School-Based Humanistic Counselling: Evaluation, Evolution and Actualisation

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Thanks to the many people whose research and feedback contributed to this paper.

Strathclyde colleagues: Susan McGinnis, Dave Mearns, Mike Hough, Lorna Carrick, Lorna Stewart, Eileen MacMillan, Terry White, Cam Miller, Graham Young, Heather Coady, Joost Luiten, Robert Bick, Marian Griffiths, project reviewers.

External colleagues: Stephen McLeod, John Butcher, Sal Bennett, Karen Cromarty, Andy Hill, Peter Jones, Steven Buss, Adam Mckell, Lucy Mearns, Sarah Mearns, Susan Hodkinson, Ann Thirsk, Katherine Joy, Dr. flora, Maria Fernandez, Steve Brown, Nick Turner, Olga Pykhtina, Kaye Richards, Elspeth Twigg, Michael Barkham, Chris Evans, John Mellor-Clark, Barry Duncan, Jacqueline Sparks, Dave Stewart, Sheila Spong, Andrew Reeves, Peter Fonagy, Miranda Wolpert, Duncan Law, Raph Kelvin

The Glasgow Counselling in Schools Project

• Inspired in 2001 by Susan McGinnis, member of the BACP CCYP Exec and editor of Counselling in Education
• Developed in association with Dave Mearns, Director of the Counselling Unit
• ‘A service that would be in the school but not of the school’
• September 2002: two years’ funding from Greater Glasgow NHS Board for counselling service in three secondary schools
• Mike Hough appointed as Project Manager
• September 2004: projected extended to a further 10 schools in Glasgow – continued until July 2011
• Susan McGinnis project manager from 2004; Lorna Carrick/Mick Cooper as Principal Investigators; Beth Freire coordinated evaluation

Knowledge exchange

Counselling services

School-based counselling services also delivered/ supported in East Dunbartonshire (2002-10), Clydebank, Oban and Tobermory, and Orkney

Service delivery supported by a range of practitioner-based resources from Mike Hough and Susan McGinnis
Evaluation and research

- **Uniquely**, from its inception, evaluation and research were integral to the Counselling Unit’s work
- Came to be leading centre in UK
- Evaluation of both Unit projects and external services: ERYCS, Welsh Assembly Government, Place2Be, Barnardo’s NI, Relate...

Glasgow projects amongst first to use ‘Teen-CORE’ (now YP-CORE) to evaluate change from beginning to end of counselling

Higher total scores =
More distress

**Changes in distress**
Change from pre- to post-counselling
Evaluations showed that counselling was consistently associated with reductions in psychological distress

Evaluation of primary-school counselling with ‘systematic feedback’
- The integration into therapy of validated methods that invite clients, on a regular basis, to assess their wellbeing (outcome feedback), or experience of therapy and the therapeutic relationship (process feedback)

- ‘Time4Me’ primary school counselling service
- Goals for counselling agreed at assessment with child and family
- Weekly use of ‘Child Outcome Rating Scale’ and ‘Child Session Rating Scale’ to assess progress and personalise therapy

Time4Me: Start of counselling
Clinical levels of distress = 73.6%

Time4Me: End of counselling
Clinical levels of distress = 9.4%

Qualitative evaluation
Children and young people consistently describe school-based counselling as helpful

From Welsh School-based Counselling Strategy:

“It really does help you to concentrate better in class cos all your problems are like, sorted, so the teachers probably think it’s good.”

“I was sad when I went in there cos I lost my grandmother…. She says it goes – she says it goes on in my life – she says she knows how hard it is – the more and more I do hear from her, the more and more I get happier.”

“Yes, it’s changed my behaviour a lot. I can walk away from situations instead of going physical. Instead if I was fighting and one of my friends would grab me I’d hit ‘em but now if they grab me I’ll get on.”

“I have recommended it to my friend. I said it really, really helps – you can talk about anything – doesn’t have to be a really big problem, just any problem you have – bullying, relationships, friendships, anything – and she always tries to understand everything you say and even if she doesn’t understand you can tell her off and just say ‘No you got it wrong’ and she listens to everything you’re saying, and what I’m describing – it really helps.”

But are improvements just due to demand characteristics, and general changes over time?

The randomised controlled trial

‘School-based humanistic counselling’

• Developed as distillation of UK practice
• Based on humanistic competences: relational, supportive approach, Rogerian foundations
• Four pilot RCTs comparing against waitlist

School-based humanistic counselling

• Combined data from three RCTs with 53 clients in counselling, and 57 in waitlist
• Up to 10 weeks of SBHC
• Audited for ‘adherence’ to humanistic competences
Reduced psychological distress
• Combined data from three RCTs with 53 clients in counselling, and 57 in waiting list
• Up to 10 weeks of SBHC
• Audited for ‘adherence’ to humanistic competences

School-based humanistic counselling

Self-esteem (SEQ)

Personal goals (GBOM)

Developing RCTs
• COSEE trial: Non-directive play therapy for children with severe behavioural difficulties
• Moray trial (Tricia Joyce): Comparison of pluralistic counselling and counselling as usual for young people with issues related to addiction

How might school-based counselling help to bring about individual change?

Process of change
Helpful aspects: young people

1. Opportunity to talk and being listened to
2. Getting things off one’s chest
3. Confidentiality
4. Counsellors’ personal qualities (e.g., accepting)
5. Independence of counsellor
6. Directive therapeutic interventions (e.g., relaxation exercises)

Helpful aspects: school staff

1. Accessibility of service
2. Independence
3. Confidentiality
4. Specialist training
5. Available for extended time periods
6. Non-stigmatising

Life difficulties: e.g., family break-up, being bullied

Psychological distress

Talking problems through

Understanding

Worrying

Confusion

Shame

Finding solutions

Time to talk

Confidentiality

Warmth

Advice

Challenge

Security

2009 Comprehensive review

- First comprehensive summary of evidence from 30 audit and evaluation studies of school-based counselling in the UK
- Established that school-based counselling was associated with large reductions in psychological distress
- And that both service users and teachers believed that the intervention was associated with positive benefits in mental wellbeing and educational engagement
- Identified characteristics of school-based counselling service and their users

Review of services across Wales

Data from over 10,000 young people
What we learnt about school-based counselling services...

Cases in England (per year)

Service delivery in UK

- Primarily humanistic, or integrative, practice
- Emphasis on mental wellbeing
- Generally one-to-one (rather than group or family)

Referral routes

Reported waiting times: relatively brief
Psychological difficulties at assessment (SDQ) (counselling)

- 'Normal'
- 'Abnormal'
- 'Borderline'

Presenting/developing issues

- Family Issues
- Anger
- Behaviour
- Bullying
- Self-confidence

BME under-represented

Counselling clients
All Wales

Impact

Strathclyde research has been presented to politicians and policy makers in Edinburgh, Stormont, Cardiff and Westminster

Dissemination of school-based counselling in UK secondary schools

- Scotland: 64-80% (approx.)
- NI: All schools since 2007
- England: 61-85% (approx.)
- Wales: All schools since 2008
Wales

- 2007 report into counselling services for children and young people in Wales set ten recommendations that were wholly adopted by the Welsh government.
- Became the basis for the provision and delivery of £6.5m school-based counselling strategy in 2008.
- Subsequent 2011 evaluation supported the £14.25m extension of the Strategy and subsequent establishment of school-based counselling as a constitutional responsibility.

competences

- 2012-13: University of Strathclyde co-chaired development of competences for counselling young people: will form basis of training programmes and accreditation.
- Drew extensively from research by Robert Elliott and EFT colleagues; also Robert’s involvement in development of humanistic competences.
- And from Strathclyde school-based research programme.

Counselling minded

From 2012 to 2014, the Counselling Unit co-led the development of a free e-learning programme for counsellors working with children and young people.

45, half-hour sessions

Funded by the Department of Health

www.minded.org.uk
Modules

- Introduction to Counselling MindEd
- Counselling and its context
- Participation and empowerment
- Legal and professional issues
- Cultural competence
- Initiating counselling
- Using measures
- Relational skills
- Therapeutic skills
- Developmental themes in young adults and young people
- Concluding counselling
- Using supervision

https://www.minded.org.uk/course/view.php?id=229
Thank you

Publications


