

## **WORKING WITHIN THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT**

### **Overview**

Counselling with young people frequently takes place within the voluntary and community, or 'third' sector.

However, many voluntary and community sector counselling services exist with uncertainty about their future due to short term funding and chaotic commissioning arrangements, whilst at the same time reporting overwhelming demands on their services.<sup>i</sup>

Given the nature of the sector, in which services often survive on transitional and sometimes complex funding arrangements, it is difficult to systematically collect data at a national level on the extent and nature of counselling provision and its effectiveness. Nevertheless, client satisfaction levels of these services appear to be high due to the accessibility of the provision and their de-stigmatising nature of their settings within the community. The data that is emerging from the sector suggests counselling is associated with improved outcomes for children, young people and young adults across a number of domains.<sup>ii</sup>

When working in third sector settings, counsellors need to understand the organisation's governance and management structures, as well as its policies and procedures. Knowledge of referral protocols and any limitations on the delivery of therapy is important, as is working collaboratively with colleagues across the organisation.<sup>iii iv</sup>

### **Key features**

The voluntary sector plays a significant contribution in the provision of mental health care of young people in the UK.<sup>v vi</sup> Some young people accessing third sector services have disengaged from statutory services and have significant mental health difficulties as well as a range of other needs.<sup>vii viii</sup>

In a Youth Access report (2010)<sup>ix</sup> the following features of community services are described:

- A range of interventions delivered 'under one roof'
- Young person-centered
- Open to a wide age range, e.g. 13 to 25
- Holistic approach, meeting multiple and complex needs
- Multi-disciplinary teams, providing wrap-around support
- Flexible access routes, including open door 'drop-in' sessions
- Free, independent and confidential.

### **Knowledge of the organisational structure**

To be most effective, counsellors working in a third sector context, will need to be able to draw on knowledge of the organisation's governance and management structures, including its:

- values, principles, mission and purpose
- principal funders
- strategic and business plans
- trustees and their legal and financial responsibilities
- management/organisational structure.

Whilst detailed information about each of these areas may not be necessary on a day-to-day basis, counsellors need know how to access such information should they need it, as and when it impacts upon their counselling provision.

### **Knowledge of the operational context**

Counsellors will also need to understand, and work within, the organisation's operational context, including:

- young people's referral routes into the service
- cross-referral protocols with other agencies
- any limits to the counselling relationship or the scope of work undertaken as a consequence of the operational context
- alternative appropriate services and interventions that may be relevant to the young person's identified needs

### **Knowledge and implementation of policies and procedures**

Counsellors in the third sector will want to draw on knowledge of the organisation's policies and procedures, and have the capacity to put these into practice. These are likely to include:

- staff policies
- policies governing the delivery of the counselling service, such as confidentiality and management of personal data, child protection and safeguarding
- policies for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the services offered by the organisation
- systems for collecting and responding to service user feedback
- the distinction between, and different functions of, line management and clinical supervision.

Counsellors will also need an ability to complete statistical and other records identified by the organisation as part of its audit and governance structure.

### **Collaborative working**

Voluntary and community sector counselling services have usually been established because no statutory services have been available to fulfil a local need. Often the development of these services, including their access to funding, is based upon an excellent ability of colleagues to work together.

Counsellors working in this sector, will need to collaborate with others within the organisation, and often with those external to the service. Counsellors need to have the ability to:

- understand the roles, responsibilities and expertise of other staff members within the organisation
- understand the roles, responsibilities and expertise of professionals they come into contact with who are external to the service (such as specialists within statutory mental health teams)
- contribute to professional meetings, and professional development training events

## Summary

Counselling services in the voluntary and community sector can be creative and innovative places to work, as they have been developed and shaped to fulfil a local need.<sup>x</sup> They are often highly valued – by their young clients and their families; by the communities in which they exist; and by local statutory services, who often rely on the third sector to take clients that do not reach their thresholds or for whom waiting lists are prohibitive.

## References and suggested further reading

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- <sup>i</sup> Kenrick, J. (2016) *More of the same? A report on how voluntary sector youth information, advice and counselling services (YIACS) are faring in the CAMHS transformation agenda.* Youth Access
- <sup>ii</sup> Street, C. (2013) *Voluntary and community sector (VCS) counselling provision for children, young people and young adults in England.* Lutterworth: BACP/Counselling MindEd
- <sup>iii</sup> Hill, A., Roth, A. and Cooper, M. (2014) *The Competences Required to Deliver Effective Humanistic Counselling for Young People – Counsellors’ Guide.* Lutterworth
- <sup>iv</sup> BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) (2014) *Competencies for Humanistic Counselling with Young People.* Lutterworth: BACP.
- <sup>v</sup> Garcia, I et al., *Listen Up! Person-centred approaches to help young people experiencing mental health problems,* 2007. The Mental Health Foundation: London.
- <sup>vi</sup> Street, C et al., *Minority Voices Research into the access and acceptability of services for the mental health of young people from Black and minority ethnic groups,* 2005. YoungMinds: London.
- <sup>vii</sup> Department for Education and Skills, *Engaging the Voluntary and Community Sectors in Children’s Trusts,* 2007. Department for Education and Skills: London.
- <sup>viii</sup> Rees, D. and Anderson, Y., *Learning from Practice Review: A report from the BOND Consortium – Better Outcomes New Delivery,* 2012. BOND/ YoungMinds: London.
- <sup>ix</sup> Youth Access, *A proven early intervention model: the evidence for the effectiveness of Youth Information Advice Counselling and Support Services (YIACS),* 2010. Youth Access: London.
- <sup>x</sup> Pattison, S., Robson, M. and Beynon, A. (2014) *The Handbook of Counselling Children and Young People.* London: SAGE Chapter 26

## Online Resources

### MindEd

<u>CMD 412 – 008</u>	<u>Counselling in the Community</u>
<u>CMD 412 – 010</u>	<u>Counselling and other Services</u>