



disparities across providers. The longest wait for treatment reported by mental health service providers in England ranges from 188 days, to just 1 day.

School-based counselling and CAMHS

Experiencing a mental health problem in childhood is one of the biggest barriers to achieving wellbeing, and yet only one quarter of children affected receive specialist help.

Counselling in schools has been shown to be a highly effective support for tens of thousands of troubled children and young people who are experiencing emotional difficulties. School-based counselling is one of the most prevalent forms of psychological therapy for children and young people in the UK. However, provision is inconsistent and many children in England do not have access to a counsellor in their school – a situation that has failed to be adequately addressed by the Government’s proposals in the Green Paper.

Research indicated that school-based counselling is perceived by children and pastoral care staff as a highly accessible, non-stigmatising and effective form of early intervention for reducing psychological distress.

There are a number of ways in which counselling may be used in schools, including to complement and support other services. Counselling may be used as a preventative measure, as an early intervention measure, as parallel support alongside specialist CAMHS, or as a tapering intervention when a case is closed by CAMHS.

School-based counselling has also been shown to minimise pressure on CAMHS services. The Welsh Government’s evaluation of school-based counselling services showed that, of the 11,558 children and young people who received counselling services in 2016 to 2017, 85% did not need an onward referral after completing their sessions.

Data from Wales indicates each young client has on average five sessions of school-based counselling at a total cost of £170-£235. This compares to an average cost of £240 per contact in Tier 1-3 CAMHS according to a 2013 report by NHS Benchmarking.

Digital services

Young people are often choosing to access on-line provision in a number of areas in England and Wales, currently paid for by CCGs. One such service, Xenzone, accredited by BACP, offers a counselling service, ‘Kooth’ to 11-25-year olds. Of the tens of thousands of young people who use the service each year they refer only around 8% into offline services, helping to increase access to mental health support whilst removing pressure on traditional NHS services.

Recommendations

- BACP is calling for a national joined-up strategic approach for those children and young people who would benefit from counselling at a point of referral, or who have been rejected from CAMHS, to be directed to counselling agencies and private practitioners who are already working to high standards with children and young people, with evidence-based outcomes.

- BACP is calling for all children and young people of school age across the UK to have access to professional, qualified counselling services in their schools.
- BACP recommends that children and young people who prefer not to access services in school, and those who are not in school, should have a choice of alternative provision with community or other settings.