last for up to half an hour
    • ***not about the issues you took to counselling, but about your experience of counselling itself***
    • will be asking you some questions:
        • ***no right or wrong answers*** (so absolutely free to say, for instance, that didn't like counselling)
            • what's most important for us is that you tell us what you really think
        • ***absolutely free not to answer any questions, don't need to say why – just say 'pass'***
        • ***can also get up and leave at any time and don't need to say why***
    • ***whole meeting is being recorded – as stated in initial letter***
        • let me know if you want copy – will send to you
        • after transcribing and analysing, some of what you said may be used in research report
        • ***anonymity absolutely guaranteed – will never use your name***
        • can ask us to stop recording, or to destroy the tape, and don't need to give a reason for doing so
    • everything that you say in interview will be ***treated as completely confidential***:
        • won't be told to teachers, or parents or counsellor
        • ***only exception, which is requirement, is if you tell me about experiences of abuse that you haven't told anyone about before, which case we'll need to talk about passing this information on***
            • but, given that not talking about specific issues, very unlikely to happen
    • If, at any point during interview, feel upset or discomfort, let me know, and we can talk about that
        • ***Counsellor will also be available at end of day [when?] if you want to talk anything through with.***

> • again, though, given that won't be talking about specific personal issues, very unlikely for this to arise.
> ***• Finally, fact that you have turned up now doesn't mean you have to take part, can still decide not to take part now and leave, without giving any reason.***
>> • ***'Are you ok to continue?'***

QUESTIONS

Attributes
• What year are you?
• How long ago did you **finish** counselling?
• How long did you go to counselling for? Roughly how many sessions?

Referral
• **How did you come to be referred** to see a counsellor?
• Did you have a choice in whether or not you went to see the counsellor?
• Going to see a counsellor was your decision. If the school had had to ask for permission from your parents/carers before going to see a counsellor, do you think that would have made you more likely or less likely to use the counselling?
• Overall, were you happy or unhappy with the process of referral?
• What did you want from counselling?

Expectations
• What did you imagine would happen when you went to see a counsellor?
• How do you think counselling is seen within the school?
• Was the counselling better or worse than your expectations?

Counselling process
• Did you find counselling **helpful or unhelpful**?
• In what specifics ways was it helpful? (outcomes?)
• What were the qualities or characteristics of the counsellor that helped you?
> • Were there differences between what you got from your counsellor and what you got from your guidance teacher? If so, what?
• What were the things that the counsellor did during counselling that you found helpful?
• What were the things that you did during counselling that were helpful?
• Are there any ways in which counselling could have been **more helpful** to you? Were there any things that weren't helpful?
• Did you feel that you had about the right number of sessions, or would you have liked more or less?

Confidentiality
• The things that you talked about with your counsellor were confidential between you and her. How important or unimportant was that for you in the counselling work?
> • **with your parents/guardians**?
> • **with your teachers**?
> • **with fellow students**?
>> • Did you talk about the counselling **with your friends**?
>> What was your friend's reaction?
• Are there other people you would have liked to have known about the things you discussed?

Location
• 'The counselling that you went to was inside the school rather than outside, say at a GP surgery or a youth centre.' Would you rather that it was outside, or did you like that it was inside, or does it not really make a difference?
> • Why?

Appendix six: Protocols for interviews

Numbers

• 'You saw the counsellor on a one-to-one basis, rather than in a group. Would you rather that it was in a group, or did you like that it was one-to-one, or does it not really make a difference?
        • Why?

Evaluation

• 'As part of the counselling service, you completed one form at the beginning of the counselling and two at the end, asking you to indicate your level of psychological problems, and also to say how satisfied you were with the counselling service. How did you find it filling in these forms? Did you find it unhelpful, helpful, or neither?

Service improvement

• Do you have any other thoughts on how the **counselling service could be improved**?

Conclusion

• Do you have any **other thoughts** or comments on the school counselling service?

FINISH

• How did you find interview?
• Remind that counsellor is about at end if need to talk to them
• Many thanks

COUNSELLING SERVICE EVALUATION: 2003-2004

Dear member of guidance staff

We are now coming to the end of the second session of the school's counselling service, and, again, we would very much value your feedback on how helpful you feel the service has been this year.

We would be very grateful, therefore, if you could take a few minutes to fill in the evaluation form below.

To help us evaluate and develop the service as effectively as possible, please be as honest as you can in your responses. All responses will be treated anonymously.

1. As far as you are aware, *over the last school year* (i.e. August 2003 – June 2004), roughly how many of your guidance students have attended one or more sessions with the school's counsellor? (please circle)

None (please go to question 3)	One	Two to Five	Six to ten	More than ten

2. Based on any changes that you have witnessed in these students, Overall, how helpful or unhelpful do you think the counselling service has been? (please circle a number from one to ten)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Extremely unhelpful				Neither helpful or unhelpful					Extremely helpful

3. Are there any ways in which you feel that we could improve the counselling service in your school?

4. If you have any other comments about the counselling service in your school, please write them below.

QUESTION FOR GUIDANCE TEACHERS

2003 03 03

ᛉ Do informed consent form

• What is their role in school/how are they involved with counselling project?

What experience/training do they have with counselling themselves?

• How do you feel that the pilot counselling service is progressing?

• Are there any particular obstacles that you feel you have encountered with the service?

• Are there any ways in which you feel the service could be improved?

• What do you think could be learned for future implementations of a school's counselling service?

• Is there anything you are surprised by?

• Do you feel that the counselling service is of benefit or hindrance to your students?

• What kind of criteria are you using for referring students to counselling?

• Do you have any thoughts on how you might be able to record of how many students are on the waiting list for counselling, and how long, on average, they tend to stay there?

QUESTIONS FOR COUNSELLORS

• How do you feel that the pilot counselling service is progressing?

• Are there any particular obstacles that you feel you have encountered with the service?

• Are there any ways in which you feel the service could be improved?

• What do you think could be learned for future implementations of a school's counselling service?

• Is there anything you are surprised by?

• Do you feel that the counselling service is of benefit or hindrance to your students?

• How have you found the evaluation process – how might it be different in future?

Confidential Counselling Service Questionnaire

We are currently conducting some research to find out pupils' attitudes towards their school's counselling service, and would be very grateful if you could take some time to complete this questionnaire. It should not take more than fifteen minutes to fill it in. The information that you give us will be very useful in helping us – and others – to improve the counselling services in schools. To help us as much as possible:

- *please be **as honest as you can be** in your answers,*
- *complete the form **on your own,***
- ***take a little time** to think about each question.*

To complete this questionnaire, please tick the box next to, or underneath, the answer that most matches what you think. **There are no right answers to any of the questions – just the answer that feels right for you.**

Anything that you write will be completely anonymous: no-one will know that these are your answers. If, having responded to this questionnaire, you would like to talk to someone further about counselling or your feelings, please contact [name of guidance coordinator] or your guidance teacher.

Please note that you do not have to answer this questionnaire, or any of the questions on it, if you do not want to. If you do not want to answer this questionnaire at all, please tick this box. ☐

When you have finished with this questionnaire, please place it in the envelope provided and seal it.

Many thanks for your help.

Dr Mick Cooper, *Senior Lecturer in Counselling, University of Strathclyde*

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1. Are you aware that your school has a counselling service?   No ☐$_0$ Yes ☐$_1$

2. How much would you say you know about counselling?

Nothing at all	A little	A moderate amount	Quite a lot	A lot
☐$_0$	☐$_1$	☐$_2$	☐$_3$	☐$_4$

3. If you had a problem that you wanted to talk to someone about, would you see the counsellor in your school?

No, definitely not	No, probably not	Yes, probably	Yes, definitely
☐$_0$	☐$_1$	☐$_2$	☐$_3$

Please comment on why you chose to respond in this way:

4. To what extent do you *imagine* that the counsellor in your school does the following things:

	Not at all	A little	A moderate amount	Quite a lot	A lot
• Provides a listening ear	☐$_0$	☐$_1$	☐$_2$	☐$_3$	☐$_4$
• Gives pupils advice	☐$_0$	☐$_1$	☐$_2$	☐$_3$	☐$_4$
• Helps pupils understand more about themselves and their problems	☐$_0$	☐$_1$	☐$_2$	☐$_3$	☐$_4$
• Teaches pupils new coping and problem-solving skills	☐$_0$	☐$_1$	☐$_2$	☐$_3$	☐$_4$
• Helps pupils 'get things off their chests'	☐$_0$	☐$_1$	☐$_2$	☐$_3$	☐$_4$
• Suggests to pupils reasons for why they feel and behave in the way they do	☐$_0$	☐$_1$	☐$_2$	☐$_3$	☐$_4$
• Asks pupils lots of questions	☐$_0$	☐$_1$	☐$_2$	☐$_3$	☐$_4$

Other:

5. If you were to see the counsellor in your school, to what extent might you **want** the following things from them?	Not at all	A little	A moderate amount	Quite a lot	A lot
• Help in understanding more about yourself and your problems..	0	1	2	3	4
• To be asked lots of questions..	0	1	2	3	4
• To learn new coping and problem-solving skills..................	0	1	2	3	4
• Help 'getting things off your chest'..............................	0	1	2	3	4
• Advice..	0	1	2	3	4
• Suggestions for why you feel and behave in the way you do...	0	1	2	3	4
• A listening ear..	0	1	2	3	4

Other:

6. If you had a problem that you wanted to talk to someone about, to what extent might the following things **put you off** seeing the counsellor in your school:	Not at all	A little	A moderate amount	Quite a lot	A lot
• Worrying that other pupils might find out that you are going..	0	1	2	3	4
• Worrying that teachers might find out that you are going	0	1	2	3	4
• Worrying that your parents/guardians might find out that you are going	0	1	2	3	4
• Worrying that other pupils might find out what you say to the counsellor..	0	1	2	3	4
• Worrying that teachers might find out what you say to the counsellor	0	1	2	3	4
• Worrying that your parents/guardians might find out what you say to the counsellor...................................	0	1	2	3	4
• Worrying that, if other pupils found out, they would tease or bully you..	0	1	2	3	4
• Not knowing what the counsellor does............................	0	1	2	3	4
• Not knowing how to contact the counsellor......................	0	1	2	3	4
• Not wanting to talk to a stranger................................	0	1	2	3	4
• Not wanting to miss classes.......................................	0	1	2	3	4
• Believing that it is 'weak' to need counselling..................	0	1	2	3	4
• Believing that you have to be 'crazy', 'mad' or 'mentally ill' to need counselling..	0	1	2	3	4
• Believing that your problems are not important enough......	0	1	2	3	4
• Not wanting to admit that you have problems.................	0	1	2	3	4
• Embarrassment about talking about your problems.............	0	1	2	3	4
• Worrying that it will be upsetting talking about your problems..	0	1	2	3	4
• Worrying that counselling will make things worse................	0	1	2	3	4
• Believing that you should be able to sort out your problems on your own..	0	1	2	3	4
• Feeling that there are other people you could talk to..........	0	1	2	3	4
• Feeling that an adult would not be able to help you..............	0	1	2	3	4

Other:

7. If you had a problem that you wanted to talk to someone about, to what extent might the following things make it **more** likely that you would go to see a counsellor:	Not at all	A little	A moderate amount	Quite a lot	A lot
• Being reassured that the counselling is confidential............	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4
• Being able to contact the counsellor directly, without having to tell a teacher...	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4
• Being able to see the counsellor on a 'drop-in' basis............	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4

Other:

8. If you were to see the counsellor in your school, which kind of counsellor would you rather see?	A male counsellor	Either a male counsellor or a female counsellor	A female counsellor
	☐0	☐1	☐3

9. If you were to see a counsellor, would you rather they were based at your school or outside (for instance, at a youth centre or doctor's surgery)?	At the school, definitely	At the school, probably	Outside, probably	Outside, definitely
	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3

10. If you were to see the counsellor at your school, would you rather see them on your own, or as part of a small group?	On my own, definitely	On my own, probably	In a small group, probably	In a small group, definitely
	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3

11. Overall, on a scale of 0 to 10, how important do you judge it to be to have a counsellor at your school? (0 = not at all, 10 = essential) (please write your number in the box) ☐

Please comment on why you chose to rate it this way:

13. What year are you?   S1 ☐   S2 ☐   S3 ☐   S4 ☐   S5 ☐   S6 ☐

12. What is your gender?   Female ☐0   Male ☐1

14. How would you describe your ethnic origin?

Indian ☐0	Caribbean ☐5	British other ☐10
Pakistani ☐1	African ☐6	White other ☐11
Bangladeshi ☐2	Black other ☐7	Mixed background ☐12
Chinese ☐3	Scottish ☐8	
Asian other ☐4	Irish ☐9	Other ☐13

15. If you have any further thoughts on the counselling service at your school, and how we might be able to improve it, please write them below and, if necessary, on the other side of this page:

COUNSELLING