SCHOOL COUNSELLING
IN ENGLAND, WALES AND NORTHERN IRELAND:
A REVIEW

William Baginsky
for the NSPCC and Keele University
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Introduction

This review has been written to coincide with the completion of a large-scale evaluation, carried out by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and Keele University, of the work of NSPCC’s schools teams. A significant part of their role is to provide counselling services to children and young people in schools. The NSPCC’s involvement in school counselling began in Bristol in the early 1990s and Wrexham later in the decade. The schools teams service, established between 1999 and 2000, now comprises 13 teams, and works in schools with several thousand pupils each year. Although the review is intended to provide a context for the evaluation, I hope that it will also be useful more widely to school staff and counsellors - in schools where services already exist and also where a new service is being considered - by drawing together ideas, themes, experiences and issues that practitioners and researchers have written about the subject.

The history of counselling in schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

The notion that schools have some responsibility for the well-being of their pupils is not new. There are some who believe that the ideology of pastoral care in schools dates back to the work of pioneering headmasters of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (King, 1999). The first child psychologist was appointed in 1913 (Milner, 1974), and child guidance clinics go back to 1921 (Lines, 2002). However, it was not until the 1950s that counselling arrived from the USA (Proctor, 1993) and only in the 1960s that counselling in UK schools began.

In 1963 the Newsom Report, looking at education for children in the lower streams of secondary schools, recommended the appointment of school counsellors. In the

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1 It has been beyond the scope of the review to cover counselling in Scottish schools. Although much of the material will be relevant, there are significant differences in Scotland’s guidance system and legislation, which affect aspects of counselling such as confidentiality and consent. The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) has published separate guidance on this latter topic: Confidentiality: Counselling, Psychotherapy & the Law in Scotland. Details of BACP publications are available on its website www.bacp.co.uk.

2 Cited in Bor et al. (2002).

3 Ministry of Education (1963)
same year, the National Association for Mental Health held a seminar at which the relationship between schools and counselling was discussed (King, 1999). There followed, from 1965, the establishment of courses at the Universities of Keele and Reading to train people with a minimum of five years’ teaching experience to be school counsellors (Bor et al., 2002).

From the mid-1960s and into the 1970s there was considerable growth. A service that led the way was an experimental scheme in a girls’ secondary school, first discussed in 1964 and launched in 1965 with two part-time counsellors, former teachers trained in marriage guidance (Jones, 1970). With the courses at Keele and Reading and elsewhere that had ‘mushroomed throughout the country’ it is not surprising that some envisaged such services continuing to spread and receiving official recognition (Jones, 1970).

And yet, by 1987, there were only 90 counsellors in six local education authorities (Hooper and Lang, 1988). Even in the previous decade, research published in 1977 showed that although there were 351 counsellors employed in schools in England and Wales, 54 per cent of them were in only nine local education authorities (Mabey and Sorensen, 1995). It is therefore worth bearing in mind that relatively few teachers will have worked in schools with counsellors even when this trend was at its height and that not everyone looks back at this time uncritically. Robinson (1996) describes the introduction of counselling then as having lacked any attempt to embed it in the culture of schools or monitor it nationally, and Lang (1999) comments that it was ‘unco-ordinated and problematic’ (p 24).

By the early 1990s it seemed that the movement was all but dead: ‘School counsellors seem to have come and very largely gone…’ (Proctor, 1993, p 14). In the mid-1990s Mabey and Sorensen (1995) referred to the rarity of trained specialist school counsellors. McGuiness (1998) writes of the decline in the number of specialist counsellors in schools and the paucity of training for teachers in counselling skills. However, it is impossible to be precise because the number of counsellors working in schools, and the number of schools employing counsellors, is not recorded. (Mabey and Sorensen, 1995).

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4 There were nine by the 1970s according to Newton (1993).
But it seems clear that over the last few years there has been an increase in the number of schools offering a counselling service to their pupils, just as there has been a growth of interest in counselling in society more generally. The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), in the preface to their *Good Practice Guidance for Counselling in Schools* (2001a), say that the impetus for its production was ‘the increasing number of enquiries for information and guidance about counselling in schools from purchasers and managers of services, and practitioners themselves’ (p 1). The document claims there has been ‘a significant increase’ (p 8) in counsellors employed directly by schools.

However, there is uncertainty not only about figures but also about what counselling means. This issue is discussed in more detail later in the review. But *counselling* does carry a multiplicity of meanings and is an activity that may, in practice, be carried out by someone without qualifications and training, or in a context where there is little knowledge or understanding of the significance of qualifications and training. Chesterman et al. (1999), for example, reporting on a survey of all schools in Kent carried out in 1997, found that of the 286 respondents only 75 reported making a distinction between qualified and unqualified counsellors when allocating pupils. Only 22 per cent knew the type of counselling training informal counsellors had; only 58 per cent knew the type of counselling training formal counsellors had. Dennison (1998), in a survey of East Sussex secondary and special schools in 1996 found wide variations in the qualifications of those who were counselling, including no qualifications at all. EMIE’s report (1997), based on a survey by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) and a subsequent one of their own, found examples of counselling being done by educational psychologists, education social workers and behaviour support teams who were not necessarily professional counsellors, even though they may have had some training in counselling.

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5 Within the BACP, Counselling In Education (CIE) is a specialist practitioner group from which the guidance originates. Details are on the BACP website [www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk).

6 Education Management Information Exchange.

7 The BACP (2001a) distinguishes between professional counselling and counselling skills.
Among the reasons cited for the decline in the model of counselling practised in the 1960s and 1970s is the lack of resources to employ counsellors in the 1980s and the development of the idea that counselling was part of the role of the school’s pastoral system (see, for example, Bor et al., 2002), though there is a view that the use of counselling skills by teachers - other than for the important task of informing their own understanding of children’s behaviour - can adversely affect their effectiveness as teachers (Dyke, 1985). Some reasons about why teachers are less likely to be counselling today are discussed later in this review, in the section on the Educational Landscape, but much has been written about the effects of the Education Act 1988 and subsequent legislation on teachers and schools. These have curtailed the time they have to spend on such activities and diverted their attention to standards and survival in a far more competitive climate (see McLaughlin, 1999, for example, for a view of the changes in the 1990s).

As for the reasons schools have concerned themselves with counselling, a number of factors are cited in the literature regarding the more recent interest in counselling in schools. The Elton Report (1989) advocated all teachers, but particularly senior pastoral staff, having basic counselling skills. However, new regulations on teacher training did not go on to make provision for this (McGuiness, 1998; Lloyd 1999). The Children Act 1989 represented a shift in attitudes to vulnerable or at risk children and young people (Mabey and Sorensen, 1995) and the rights of all children and young people, and placed requirements on schools in relation to pastoral provision (Hooper, 1997). Governments have formalised special needs legislation and placed responsibilities on schools and local education authorities but have not provided resources for counselling (Lines, 2002). There have been increasing concerns about the problems of adolescents and the pressures on them (Mabey and Sorensen,1995; Burnison, 2003), rates of exclusion, behavioural problems and long waiting lists for specialist support (Capey 1997; Baxter, 2002), and the clinical labelling of behavioural disorders and the use of drugs such as ritilin (Lines, 2002). There has been a decline in the pastoral role of teachers because of constraints imposed by the National Curriculum, SATs and the resulting pressures of work, though Mabey and Sorensen (1995) refer to there being many in-service courses for teachers on counselling and many teachers on

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counselling courses. At the same time, both pupils and parents have demanded more appropriate emotional support in an increasingly challenging and stressful world, and schools have recognised the value of the specialist skills of counsellors and psychotherapists in preventative work (Bor et al., 2002), and their independence (Burnison, 2003).

However, what the literature covered in this review does not tell us is the extent to which counsellors trained in the 1960s and 1970s made an impact on pastoral care in the schools in which they worked, nor on the thinking of schools more generally. Because of the lack of hard evidence we do not know the numbers of counsellors working in schools now, nor the numbers of schools with a counselling service, nor the extent to which other workers - such as school nurses employed directly by schools and youth workers based on schools sites - use counselling skills. And we do not know the level of training they have received to do so. What is clear is that there is a growing interest, and growing activity, in initiatives designed to cater for the emotional needs of pupils in schools, in such forms as peer support, circle time⁹ and conflict resolution programmes (see the UK section of www.mediation-eu.net for an overview of the current situation) as well as in counselling services in schools offered by organisations outside the education system (see, for example, Baginsky 2003a; Baginsky, 2003b).

What school counselling is

That counseling has many meanings has already been mentioned in relation to the history of counselling in schools. It is sometimes used to encompass activities that professional counsellors would surely not consider to be counseling at all. These include careers interviews, ad hoc advice, and crisis conversations in the corridor (Mosley, 1993). There is also some lack of clarity between counselling and psychotherapy, and between counselling, counselling skills and helping skills (Lloyd, 1997). Lloyd sees these as a ‘therapeutic continuum’ (p 26) with varying levels of intensity and formality, and she identifies characteristics of counselling on which there is a high level of agreement: ‘a formal contracting between the

⁹ Some would argue that here too there is lack of an evidence base (see Lown, 2001).
parties’, a ‘counsellor’ who is trained, accredited and supervised and operates ‘in accordance with formal legal, ethical and professional requirements’ (p 26).

This kind of distinction was also made by Chesterton et al. (1999) in their research in Kent schools. They recognised the different levels: the *ad hoc* emotional support that school staff provide to pupils; the informal counselling and mentoring staff provide within a defined space and time but alongside other roles and relationships; and formal counselling whereby a young person sees a qualified counsellor by appointment. Elsewhere, the role of school staff is described as ‘mediation, negotiation, advocacy, guidance and advice, rather than *counselling*’ (Mabey and Sorensen, 1995, p 48).

The BACP’s own guidance (2001a) for professional counsellors makes a distinction similar to Lloyd’s *therapeutic continuum*, distinguishing between counselling skills that may be used by school staff and the work of professional counsellors. Their definition of counselling, however, emphasises the process that ‘assists [the] individual client to focus on their particular concerns and development issues, while simultaneously addressing and exploring specific problems, making choices, coping with crises, working through feelings of inner conflict and improving relationships with others’ (p 2). The BACP stress the contractual nature of the relationship between counsellor and client, saying that ‘People become engaged in counselling when a person, occupying regularly or temporarily the role of counsellor, offers and agrees explicitly to give time, attention and respect to another person or persons, who will be temporarily in the role of client’ (p 2). The planned setting aside of time for the process to take place is found in definitions offered by services themselves (see, for example, Dudley Counselling Service’s *Why is counselling of value to children and young people?*).

McGuiness (1998) includes two other important definitions in his detailed discussion of what counselling is. These are that it is the client who is in charge of the process, and that counselling deals with *normal* people, not primarily those who are mentally ill, because ‘It is about helping people to grow in emotional fitness and health’ (p 23). Both of these have important implications, discussed in more
detail in other sections of the review. The first runs counter to the perceptions of some (Galloway, 1990\textsuperscript{11}), of the way schools run, that the majority of interviews in school are prompted by teachers rather than pupils or parents. The second suggests that counselling is a preventative strategy that ought to be the entitlement of all school pupils. And this is a view to be found in the literature. Mosley (1993), for example, argues for the offer of counselling in all schools ‘as a vital positive force in pupils’ lives, a means of helping young people ‘think for themselves, make their own decisions, value their own integrity’ (p 105). It is also remarkably similar to the aims of a secondary school service first discussed in 1964 and set up in 1965 (Jones, 1970) to promote good mental health.

McLaughlin (1999) characterises counselling as a helping relationship, individually or in a group, which explores a problem, a developmental process or an event. She identifies the skills required of the counsellor as listening, empathising, challenging and facilitating action, and these are used to help someone understand their own and others’ feelings, thinking and behaviours and be able to act on them in productive ways. The counsellor believes that self-awareness is helpful and that its development is part of the counselling process. She argues that counselling in schools has the same components. However, others have drawn attention also to the differences between counselling generally and counselling within the context of the school. Bor et al. (2002), for example, refer both to the duty in certain circumstances of counsellors to break confidentiality and to their accountability to the head teacher. Later in the review, \textit{Types of counselling} includes some discussion of the suitability of particular approaches to counselling to the context of school.

Schools do have certain advantages over other venues for the provision of counselling. Klinefelter (1994), in relation to her work in Canterbury and Thanet Health Authority, observes that ‘school is less stigmatising and less disruptive of studies than would be the case if [pupils] were sent to specialist mental health services at some distance from school’ (p 216). Bor et al. (2002) echo this sentiment, describing school as a ‘non-pathologising context’ (p 16), unlike, for

\textsuperscript{10} \url{www.dudley.gov.uk}. There is a link to the counselling service from the Lifelong Learning pages of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council’s website.

\textsuperscript{11} Cited by Mabey and Sorensen (1995).
example, a health centre. On the other hand, there is some evidence that ‘hard to reach’ young people would prefer to see services provided at GP surgeries, youth clubs and special centres rather than in schools (Sellen, 2002, p 32). And Lines (2002) discusses the possible confusion for some pupils resulting from the difference in approach of the counsellor and teacher, one encouraging a testing of boundaries, the other discouraging it.

**What counselling is for**

Some discussion in the literature relates to the level of need amongst young people and the inadequacy of provision for the emotional and psychological well-being of children and young people. One of the distinctions made is between services for those with readily identifiable physical, sensory or learning difficulties and the less well developed services for children with emotional difficulties (Moore et al., 1993). On the basis of 20 completed responses from 50 primary schools in south-east England which were sent questionnaires, Moore et al. found that nearly 8 per cent of pupils had special needs associated with emotional disturbance, though they acknowledge that the number seems high given that Warnock’s (1978) 20 per cent included the whole range of special needs. A follow-up study in secondary schools found that teachers identified significant numbers of pupils with emotional needs which they believed to be affecting their academic achievement (Moore et al., 1996). Flood (1997) cites evidence given to the House of Commons Health Select Committee that approximately 10 per cent of children have problems that are significantly disabling. These include the ability to make friends, go to school and function productively. Mabey and Sorensen (1995) cite research from the mid-1970s estimating that 14 per cent of children had symptoms of emotional disturbance and maladjustment, including one to 2 per cent with severe psychiatric disturbance. Research by the Mental Health Foundation (1999) indicated that one in five children and young people experience mental health problems. Mabey and Sorensen (1995) comment on the decrease in services to meet these needs.

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12 The Warnock Report (Department of Education and Science et al., 1978) identified 20 per cent of children as likely to need special educational provision of some kind during their school years.
Other references to services for children and young people with emotional problems convey the message that even given the greater difficulty of identifying these kinds of needs (Moore et al. 1993), provision is inadequate and geographically uneven. Flood (1997) cites research\(^{13}\) from the early 1990s showing that 90 per cent of child psychotherapists practised in the south of England, that provision was patchy around the country and rarely based on need. The same author cites other research\(^{14}\) identifying a three-fold increase in exclusions from primary schools and comments from schools that they did not believe they were receiving the support they needed to deal with the most severe cases.

An early supporter of school counselling, Jones (1970) argues that it is not necessarily the severe cases that school counselling should address. Rather, it is more concerned with ‘the development of what is than with fundamental change; with the here and now more than with the deep and distant past; with making the best of a situation as it actually is, rather than with altering the way of the world’ (p 25). This kind of view of school counselling is discussed more fully in the section on Types of counselling. She makes the point that most young people emerge from adolescence without needing the support of a counsellor. In Jones’ view, counselling is for those who feel the insecurities and uncertainties of adolescence and also ask for help.

Wetz (1997) identifies a range of problems experienced by young people: family and peer relationships, self-harm, health issues such as eating disorders, stress and depression, misuse of drugs, sexual relationships and pregnancy, pressures arising from poverty, deprivation or the problems of carers. Like Jones (1970), she argues that most young people find support through family or the community. The role of counselling is to support those for whom some of these problems can be the start of mental health problems, a view shared by Sherr et al. (1997), and by MacLeod and Barter (1996) in relation to boys. She also makes the case that the process of counselling ‘offers pupils the chance to develop a language with which to express and understand these emotions, and children who can express feelings and needs effectively are less vulnerable to risk and exploitation’ (p 16). Barwick’s (2000) view is that emotional relief may allow pupils better to focus on educational tasks.

\(^{13}\) Kurtz Z, Thornes R and Wolkind S (1994).
A practical application of these views is reflected in the example of a primary school in London where the head teacher found funds to employ a counsellor for an additional day a week on the basis that unless children’s emotional and psychological needs were met they could not adequately access the curriculum (Baginsky, 2003a). In the same school, the counsellor ran an anger management group, which enabled pupils to develop a vocabulary to express their feelings. The importance of addressing the mental health of boys is highlighted by figures for the increasing rate of suicide among young men (see, for example, Childright, 1994 and the end of the section on Evaluation).

Counselling is also seen by some as having a purpose wider than support for individual pupils. McLaughlin and colleagues (1993; 1999; McLaughlin et al., 1996), while arguing that counselling in schools has the same components as counselling in other contexts, believes it has three functions - educative, reflective and welfare. While counselling is concerned with pupils’ personal and social development it is also about the wider issues of school practices that have a bearing on pupils generally within the school. Wetz (1997) makes a similar point about the value of the feedback counsellors can provide to a school on the feelings of pupils about school life. An example of how this works is a primary school in London where pupils’ concerns about bullying, both in their own school and fears of it when they transferred to secondary school, were fed back to the head teacher and staff by the counsellor. As a result, the school reviewed its policy on bullying and launched a whole-school anti-bullying project (Baginsky, 2003a). Other purposes may be to mobilise resources to deal with particular difficulties, such as pregnancy, and to enable access to protective or therapeutic services (NSPCC, 1995).

The BACP’s guidance (2001a) on counselling in schools makes a number of statements about the purposes of counselling in schools, some of them explicitly related to legislation and government guidelines. It outlines the benefits of counselling - including the promotion of good communication in schools and the emotional well-being of pre-school, primary and secondary children and young

14 Hayden C (1997).
15 Baginsky (2003a) includes a description on the basis of a booklet produced by the group, and interviews with the pupils and with the counsellor.
16 This states that the suicide rate for young men between 15 and 24 rose by 71 per cent during the 1980s.
people, support for inclusion and the National Curriculum - and sets these against the high priority the NHS Frameworks for Health\textsuperscript{17} give to mental health, and the long waiting lists for therapeutic services. Counselling is seen as ‘cost-effective and readily accessible... for children and young people experiencing difficulties as a result of emotional concerns, behavioural problems, social and peer pressure, family tensions, bereavement and normal developmental issues’ (p 3). While much of this is consistent with other areas of the literature, perhaps unsurprisingly, some of this reads as a case for counselling in schools. For example, reference is made to ways in which counselling has been seen to support favourable comments from Ofsted inspectors on aspects of the schools such as pastoral care, special educational needs, drug and sex education. There is also mention of surveys showing that where school counselling is available services are well used ‘and that early recognition of stress symptoms can assist future well-being and emotional and psychological health’ (p 3). However, no sources are cited.

There are other claims that, were they made elsewhere, would suggest the need for caution on the part of schools considering the establishment of a counselling service. The document refers to child protection guidance, the Framework for Assessment\textsuperscript{18} and Working Together\textsuperscript{19}, claiming that counsellors in schools ‘can provide support to the staff in “working together” to understand these factors’ (p 4). Not only is this a distortion of the meaning of working together in the context of child protection but, as has been mentioned earlier, there is some uncertainty about the level and appropriateness of the qualifications of some people practising as counsellors, never mind as advisers about child protection. In relation to drugs, reference is made to a statement in DfEE Circular 4/95 about ‘The Secretary of State [believing] that schools will want to develop a repertoire of responses incorporating both sanctions and counselling’ (BACP, 2001a, p 5). As an example of the way in which counsellors can contribute, the document claims that they can provide ‘advice on policy development and on procedures to manage drug-related incidents’ (p 5). As with child protection, there will be some counsellors who have relevant experience of the area and who can contribute in the ways described. However, it is likely that the majority will not. And it is also likely that the

\textsuperscript{17} See National Service Framework for mental health, 1999.

\textsuperscript{18} Department of Health (2000).

majority of counsellors, when they first start working in schools, will not have experience or training in the ways schools work. Grounds for such reservations will, of course, remain conjecture - as will justifications for the claims - until accurate figures are collected and collated.

As mentioned earlier the BACP (2001a) claims that counselling can benefit children from pre-school age upwards. There is some discussion of the effectiveness of counselling in the section on Evaluation. However, it has been difficult to find references in the literature to the relationship between counselling and age, and at what age therapeutic work with children can reasonably and accurately be termed counselling.

Types of counselling
It is beyond the scope of this review to discuss in detail the great variety of approaches to counselling. Instead, the focus is on some of the references in the literature to the suitability, or otherwise, of particular approaches within a school setting.

For a general view, the BACP website includes brief details of more than 20 theoretical approaches to counselling and psychotherapy, covering psychoanalysis and other forms of analytic psychotherapy, and humanistic and behavioural therapies. In an overview of counselling in a book about counselling in schools, Proctor (1993) outlines five broad approaches - client-centred, psychodynamic, humanistic, cognitive and behaviourist - commenting that practitioners have become increasingly flexible in attempting to meet the needs of their clients.

The other texts mentioned here are specifically related to counselling in schools. Mabey and Sorensen (1995) provide a very clear explanation of the theoretical frameworks underlying four approaches to counselling - person-centred, problem-focused, existential and psychodynamic. For each, the authors refer to cases and discuss the ways in which the particular approach was effective. They argue that the person-centred approach, based on the ideas of Carl Rogers, is both widely

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20 http://www.bacp.co.uk/seeking_counsellor/seeking_counsellor_frameset2.htm
used with, and particularly suited to, young people because of its understanding of conflict between the ‘real self’ and the ‘self-concept’ (p 25) and the positive experiences provided for clients through ‘empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard’ (p 38). This was also the approach adopted by school counsellors of the 1960s and 1970s (McLaughlin, 1999) and the courses that trained them (Lines, 2002). Squires (2001) describes cognitive-behavioural counselling with its testing of automatic thoughts, focus on the present rather than the past, goals, decisions and measurement of progress. Lines (2002) comments that the reliance on interventions and client motivation for change of this approach make it very suitable for use in school. Platts and Williamson (2000) also outline the advantages of cognitive-behavioural therapy for work in schools because, they say, its theoretical underpinning and therapeutic process are consistent with what pupils are already familiar with in school in approaches to the handling of ideas and study. King and Kellock (2002) provide a short description of solution-focused brief therapy, which uses realistic and achievable tasks to help the client build up a picture of life without the problem, and refer to other studies showing that this can be an appropriate approach in schools.

Lines (2002), after discussing various schools of counselling thought, concludes that psychodynamic therapy is ‘largely impractical’ (p 58) in schools because of the time needed for in-depth self-exploration, and because it rules out most younger and less able pupils as the client has to have the capacity for introspection and articulation. However, he does believe that the framework contributes to counsellors’ understanding of adolescent problems.

There is a large measure of agreement that the nature of the problems that many young people face\textsuperscript{21}, and the characteristics of the school day and year, mean that the theoretical model is often less important than that the therapy should be brief and lend itself to these circumstances. Lines (2002) also favours other approaches - such as Egan’s three-stage model\textsuperscript{22}, solution-focused therapy, narrative therapy and motivational interviewing - which lend themselves to the time limitations and frequent interruptions of school life. Like Mabey and Sorensen (1995), Lines uses case studies to illustrate the effectiveness of using a variety of approaches.

\textsuperscript{21} Lines (2002), for example, describes these as ‘immediate and transitory’.
There is some variation in what is thought to constitute brief therapy. In an example of a statistical audit for a secondary school, the BACP guidance (2001a) defines short term as six sessions or fewer, medium term as six to 12 sessions, and long term as 13 sessions or more. Lines (2002) refers to research showing the effectiveness of single-treatment programmes. However, he defines brief therapy as fewer than 25 sessions. His view is that brief therapy sets itself more modest aims and is designed to be focused in a short-term intervention. Sessions may be spread out, with periodic reviews and evaluations. Given that for most schools the year is divided into six half terms, with little likelihood that counselling sessions can continue during the holidays, this has to be an important consideration. The approach entails a more active role for the counsellor but, he claims, young people generally prefer this. Platts and Williamson (2000) define short term as usually eight to 12 hour-long sessions for cognitive-behavioural therapy. Chesterman et al. (1999), in a survey of all schools in Kent, found that counselling was most likely to last for half a term.

A project in six schools, described by Dennison (1998), highlights some of the reasons why schools themselves may favour brief therapy. The service was provided by two counselling organisations, each with a very different approach to counselling. One offered short-term counselling - sometimes one session only - with sessions often split into two to give maximum access to pupils within the time available. The second offered principally full 50-minute sessions on an ongoing basis, which limited the number of pupils who could be seen and caused some frustration to the schools the counsellors were working with. The first organisation considered that a 50-minute session was also often too long for pupils.

**Context - the educational landscape**

The pattern of interest in school counselling has been discussed in *The history of school counselling in the UK*, earlier in the review, and some of the reasons for the recent increase in its fortunes were mentioned there. These included the growth of interest in counselling in society generally, the effects of educational legislation on

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22 Referred to as *problem-focused* earlier in this section.
schools’ priorities and responsibilities, and what are often seen to be the challenges and stresses of contemporary life on young people. In this section, these issues are covered in more detail.

McGuiness is one of the most vociferous in his condemnation of the values now dominating education. He refers to an HMI report published towards the end of the 1970s\(^{23}\) that described as ‘the central purpose of education’ ‘the personal development of children’ (McGuiness, 1998, p 8). In contrast he sees, in the late 1990s, ‘testing, vocationalism, central control and, of course, the market place...’ where pupils are valued for their potential contribution to the national economy rather than ‘for their humanity’ (p 8). Robson et al. (1999), looking back at the Education Reform Act 1988, observe the very same priorities and argue that this has resulted in teachers and pupils being valued in terms of performance indicators and a move away from a concern with pupils’ personal and social development. And Klinefelter (1994), a few years earlier, commented on the ‘increasingly competitive school environment’ (p 215).

Lang (1999) describes the most recent standards for achieving qualified teacher status\(^{24}\) as involving ‘a mainly mechanical approach to effective teaching’ (p 24) with little attention to the affective aspects of education to which counselling contributes. Lloyd (1999), in similar vein, suggests that in recent years there has been more concern in schools about cognitive, rather than psychosocial, development.

There is also a sense that pupils’ problems have increased and that schools and other agencies are less able to respond to the needs of young people. Wilson (1996), writing about evidence given by Young Minds to the House of Commons Select Committee Inquiry on Children’s Health in the mid-1990s, refers to information from members in specialist child and adolescent mental health services and in educational settings giving the impression of ‘a major increase in referrals and in the complexity of problems’ (p 9). Lloyd (1999) comments on the numbers of children with mental health problems and inadequate support for them. Sherr et al. (1997) refer to the lack of provision for young children ‘at the very point they

\(^{23}\) HMI (1979).

\(^{24}\) HMI (1979).
experience such problems’, and a lack of preventive interventions, against a backdrop of ‘alarming figures of youth crime, youth trauma, youth extremism and youth suicide’ (p 285).

Watkins (1999) provides an overview of changes in teaching methods and how the curriculum is viewed, and changes in teachers’ and head teachers’ roles during the 1990s, with more time spent on administration, more externally imposed priorities, lower morale, and higher levels of stress and anxiety. For pupils too, he cites evidence of the ‘negative and divisive’ (p 74) effects, including a diminishing of personal and social education, the changes during this period have had. Watkins observes that the ‘psychological climate of many schools is now more akin to frightened organisations’ (p 74) in which a fear of public punishment stifles risk-taking despite hard work and the introduction of new initiatives. Lloyd (1999) refers to the kind of tensions that arise for teachers, giving the example of a child referred to a pastoral head who has responsibility not only to the needs of that child but also to ‘the organisational needs for order’ (p 27). She illustrates this in relation to support for a child who has been excluded in the interests of their peers rather than for their own best interests. Referring to a climate of uncertainty among teachers, brought about by government policy in such areas as sex education in Circular 5/94, McLaughlin (1999) also discusses internal tensions, this time between teachers’ desire to deal ‘professionally and humanely’ (p 15) with the issues pupils brought to them and the concerns of policy makers. Lloyd (1999) points to the discrepancy between a child’s right to be consulted about decisions affecting their lives, if competent to do so, under the Children Act 1989 but only as far as social welfare is concerned, not under education law. Dennison (1998) mentions class sizes having increased so that more pupils are competing for a teacher’s time, and school exclusions having reached an all-time high. McLaughlin (1999) draws parallels with the 1970s and the raising of the school leaving age and research that suggested that it was a hardening of teachers’ attitudes rather than an increase in bad behaviour that led to the rise in exclusions then. Amongst the benefits of a counselling service in school, 12.5 per cent of the teacher and classroom assistant respondents in a survey of schools in Northern Ireland with counselling services commented on counsellors having time to listen (Baginsky, 24 Education Reform Act 1998
Moore et al. (1996) found that teachers in a study of 15 secondary schools favoured counselling as a response to the needs of pupils whose emotional difficulties were adversely affecting their academic achievement.

Meanwhile, services outside schools have been unable to meet the demand. Kleinfelter (1994) comments on the long waiting lists for support from child guidance and the lack of time social services have for other than child protection work. Wilson (1996) talks of the serious consequences for waiting lists, training and liaison on the services his members provide because of inadequate resources. The consequences of cuts in education and social services are, he says, similarly serious.

Context - other services for young people

A detailed overview of services for young people from the 1960s onwards is given by Mabey and Sorensen (1995). This decade saw information, advice and counselling provided by the Youth Service and marriage guidance workers, though they point out that it is difficult to tell from the limited literature what this meant. In the 1970s some counselling work was done by social services, the Citizens Advice Bureaux and the Samaritans.

Mabey and Sorensen’s account covers some key documents and recommendations, including a research report from the DHSS in the late 1970s that discussed the various philosophical backgrounds of services, from psychoanalytical through to person-centred, the latter characterising the community and broad-based services often staffed by volunteers. They go on to talk about the founding of The National Association of Young People’s Counselling and Advisory Services (NAYPCAS) in 1975, and the poor state of funding of such services, and the World Health Organisations’s recommendations in 1978 on the importance of funding and co-ordinated services for young people, a reminder of how slowly such recommendations have been acted upon. Mabey and Sorensen’s account refers to an HMI report looking at youth counselling services in 25 local authorities from

\[ \text{25 Tyler M (1978)}\]
\[ \text{26 Her Majesty’s Inspectors (1989).} \]
1987 to 1988, which found a range of work, including one-to-one youth work, specialist information and advice work through an agency, informal counselling in a youth work setting by a trained counsellor, formal counselling by selected and trained volunteers, and psychotherapeutic counselling by professionally trained counsellors. This report acknowledged the funding difficulties of many of these organisations and the uneven geographical distribution of services, many of them in London.

Mabey and Sorensen go on to discuss the setting up of local youth bureaux for 14 to 25 year olds and the ‘key’ document that synthesised many of the points made by previous reports. As a result of what the authors refer to as ‘the stigma’ attached to the term counselling it was replaced by guidance in the bureaux. The youth advice and information centres mentioned by Dennison (1998) are presumably the same facility by another name. Dennison says that they are more suited to older teenagers with greater freedom and resources. In her report on a pilot counselling project in six schools in Brighton and Hove, professionals included in their comments the perception that young people may find it difficult to access services outside school without family or friends finding out, or lack the resources to get to them.

Mabey and Sorensen go on to discuss the development of the Youth and Community Services as providers of social education in informal contexts rather than leisure and social activities based in youth clubs, and the ‘sterling’ individual counselling work done by many education welfare officers despite the focus of their role on attendance.

Telephone helplines are a relatively recent innovation. In a discussion of their experiences of ChildLine, MacLeod and Barter (1996) observe that children who call ‘particularly value the anonymity, privacy, confidentiality, and the freedom to call when they wish and end calls when they wish’ (p 5). Amongst the difficulties children experience in seeking help they mention worries about being disloyal to their family, not being believed, not being taken seriously, and losing control of what happens as a result of speaking to someone about their problems. They also

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refer to the shame, guilt and fear associated with the consequences of telling. Mabey and Sorensen (1995) say that of the 10,000 telephone calls received each day by ChildLine about 27 per cent are answered. One of the difficulties is the high drop out rate for volunteers answering calls.

Models of school counselling services

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) conducted a survey after the Association adopted a resolution in 1996 in favour of employing school-based counsellors. Capey (1997) incorporates the results of ATL’s survey with EMIE’s own that followed, based on responses from 89 local education authorities in England and Wales and one education and library board in Northern Ireland.

The surveys found several models of service in terms of funding. One model is the employment of counsellors directly by schools, sometimes with support from the local education authority, in the form of guidelines on setting up and running a service, for example.

In other cases a central counselling service is provided by the local education authority. Although the report includes some other examples on a smaller scale, the most notable is that of Dudley Education Department which, at the time the report was written, had run the service for 20 years. The service is also discussed by Mabey and Sorensen (1995) who regard it as unique because it was sustained even during times of financial restraint. Another example of a service that comes within this category is one in Clwyd (Dyer and Elliott, 1995). This developed out of the child guidance service. Following the success of an outpatients group and workshops for school staff, a high school requested work on the school site, and this was subsequently taken up by four schools.

The survey also found examples of services provided by external organisations, and the report includes a detailed response from the NSPCC in Bristol. Baginsky (2003a) describes a service set up initially for a year in one primary and one secondary school in London, funded by the Children’s Fund and recruiting counsellors from an independent counselling agency. In this case, one of the schools valued the work of
the counsellor so much that the head teacher organised funding to employ the 
counsellor for an additional day each week, free of the constraints imposed by the 
funders, and the arrangement continued when the project ended.

Another way of looking at the services is to categorise them according to the types 
of activities they undertake. Among those found in the EMIE survey were drop-ins 
(see also Bor et al., 2002), peer befriending or support schemes, telephone 
helplines, befriending by adults working with or in schools (specifically through an 
independent organisation Schools Outreach), and counselling and befriending 
during crises for pupils and schools. The EMIE report includes examples in relation 
to the last item involving educational psychologists, education welfare officers, 
education social workers and, in Northern Ireland, a Trauma Support Team 
provided by the local Health and Social Services Board.

Yet another way of categorising services is to look at the counsellor’s relationship 
with the school. The broader issues are discussed later in the review28, but it is 
relevant here too because it will have a bearing on the kinds of activities the 
service will undertake. Both Mabey and Sorensen (1995) and Lines (2002) discuss 
the concepts of an individual or open-orientation approach to counselling and a 

d system-orientation. In neither case are the authors’ alignment of these 
orientations with political ideologies of the 1960s and 1980s illuminating. However, 
the notion of a counsellor taking a stance in relation to their role, one that leans 
either towards individualism or towards communal responsibility, does find echoes 
in much of what is written about the counsellor’s relationship with school, the 
tasks they undertake and the potential difficulty for teachers to combine a 
teaching and counselling role. The difference manifests itself in issues such as 
whether referrals should come predominantly from school staff or the young people 
themselves (Baginsky, 2003a) and the role of the pastoral head (Lloyd, 1999) 
mentioned in Context - the educational landscape.

In the example of Dudley given earlier in this section, the local education 
authority’s own documentation29 describes the counselling service as one of a 
number of support services the education department provides in order to ‘raise

28 Counsellor’s relationships within school.
standards within the education system it provides’. Although an intervention may benefit an individual it is clearly the educational agenda that prevails. Moreover, the relationship of the service is very much to the school as an institution, the team providing training and support to school staff in counselling skills, peer support and pastoral policies. Similarly, the Clwyd service includes in its role - in addition to individual psychotherapy - supervision to staff who are counselling, consultations to staff over difficult teaching situations, contacts with parents and input to school policy discussions relating to emotional and behavioural problems (Dyer and Elliott, 1995). The alternative is epitomised by Platts who refers to herself as ‘a counsellor who works in - but is not part of - schools...’ (Platts and Williamson, 2000, p 97). And of the two counselling organisations in a project working with six schools in Brighton and Hove, one remaining aloof, the other becoming involved, Dennison (1998) says interestingly, in her conclusions, that the evaluation of the project was unable to offer much evidence on how these two ways of working impacted on students’ perceptions of the services.

Setting up a service

Mabey and Sorensen (1995) comment that schools are often unaware of what is involved in setting up a service when they consider the possibility of doing so and on the kinds of unrealistic expectations about responsibilities and time that can result. The kind of area where this can happen is feedback, if staff expect it and counsellors believe it is inappropriate (Dennison, 1998). One of the advantages for schools of provision by an external agency is funding, though difficulties may arise where counsellors do not understand the school context (Mabey and Sorensen, 1995). However, funding by an external body can also be problematic, particularly if the duration and timing are inappropriate for the school year (Dennison, 1998; Baginsky, 2003a). It is for reasons like these that careful planning and effective communication are vital before a service is operational (see, for example, Burnison, 2003).

The handbook of Dudley Education Department’s counselling service includes five points for an effective service. These are a clear understanding of its purpose, its
code of practice and how it might function in the school; clear referral procedures; a respect for inter-professional boundaries; suitable accommodation; and the need for ongoing assessment through regular meetings with pastoral and other appropriate staff.

Mabey and Sorensen (1995) detail what they consider to be the minimum requirements for setting up a service and many are relevant to services in schools. In addition to items on accommodation and referral also mentioned in the Dudley handbook, they include finding out about existing alternatives and young people’s views; the nature of the community to be served in terms of ethnicity and gender; the employment of counsellors with high level training, and opportunities for further training; supervision; clear lines of responsibility regarding management and child protection; and monitoring and evaluation, including the use of statistical information on usage and feedback from users.

The BACP’s (2001a) guidance says, about accommodation, that the counselling room should be ‘soundproof’; ideally it should be furnished differently from a classroom or teacher’s office; there should be a secure place to keep case records and access to a telephone line. Both counselling organisations in the service described by Dennison (1998) stressed the importance of soundproof accommodation, available regularly and different from classroom or office. Baginsky (2003a) acknowledges the problems that can be caused by the shortage of suitable accommodation. Location of the counselling room in particular parts of the school that made visits obvious to others, and lack of privacy were features pupils did not like (Baginsky, 2003b). Given that accommodation in schools is often at a premium and that it may not be ideal this last report suggests that it may allay the inhibitions of some pupils if the issue is made explicit when the service is being publicised.

Klinefelter (1994), describing a counselling service set up initially in six schools in the Canterbury and Thanet Health Authority, refers to meetings with head teachers and pastoral staff before the service was established, where discussions took place about the referral system, timings and confidentiality. Contact was also made with other agencies, including GPs, education welfare, child guidance and social services. Dennison (1998), in her conclusions on a project in Brighton and Hove,
discusses the importance of establishing in advance how the project will operate, and particularly of schools being aware of what is expected of them. In addition to accommodation and referral procedures, she also discusses the importance of a link person with an understanding of counselling and the time to fulfil the role, and the involvement of staff and pupils as well as the key personnel. The counsellors should have the time, in preparation for the start of the service, to learn about the timings of the school day and other aspects of how schools operate. She also mentions the importance of good communication between the counsellor and the school, their own organisation, and other agencies working with the school.

Baginsky (2003a), on the basis of an evaluation of a counselling service in a primary and secondary school in London, includes among the features likely to be necessary to establish a successful project: clarity about the relationship between counselling and other initiatives in the school and the benefits the school is expecting from the project; a negotiated written agreement between the partners covering topics such as the roles and responsibilities of the participants and arrangements for steering, reviewing and evaluating the project; and plans and protocols for aspects of the project such as the induction of counsellors, consent, confidentiality, child protection, record-keeping, communication, publicity and arrangements in case of the absence of key personnel.

Jackson and Parnham (1996), in an evaluation of counselling services provided by the NSPCC to two comprehensive schools, include the importance of publicity to staff and pupils, and in particular of informative publicity to teachers because they may be significant in the extent to which the service is used. And the importance of sufficient information for pupils is also clear (Dennison, 1998; Baginsky, 2003b).

Professional qualifications, training and supervision

Although there appears to be a commitment to high quality qualifications and training for counsellors working in schools (Mabey and Sorensen, 1995; BACP, 2001b), the lack of reliable large-scale information about the situation in the UK and the picture that emerges from the surveys that do exist (see The history of counselling in schools in the UK) suggest that the commitment does not yet match the reality.
It is impossible to know the extent to which Hooper’s (1997) observations are representative because they relate to counselling in independent schools. However, they do suggest that there are a substantial number of people counselling in schools, or using counselling skills, who lack the knowledge, training and support to do so in an occupation that ought to be characterised by a high level of professionalism. In a survey of attendees at an annual conference about counselling in independent schools he found that, although almost half the respondents described themselves as having a theoretical orientation towards one particular approach to counselling, more than 60 per cent had had no training at all and only 15 per cent were trained to diploma level. Of the other respondents (approximately 24 per cent) half were trained to certificate level and half had had only introductory training. He acknowledges the participants’ high degree of commitment to counselling but expresses concern on several counts: the confusion of many respondents between counselling and counselling skills, the large number considering themselves to use a strong counselling element in their work but with no training in counselling, and the small number having supervision.

Dudley Education Department’s counselling service, discussed elsewhere in this review, is unusual in the material discussed here in being unequivocal that their counsellors are professionally qualified and experienced and are qualified teachers as well.

Bor et al. (2002) have produced a chart showing the various training routes in counselling through British Psychological Society (BPS), BACP or the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapists (UKCP) membership. They say that such training is ‘expected’ for those who work in schools and that experience of teaching or working with children is ‘desirable’ but how this relates to practice is unclear.

BACP’s (2001a) own guidelines are specific in some respects but vague in others. For example, they outline the qualities needed by a counsellor working in schools. These include sensitivity to ‘the different needs and demands which a school community imposes on clients and those who have responsibility for them’ (p 6); being approachable; having good listening skills; and a manner that encourages a
climate for safe and trusting relationships. These are characteristics that a school would be looking for in anyone to be employed in any capacity to work with children. It is difficult to see how they would assist a school in recruiting a counsellor.

About qualifications, the BACP (2001a) guidance says that counsellors should have had ‘sound training’ and that ‘it is imperative that counsellors are qualified in stringent theoretical principles, high level practice skills and other specialised areas of counselling, for example art therapy and play therapy’ (p 6). They should also have obtained or be aiming for BACP Accreditation and United Kingdom Register of Counsellors (UKRC) Registration or equivalent, though they do not specify what would constitute equivalence. The guidance also mentions diploma and degree courses and NVQs but says nothing about their relative merits compared with courses offered by ‘some training organisations with specific expertise in this field’ (p 6). More helpfully, they say that schools should ensure that an adequate number of training hours should have been completed as part of training and refer to their own requirement for 450 hours teaching time, making a distinction between these and short courses in counselling skills. They also recommend that 100 hours of supervised counselling practice have been completed, preferably with children or young people. Again more specifically, the guidance makes clear that trainees should be recruited only to well established services and only then if the person is working towards completion of their qualification, accreditation is supervised by experienced and salaried counsellors, and client contact time is limited to a few hours a week. Finally, counsellors should work within a code of ethics and practice such as the BACP’s own.

Supervision is seen to be essential (Mabey and Sorensen, 1995; Bor et al. 2002; Lines, 2002; BACP, 2001a and 2001b) though the need has been recognised less for counsellors working in schools than in other contexts (Mabey and Sorensen, 1995). The distinction is made by some between managerial supervision and independent supervision (Klinefelter, 1994; Mabey and Sorensen, 1995; BACP 2001b).

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30 UKRC is part of the BACP.
31 BACP (2001b).
Regarding frequency, Klinefelter (1994), writing about a service set up with six schools in the Canterbury and Thanet Health Authority, refers to monthly group supervision ‘for case discussion, mutual support and to consider administrative issues’ (p 217), as well as individual supervision for all counsellors once a fortnight. Mabey and Sorensen (1995) refer to the then BAC’s Code for Counsellors (1992), which stated that ‘The volume of supervision should be in proportion to the volume of counselling work undertaken and the experience of the counsellor’ (BAC 1992: B.3.4) but without specifying any frequency. Lines (2002) refers to the BACP’s Code of Ethics and Practice (2000) to say that supervision should not be provided by the managers of the agency and should be independent of the organisation in which a counsellor is working. Lines says that according to the BACP there is conventionally one and a half hours individual supervision for each month’s counselling. This code has now been superseded by BACP’s Ethical framework for good practice in counselling and psychotherapy (2001b)\(^3\), which talks of ‘an obligation to use regular and on-going supervision’ and the counsellor’s ‘ethical responsibility to use supervision’. It also mentions the ‘general obligation’ for all counsellors ‘to receive supervision/ consultative support independently of any managerial relationships’ but again no specific frequency is mentioned. Mabey and Sorensen (1995) also refer to guidelines from the Association of Student Counselling (ASC)\(^4\), that ‘consultations should take place preferably once a fortnight and should be an integral part of the counsellor’s work’ (ASC 1992: 2). On group supervision, the ASC recommended that it should be ‘weekly for at least one and a half hours and preferably in a group of no more than four, so that each counsellor can present casework once a fortnight’ (ASC 1992: 2).

According to the BACP’s (2001b) latest guidelines, the purpose of supervision is ‘to enhance the quality of the services provided’, and the responsibility of supervisors and managers is ‘to maintain and enhance good practice by practitioners’. For Mabey and Sorensen (1995) the importance of independent supervision is fourfold\(^5\): personal support for the counsellor to avoid over-involvement and the avoidance of issues, and containment of the counsellor’s anxieties; the maintenance of ethical

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\(^3\) For coverage of all English language research in the English language since 1980 on supervision of counsellors and psychotherapists see Wheeler S (2003).

\(^4\) The document, on the BACP website, does not use page or paragraph numbers.

\(^5\) This has become the Association of University and College Counsellors (AUCC).

\(^5\) Mabey and Sorensen draw on Bond T (1993).
standards and practice; the promotion of reflection and learning; and helping the counsellor to look at their work in the context of the organisation within which they are counselling. McMahon and Patton (2000) drew similar conclusions about the importance of supervision on the basis of focus group interviews with school counsellors in Australia. The aspects of supervision that made it important included the provision of support; accountability, and especially the opportunity to seek a second opinion; debriefing, particularly following traumatic and stressful cases; skill development; and personal development, especially becoming aware of blind spots. The researchers also report references by counsellors to the damaging effects of not having supervision, such as having no benchmark by which to assess the rightness of decisions, the risk of becoming stale, and the lack of an important support to those new to the profession.

The counsellor’s relationships within school

More harshly than is usual in the literature, Lang (1999) claims that the role of counselling in schools has, since the 1960s, generated conflict and created confusion. The confusion, he says, ‘has included what the process actually involves; the conflict has concerned what counselling’s relationship to and role within the school’s pastoral system should be’ (p 24). The issue of the counsellor’s relationship with the school was raised at the end of the section Models of school counselling services. Here, the view of one counsellor that she was ‘a counsellor who works in - but is not part of - schools…’ (Platts and Williamson, 2000, p 97) was seen to represent one end of the spectrum of opinion on this topic. Although this is not typical in the literature, it is true to say that the subject is more complex than at first it may seem to be.

There is, first of all, some recognition that counselling within the context of a school carries its own particular characteristics, limitations and demands. Clifford-Poston (2000) poses the question ‘can counselling in schools really be effective?’ (p 32) given the importance within the process of privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. She asks the question because within a school the clients may well know each other, be in the same class, be aware of others being collected for sessions, and see the counsellor around the school talking to other adults and
children. BACP’s (2001a) guidance also recognises the complexity of the situation in relation to accountability because of the counsellor’s multiple responsibilities - towards clients, the school and the organisation the counsellor works for. The situation can be further complicated if someone has the dual role of counsellor and teacher. In these circumstances the guidance recommends that the counsellor should resolve with the client issues such as whether the counselling relationship is acknowledged outside the counselling situation. The ambiguities inherent in the role of counselling in school are apparent in BACP’s seemingly paradoxical assertion that a counselling service in school supports the pastoral system, while acknowledging that it is the independence of the service that can be its strength. Bor et al. (2002) also discuss the issue of accountability and that in a school a counsellor is ‘directly accountable to others for [their] actions at all times’ (p 97). For them it is essential that the school should have confidence in the professionalism of the counsellor and have trust in the counsellor. This, they argue, takes time and can be achieved through ‘open communication and collaboration’ (p 97).

This view is far more representative of the literature than Platt’s (Platts and Williamson, 2000). Jones (1970) sees the very success of a counselling service as dependent on a relationship between school staff and counsellor ‘built on mutual respect, confidence, trust and reciprocal cooperation’ (p 79), not dissimilar from Hamblin’s (1974) view that counsellors in schools should be seen as part of a social system, dependent on support from teachers and sharing information to benefit pupils. Among the factors that make this possible Jones discusses the importance of the clarity of roles of both teachers and counsellors. The counsellor’s role, she says, is to serve the interests of their clients, not to be another means of enforcing conformity, but at the same time to complement, not replace, the pastoral role of the teacher. Similarly, Kleinfelter (1994), in her account of a project in the Canterbury and Thanet Health Authority, refers to the clear groundrules that were established in relation to confidentiality alongside close working relationships with teachers and other agencies.

36 Cited by Chesterman et al. (1999).
Another factor is time. Jones describes, from her own experience, the phases through which the relationship between staff and counsellor passed - honeymoon, short period of semi-disillusionment, and then a realistic working relationship. This took two years. Services that are funded for only a year or that do not recognise the significance of the differences in school, financial and calendar years, do not allow this process fully to take place (Baginsky, 2003a). Jones acknowledges that the counsellor needs to be outside the mainstream of school organisation and discipline but must also know what is expected of pupils and why, and not undermine what the school is trying to achieve no matter what their personal feelings are.

More recent work seems to take for granted that there will be a working relationship between school staff and counsellor. In a job description listing the kinds of tasks a counsellor might undertake, BACP’s (2001a) guidance includes individual and group counselling to parents and staff as well as pupils; networking with other agencies to ease referral; statistical information to the school’s senior management on numbers and reasons for referral; and consultation with staff on supporting pupils in emotional distress. On the advantages of a counsellor’s involvement in the life of the school, from the perspective of a project in six schools using counsellors from two agencies - one involved, the other remote - Dennison (1998) says that it enables counsellor and pupils to develop a trusting relationship prior to counselling, allows the counsellor to detect issues that might otherwise go unnoticed, may make the counsellor more approachable in the eyes of students and staff more willing to refer. Bor et al. (2002) advocate an open and collaborative approach for counsellors working with school staff. Among the suggestions they make for establishing effective relationships with pupils, staff, governors and other agencies are meetings, involvement in PSHE, general support for parents at school evenings, training for staff, and reports on the work of the counselling service. And Lines (2002) discusses some of the implications for counselling practice of an understanding of the school context and the ethos of the particular environment. These include acknowledging that the normal experience of young people in schools is not non-directive counselling or exploration of options, and that in a school there is no recovery time for pupils after challenging work.
Mabey and Sorensen (1995) appear rather more sceptical than most of the relationship between counsellor and school staff. They claim that the counsellor’s role is unique in its concern with being rather than doing and that this can lead to misunderstandings by other professionals of the legitimacy of the process. In a section specifically about counsellors working with teachers, the authors acknowledge the pressures under which teachers work and the lack of time for pastoral care despite their wishing to undertake this work. However, they claim that this can sometimes lead to ‘a kind of professional jealousy towards the work of counsellors which can be destructive and unhelpful to all concerned’ (p 85). Teachers’ alleged image of the counsellor as a ‘woolly liberal’ is countered by saying that counselling is often confrontational and encourages young people ‘to take responsibility for their part in the difficulties and problems in their lives’ (p 85).

In a recent survey (Baginsky, 2003b) of the attitudes and opinions of 248 teachers and classroom assistants in Northern Ireland - in 13 primary, secondary and special schools with counselling services - there was little or no evidence of such views by teachers. In fact, almost all respondents thought the service in their school was either essential or at least important. There was some evidence of Mabey and Sorensen’s contention that teachers may sometimes fear allegations, including those against teachers ‘whose practice is extremely ethical’ (p 86), without any right of reply. But it was extremely small: two respondents expressed concern about unfounded allegations and three about children attempting to get their own back on staff. Hooper (1997), referring to an article about counselling in independent schools37, found opinions at both ends of the spectrum. There were some that believed all teachers should have counselling skills and considered the risk of undermining teachers’ confidence in dealing with pastoral matters by deferring to an expert. But there were others who acknowledged that problems were sometimes of a kind that school staff were not best able to deal with and that the use of a counsellor had enabled pupils to remain in school when otherwise they might not have been able to.

37 Hooper cites an article in Conference and Common Room (Journal of the Headmasters’ Conference Schools) 33: 2.
There are two aspects of the relationship between the counsellor and school that have received little attention in the literature looked at for this review. One concerns the consequences for communication of the structural and organisational differences between secondary and primary schools - factors such as the size of the school population, the complexities of the timetable and subject specialists rather than class teachers. The other is the extent to which link staff are able to liaise with and support the counsellor. Both of these issues were raised in an evaluation of a counselling project in a primary and secondary school in London (see Baginsky, 2003a).

Confidentiality

References to confidentiality are never very far away in discussions of most aspects of counselling in schools (see sections on What counselling is; Context - other services for young people; Setting up a service; and The counsellor’s relationship with the school). Confidentiality, and - from the client’s point of view - trust that confidentiality will be maintained, are at the heart of the relationship between counsellor and client. However, in school far more than in private practice, the counsellor is constrained by legalities and ethics governing the context and by professional relationships with school staff and those working with schools, and with parents, as well as with the clients themselves. There is also some official recognition that confidentiality within school counselling should not be undermined.

BACP’s (2001a) guidelines include a section specifically on confidentiality. They regard the guarantee of confidentiality as vital for a relationship of trust to develop between the counsellor and client, but they also acknowledge that whatever the age of the client, the guarantee cannot be absolute and they

38 See, for example, Jones (1970). While she talks of the necessity for ‘absolute trust between counsellor and pupils’, she also cites as circumstances when the counsellor has a responsibility to society, the school and the client’s family where a law has been broken or where there is moral or physical danger to an individual. For her, this is why it is so important that the boundaries of confidentiality should be made clear from the outset. 39 See Casemore (1995) on the recognition by the then DfE that school inspections would not sit in on counselling sessions. And Heller (2000) makes a distinction between work with adults and work with children, arguing that too strict an application of the rules of
emphasise the importance of written guidelines agreed by the parties involved. Where counsellors may be called upon to share information with parents, school staff or at case conferences, BACP’s guiding principles are that the boundaries of confidentiality should be made clear to the client and counsellors should not offer levels of confidentiality they are unable to keep. In relation to situations where a client has suicidal thoughts the guidance makes clear the steps to be taken and the need for an interventionist strategy even if this results in a breach of confidentiality. And concerning law-breaking the guidance distinguishes between the common law right to report actual or intended crime and the requirement to do so. Although it says that the former applies, it acknowledges that specific school contracts may require the counsellor to pass on such information and advises counsellors to clarify the position with their line manager, the local authority lawyer and local police liaison officer.

Bor et al. (2002) devote a whole chapter to legal and confidentiality issues in relation to working with young people in school. They outline relevant legislation, particularly the Children Act 1989 and the responsibilities professionals have to uphold children’s rights under this legislation and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989. The authors draw a distinction between areas where counsellors are likely to accept the necessity of breaching confidentiality, such as in cases of self-harm or harm to others, and abuse or neglect, and areas where there is more scope for personal judgement, such as underage sex or the use of drugs. They recommend that clear policies and protocols on confidentiality and privacy are agreed between the counsellor, the head teacher and others with a direct interest in the service, and that the limits to confidentiality are explained to clients at the outset of counselling.

Lines (2002) refers to a range of government guidance and regulations and specialist books and claims that although there is no statutory protection safeguarding information shared in counselling, judges tend to be sympathetic to codes of confidentiality. The BACP guidance (2001a) too says that the courts are increasingly giving more attention to the needs and wishes of the child. Lines cites

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Bor et al. (2002)

Lines (2002)

BACP guidance (2001a)

Hamilton C and Hopegood L (1998)
legislation that protects counselling and advice records but also regulations that permit parents to see the school records of their children under 16. Whether it is on the basis of this apparent contradiction is unclear but Lines advises counsellors that information should be shared only on a need to know basis and with the permission of the client, where appropriate. This subject is also covered by the BACP (2001a) guidance, which includes the problematic status of counsellors’ personal process notes and advises that this topic should be discussed by counsellors and schools and covered in schools’ policies and procedures. The situation is further complicated because of teachers being in loco parentis.

Drawing on a legal guide published by the then BACP41, Lines discusses the implications for counsellors employed on teachers’ contracts and conditions of service who are legally bound to give information about pupils collected during counselling to the head teacher if the head teacher insists, though Casemore (1995) says that it would be ‘most unwise and unreasonable’ of a head teacher to breach confidentiality unless a child could be at risk of harm or there were child abuse or other serious issues, and the BACP (2001a) urge common sense and a consideration of what is ‘in the interests of the child’ (p 15). Lines goes on to describe some possible and potentially difficult considerations relating to areas such as infringements of school rules and underage sexual behaviour.

The legal situation is complex and open to interpretation, and the importance of negotiation and clarification before a service is established is clear. What is not discussed in the literature covered in the review is the additional complexity that may be involved for an external organisation providing a counselling service. While it may go against the grain for a counsellor employed directly by a school to find they have the same status in relation to confidentiality as teachers and other staff, at least they know where they stand. However, counsellors employed by an external organisation, who may well be working in several schools, will be subject to different policies and procedures in each school. Unfortunately, there is no hard and current data in the literature looked at for this review on the extent to which written agreements are drawn up between schools and organisations offering counselling services in school. Nor is there any information on school policies in

relation to counselling and how far BACP guidelines on confidentiality have been followed.

Specifically in relation to child protection, Relate (2001) talks of the need, when setting up a counselling service in schools, for clarification of the position taking account of both Relate’s and the school’s child protection policies. The organisation also provides guidance on circumstances when confidentiality might have to be breached, particularly in cases of suspected non-accidental injury and suspected child abuse.

The BACP (2001a) also offers guidance on child protection, with rather less emphasis than their earlier guidance (BAC, 1998) on the haziness of the position of counsellors in schools in relation to the ‘qualified duty’, under the Children Act 1989, of local authority employees ‘to assist social services in their enquiries in the case of child abuse where called upon to do so but not where doing so would be unreasonable in all the circumstances of the case’ (Children Act 1989, Section 47\(^2\)). Counsellors are advised to refer to ACPC procedures and to discuss policy and procedures with the school’s designated teacher\(^3\) as well as given up-to-date information on current legislation and practice. Mabey and Sorensen (1995) point out the variety of guidelines produced by local authorities about how much co-operation is expected and its timing. They claim that some social services departments expect information to be passed to them routinely, even though this is not required by the Act. And they say that there are also differences in the extent to which schools have confidentiality policies. Furthermore, counselling agencies vary in the level of confidentiality they keep, some contacting social services only if specifically asked to do this by the client, even in cases of abuse. Given the variety of ways in which counsellors are employed in schools, and the likely differences in agreements between counselling agencies and schools, it seems probable that there is considerable scope for uncertainty.

\(^2\) Quoted in the BACP (2001a) guidance, p 15.
\(^3\) And yet, even in the extent to which the school’s designated teacher should be involved in cases of child abuse advice varies. Dudley Education Service’s counselling service, for example, tells counsellors that they should make referrals directly to social services. Consultation with the designated teacher is mentioned only as a possibility.
The guidance also makes clear that people employed by non-statutory agencies and voluntary organisations do not have a statutory duty to report allegations of suspected or alleged child abuse. Where there are child protection concerns, it acknowledges that breaching confidentiality may be in the best interests of the child’s safety but only ‘when the counsellor has strong grounds for thinking that an individual might be at risk of significant harm from themselves or others’ (pp 16-17). And counsellors are advised to seek the advice of social services and local education authority child protection co-ordinators without revealing the name of a child about whom they have concerns in order to reach a decision that balances their responsibilities to the rights of the client and the level of risk from significant harm. If a child refuses to consent and the counsellor still believes confidentiality has to be breached, the guidance says that the counsellor should nevertheless inform the child.

In relation to experiences within schools, two issues are particularly noticeable. One is feedback to staff and the other is the extent to which concerns about confidentiality influence young people in their use of services at school.

Reference has already been made to feedback in relation to the possible conflicts that can arise when there are differing expectations by school staff and counsellors, and to the beneficial results of counsellors letting schools know about common concerns amongst pupils. With similar consequences to the earlier example, a NSPCC evaluation (1995) refers to the practice in some schools of counsellors attending pastoral meetings to let the school know of any difficulties experienced by pupils that could be dealt with through the school system. Capey (1997), in EMIE’s survey, found some concern on the part of local education authorities about the boundaries of confidentiality and a belief that there should be some feedback from counsellors to pastoral staff and cites some examples of clear guidance given by leas. One of these drew a distinction between confidentiality of information referring to individuals and statistical information for head teachers and governors. Clearly, this distinction has a long pedigree. For example, Jones (1970), while describing as ‘unethical’ a counsellor revealing what a client has said, sees no problems in counsellors communicating with teachers in

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44 See Setting up a service and What counselling is for.
general terms without breaching confidentiality. Klinefelter (1994), writing about a service set up in six schools, comments that initial concerns about staff expectations of feedback proved to be unfounded and that they had been ‘very respectful of student and family privacy’ (p 216).

On pupils’ views about counselling, Mabey and Sorensen (1995) refer to a piece of research that found young people’s biggest concern in educational establishments was confidentiality. On the other hand, Jackson and Parnham (1996), in an evaluation of a NSPCC counselling service in two comprehensive schools found that pupils were not at all concerned about peers knowing that they were using the service but were concerned about confidentiality in relation to the content of sessions. The authors also warned that issues of confidentiality should not be dismissed because they could be a factor in some pupils not using the service. A survey (Baginsky, 2003b) of 1569 pupils between 11 and 18, from four secondary and three special schools with counselling services in Northern Ireland, suggested that fears about confidentiality were not necessarily a major factor in preventing young people from seeing a counsellor in school, but they did account for many concerns about the nature of the relationship between counsellor and client. It also seemed that other responses masked concerns about confidentiality. However, an evaluation of the counselling services in the same schools in Northern Ireland found that young people valued the confidentiality offered (Burnison, 2003).

Consent, referrals and appointments

Jackson and Parnham (1996), in an evaluation of counselling services provided by the NSPCC in two comprehensive schools, found ‘overwhelming evidence’ (p 32)

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46 Pupils were asked if they would see a counsellor if they needed help. Of the 1569 young people who responded 336 (21.4%) said no. Respondents were invited to give reasons, in their own words, for their answers and up to two reasons per pupil were recorded. Only 16 pupils wrote of concerns about confidentiality. The biggest single reason was that they would talk first to someone they knew or would not want to talk to stranger (n = 116). Other responses were related to not wishing to discuss personal problems, and shyness or embarrassment (n = 71). And some responded that they would want to sort out problems themselves (n = 23). Only nine answered that they would not be sure they could trust the counsellor, and the same number that others would make fun of them or pick on them or they would feel embarrassed if others found out they were seeing a counsellor. Asked to
that school is an excellent place for counselling because young people do not have to explain at home where they are going when they attend sessions. Dennison (1998), in an evaluation of a service for six secondary schools, found evidence that some children were put off from counselling where one of the schools required specific parental consent rather than where, as was the case in the other five schools, parents were simply informed of the existence of the service and could opt out if they wished. As with so much else on counselling in schools, the issue of consent is complex, not least in relation to the legal aspects.

There are therefore numerous references in the literature to the Gillick case\textsuperscript{47}. Bor et al. (2002) say that the law has sought to find a balance between the self-determination and protection of young people, and that this case leaned towards the first of these while some judgements subsequently leaned towards the second. As a result there is some uncertainty for counsellors. However, they argue that a counsellor ‘who can demonstrate having made a conscientious decision in the best interest of the young person concerned is much better placed legally than someone who adopts an inflexible stance favouring either self-determination or protection’ (p 122). For young people between 16 and 18, the situation is straightforward because they are usually deemed to be capable of making a decision about whether or not to undertake medical treatment and confidential counselling without reference to a parent (Bor et al., 2002; Lines, 2002). The House of Lords ruled, in the Gillick case, that a GP has the right to give contraceptive advice to young people under 16 without parental permission if the young person wants the advice. However, the GP is required to balance the protective wishes of the parent and the consequences of informed consent measured by the age, intelligence and maturity of the child (Lines, 2002). The \textit{Gillick test} is whether the child or young person has ‘sufficient understanding and intelligence’ to receive confidential counselling (Bor et al., 2002). Bor et al. (2002) also explain some of the complexities of Lord Scarman’s decision in this case and the different view regarding parental rights taken by Lord Fraser in the same case.

\footnote{\textit{Gillick v West Norfolk and Wisbech Area Health Authority [1985] 3 All ER 402 (HL).}}
The element of subjectivity involved in applying the Gillick test would suggest that guidelines for counsellors and schools are essential and that these would need to be part of any agreement between them on setting up a service. There are few guidelines in the literature covered for this review. One exception is a leaflet produced by the service run by Dudley Education Department. This states simply that schools are responsible for obtaining parental consent but no further guidance or explanation is offered in the leaflet. Another is a section in the BACP guidance (2001a). Here counsellors are advised that they need ‘to consider how they can substantiate their assessment of “understanding and intelligence” with reference to ‘appropriate theory and practice’ (p 13). However, no details are provided of what might constitute ‘appropriate theory and practice’. More specifically, counsellors should ‘consider the age and developmental stage of the young person, the nature of the problem, their ability to act autonomously and acceptable precedents within society’ and they may have to consult line management and school staff. The guidance also states that below 13 most children would not be considered Gillick competent and that circumstances, such as extreme stress and drug abuse, may affect an older child’s competence. The guidance makes a helpful distinction between the situation in primary schools and secondary schools. In the former parental consent is the norm other than in cases of alleged abuse by a parent or guardian. In secondary schools levels of confidentiality related to the age of the child are more likely, as an acknowledgement of the growing independence of the child. The guidance also makes the point that the Gillick Principle applies to attendance at counselling not to the content, which remains confidential.

In *Models of school counselling services*, earlier in the review, the question of whether referrals derive predominantly from the school or from young people themselves was raised, together with what the answer says about the principal purpose of a counselling service - to support individuals in need of help or the school in dealing with problematic behaviour (Baginsky, 2003a)? In view of the value attached by counsellors to the relationship between counsellor and client it is not surprising to find support for the voluntary nature of counselling, the importance of a system of self-referral and a clear route to the counsellor (see, for example, Dennison, 1998). Jones (1970) designed her own service to encourage self-referrals, even though it meant that not everyone who needed help received it, because she believed that effective counselling depends on the willing co-
operation of the client. Dudley Education Department’s counselling service leaflet makes it clear that referrals can be made by school staff, parents or pupils but that seeing the counsellor is voluntary. The BACP (2001a) guidance also says that pupils have the right to refuse or discontinue counselling at any time.

From the point of view of pupils themselves, there does not appear to be very much evidence available. From the little there is, for example Baginsky (2003b) the means of referral was mentioned by only four pupils (out of 403 who said improvements could be made to the service), though some comments were made about alternative means of contacting the counsellor that would avoid others, both pupils and staff, knowing. The BACP (2001a) guidance does acknowledge such concerns and recommends that the appointments system should be ‘discreet’ while at the same time recognising that there may be certain constraints within schools.

Evaluation

The dearth of research into counselling young people is acknowledged in the literature together with a recognition of the importance of evaluating the process - and some of the difficulties of doing so - and the effectiveness of particular services.

Proctor (1993), on counselling as a therapy, comments that the scarce research available ‘continues to show that effectiveness depends on the “who” who does it more than the “what” that is done. Rogers’ (1961) ingredients for a good enough counsellor - respectfulness, warmth, genuineness, and the ability to convey accurate empathy - have yet to be disproved’ (p 10). The identical conclusion, that what is significant is the quality of the counselling relationship rather than the particular approach to counselling, is drawn by Mosley (1993) and McGuiness (1998).

However, Squires (2001) claims that cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) can have a significant effect on the self-control and classroom behaviour of pupils with low-frequency behavioural difficulties in Years 5 to 8. And King and Kellock (2002) cite several studies reporting the effectiveness of solution-focused brief therapy. Mabey
and Sorensen (1995) comment that the lack of research on youth counselling has a damaging effect on services. Without research, they say, ‘services are inevitably destined to be inadequate and competent research will fall by the wayside’ (p 120). They identify the views of young people themselves as an area that is particularly lacking. Le Surf et al. (1999) similarly comment on the small amount of research on young people’s perceptions and experiences of counselling, as well as on the evaluation of the provision and practice of counselling.

At the same time, those who provide counselling services in schools seem to recognise the need for evaluation, and are aware of the difficulties of doing this effectively. Capey (1997) reports on four accounts of evaluation from local education authorities received in response to the EMIE survey. One of these was from Dudley Education Department, whose long-standing counselling service is referred to elsewhere in this review. Their response included the statement that further thought was needed about the means to evaluate their service. One of the areas of difficulty they identified was how to access, without breaking the boundaries of confidentiality in the relationship, the subjective nature of the experience of counselling. This issue is also referred to by Dunne et al. (2000). Their paper on work with adolescent males was based on subjective data from counsellors and clients with no observers’ perspective. They warn that although ‘The assumption in all research using participant data is that the participants are able and willing to report accurately on their experiences’ (p 89) this may not be the case.

The main features of Dudley’s evaluations at the time they responded to the EMIE survey (Capey, 1997) were feedback from clients, parents, teachers and head teachers; statistics on the number of clients seen and categories of referral; periodic checks by the counsellor on clients’ progress at school; session notes and emerging issues; and confidential supervision of counsellors. How the last item particularly fed into evaluation without breaching confidentiality is unclear. Capey also includes information about a NSPCC project in Bristol with an evaluation report commissioned in 1995. The features included the numbers and groups of service users, categories of presenting problems and ‘qualitative outcomes’ that incorporated evaluations by pupils, schools and other services. Another response was from Canterbury and Thanet Counselling Service who used questionnaires,
designed by the University of Kent, for pupils at the end of counselling with questions on waiting times, facilities, the counsellor’s approach, and changes experienced as a result of counselling.

Bor et al. (2002) devote an entire chapter to evaluating counselling in schools. Its importance is related to accountability to funders and ensuring the service fits the needs of the school population, and they argue that it is good counselling practice for counsellors to set up their own evaluations. They give examples of the kinds of information that might be collected routinely, like presenting problems, frequency of sessions and the time between referral and appointment. And they suggest non-routine projects that might look at trends or the maintenance of standards or the relationship between different aspects of the service. They include a questionnaire that could be used to gauge client satisfaction with questions about publicity and the referral process, practical issues, and the process of treatment. They also look at questions about outcome and examples of studies and papers used in other health services for the evaluation of client satisfaction. Finally, the chapter includes ten steps that counsellors might use to set up their own research, relevant specifically to counsellors.

The BACP (2001a) guidance assumes the importance of evaluation by, for example, including in a sample information sheet the statement that the service will be evaluated regularly. And a specimen evaluation questionnaire for clients includes 15 statements about the client’s feelings in relation to the counsellor, how the counsellor behaved towards the client and what has been achieved, their satisfaction, and practical matters such as access to the counsellor and timings of appointments. The client is asked to respond on a six-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

There has been some attempt to address the lack of attention to the views and perceptions of young people themselves mentioned earlier in this section. Le Surf et al. (1999) looked at this in terms of attitudes and beliefs that may make young people less willing to use a counselling service, though their study was not specifically about school counselling, and the young people interviewed were in their upper teens. Among their findings, the researchers reported that in groups young people tended to be more accepting of counselling as an option for people
who needed help than when they were interviewed on their own. They also found, much like MacLeod and Barter (1996) on ChildLine, referred to in *Context - other services for young people*, that many young people expected negative responses if they disclosed a problem to an adult and were concerned about confidentiality and loss of control over what would happen. There was confusion about the process of counselling and a stigma associated with receiving counselling. The young people they spoke to wanted a service to be in a discrete location, accessible, flexible and informal, to see the same counsellor on different occasions and preferably someone they already knew in another context. One of the authors’ recommendations is that publicity about counselling should take into account that for most young people the choice of whether to seek counselling is neither a straightforward nor an easy decision.

Another study (Baginsky, 2003b), referred to elsewhere in this review, collected the views of 1569 secondary age pupils, in seven schools with counselling services provided by the NSPCC in Northern Ireland. Pupils responded to written questionnaires. The report includes a discussion of the pitfalls of collecting views in this way, but the survey did have the advantage of relatively wide coverage in terms of numbers of young people and schools. The results showed a high level of knowledge about the service but a substantial minority (13 per cent) did not know about it, and many more of these were boys. This is a recurring theme, with further references at the end of this section. The significance of publicising the service effectively was highlighted by a wide variation between schools (3.7 per cent to 16.8 per cent in the mainstream schools) of pupils who did not know about the service. The responses also illustrated that pupils themselves are potentially a valuable resource. Many commented on the importance of publicity, not least in relation to access. They also made practical suggestions about how to raise awareness. In relation to valuing the service, 88 per cent of the pupils thought that a school counselling service was at least *useful*. However, like the young people in Le Surf’s study, a substantial number (13 per cent) clearly thought it was useful for others rather than themselves. Nevertheless, this did mean that just over 75 per cent of the respondents indicated that seeing a counsellor was a possibility for them if they had a problem.
Warm’s (2002) preliminary evaluation report focuses on young people after using the Relateen counselling service in Relate Centres and five schools. With part of the questionnaire similar to the BACP’s sample questionnaire described above, and part of it a follow up questionnaire on feelings, Warm reports consistent trends that users found the service worthwhile and beneficial and that there was strong agreement with items relating to the therapeutic value of sessions. With a warning that this could not be taken as evidence of causality, the evaluator reported respondents feeling less worried, angry and confused following counselling, and were generally happier and more positive about the future. Sherry (1999), in an evaluation for Dudley Education Department covering 16 secondary schools where the counselling service was operating, found that 80 per cent of respondents reported ‘significant improvements in their situation as a direct result of counselling’ (p 45) but a small number who had felt the counselling process to be intrusive. Sherry speculates that this last experience may be more likely if the counselling came about as a result of referral by someone else.

There is very little reference in the literature covered for the review on issues related to ethnicity, which is a serious deficiency, not least if a case is to be made for the availability of counselling as an entitlement. There is more, though still not a great deal, on differences in attitude - and use of - counselling by girls and boys. An evaluation for the NSPCC (1995) found that the ratio of girls to boys was 2.6 to 1. In another (NSPCC, 1998) it was 4 to 1. The evaluator speculates whether this was partly related to the counsellor being female but reports another service with a male counsellor where the ratio was 13 to 1 in favour of girls. Warm (2002) reports that twice as many females as males accessed the Relateen service, and comments that this is consistent with the ratio for adults. In terms of attitudes, Le Surf et al. (1999) found that both males and females in their later teens had negative attitudes towards discussing difficulties with others, but young men found it much harder. MacLeod and Barter (1996), on the experience of ChildLine and other help lines, comment that boys are far less likely to seek help, even with problems that affect boys more than girls, such as physical abuse, bullying and homelessness. There is only one area where calls from boys predominate - abusing other children. Unlike girls, boys frequently said they feared being seen as weak

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48 See CIE (Counselling in Education) on the BACP website.
and useless if they talked about their real feelings and boys felt they should be able to handle problems. Very similarly, Le Surf et al. (1999) reported responses from young men to the effect that discussing difficulties would result in others thinking they were weak and lacking in manhood. Unusually, Dunne et al. (2000) found the young males of 14 to 18 in their study rated highly the opportunity to talk about problems and feelings. The authors surmise that this may be related to the context, which was an all-boys school.

Conclusion
Having had mixed fortunes since its introduction in the 1960s, school counselling seems again to be in the ascendant. The increase in counselling services may be one of the ways some schools are demonstrating that addressing the emotional needs of children and young people is as important as raising standards, and that academic achievement can be dependent on successfully attending to those needs. It is certain that many children and young people need emotional support in addition to, or aside from, what is given by family and friends, and that much of that need is unmet. It is equally certain that many young clients, counsellors, teachers and parents are positive about the benefits of counselling in school.

What is less certain, or rather less agreed upon, is what counselling in schools is. Although distinctions are made between counselling skills and counselling, the term counselling is used to cover a range of activities, some of which professional counsellors would not recognise as counselling at all, particularly if carried out by someone whose role is also a teacher. Even within professional counselling there is little consideration, in the literature covered for this review, of the relationship between counselling and the age of the child or young person, of activities that might be used with younger children that can be considered counselling rather than some other kind of therapeutic intervention. There also seems to be little available and meaningful outside the subjective views of those involved personally or professionally, important as those views are, to evaluate the effectiveness of services and the impact they make on the lives of those who use them. These points are likely to have a bearing on other issues raised in the literature such as: the extent to which counselling is carried out by appropriately trained and
experienced professionals, and how far agreements and policies conform to BACP standards, about which there is little information; the counsellor’s relationship with, and role within, the school; and securing and maintaining funding. Further discussion and information on these issues and others mentioned in the review, such as ethnicity and gender, would surely be useful to all those involved in counselling in schools.
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This Information Briefing is based on a review of research and literature. It reports the findings and views of a range of authors. These views are not necessarily the views of the NSPCC.