Young People’s Views on School Counselling

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Barwick (2001): A number of issues affect the lives of young people

Current services not meeting needs (Baruch, 2001)

Benefits of locating MH provision in schools (Baruch, 2001):
- More accessible
- Normalises service provision
- Enables treatment benefits to be generalised
- Children’s problems assessed more easily
- Easier to carry out preventative work
Previous research

Le Surf and Lynch (1999): factors that hinder young people’s use of counselling:

- Not wanting to talk to someone outside of the family
- The view that adults do not always listen
- Fear that promises of confidentiality would not be honoured
- Young men concerned about the stigma
Previous research (cont.)

Le Surf and Lynch (cont.):

- The counselling *relationship* critical
- Key aspects of the counselling *service*:
  - Discrete but accessible location
  - Flexible and informal

McLaughlin (1999): Interviews with secondary-age pupils and teachers:

- Pupils - desire to be heard in school/feeling of not being listened to
- Pupils wanted to share their problems
- Pupils stressed need for teachers to listen but they also recognised that teachers are limited by time
Evaluation of the NSPCC Schools Teams

- **13 Schools Teams:**
  - Established as part of the Full Stop campaign
    - Children need to share their concerns
    - Children spend a lot of time at school

- **Services offered:**
  - School counselling
  - Group-work
  - Circle Time
  - Peer Support
  - PSHE
  - Child protection advice/training
Evaluation - Methods

- **Surveys:**
  - Pupils (n = 785)
  - Teachers (n = 149)

- **Interviews:**
  - Pupils (n = 16)
  - Teachers (n = 26)
  - Counsellors (n = 19)

- **Focus groups with pupils:**
  - About school counselling (n = 9)
  - About being a peer supporter (n = 9)

- **The TEENCORE questionnaire completed by 114 children pre and post counselling**
Young people’s views on SC

- Pupil survey ($n = 415$):
  - Completed on whole class basis
  - Mixture of closed and open questions
  - Content analysis

- Focus groups ($n = 9$):
  - Modal group size = 7
  - In each group: from same year group and mix of males and females
  - Recruited from survey
  - Ethical issues
Awareness of the SC service

- 79% yes
- Reported problem – ‘it is not widely known about’ (5% of responses)
- ‘Better promotion’ a suggestion for improvement (29% of responses)
- Lack of awareness evident in focus groups:
  - Miss Taylor said, “if you need help, then go and see her or me” sort of thing, but where is she?
  - It’s like the Men in Black isn’t it? No one knows who they are
  - I’ve been bullied and it stopped about a week ago and I never even knew there was a school counsellor. I didn’t know until I did the questionnaire and it’s been going on for ages
Usefulness of SC

- 84% circled useful, very useful or extremely useful
- 36% said they would go and see a SC
- Gender differences
- Sort of things?
  - Bullying
  - Home issues
  - School issues
  - Risky behaviour
Having someone else to turn to

Benefits:
- ‘it is good to have someone to turn to’ (42%)
- ‘it is good to have someone else to turn to’ (11%)

Key theme in the focus groups:
- Off your chest, if you don’t want to tell anyone else you can tell her
Teachers:

- Well, if you make an appointment with a counsellor, that’s saying you’ve got to have time off me basically, and with your form tutor, there’s lots of wrong times. There’s more wrong times than right times.
- The teacher is in school all the time and could tell other teachers in the staff room.
- If they were your counsellor as well, you would feel a bit uncomfortable, ‘cause you look at her [in lessons] and you think, she knows everything about me, all my problems and stuff.
- A teacher knows your naughty and that, and if you get bullied, they would say you probably started it.
Confidentiality

- A benefit and a problem

- Theme in focus groups:
  - Important aspect of service
  - But, still lack of trust
    - But, the trouble is, with a school counsellor…you don’t know whether or not they’re gonna tell people
The risk of others finding out

- Problem: 37% of responses – negative outcomes for the child

- Themes in focus groups:
  - Social stigma:
    - *They think you are a psycho and that*
    - *[if you are a boy] people would start calling you a wimp*
    - *Friends would probably take the mick if they found out*
  - Privacy:
    - It needs to be in a discrete location
    - Access directly
The counsellor as stranger

- Reason for not accessing (17% of responses)
- Focus groups:
  - It’s telling a stranger about your personal life though. That’s what makes some people feel uncomfortable
  - You have to trust them, so the SC should go around classes sometimes and just have talks and that, so that you can get your confidence
  - But some groups discussed the advantages of this
Summary/conclusions

- Young people value having a SC
  - Some gender differences
- Better promotion needed
- Problems of talking to teachers, friends and parents
- Confidentiality perceived as a benefit and a problem
- Privacy
- Counsellor as stranger
References


Acknowledgments

- Ian Butler
- Mick Cooper
- Schools Teams
- Participating schools
- Mary Baginsky