

## **Good practice guidance**

To support our members who currently work with children and young people (aged 11-18), and for those who aspire to in the future, we have developed a suite of relevant Good Practice Guidance documents.

These concise, easy to read documents, aim to give the reader an overview of what needs to be considered before embarking on children and/or young people's counselling. They are not a substitute for a specialist training, but they give an indication of the scope of knowledge and abilities required by counsellors working with this 11-18-year-old client group. The documents also signpost members to other useful resources for further reading, and online learning.

The documents set out what are commonly accepted as "industry standards" within the counselling community. They have been drawn from a number of freely available published resources including:

- various departments of the four governments of the UK
- commonly used texts from face-to-face and online training programmes and curricula
- recent research from the field
- the standards of other professional bodies in the counselling sector

They are also based upon expert experience of the sector.

## **Background**

The National Counselling Society (NCS) recognises that many of our members currently work with children and/or young people, and that they get a great deal of satisfaction from this work. NCS members tell us that they enjoy the opportunity to be able to deliver a counselling intervention when a problem is in its early stages of development and before it becomes a major difficulty for the child, their family, their friends or their communities. Similarly, our members have identified that often children and young people undergo change within counselling more quickly than many adults do, and as such the work is not only rewarding, but it can be cost effective for society as a whole.

## **Prevalence of Mental Health Difficulties**

Research tells us that around 10% of 5-15 year olds have a diagnosable mental health problem at any one time (Mental Health Foundation, 2005) and we know there are many more who are distressed but don't quite reach diagnostic thresholds, or indeed never consult a clinician. As such, there is much scope for counselling to play a significant part in the range of interventions available to treat distressed children and young people across the UK.

## **Standards**

NCS acknowledges that counselling children and young people is different in many ways from counselling adults. We believe that those who undertake counselling work with children and young people need specialist knowledge, skills, and abilities; and we also maintain that they should be supported by appropriately competent and experienced supervisors. Whilst many of the clinical skills needed for counselling children and young people can only be learned with specialist training and practise ([click here for a list of NCS Accredited Courses](#)) some of the other complexities of the work can be studied in other ways.

## Good Practice Guidance: Children & Young People

[Professional and Ethical Considerations](#)

[Legal Frameworks](#)

[Capacity, Consent, and Confidentiality](#)

[Contracting and Record Keeping](#)

[Risk Assessment and Child Protection](#)

[Working Within and Across Other Agencies](#)

[Working Within the Voluntary and Community Context](#)

[Working in Schools](#)

[Making Use of Measures and Collecting Data](#)

[Mental Health Difficulties](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

### Counselling within the context of adoption

The extract below is taken from the '[Introduction to adoption support agencies](#)' document. Up-to-date versions of the document can be found on this page: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adoption-support-agencies-introduction-to-registration>.

***"A counsellor would need to register as an adoption support agency if they set themselves up in business to provide an adoption-related service to adults, children or families who need counselling around adoption issues. This can include circumstances surrounding their own adoption or their child being adopted.***

***If an adoption related issue only emerges after counselling is established and is not the primary concern or focus of counselling the law does not require you to register. However, it is good practice for you to seek advice from someone registered to provide adoption support services. It may be better for your client to be referred to a specialist service. If however, during the first counselling session it becomes clear that matters related to adoption is the main purpose for the counselling, you should make clear to the client their right to access adoption support services and consider referring the client to a registered adoption support agency. The law says you cannot provide counselling on adoption matters without registering or being under contract with an approved adoption support service."***

If you are unsure about any specific cases speak with your supervisor, insurance provider and/or Ofsted.

MindEd

If you have an interest in working with children and young people, and find these documents useful, we would encourage you to extend your learning by undertaking the online MindEd sessions referenced within each.

MindEd is a no-cost, easily accessible, high quality, online learning resource. The learning programme has a vast and comprehensive range of material relating to children and young people's mental health.

Learners can register for free, and then undertake a systematic programme of study, or if preferred 'dip in and out' of sessions that are of interest at any particular time.

MindEd is suitable for all adults working with, or caring for, infants, children or teenagers; all the information provided is quality assured by experts, useful, and easy to understand. It aims to give adults who care for, or work with, young people:

- the knowledge to support children and young people's wellbeing
- the understanding to identify a child at risk of a mental health condition
- the confidence to act on their concern and, if needed, signpost to services that can [help](#)

### **Further reading**

As well as MindEd links, the suite of Good Practice Guidance has a wealth of further reading suggestions – either in the form of hard copy publications or online documents. Members are encouraged to supplement their learning by using the recommended resources.

### **Evidence-based Good Practice Guidance**

The NCS Good Practice Guidance documents are based upon the freely available 'Competency framework for humanistic counselling with young people (11-18)'.

This framework was developed by undertaking a comprehensive review of the research literature, led by Tony Roth, and overseen by an Expert Reference Group (one of whom was Karen Cromarty, the author of the NCS Good Practice Guidance suite). As such, the GPG is evidence-based for working with 11-18 year olds. Whilst much of the guidance within the suite is applicable to under 11's, the guidance is specifically aimed at practitioners working with 11-18 year olds.

NCS anticipate developing guidance for working with U11's in due course.

### **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

To accompany and supplement the GPG, we have also developed a range of FAQs and associated responses which we hope will contextualise the issues raised within the GPG, and help members apply them to their practice.

### **Authorship**

We are grateful to Karen Cromarty (Independent Consultant, and Fellow of NCS), who has authored the Good Practice Guidance, and to Caroline Gardner (The Academy at Shotton Hall) and Edith Bell (Director of Counselling at Familyworks Northern Ireland) who have undertaken a peer review on their content.