



## Counselling Policy

### COLLEGE VISION

To be an outstanding, inclusive Catholic sixth form college; valuing the individual, celebrating learning and raising aspirations.

### COLLEGE MISSION

We are a Catholic College dedicated to the education and development of the whole person and supporting all students to realise their full potential. In becoming an outstanding learning organisation SJR will have a strong sense of purpose and a commitment to shared values within a Christian community. We will establish a unique and challenging environment where every individual is valued, talents are recognised and nurtured, achievements are celebrated and dedication is rewarded. To achieve this as a community we will:

- Welcome all students who are happy to be educated within a Christian environment
- Value the uniqueness and dignity of each individual
- Deliver the highest standards of teaching and learning
- All show a commitment to our work and the Christian values of the College
- Provide equality of opportunity, with mutual respect and positive encouragement
- Build and further develop local, national and international partnerships

Core values in daily life at St John Rigby College are expressed as:

- Genuine concern for others
- Support for and challenge of one another
- High standards and expectations
- Consistency and perseverance
- Recognition of talents, progress and achievements

### AIMS OF THE COUNSELLING SERVICE

To provide a distinct, yet complementary, specialist service to College students. This service will offer access to a qualified and experienced Counsellor who can give therapeutic, developmental and preventative support to individuals when problems of a personal or emotional nature threaten to interfere with their daily lives and work in College. This will be carried out through individual work using exploration, self-discovery and clarification to enable students to make good use of the choices facing them in their working, personal and social lives.

The Service upholds a philosophy in line with the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy:

- Alleviating personal distress and suffering
- Fostering a sense of self that is meaningful to the person(s) concerned
- Increasing personal effectiveness
- Enhancing the quality of relationships between people
- Appreciating the variety of human experience and culture
- Striving for the fair and adequate provision of counselling services
- Respect for the diversity of individuals
- Equal opportunities and access
- Maintenance of professional standards
- Monitoring and evaluation of progress
- Adherence to the Ethical Framework for Good Practice of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

The College Counsellor will demonstrate her commitment to this philosophy by:

- Promoting the client's well-being by working within the limits of her competence, by undertaking supervision and by ongoing reflection and updating of her professional development and skills
- Avoiding harm to the client from any form of exploitation or by providing services when she is unfit to do so
- Providing a fair and impartial service to all clients by appreciating difference, being committed to equality of opportunity and the avoidance of discrimination against people or groups and by striving to ensure fair provision of counselling services accessible and appropriate to the needs of potential clients
- Fostering the practitioner's self-knowledge and care of self by appropriately applying all the above entitlements to herself, by seeking personal therapy, opportunities for training and personal development and by undertaking regular supervision as necessary.
- Honouring the trust placed in her by regarding client consent and confidentiality as of paramount importance whilst clarifying to all clients the reasons why confidentiality cannot be absolute.
- Ensuring that publicity and literature is not misleading, that contracting is open and explicit and that the autonomy of the client is always respected.
- Undertaking regular professional supervision and by ongoing reflection and updating of personal and professional development and skills.

## **MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF THE SERVICE**

The need to respect client confidentiality is understood as the core principle of counselling and is underpinned by an ethical commitment to promote the client's personal development and potential for autonomy. Best practice requires that the Counsellor seeks the consent of clients for any disclosure of personally sensitive information. Since the formation of a therapeutic relationship is utterly dependent on trust, any breaking of this would only ever be undertaken if the alternatives were in some serious way deemed detrimental to the client or the College or wider community. Whenever necessary the Counsellor will consult with their professional body and / or supervisor and any external agencies necessary in order to make the best professional judgement.

### **Confidentiality and Young People**

Clients over the age of 18 years will be treated as adults with regard to their legal rights to confidentiality and must normally give explicit consent to any disclosures of personally sensitive information being passed on to others.

Those clients who are not yet 18 will generally be deemed to have sufficient intelligence and understanding and the competency to give appropriate instructions as adults, and as such, will be entitled to the same level of confidentiality. 'Fraser Guidelines' will be adhered to. The Fraser Guidelines help to assess whether the client has the maturity to make their own decisions and to understand the implications of those decisions.

### **Confidentiality and Protection**

The Counselling Service offers a confidential service to students acknowledging that this confidentiality is at the root of the formation of the trusting relationship absolutely necessary for therapeutic change to occur. Breaking of this trust is never undertaken lightly or negligently on the part of the Counsellor. Wherever appropriate, the Counsellor will encourage a client to discuss difficulties with their families, particularly with their parents, but this will never become a condition of using the Counselling Service. Clients may be encouraged to talk to teaching staff about the quality of their College work where this is suffering due to personal problems or may ask the Counsellor to do so for them.

In certain circumstances, having disclosed information which leads the Counsellor to believe that the client is severely at risk, either from themselves or another, according to the criteria laid out below, the client may be unwilling for the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)<sup>1</sup> to be informed. Where the client's disclosure involves a threat of imminent suicide, their declared intention to harm someone else, or their knowledge of a serious breach of the law, the Counsellor will inform the client of the Counselling Service's obligation to inform the DSL.

In March 2015, the Counter Terrorism and Security Act received Royal Assent. The Act includes a new safeguarding duty - the Prevent Duty. The current threat from terrorism may include the exploitation of vulnerable students to involve them in terrorism. Extremism, radicalisation and exploitation are a safeguarding concern and the Counsellor will inform the DSL if a client presents themselves as being at risk from this threat or a threat to others.

However, the Counsellor has a right to exercise professional judgment as to the management of a case. The Counsellor may decide, usually after consultation with a Supervisor, that the interest of the client is best served by maintaining confidentiality,

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<sup>1</sup> If the Designated Safeguarding Lead is not in College then information will be shared with the College Principal (Deputy DSL)

but, conversely, may decide that the client will be better protected if the DSL, Principal and other agencies are informed and involved.

'A college's legal responsibility of standing in loco parentis for under 18 year olds does not override the Counsellor's responsibility to exercise professional judgment in the management of confidences. In this respect The Department for Education appreciates that the College Counsellor is in a different position from teaching staff. The Children Act 2004 does not create a general legal obligation to disclose all suspicion of abuse.'

Tim Bond: 'Confidentiality Guidelines for College Counsellors in Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges'.

At times the Counsellor may need to discuss concerns and seek guidance from the DSL without a name necessarily being given; in such a case the DSL will respect the boundaries of confidentiality.

#### **A. With the Client's considered and explicit consent**

In certain situations, client and Counsellor will need to discuss the breaking of the bond of confidentiality in the best interests of the client or others.

This may occur where:

- the Counsellor believes that the client is at substantial risk of seriously harming themselves;
- the Counsellor believes that the client is at risk of harming others;
- the Counsellor feels that the client is at risk from another person either inside or outside of their family;
- A student's personal difficulties are making keeping up with work impossible.
- A student is at risk of leaving College
- a minor is deemed to be at risk

In any of these situations, depending on which is most appropriate, the Counsellor will consult with their supervisor and/or DSL to discuss in confidence what further support can be enlisted for the client. If for any reason this is not possible, the Counsellor may seek consultation, in confidence, with the College Principal and/or the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). The extent of any disclosure will be in accordance with the wishes of the client. The purpose of the disclosure will be to protect those at risk.

Any steps taken to ensure the safety of those at risk (e.g. contacting specialist agencies, the client's own GP, parents, Police or Child Protection services) will be done, if at all possible, with the consent of the client. Unless there are good reasons for not doing so, time and space will be given to calmly discuss these decisions and the possible consequences of making them before any action is taken. Where the client consents to a referral to another agency then the Counsellor will record the client's explicit consent.

#### **B. Without the Client's consent**

Very rarely circumstances may arise that may override the conscientious endeavor to seek a client's consent to pass on sensitive information to others. The Counsellor's decision to pass on sensitive information to others in the absence of consent would depend upon a variety of factors including:

- the urgency of the situation
- the seriousness of the impending harm to the client or others
- the client's lack of sufficient understanding or well-being to give consent
- the disclosure involving knowledge of a serious breach of the law
- where seeking the client's consent would expose them to greater harm
- Where failure to disclose would leave the Counsellor and the College liable to civil or criminal court procedures.

In any of these situations, depending on which is most appropriate, the Counsellor will consult with their supervisor and/or DSL to discuss in confidence what further support can be enlisted for the client. If for any reason this is not possible, the Counsellor may seek consultation, in confidence, with the Principal and / or the BACP. All decisions regarding a required breaking of the bond of confidentiality will be recorded.

Whenever possible the client will be informed of the decision to break confidentiality and will remain included in the deliberations and decisions about any action to be taken. In order to minimise breaches of confidentiality the Counsellor will restrict the information conveyed to that which is pertinent to the immediate situation and to those persons who can provide the help required by the client

At times the Counsellor exercising their professional judgment may decide, usually after consultation with a Supervisor, that maintaining confidentiality and monitoring the situation best serve the interest of the client.

### **C. Limitations associated with utilising College systems**

The Counsellor makes all students aware that whilst the personal content of what is shared in counselling is confidential, it is not possible to ensure that the fact that they are attending for counselling will remain unknown to others.

- Clients are reminded that they may be observed entering or exiting the counselling room.

All efforts are made to minimise disclosure of identity by using student identity numbers instead of names.

### **Record keeping (see Appendix A Retention of Records Procedures)**

As encouraged by the BACP Ethical Framework for Good Practice, the Counsellor keeps notes for the purposes of providing:

- A service record
- records of any initial or ongoing assessments of the client's counselling needs
- records of any agreements negotiated between the Counsellor and client
- records of any identified risk
- records of the content of individual interventions

Notes are kept of sessions with clients. Notes are both process notes and records of fact. Standard letters are noted and any non-standard letters are copied to the file. These notes are kept securely and contingency plans for their destruction or safekeeping have been made in the case of the unexpected unavailability of the Counsellor, either temporarily or permanently. Notes will be kept for up to a period of six months from when the student leaves College and will then be destroyed. Clients are entitled under the Data Protection Act to have access to their file although the file remains the property of the Counsellor. Students who ask to see their files will be allowed to see the file in the Counselling Office in the presence of the Counsellor.

Files may be requested, under certain circumstances, by the Police or the Courts and will be relinquished if the necessary legal requirements are met. However, students will be informed that the Counsellor will make no report on their behalf to barristers or solicitors for the purposes of compensation claims unless legally compelled to do so.

### **Data Protection**

Counselling records fall within the Data Protection category of 'sensitive personal data'. The College service demonstrates recognition and respect of this by:

- informing clients about the keeping of records and seeking their consent
- ensuring the physical security of these records
- informing clients of their entitlement to see these notes

The College Counsellor may, at times, deal with external agencies such as CAMHS and General Practitioners. Where this is the case, the Counsellor will seek written consent.

Counselling notes are retained for up to six months after the student has left College and will then be shredded by the Counsellor. In cases where there are any safeguarding issues or issues where action has needed to be taken. Notes and records will be retained in line with the College's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Notes may be requested under certain circumstances by the Police or the Courts and will be relinquished if the necessary legal requirements are met.

Students will be informed that the Counsellor will make no report on their behalf to barristers or solicitors for the purposes of compensation claims unless legally compelled to do so.

## **COUNSELLING SESSIONS**

### **Advertising**

It is vital to the existence of the Counselling Service that the College Counsellor is made known to students. Throughout the year students can access the Counselling Service support area on the College Intranet to find out about what Counselling entails in order that prospective clients may make informed choices about undertaking counselling and how to access the Counselling Service. Posters and leaflets are widely available in areas frequented by students. All advertising strives to be clear and explicit.

### **Referral**

Students may self-refer by:

- Filling in one of the Appointment Forms via College intranet or by approaching the Counsellor personally.
- E-mailing the Counsellor
- Leaving a note in the Counsellor's locked mailbox located outside the counselling room.

Students may be encouraged to seek help and be referred to the service by Senior Tutors, Personal Tutors and other members of staff. This, however, must be done with the student's consent and students must sign the staff referral form. Once all the details on the form have been filled in, the completed form should be posted in the locked box located outside the Counsellor's office (D005).

### **Response to Requests**

Following an enquiry the Counsellor will reply by the format chosen by the student as shown on the referral form. An initial assessment meeting will be arranged, preferably during the client's free time.

### **The Initial Session**

Clients will be invited to explore their reasons for using the service, what brought them and what they would hope to get from counselling and the client and the Counsellor will begin to establish a trusting therapeutic relationship. Clients will be informed of the boundaries of the Service. Clients are asked to sign a 'Counselling Contract' (see Appendix B).

### **Repeat Sessions**

Although the Service offers flexibility, clients will usually return weekly for hourly sessions until the contract has been fulfilled and the client's needs have been met.

### **Missed Appointments**

It is acknowledged and accepted that clients will miss appointments for a variety of reasons. Sometimes they will simply have forgotten or mistaken their appointment time but often they do not wish to pursue the counselling any further, but would find it difficult to say so directly. The Counselling Service tries to strike a balance in its response to missed appointments. Each time an appointment is missed a text or an email is sent that acknowledges, indirectly and directly, some of the reasons why and allows a client to make another appointment if required, leaving the door open for appointments to be made in the future. This email can be seen as taking the place of a final session and offers closure of a different, but still important kind.

### **Reviews**

Review sessions will take place as agreed with the client and the Counsellor, normally at the sixth session. This allows both client and Counsellor to evaluate the work, to check progress, and to see if the client's needs have been met. It also enables the client to give anonymous feedback about the service. It is at this stage that agreement is reached if counselling is to end or continue for a further agreed number of sessions until next review. Most clients complete both evaluations A and B at the review session (see Appendix C and D).

### **Endings**

Once a client's counselling needs have been met, the contract will have been fulfilled. An informal review between the Counsellor and the client will take place recalling the journey from beginnings to the present, allowing the client and Counsellor chance to acknowledge and celebrate the work achieved. With the client's consent the review forms can be used in evaluation of the service.

## **COUNSELLOR SUPPORT NETWORKS**

The College will support the Counselling Service through the provision of line management, supervision and training, and also in terms of suitable facilities, equipment and materials (books, periodicals etc) as may be necessary for the professional running of the Service.

### **Line Management**

The Counsellor is supported and managed by the Director of Students who is a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Summative reporting of counselling provision, within the boundaries of confidentiality, will be provided by the Counsellor in order to review the service.

### **Supervision**

Provision will be made for the Counsellor to visit an accredited supervisor of her choice, during the College day, in order to discuss her work. This is not only recognized as good practice, but is a safeguard for Counsellor, College and clients. The College will approve paid leave of absence for supervision that will allow the Counsellor enough time each month for her visits.

### **Training**

The College will provide the opportunity for further training for the Counsellor. When the Counsellor needs further information or skills in specialist areas she will be able to look for courses, lectures or workshops which will address their needs. Where reasonable, the College will allow the Counsellor to attend courses during working time, and will pay for the cost of further training.

## **INTEGRATION INTO COLLEGE AND COMMUNITY LIFE**

The Counsellor will strive to be an integral member of the College Pastoral and Chaplaincy Team and wider College community, working in a co-operative way with colleagues as far as the bounds of confidentiality will allow.

### **Networking in the Community**

The Counsellor can never meet all the needs of all the students who pass through the Counselling Service and it is therefore her responsibility to network with local agencies able to help students with very particular problems. Consequently, the Counsellor networks with the Health Promotion Unit, Teenage Pregnancy Advisory Service, Family Planning and Genito - Urinary Medicine (GUM) Services and drug and alcohol dependency agencies and collaborative, partnership working is encouraged wherever possible. Contact will be sought with health workers in the mental health area as the need arises and contact with GPs will be encouraged.

The Counsellor acknowledges that some spiritual needs arising out of the counselling situation and in College life in general are beyond her competence. In order to meet this need there is partnership working with the College Chaplain who is able to offer spiritual advice and guidance to students of any faith or none. He offers the students additional support both emotionally and practically.

### **Current contact details for Supervisor**

Should the College need to contact the Counsellor's Supervisor in cases of emergency<sup>2</sup>, contact details are as follows:

*To be confirmed*

### **References**

The following publications were carefully considered in the drawing up of these Policies in a way that most accurately reflects the current practices of the College Counselling Service

[AUCC Guidelines for University and College Counselling Services 2004](#)

[Confidentiality Guidelines for College Counsellors in Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges BACP 2002](#)

[Ethical Framework for good practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy BACP 2003](#)

[Access to records of Counselling and Psychotherapy BACP 2002](#)

[Making Notes of Counselling and Psychotherapy Sessions](#)

[Confidentiality & Record Keeping in Counselling & Psychotherapy – Tim Bond & Barbara Mitchels](#)

[Therapy with Children – children's rights, confidentiality and the law 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Debbie Daniels & Peter Jenkins](#)

### **Related College Policies**

- Data Protection Policy
- Learning Difficulties, Disabilities and Medical Condition Disclosure Procedure (contained within the Learning Support Handbook)
- Preventing Extremism and Radicalisation Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

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<sup>2</sup> If the College Counsellor is absent from College for a prolonged period of time, Mrs F Jones will be contacted in the first instance for advice and potentially available counsellors who would provide a substitute service..

## **Retention of Records Procedures (Appendix A)**

### **Client records – Active**

Records will be retained within the service for the duration of time that the client remains a student at St John Rigby College.

Once a student has left College, records will be shredded by the Counsellor within six months of the student leaving. All records relating to that client will be destroyed. Case note numbers of the files destroyed will be recorded in a separate book and dated and signed by the Counsellor.

### **Records relating to Safeguarding.**

Records relating to issues around clients which have caused action to be taken by the Counsellor to safeguard a young person will be retained within the counselling filing system in a specific file. Index files will be adapted to allow for separate reference.

These records will be kept in line with College procedure for retention of records.

### **In the event of closure of the service**

In the event of closure of the service all documentation traceable to clients will be shredded. The process will be recorded, dated and signed by the Counsellor.

### **If the Counsellor ceases employment**

All client records relating to St John Rigby College Counselling Service remain the property of the Counsellor who worked with the client. Should the Counsellor cease employment she will destroy all records of the clients she has worked with. This will be done on College premises and be suitably recorded.

The Vice Principal (Students) will be informed that the destruction has taken place and the Vice Principal (Students) will retain the recorded information relating to that destruction.

### **Death of the Counsellor**

If the Counsellor dies whilst in service the Counsellor's external supervisor must be contacted and advice sought as to the destruction of all records.

**St John Rigby College Counselling Contract (Appendix B)**

Counselling will initially include 6 sessions each lasting up to 50 minutes. After 6 sessions a review will be held. This will give you the opportunity to say if and how counselling is helping and what you want to happen next.

At the end of each session we will confirm the date and time of our next appointment.

If you are unable to keep your appointment, don't worry. Let me know as soon as you can and I will give you another appointment. If I am unable to keep an appointment then I will try to contact you in whichever way we agreed (i.e. phone, text, College e-mail). If you wish to end counselling at any time before our agreed sessions you are free to do so, please let me know. There will be no pressure to continue.

Counselling is an opportunity for you to talk about anything that is worrying you or stopping you from enjoying and developing your life. What happens in a counselling session is confidential and stays between us. However there are a few exceptions e.g.:

- If you were to tell me that you have carried out an act of terrorism or intend to, then I am legally bound to report this.
- If I am concerned about your wellbeing, and I consider you or someone else to be at serious risk of harm, then I would need to speak to the College's Designated Safeguarding Lead (currently the Director of Students). If this needs to happen I would always try to discuss this with you first and we would support you as best we could throughout the process. To make sure that I am working properly with my clients, and to comply with my professional body (BACP) code of ethics and practice, I am required to have regular supervision, with someone external to College. In these sessions we discuss content only and not the person, clients remain anonymous.

**NOTES & RECORD RETENTION**

I will make notes of our sessions, that will identify you by a number, and only I will know who that number refers to. These notes will be held in a locked filing cabinet. The policy of the College is that notes/records will be retained whilst students are in College and will be destroyed (by shredding) no longer than 6 months after a student has left St John Rigby College. The shredding will be done by the College Counsellor. Notes and records where action has needed to be taken in line with safeguarding procedures will be held according to College policies.

The Counsellor will make no report on any student's behalf for the purpose of compensation claims unless legally compelled to do so.

Signed.....Student (Dated.....)

Signed.....Counsellor (Dated.....)

**Evaluation A (Appendix C)**

Client No: .....

Number of sessions: .....

Date: .....

Do you think counselling has been helpful?

YES NO (Please circle)

If you answered Yes:

Why do you think counselling has been helpful?

.....  
.....

Have there been any changes for you?

.....  
.....

If you answered No:

Why do you think counselling has not been helpful to you?

.....  
.....

Any other comments you would like to make?

.....  
.....

Would you agree to your comments being used (you will not be identified) YES NO

## **Evaluation B (Appendix D)**

- 1) To what extent would you say that counselling helped you to stay in college?
  1. Not at all
  2. To a limited extent
  3. One of many factors
  4. An important factor
  5. The most significant factor
  
- 2) To what extent would you say that counselling helped you to do better academically?
  1. Not at all
  2. To a limited extent
  3. One of many factors
  4. An important factor
  5. The most significant factor
  
- 3) To what extent would you say that counselling has improved your overall experience of College?
  1. Not at all
  2. To a limited extent
  3. One of many factors
  4. An important factor
  5. The most significant factor
  
- 4) To what extent would you say counselling has helped you develop skills that might be useful in obtaining future employment (e.g. self-understanding, understanding of others, managing difficult feelings better, increased confidence, assertiveness)
  1. Not at all
  2. To a limited extent
  3. One of many factors
  4. An important factor
  5. The most significant factor
  
- 5) Please describe in more detail the ways in which counselling has helped you.
  
- 6) Please describe any ways in which you found counselling or any aspect of the service unhelpful