

School and College Counselling in the Covid-19 Landscape



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Setting the Scene - School and College Counselling in the UK

CYPF Role

Delivery of school based counselling across the UK

IPPR Study -Inequalities linked to availability of 'on-site' counselling in England; plus a decline in the amount of provision



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WHO (2020) conducted a survey across 130 countries, evaluating how the provision of mental, neurological and substance use services has changed due to COVID-19, the types of services that have been disrupted, and how countries are adapting to overcome these challenges

COVID-19 has disrupted or halted critical mental health services in 93% of countries worldwide while the demand for mental health is increasing

72% reported disruptions to mental health services for children and adolescents

67% saw disruptions to counselling and psychotherapy

Around three-quarters reported at least partial disruptions to school and workplace mental health services (78% and 75% respectively)

Although 89% of countries reported in the survey that mental health and psychosocial support is part of their national COVID-19 response plans, only 17% of these countries have full additional funding for covering these activities.

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YOUNGMiNDS

"Coronavirus: Impact on young people with mental health needs" Feb, 2021

- 75% -the current lockdown harder to cope with than the previous ones
- 67% believed that the pandemic will have a long-term negative effect on their mental health
- 24% said that they had looked for support but not accessed it – often because of challenges accessing support remotely rather than face-to-face, particularly if they were concerned about privacy at home. Others had experienced long waiting times, or fallen in the gaps between different services.
- 49% who were at school or college, did not think their school was focusing more on wellbeing following the pandemic
- 55% said that there was a counsellor or mental health support team available in their school (an increase from an earlier survey where 40% of respondents said that there was no school counsellor available to support students in their school)

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Definition of School and College Counselling

School and college counselling intervention can be defined as

"a form of psychological therapy that provides young people with an empathic, non-judgemental and supportive relationship to find their own answers to their own problems" (Hill, Roth and Cooper, 2013)

This is offered within a safe and boundaried space for children and young people to talk about their difficulties, within a relationship of agreed confidentiality.

A professional service delivered by qualified and experienced children and young people practitioners working to a CYPF competence framework.

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School and College Counselling in the UK - Research aims

Better understand the provision of counselling and psychotherapy in UK primary, secondary and further education college settings

Investigate how COVID-19 has affected the provision of this therapy and what is needed for the future

Policy implications



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Method

- Survey practitioners working with children and young people (5-18 years old) in educational settings
- Participants complete self-report surveys online at several points

Timescale 2020-2021	Number of respondents
Summer term (closing date end of July)	742
Autumn term (closing date end of December)	206
Spring term March 17 th - closing date April 11 th	
Summer term (end of July, 2021)	

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Professional Membership breakdown

Membership body	
BACP	91.1%
NCS	3.5%
UKCP	3.4%
BPS	3%
COSCA	3%
Play Therapy UK	2.3%
The Person-centred Association	1.8%
Black, African and Asian Therapy Network	1.3%
Association of Christian Counsellors	1.1%
British Association of Art Therapists	1.1%
British Association of Play Therapists	1%

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Breakdown of Job Titles

Roles	Summer	Autumn
Counsellor	78%	76%
Psychotherapist	12%	15%
Arts/creative therapists	5%	4%
Counselling psychologists	1%	1%
Other therapeutic roles	4%	6%

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Settings where counselling was offered

Settings	Summer	Autumn
Secondary education	73%	78%
Primary education	49%	46%
Sixth form/FE	25%	25%
Pupil Referral Units (PRU's)/other alternative educational settings	10%	9%
Other educational settings	9%	9%

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Breakdown of Roles

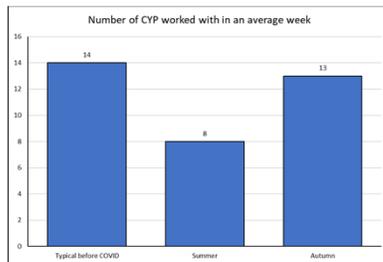
Role	Number	Percentage
Paid employment (school or college)	123	59.7%
Paid employment (voluntary or community sector)	47	22.8%
Paid employment (NHS or other statutory provision)	31	15.05%
Trainee	14	6.6%
Volunteer	20	9.7%

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Results

Number of CYP receiving therapy approximately halved following COVID-19 restrictions, but improved towards end of 2020



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Reasons counselling didn't take place in the Summer term, 2020

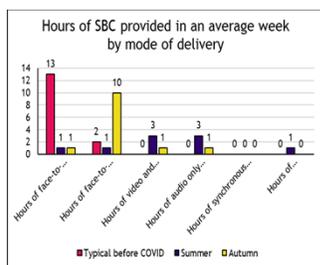
- 1 School/organisation has been physically closed
- 2 Clients have not been able to access remote therapy without others knowing
- 3 My school/organisation has reduced or stopped the provision of therapy
- 4 I have not had an appropriate space to provide face-to-face therapy
- 5 Clients have not had an appropriate space to access remote therapy
- 6 Clients have not been interested in remote therapy
- 7 Not been able to provide therapy in a way that is appropriate for the client's developmental stage
- 8 Clients have not had sufficient access to the technology required to access therapy
- 9 I have not been able to contact clients due to data protection or safeguarding
- 10 I have not felt psychologically capable of providing therapy
- 11 I have not had an appropriate space to provide remote therapy
- 12 I have not had sufficient access to the technology required to continue providing therapy

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Survey results

- Face-to-face therapy greatly reduced immediately following COVID-19 restrictions, with video conferencing and telephone therapy increasing
- Face-to-face therapy increased again towards end of 2020, although with social-distancing in place



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Respondents reported that...

- Therapeutic sessions were slightly shorter in both Summer and Autumn terms compared to before COVID
- Waiting times for therapy had slightly increased in the Autumn term compared to before COVID and the Summer term
- Contact with educational staff was slightly reduced in both the Summer and Autumn terms compared to before COVID
- Contact with practitioners' therapeutic colleagues and supervisors appeared unaffected by COVID
- Contact with CYP's parents/guardians was slightly higher in both the Summer and Autumn terms compared to before COVID
- CYP referrals to therapy decreased following COVID in the Summer term, but increased from the Summer term's levels in the Autumn term

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Priorities following the first survey

1. Greater recognition of mental health as a critical service
- 2 A private space to provide face-to-face therapy (with or without social distancing).
- 3 A private space for clients to attend remote counselling
- 4 Research into the impacts of COVID-19 on CYP
- 5 Ways to contact CYP who are not currently attending therapy (during term-time)
- 6 Appropriate technology for clients to attend remote counselling
- 7 Guidance/training in providing therapy remotely

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Key themes from the initial research relating to further guidance needed

- Face masks and social distancing
- Working online with under 10's
- 'Safe' platforms for remote therapy
- Room safety
- Use of play and arts materials for remote counselling
- Confidential space for remote therapy
- Consistency across schools
- Therapeutic boundaries
- What counselling is and what it isn't
- Easier to digest/faster guidance
- Nation based guidance
- Networking opportunities/share resources
- Free training/CPD opportunities



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Limitations of the research

- Self-report online survey
- Survey only completed once at the end of each term - the situation relating to COVID-19 changes much more rapidly
- Doesn't fully capture the issues counsellors are working with during the pandemic



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Policy Implications



- Initial research findings shared with the Department for Education (Westminster) and included in campaign work as part of the comprehensive spending review - 'workforce ready'
- Support from Young Minds, Centre for Mental Health, Mental Health Foundation - calling for funded counselling provision for children aged 10 -18
- Early Day Motion - 34 signatories
- BACP school and college counselling Expert Reference Group
- Green paper response "transforming children and young people's mental health services" - Call for evidence inquiry
- Digital poverty, inequalities
- Implications for future counselling provision
- [Budget response](#)

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JAMA Pediatrics

Views on COVID-19 impact on CYP mental health

Not all school-based practitioners or families have access to technology for remote counselling

For CYP who can access remote counselling, also need to address the potential obstacle of the client not having a private space, which might particularly affect lower-income families with smaller living spaces

2012-2015 -57% students accessed school based mental health support, with 35% receiving this support exclusively in schools

Golberstein, Wen and Miller (2020)

Volume 174 (9)

School closure and quarantine increase risk of loneliness and domestic abuse

Need to implement policy interventions to alleviate longer-lasting effects of school closures

Poletti and Raballo (2020).

Volume 175 (2)

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Counselling Online- is it the future?

Sarah Hinds, in an article entitled "A reflection on the digitalisation of counselling in HE" Universities and College Journal, March 2021, volume 9.

Quotes an associate lecturer from Instead:

"Our minds are together when our bodies feel we're not. That dissonance, which causes people to have conflicting feelings, is exhausting. You cannot relax into the conversation naturally"

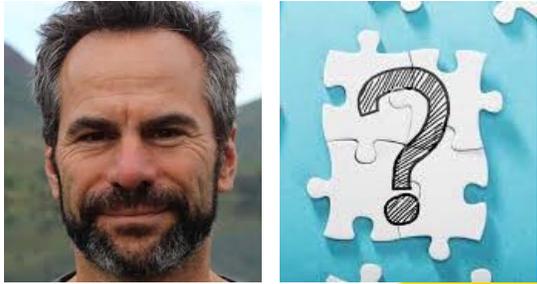
"I don't want to do counselling online. My room is not a private space when I can discuss things I may want to, and I know from counselling that I've had in the past that the ability to go somewhere separate and talk to someone in person is a big part of why it worked for me."

Young Minds, 2021



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Any Questions?



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Thank you!



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