

Professional Role: Director of Pupil Wellbeing at Berkhamsted Schools Group
Institution/Affiliation: Doctoral Candidate of Psychotherapy by Professional Studies at Metanoia Institute

Contact details: 01494 776993 / 07976 528826

Email: jhennigan@berkhamstedschool.org and jeanettehennigan@yahoo.co.uk

Five Keywords: Online therapy, school counselling, adolescents

Title of presentation: **Online counselling in Schools as an additional option to face-to-face (f2f) provision: Exploration of pupils' experiences and comparison of effectiveness of working in different modalities.**

Aim/Purpose: A review of a UK Schools Counsellors attitudes to in-house online school counselling (Hennigan & Goss, 2015) provided impetus for the current study, which sought to understand i) Pupil usage of an in-house online counselling provision (as an adjunct to the f2f provision) from September 2016-July 2017 ii) Differences in CORE 10 and Goals Based outcomes for pupils using f2f only, online only or a blend of both iii) Pupil's thoughts about offering choice of f2f, online or blended counselling

Design/Methodology: A pluralist, mixed methods approach utilised a variety of quantitative analyses and a qualitative thematic analysis of post counselling interviews with pupils who had experienced either f2f or online counselling,

Results/Findings: Of 68 pupils (7.6% of total pupil cohort) using the service, 52 (76%) chose to work f2f only and 16 (24%) chose online counselling (12 blended with f2f and 4 online only). Results suggest that those who received online counselling had a slightly higher average first CORE 10 score and made somewhat greater improvements in CORE 10 scores, which is similar to results of the Glasheen et al, (2016) study. Thematic analysis of post counselling pupil interviews revealed three main themes: 'Convenience', 'Connection' and 'Confidentiality'. Perceived concerns that pupils had about online counselling in school e.g. quality of relationship, confidentiality online, miscommunication and lack of visual cues are comparable to some concerns that UK secondary school counsellors had in 2014 (Hennigan & Goss, 2015) and are potentially based upon lack of exposure to relevant information.

Research Limitations: The relatively small sample size limit reliability and generalisability. Future research could address these through a larger group of participants and / or fuller sampling in smaller areas. More free text responses in survey could have led to a wider variety of responses.

Conclusions/Implications (including practice implications): This study suggests that pupils want the convenience and flexibility of having an in-house school counselling service that is both online and offline and have a strong enough connection with their counsellor to make roughly equivalent progress in both mediums. Clarity around confidentiality online may encourage more pupils to access counselling this way, as well as continued exposure to what is for many, still a new and potentially risky venture.

367 words