

20 April 2020

Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS)

Dear Principal

I am writing to update you regarding the interim arrangements for the continuing delivery of the Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS) during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Education Authority (EA) considers that the mental health of young people is paramount and the consistency of emotional support is essential for young people during these extraordinary times.

Counselling sessions are available for young people via telephone and online video calling. Drop-in support is available via telephone. Your ICSS Provider will provide young people with a telephone number to access drop-in support.

As you are aware referrals are accepted from young people, parents and teachers through the School Key Contact or Deputy Key Contact. In order to ensure that young people can access counselling support it is vital that the contact details of the relevant school staff are readily available so that young people and parents know who to contact if counselling is required. The School Key Contact should continue to hold the waiting list for counselling and liaise with the school counsellor on a weekly basis via telephone or video link.

In order to ensure that young people have access to counselling, it is strongly recommended that Principals provide the names and contact details of the relevant school staff for young people to contact if they wish to access counselling. The ICSS Providers also require the contact details of the School Key Contact and Deputy Key Contact to ensure that regular communication is maintained. Young people in post primary schools can also self-refer by contacting their ICSS Provider; Links Counselling (Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon District Council) <https://www.links counselling.com/> or Familyworks (all other District Council areas) <https://familyworksni.com/>.

The EA have also made arrangements to address safeguarding concerns during this time. The EA Child Protection Support Service (EA CPSS) will provide advice to the ICSS Providers if a safeguarding concern arises. The school counsellor will also inform the Key Contact and Designated Teacher of advice given and action taken.

“To inspire, support and challenge all our Children and Young People to be the best that they can be.”

Education Authority

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The EA is confident that the counselling support provided will continue to conform to the current best practice and professional standards and will continue to monitor the operational service delivery during these times.

Yours sincerely



Nicola Topping
Head of Support Services for Pupil Wellbeing
Education Authority

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