

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2018-2019**

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Date 13<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

**REPORT OF:  
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND  
INCLUSION SERVICES**

**Agenda Item No.**

**SCHOOL BASED COUNSELLING  
SERVICE 2017/18**

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**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to provide Elected Members with an overview of the provision and effectiveness of counselling services for young people in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) during the academic year 2017/2018 and to inform Elected Members of current plans to ensure ongoing provision that meets the needs of service users.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Scrutinise and comment on the information contained within this report.
- 2.2 Consider if any further information is required.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

To raise Members' awareness.

**4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 came into force. This Act places a statutory duty on local authorities (LAs) to provide an independent counselling service in respect of health, emotional and social needs for children and young people in their area.
- 4.2 At the same time that this new Act came into force, the specific grant funding for independent counselling services transferred to Local Authorities' Revenue Support Grants as part of the Local Government Settlement. LAs are consequently required to make reasonable provision of counselling services for children and young people aged between 11 and 18 and for year 6 pupils. All children and young people

residing in RCT are entitled to access counselling services, irrespective of whether they attend school or not.

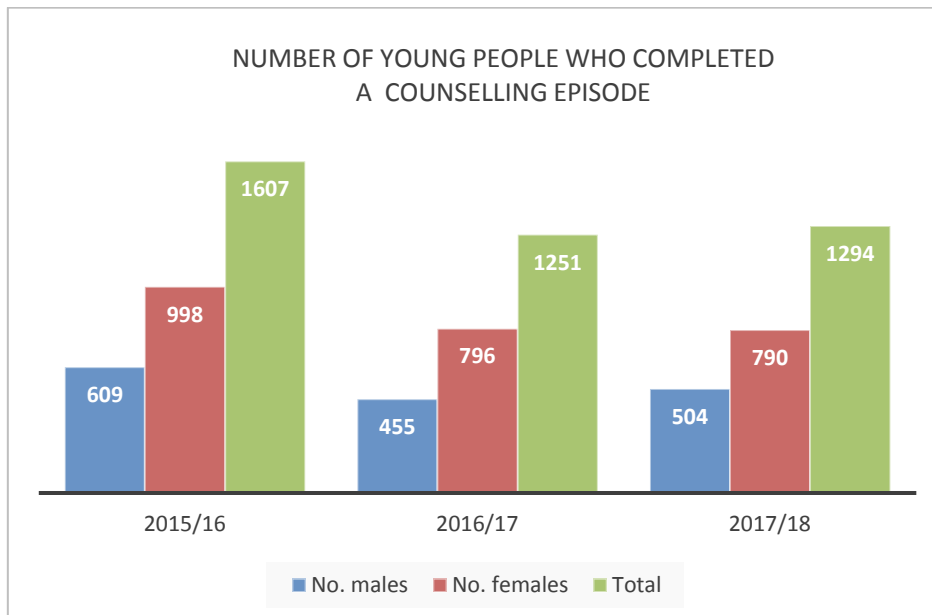
- 4.3 The 2013 Act requires the LA to provide an independent counselling service on the site of each secondary school that it maintains and also offer counselling services at other locations for young people who are not in school and/or wish to access counselling outside of a formal education setting.
- 4.4 Within schools, counselling complements other approaches to support the health and wellbeing of learners, such as school based wellbeing interventions and pastoral support or more specialist interventions from LA central support teams such as the Educational Psychology Service or Behaviour Support Service, as well as services provided externally through Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- 4.5 The appointment of a counselling services in each LA is carried out via a tendering process every three to five years. In RCT, the Eye to Eye Young People's Counselling Service is currently contracted to provide the statutory service within schools and in the community. Eye to Eye is a registered charity comprising of a professional team of counsellors who follow the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy.
- 4.6 The organisation consists of 21 employed counsellors (13 fte) and a number of volunteer counsellors who work in the community setting in the evening. All of the employed counsellors are fully qualified and certified with the BACP. Volunteer counsellors may still be in training but their practice is supervised by a fully qualified and BACP certified counsellor. Community based counselling is provided in community buildings on the site of Bryncelynog Comprehensive School.
- 4.7 During the academic year (2017/18) a Counselling Service Management Board was established, comprising representation from the Educational Psychology Service, Children Looked After (CLA) team, Attendance and Wellbeing Service (AWS), Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS), a local Secondary Head Teacher, LA data and procurement teams and the Eye to Eye Counselling Service. The purpose of the management board, is to ensure that the Eye to Eye Counselling Service is meeting the requirements set out in their contract, that the service provided meets the needs of children and young people in RCT and to consider the necessary requirements of an effective counselling service for children and young people, as we move towards the next tendering process (time scale for tendering process is appended).

## **5. CURRENT POSITION**

- 5.1 Graph 1 details the number of young people who have accessed counselling during the three year period. The graph shows a decrease in figures since 2015/16 due to a change in measures, as historically the

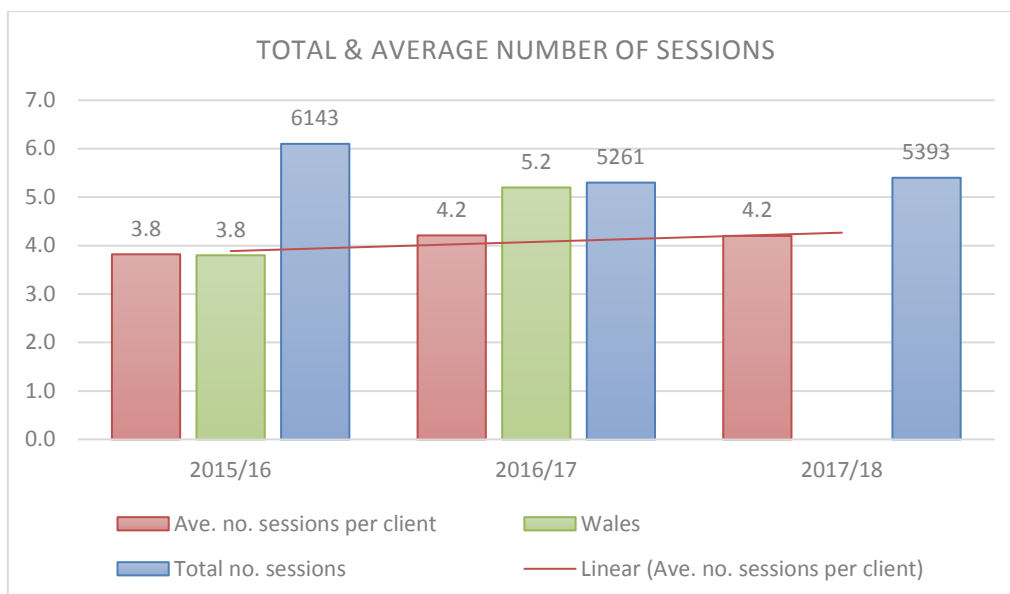
figures quoted were for the number of referrals, rather the actual number of individuals who attended counselling. This has now been corrected from 2016/17. Figures show more school registered pupils (11-18 year olds) received counselling support in 2017/18 compared to 2016/17.

When comparing males and females accessing counselling during this three year period, significantly more females than males had counselling. This is a common trend across Wales. However, efforts have been made in RCT to encourage more males to engage in counselling, by employing two male counsellors, since when there has been a rise in males completing a counselling episode, with 504 school registered (11-18 year old) boys receiving counselling compared to 455 in 2016/17 – an increase of 11%.



**Graph 1: Number of young people who accessed counselling**

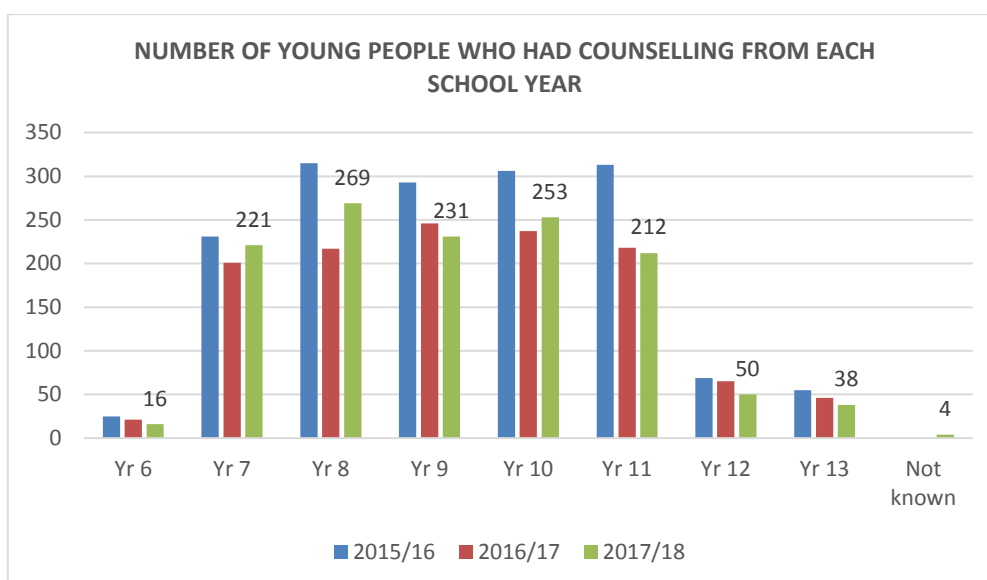
5.2 Graph 2 indicates the average number of counselling sessions attended by young people, which for the academic year 2017/18 was 4.2. This was the same as the previous year, when it was slightly below the national average of 5.2. National data was not available for comparison for 2017/18. However, the total number of counselling sessions attended in 2017/18 had increased on the previous academic year, as more young people had engaged in counselling.



**Graph 2: Number of sessions attended by young people**

5.3 Graph 3 indicates that in 2017/18, year 8 (269) pupils used the counselling service the most, closely followed by year 10, year 9 and then year 7. This is the common trend across all areas in Wales.

The lowest number of young people accessing the service were year 6 pupils; this is due to only a limited number of counselling sessions currently offered to primary schools in the RCT under the current counselling contract. The needs of this younger cohort are therefore met by school based staff such as Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs). However, primary schools can currently refer a year 6 pupil for counselling, in order to help them after a loss.



**Graph 3: Number of young people in each school year who had counselling**

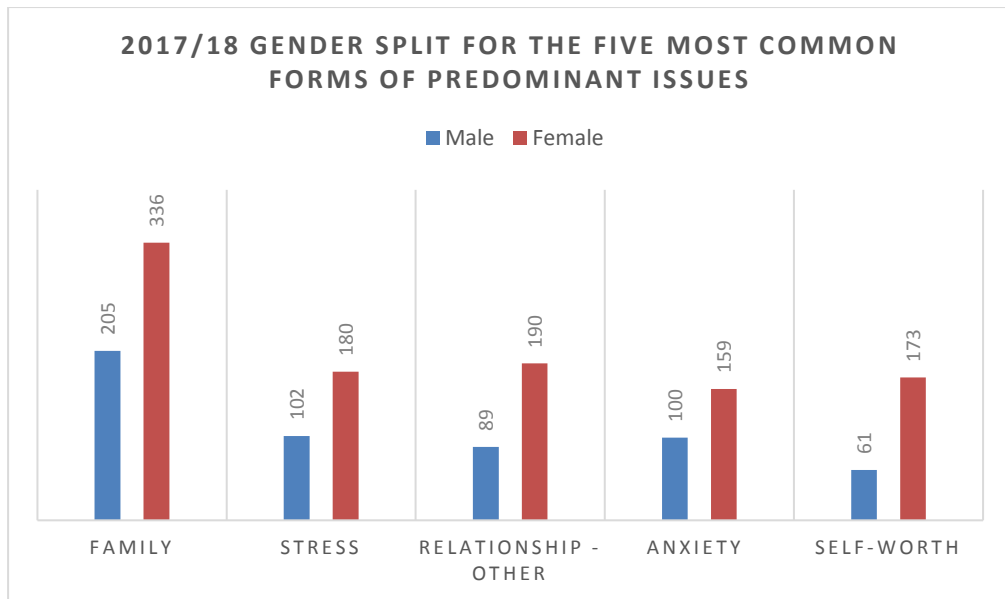
5.4 Table 1 demonstrates the percentage of young people with special characteristics receiving counselling, as a proportion of the total number

of young people attending counselling. These special characteristics include Special Educational Needs (SEN), a registered disability or where a child who is looked after (CLA) by the LA. The figures noted indicate that these groups are accessing counselling. However, on the 31st of March 2018, there were 676 looked after children and young people within Rhondda Cynon Taf. Whilst not all of this cohort is of statutory school age or old enough to access counselling, they are noted to be an extremely vulnerable group who may benefit from counselling services as they get older. As only 15 children who are looked after attended counselling in 2017/18, it is considered that more needs to be done to improve accessibility of counselling services to this cohort in particular. It is hoped that the inclusion of members of the CLA team on the Counselling Service Management Board, may be helpful in addressing this.

Year	Group	Males	Females	Total	Total No. C&YP who had counselling	%
2015/16	SEN	126	87	213	1,607	13%
	Disability	37	34	71		4%
	CLA	16	39	55		3%
2016/17	SEN	104	100	204	1,251	16%
	Disability	9	8	17		1%
	CLA	14	22	36		3%
2017/18	SEN	90	46	136	1,294	11%
	Disability	9	15	24		2%
	CLA	7	8	15		1%
Total over the 3 years	SEN	320	233	553	4,152	13%
	Disability	55	57	112		3%
	CLA	37	69	106		3%

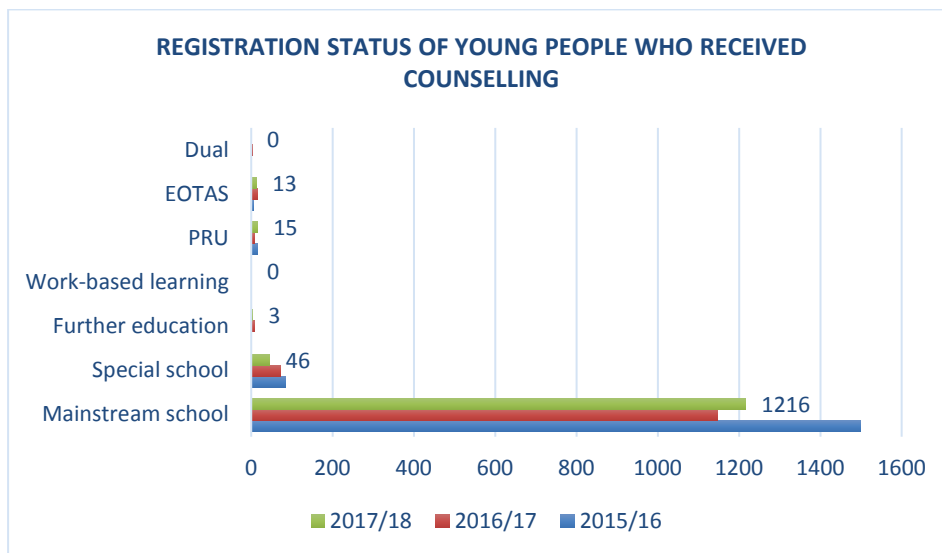
**Table 1: Percentage of young people with special characteristics attending counselling.**

- 5.5 An analysis of the gender differences exhibited for the five most common forms of predominant issues is highlighted in graph 6. The data for 2017/18 indicates that 'family issues' continues to be the predominant issue for both males and females receiving counselling, followed by stress, difficulties with other (non-familial) relationships, anxiety and feelings about themselves.



**Graph 6: Gender split for the five most common forms of predominant issues**

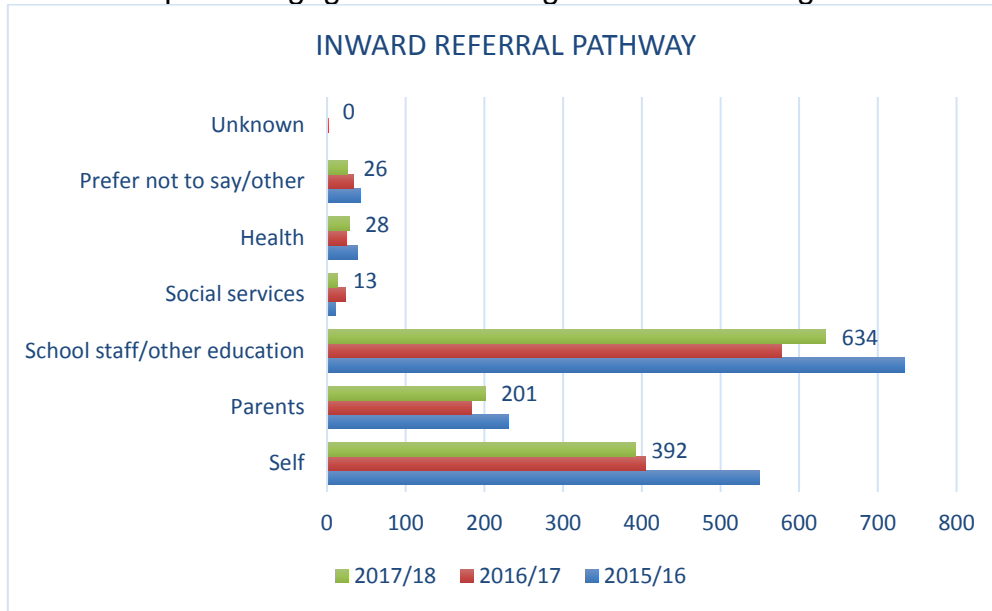
5.6 Graph 7 demonstrates the educational provision attended by the young people accessing counselling. Over the last three years, the majority of young people that received counselling were registered at mainstream schools. The lower figures from provisions other than mainstream school are reflective of the lower numbers of young people attending these different provisions.



**Graph 7: Registration status of young people who received counselling**

5.7 Over the last three years, the majority of referrals made to the counselling service have been by school staff. In 2017/18, 49% of referrals were made by schools or other educational establishments, 30% through self-referral and 16% made by parents (the other 5% made by Health or Social Services).

Those referrals categorised as 'other' include those from the Youth Offending Service, Team Around the Family (TAF), Young Carers, Oasis Centre, Barnados, College and voluntary organisations such as Valleys Kids and New Horizons. It is considered positive that, in addition to school staff and parental referrals, a significant number of referrals for counselling are self-referrals, demonstrating the young people themselves are aware of the counselling service and are choosing to seek help and engage in counselling in order to manage their difficulties.



**Graph 8: Inward referral pathway**

5.8 During the academic year 2017/18 data was also collected in relation to the time spent waiting for counselling, following service evaluation from the previous year that noted this as an area of concern. The results indicate that during this period, 36% of young people referred for school based counselling waited for more than 31 days for counselling to commence and 4% of young people waited for more than 100 days. Waiting times were longer for those choosing or needing to access counselling in the community rather than at school, with 78% of school registered young people waiting for longer than 31 days and 71% of young people no longer at school having to wait for more than 31 days. The length of waiting lists is reported to be due to the volume of referrals being greater than the capacity of the current counselling service, with community based counselling being predominantly delivered by unpaid volunteers in the evenings.

**School Based Counselling waiting times**

No. of Days	Same day	1 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 20	21 - 30	31 - 50	51 - 70	71 - 99	100 - 149	150+
No. YP	225	184	137	125	137	196	116	89	38	11
% YP	18%	15%	11%	10%	11%	16%	9%	7%	3%	1%

### Community Based Counselling For School Registered YP Waiting Times

No. of Days	1 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 20	21 - 30	31 - 50	51- 70	71 - 99	100 - 149	150+
No. YP	1	2	2	5	10	7	8	10	2
% YP	2%	4%	4%	11%	21%	15%	17%	21%	4%

### Community Based Counselling Waiting Times for YP no longer registered at school

No. of Days	6 - 10	11 - 20	21 - 30	31 - 50	51- 70	71 - 99	100-149	15+
No. YP	1	3	1	2	3	4	2	2
% YP	6%	17%	6%	11%	17%	22%	11%	11%

5.9 Information was also gathered in relation to young people who did not have counselling following referral. These figures show that more than 200 young people referred for counselling did not complete sessions, either because they declined to take part, did not attend the sessions offered or (following discussion with the counsellor) counselling was not considered suitable or necessary at this time. This suggests that a number of young people are being inappropriately referred for counselling and may be better sign posted to other services in some instances.

	Total	School	Community (school registered)	Community (19 – 25 year olds) <sup>1</sup>
<b>Did Not Have Counselling</b> (now closed):	<b>209</b>	100 (7%) (47 males & 53 females) 26 declined 5 DNA 69 not suitable	66 (48%) (25 males & 41 females) 46 declined 19 DNA 1 not suitable	43 (57%) (20 males & 23 females) 32 declined 10 DNA 1 not suitable

5.10 Service evaluations are carried out every year with the young people using the service. The results of the 2017/18 evaluations indicate that the majority of service users completed an evaluation, which therefore provided a representative sample of views. The results indicate that, despite figures suggesting lengthy waiting lists, 95% of those in school and 100% of those accessing community based counselling, felt that it was easy to get an appointment. The outcomes are also extremely positive with regards views of counselling as a way of dealing with problems and having a positive overall impression of the counsellor and service provided.

### Service Evaluations (completed by service users)

	School	Community
No. evaluations completed	935 (74%)	29 (55%)
% easy to get an appointment	95%	100%



<b>% good way of dealing with their problems</b>	99%	100%
<b>% 'good' or 'great' overall impression</b>	92%	100%

## **6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required as the contents of this report are for information purposes only.

## **7. CONSULTATIONS**

- 7.1 No consultation exercises have been undertaken.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Under current arrangements the counselling service is grant funded by Welsh Government. However, there has been no increase in the grant for over 5 years, which has implications with regards to maintaining and recruiting counselling staff.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 9.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

## **10 LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN/CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP**

- 10.1 One of the three priorities of the Corporate Plan for RCT is 'Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone'. It is considered that an effective counselling service is key to ensuring that the needs of vulnerable young people are met, in order for them to develop independent coping strategies, build good mental health and positive lives.

## **11. CONCLUSION**

- 11.1 There appears to be a continuing increase in demand for counselling services for young people in RCT. It is positive to note that there has been an increase in boys engaging in counselling. However, the figure is still low compared to females and, whilst this may reflect a difference in coping strategies, it is concluded that there need to be further work to engage boys who are in need of social and emotional support.
- 11.2 The provision of counselling services for primary school aged children is currently very limited. It is understood that counselling for this age group has to be delivered differently, using techniques such as play therapy

and therefore recruitment of counsellors with this skill set may be more difficult. Additionally, the needs of the youngest pupils may best be met by school staff who they already know and trust. However, it is considered that a scoping exercise to consider the needs of this cohort may be helpful to explore any gaps in the current provision.

- 11.3 There is a continuing need to improve accessibility of counselling services for children who are looked after by the LA. It is hoped that the inclusion of members of the CLA Education Team on the Counselling Service Management Board, may help to better understand the issues and then address them.
- 11.4 The predominant reasons for young people requesting counselling continues to be as a result of difficulties with family relationships, non-familial relationships, stress and anxiety. Whilst some issues in these areas in not un-expected in teenage years, there is perhaps an indication that there is an ongoing need to assist young people in developing coping strategies and resilience, alongside counselling.
- 11.5 The number of young people self-referring for counselling is considered to be a positive reflection on young peoples' awareness of the counselling service.
- 11.6 Waiting times for counselling is an area of concern, as they can often be extensive, particularly for young people wishing to access counselling in the community rather than at school. There is considered to be a need for further work in relation to triage, in order to ensure that the young people with most urgent needs/acute cases can be expedited and other, less urgent cases can be signposted for support from other services whilst waiting for counselling to commence.
- 11.7 There appear to be a high number of inappropriate referrals for counselling and there is therefore a need to further educate school staff and parents as to what the counselling service can offer and other services that may be available to meet a range of wellbeing needs of different levels. The Counselling Service Management Board has put together a working group, who will produce a flow chart model to assist with this.
- 11.8 Evaluations of young people using the existing counselling service continue to be overwhelmingly positive with regards their view of the service and how helpful they consider it to be in solving their issues and meeting their needs when referred.