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Author(s): Linda Bassett

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**YOUNG PEOPLES' PERCEPTIONS OF
THEIR EXPERIENCE OF COUNSELLING IN
A SCHOOL SETTING: A QUALITATIVE
STUDY.**

**Dissertation submitted to the University of
Liverpool for the degree of Master of Arts
(Counselling Studies) in part fulfilment of the
modular programme in Counselling Studies.
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ABSTRACT.

This study examines young peoples' experiences of counselling in a school setting. Five young people who received counselling in their school were interviewed individually and their responses analysed using the constant comparative method. The results highlight four particular areas that would be helpful to address if a school were considering setting up a counselling service. The findings emphasise the importance young people place on autonomy around the disclosure of the fact they are attending counselling, as well as the actual content of counselling sessions. They suggest that many young people would prefer to have counselling in their school, rather than at another venue. The young people interviewed identify certain qualities in the counsellor that facilitate an effective counselling relationship, and finally how many of their peers were unaware of the nature and existence of a counselling service in their school. The relevance of the outcomes to the effective counselling of young people are discussed.

DECLARATION.

This work is original and has not been submitted previously in support of any qualification course.

Linda Bassett.

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Professor Mick Cooper has been brilliant – many thanks for his support. Also Janette Newton and Mary Baginsky for their time, advice and direction.

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List of Abbreviations.

BACP	British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.
BJGC	British Journal of Guidance and Counselling.
CCYP	Counselling Children and Young People.
CPJ	Counselling and Psychotherapy Journal.
CPR	Counselling and Psychotherapy Research.
DfES	Department for Education and Science.
IPR	Interpersonal Process Recall.
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.
TES	Times Educational Supplement.

Chapter 1 - Introduction.

The completion of this dissertation comes at a most significant point in the history and development of services for children and young people. From 1st April 2006, all Local Authorities were encouraged to have a Director of Childrens' Services in place (compulsory by April 2008). The role is to co-ordinate and be responsible for the services available to support and protect children and young people.

New legislation, created in response to "Every Child Matters" (Department for Education and Science DfES 2003), is contained in the Childrens' Act 2004 (DfES 2004a), and brings together for the first time education, social services and health. "A National Framework for Change" (DfES 2004b) underpins the Act and calls for: "... *listening to children, young people and their families when assessing and planning service provision*" (p4).

This set the agenda for the research I proposed to carry out. I intended to give young people who use a counselling service in their school the opportunity to comment on its effectiveness. I used structured interviews to gain this data and then categorised the comments to inform an objective discussion.

My aim was to give young people a voice, a chance to speak out about what is helpful and unhelpful in a School Counselling Service. As Howe (1993, p7) in his seminal work, *On Being a Client*, states:

... there is something fundamentally important in hearing what people in therapy have to say about their experience. Their point of view is peculiarly important in helping us gain a thorough understanding of the therapeutic relationship.

The National Office of Statistics "Mental Health of children and young people in Great Britain 2004" presents some worrying statistics, notably 10% of young people have a mental disorder (quoted in Counselling Children and Young People CCYP Autumn 2005, p27). The National Society for the Prevention of

Cruelty to Children (NSPCC 2004) in their document “Someone to turn to?” calls for independent counselling to be available in every school. It reports that almost half (47%) of the young people interviewed (750 11 – 16 year olds) were worried about not having someone to share their problems with.

When completed I will share my findings with relevant personnel in schools and also with officers of the Local Authority. It may be helpful in facilitating a better understanding of the need for counsellors in schools. A recent discussion with Mick Cooper (07/10/06) revealed that this is what he is hoping to do in Scotland through the Scottish Executive, and nationally through the DfES.

The researcher.

The researcher is a Behaviour Outreach Teacher and counsellor employed by a special school, working in 8 mainstream schools, with a brief to support young people and staff in dealing with social, emotional and behavioural issues (see Appendix 1). She gained a Diploma in Counselling in 1995, and from 2000 to date provides counselling for young people in mainstream schools. An inherent belief in the ability of young people to articulate what is right for them led to the decision to carry out this work.

Chapter 2 - Review of the literature.

Introduction.

There is a paucity of research on counselling young people, particularly any that consults the service users (Baginsky 2004, p39). The lack of existing research gives justification to my work. I will use the review to identify the areas of comment made by young people and so direct my questioning effectively. This is one of nine reasons for reviewing literature outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998, p50-52).

Hart (1999) says that one of the main reasons for writing a review is to make a proposal for the research you intend to do. My proposal involves asking young people what they think about the counselling they received in their school.

McLeod (2001b, p4) states that:

Qualitative research which gives clients a 'voice', which allows their experiences and life stories to be documented, is therefore invaluable to the smooth, efficient and humane running of human services agencies.

I felt it was important to carry out my literature review before consulting the young people. Edited sections of my Research Diary appear as Appendix 2 to enable the reader to examine the process of this review.

Background.

Counsellors in schools are not a new initiative, they have been around in the United States of America since 1898. In the United Kingdom, the Newsome Report of 1963 recommended their employment and in 1965 Keele University established a course for teachers with 5 years experience to train as counsellors. However, funding has always been an issue and despite impetus from the Childrens' Act 1989, the availability of counselling in schools has been limited (for a fuller discussion see Bor et al 2002, p2-3).

Since the 1990's behavioural issues have been high on the educational agenda, although in the light of "Every Child Matters", the emotional health and well-

being of young people is again being emphasised. In 2005 Margaret Hodge, the then Childrens' Minister, said that psychological counselling should be available in all schools. It is interesting to note that the Times Educational Supplement (TES) selected "Counselling" as its 'whole-school issue' in the March 24th 2006 edition. The following week it was to feature "Numeracy". This perhaps gives some indication of counselling's prominence at the moment.

Relevant texts on Counselling in Schools.

Counselling in schools has seen a significant resurgence in the last few years, in the main due to funding streams from the DfES aimed at including all pupils in mainstream schools. In recognition of this growth, there has been a complimentary increase in the texts around this subject – British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP 2001, 2002a and 2006); Barwick (Ed 2000); Bor et al (2002); Daniels and Jenkins (2000); Geldard and Geldard (1997); Lines (2002); Redgrave (2000); Selekman (1997) and Varma (Ed 1997) are some of those I have found useful. None of these really address issues from the young persons' perspective; they are more guides for professionals in how to manage a counselling service and strategies in how to help young people. Bor et al (2002, p119) do acknowledge the need for research, although their chapter only, "... serves to introduce counsellors to service-related research and the pleasures (and challenges) associated with this."

BACP has been active in supporting rigorous counselling services in schools and has produced "Guidelines for Counselling in Schools" (2002a) and "Good Practice Guidelines for Counselling in Schools" (2001 3rd ed and 2006 4th ed). Both publications outline the desirable qualifications and qualities of school counsellors and offer guidelines on setting up school counselling services.

My research question focuses on what young people who have had counselling think about it. It will also be useful to examine studies which have investigated adult perceptions of counselling.

Studies that use clients as respondents.

David Rennie (1998) based his approach to Person-centred Counselling on his research – his book is a unique insight into a theory informed by clients' experience. Rennie uses the method of Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) to collect clients' accounts of their experiences in therapy. He plays the respondents tapes of their therapy sessions and then stops the tape and asks open-ended questions to assist the client in remembering what they were experiencing during the session. McLeod (2001, p88) promotes Rennie's work as exemplary, “ ... *a jewel in the crown of qualitative psychotherapy research*”. Rennie (2001, p83) says:

When clients are consulted about what it is like to be in counselling and psychotherapy, they have many wonderful things to say.

Rennie (2001, p87) also highlights how both clients and counsellors withhold their experiences and this leads to misunderstanding. If the efficacy of therapy is to improve, both parties need to be more open and honest, “ ... *the unspoken is revealed*” – something that this type of research facilitates.

Millar (2002, p137) presents clients' experiences of an in-house police counselling service and comments that:

... the majority reported that they had not only been helped to resolve their presenting problems, but had also made important gains in self awareness and work effectiveness.

Like Rennie's work this study illustrates how much the client perspective has to contribute to the on-going development of counselling. It is only by asking them that we gain this insight.

Paulson, Everall and Stuart (2001) present client perceptions of hindering experiences in counselling. They say (p53):

Clients' perceptions offer a valuable contribution concerning our understanding of the therapy process, particularly since they often differ from the counsellors' perceptions.

There is much we can learn from our clients, particularly if we can remove the power differential highlighted by Rennie (2001, p84) which may result in clients not being honest.

Studies on Counselling Young People.

Le Surf (1997), Le Surf and Lynch (1999) and Everall and Paulson (2002) were the only specific papers I found in 2002 involving young peoples' perceptions of counselling. None of them focused on a school setting. Kadzin (2000) put forward a model for carrying out research without providing any actual findings. However, these studies are useful as they 'flag up' what is important to young people. They place great emphasis on the openness of the counsellor and the way she relates to them. Mearns highlights this when he is talking to Sue McGinnis (2001) about training counsellors for working with young people.

BACP commissioned "Research on counselling children and young people: a systematic scoping review" (Harris, 2004). The report is driven by the question: "Is counselling effective for children and young people?" For my purpose, the findings are rather disappointing. They look more at which particular therapy is most successful with a range of issues that affect children and young people, for instance: depression; anxiety; self-harm; sexual abuse; conduct disorders. As it says in the report (Harris 2004, p45), the majority of the studies included are concerned with children with high levels of dysfunction. It states there is a lack of empirical evidence about the work done with children with less severe symptoms – such as those who would receive counselling in a school setting. The report does not examine work involving the perspectives of young people, stating that such reports "... lack the rigour for inclusion" (p45). As Harris says in her final thoughts (p46) "... a qualitative element such as pre- and post-intervention

interviews may help develop an in-depth understanding of key factors involved in effectiveness ...” This is what Relate (2004) did when they evaluated their counselling service for young people.

Counselling Young People in Schools.

As there has been an increase in interest in counselling young people in schools over the last 3 years, I decided to contact the relevant agencies involved in this to ascertain what they have found out. Valuable support has been offered by 3 leading experts in the field: Mary Baginsky, Senior Research Officer at the NSPCC; Professor Mick Cooper of the University of Strathclyde; and Janette Newton, Head of the Dudley Counselling Service for Children and Young People. Baginsky (2004) produced a most useful review of Counselling in Schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for the NSPCC and cites many of the documents I have examined. His main conclusions are around the need for further research into exactly what counselling in schools means - he reports a vast difference in perceptions of different groups.

There is very little mention of the actual opinions of the young people in this review. Mabey and Sorensen (1995) are quoted by Baginsky (2004, p40) as saying that without research, “... *services are inevitably destined to be inadequate*”. They go on to say that research into the views of young people themselves are particularly lacking.

Since 2002, several ‘landmark’ studies on counselling young people in schools have been published, (Fox and Butler, 2003; Baginsky, 2003; Burnison, 2003 and Cooper, 2004). I have also received work from Relate and the Dudley Counselling Service.

The research design of Cooper’s project is pluralistic in that it combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies from multiple perspectives (as recommended by Harris, 2004 p46), ie using a psychometric measure and post-

counselling satisfaction questionnaires with clients; interviews with clients, guidance teachers and counsellors; guidance teacher questionnaires; and a school wide questionnaire to develop a wider understanding of how pupils across the schools perceived counselling. The findings will be discussed later.

The NSPCC evaluation carried out by Fox and Butler (2003) is similar in its pluralistic methodology, although it takes a much wider view of counselling support to schools. The NSPCC teams provide more than 1:1 counselling, and the groupwork, peer support schemes, circle time and input to Personal, Social and Health Education are also investigated resulting in a much larger study. Unlike Cooper's (2004) study, not all the respondents had actually had counselling.

Cooper (2004) and Fox and Butler (2003) both use Teen-CORE version 1 pre and post counselling with some of their respondents. Teen-CORE is a psychometric test used to measure psychological health and Cooper (2004, p27) reports it has "... *sufficient levels of internal reliability*" and showed decreased levels of psychological distress in the sample. The NSPCC was not so secure in its use due to the much larger nature of their study and having less control over who it was given to. What the measure does not indicate is what actually brought about the improvement in psychological well-being.

The NSPCC in Northern Ireland selected to commission 2 separate, and yet complementary, studies to evaluate the counselling services provided there. Burnison (2003) focused on qualitative methods and interviewed pupils, principals, teachers, counsellors and external support personnel including NSPCC managers. Baginsky (2003) used questionnaires to capture the views of pupils and school staff. He reported concerns over the administration of the questionnaires as it was obvious in some schools the pupils had been given guidance in their completion.

Janette Newton, the Head of Dudley Counselling Service for Children and Young People, provided well documented evidence of the rigorous nature of the service, including a study done by Sherry (1999). This did focus on young people who had received counselling. He used semi-structured interviews with self-nominated interviewees, and questionnaires were completed by 174 service users (a response rate of 38%). The overall findings show an 80% satisfaction rate with the service, “... *the great majority of clients reporting significant improvements in their situations as a direct result of counselling*” (Sherry, 1999). The figure is almost identical to Cooper’s finding (79% overall satisfaction).

The quantitative data is interesting, and yet what I am more drawn to is what the young people actually say when they are given the opportunity to speak. 1. Le Surf (1997), 2. Sherry (1999), 3. Fox and Butler (2003), 4. Burnison (2003), 5. Baginsky, W (2003), 6. Relate (2004) and 7. Cooper (2004), all present relevant comments made by the young people. I have tried to categorise the responses in order to direct my own line of research (see table 1).

Issues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Presenting problems		*	*	*	*		
Counselling process		*	*			*	*
The counsellor	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Referral	*	*		*			*
Duration		*					*
Endings		*					
Improvements	*	*		*	*	*	*
Expectations	*						*
Confidentiality	*		*	*	*		*
Location	*					*	*
Promotion of service	*		*		*		*

Table 1. Issues investigated in the studies reviewed.

Many of the studies reviewed are evaluations of existing services, often carried out to justify continued funding. These provide useful insights into pupil perceptions, although unlike Le Surf (1997) and Pope’s (2002) studies they do not address the “what if” question. These 2 studies, which are not school based,

were investigating what young people would look for in a counselling service “if” one were available. The NSPCC study combines both strategies as it consults on both “what would you want from a counselling service?” and “how has this counselling service helped you?”

A few words on adolescence.

Before going any further I feel it is important to set my client group in context. The world of the adolescent is a confusing one for all involved. Erikson’s (1963) classic text names this life stage “identity v. role confusion”, and describes adolescence as a “*moratorium, a psychosocial stage between childhood and adulthood*”. Canham and Youell (2000, p14) describe it as: “... *a kind of assault course with physical, psychological and emotional obstacles to be negotiated*”. Jacobs (1998, p87) says:

What in the adult could be indications of the manic-depressive personality, in the young person might be normal mood swings.

He goes on to say that fluidity and adapting to change are factors that predispose adolescents to successful counselling, “... *since they are less tied by conventions, permanent relationships and fixed attitudes*”.

Geertjens and Waaldijk (1998, p159 – 175) present a thesis on working with adolescents. They put forward 3 stages of adolescent development. Although a useful format, it is important to remember that adolescents develop at different rates – this can often be the reason for their distress. It is vital the therapist remembers the self-concept is still in the making, and that they can provide an influential model in how to manage emotions and relationships.

Lines (2002, p54) examines “*good enough*” parenting and states there are 3 psychological necessities needed to develop a positive self-concept: affection and protection, realistic expectations and a predictable environment. He quotes research carried out in Dallas that identified the following factors contributing to

effective parenting: a positive and friendly attitude; parents with emotional independence providing both intimacy and separateness; a family based on strong and equal coalition; firm boundaries, applied consistently and with consultation; free and open communication; and finally acceptance and an ability to cope with change.

Rather a tall order when, as Lines goes on to say: “... *some parents fail even to look after themselves, let alone their children.*” It is my experience that the majority of pupils presenting for counselling do so because of inadequate parenting and the consequences of that. Goleman (1995, p228) is talking about therapy in adulthood when he says:

Much psychotherapy is, in a sense, a remedial tutorial for what was skewed or missed completely earlier in life.

Social, cultural and gender factors are interdependent in the world of the adolescent. Lines (2002, p46) describes adolescence as a cultural phenomenon rather than a biological stage on the way to adulthood. The peer pressure exerted on adolescents is huge – they have to conform to what is deemed to be the norm, or be excluded from the group. I have found that certain groups have their own language (and the counsellor needs to know it), and they have their own codes of conduct. Groups are sometimes gender exclusive, sometimes mixed – and there is always a sense of belonging. Great for those who belong; not so great for those who do not fit in. It is helpful for the counsellor and the researcher who are going to work with young people to know “the way it is”.

Conclusion.

By reviewing the literature, some of the questions the research seeks to answer have been discussed. This is particularly the case with Cooper’s (2004) study. Professor Cooper has provided encouragement for continuing with the study as it could provide further evidence to support his findings.

What the literature review has helped to clarify is the areas of questioning that would be most relevant in my interviews. My experience of working with young people over many years has raised my awareness of the need to focus the questioning appropriately and so facilitate effective enquiry.

Chapter 3 – Research design and methodology.

Introduction.

I have listened to, and read about quantitative research – ‘old paradigm’. As a counsellor interested in the human perspective, and wanting to do an in-depth examination of young peoples’ perceptions, I am not setting out to prove a hypothesis or establish an ultimate truth. My aim is to facilitate participants’ ability to report on their thoughts, feelings and experiences of counselling. The objective tests, rating scales and self-report questionnaires of the quantitative approach are not applicable. McLeod’s (1998) description of quantitative research involving measurable variables and provable propositions with the researcher taking a detached and objective role does not seem to fit. Qualitative methodology would seem to be more useful, focusing as it does on peoples’ experience. Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p21) state:

The goal of qualitative research is to discover patterns which emerge after close observation, careful documentation, and thoughtful analysis of the research topic.

My research design has been informed by the grounded theory model, although it does not adhere fully to it. Unlike Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) recommendation to do this after data collection, I have already examined the existing literature, in fact my interview schedule is based on that of Cooper’s (2004) study. I have interviewed 5 young people, whereas Strauss and Corbin (1998) recommend at least 8.

The “Constant Comparative” method outlined by Maykut and Morehouse (1994) fits well with the aims of my study and that of qualitative research in general as outlined by McLeod (2001, p3) in that it “... seeks to describe, analyse and interpret the world-view, experiences and language of a sample of people who represent that category”. The category in my case being young people who have had counselling in their school.

Both Maykut and Morehouse (1994) and Strauss and Corbin (1998) promote the concept of immersion or indwelling – immersing oneself in the data in order to truly appreciate what the respondents are saying. Such “indwelling” is in line with person-centred therapy, the basis of my counselling work. Like the person-centred therapist, the qualitative researcher must put their perspective to one side if they are not to influence the participants’ response.

Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p123) highlight this makes the qualitative researchers’ position a paradoxical one. On the one hand we have to be “acutely tuned-in” to the experience of the respondents; and yet at the same time be aware of how our own biases may contribute to our understanding. The process of “epoche” (p123) helps the researcher to “... *investigate the phenomenon from a fresh and open view without prejudgement or imposing meaning too soon*”.

My work would seem to sit very well with the aims and objectives of Counselling and Psychotherapy Research (BACP) – “... *to promote research that is reflexive, contextualised and practitioner-orientated.*” It would be of use to other counsellors of young people and help to bridge the research-practice gap highlighted by McLeod (1999, p6 and 2001c, p3). McLeod (2001a, p41) supports the value of research into the client’s experience of therapy and calls for an up to date review of the literature.

Sample and access.

When I originally planned this research in 2002, I was working as a counsellor in my own school and intended to interview past clients. I presented the work of Etheridge (1996, 2001a and b) to justify this and answer any ethical questions. When my employment situation changed, I was able to review this proposal. My new position as a Behaviour Outreach Teacher has enabled me to build up a professional relationship with other schools. In 2 schools, a Counselling Service is provided (this unfortunately means that within the Authority there are 16

schools where one is not), so I now had access to young people who have been counselled in a school, and not by me.

I approached the administrators of the services and introduced the concept of my research. In both cases they agreed, together with the counsellors, to approach young people who might be willing to be involved in the research (for more details on the ethical considerations see p20). I was very much in their hands as far as the selection of respondents were concerned. However, I identified certain criteria, ie the young person had now finished counselling and was in the administrator and counsellor's opinion, suitable for interviewing.

My respondents were all at the older end of adolescence (2x16 and 1x17 year old male and 2x18 year old female). It could be argued that they will have a more developed sense of autonomy – and yet I feel that has been a strength in eliciting their opinions.

Data collection.

In my original research proposal I intended to use a semi-structured interview schedule with 4 questions:

How did you come to use the counselling service?

How was counselling helpful?

How was counselling unhelpful?

What impact has the counselling process had on your life?

Preliminary discussion with young people and colleagues suggested this would result in a lot of “off subject” material. I needed to manage the areas of investigation without influencing the participants' response. A structured interview like the one used by Cooper (2004) seemed more useful and I gained permission to use a protocol similar to his (see Appendix 3).

Maykut and Morehouse's (1994, p68–117) "*Data Collection in the Natural Setting*" provides a good model. I viewed my participants as collaborators in the study and our interviews were "... *a conversation with a purpose*" (p79).

I met the young people in the setting where they had originally had their counselling, introduced myself and adhered carefully to the interview protocol (Appendix 4). This clearly laid out the principle of informed consent, the aims of the interview and reinforced the points contained in my original letter (Appendix 5) regarding the recording and transcribing of the interview and confidentiality. My overriding concern was to give the young people the opportunity to withdraw at any time should they so wish. Fortunately, this was not the case and the 5 interviews were completed. 3 of the 5 participants said they would like a copy of the transcript and this was provided.

Data Analysis.

My methodology here was based on Maykut and Morehouse's (1994, p126 – 147) "*Constant Comparative Method*", and that of Strauss and Corbin (1998, p93 – 99). It is an inductive method of data analysis, ie the researcher does not apply predetermined categories: rather the categories emerge from the data. As Rodgers (2002, p187) states:

The aim here is not to verify existing ideas or form new 'grand theories', but instead to generate a theory that 'fits' and is understandable to the people who work in the area being investigated.

Thus, when examining the transcriptions, I needed to put to one side the bias of the questioning and isolate each comment.

Once I had transcribed each interview, my initial plan was to make copies on coloured paper and then physically dissect them in order to facilitate categorisation. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p344 – 346) describe this as "*unitising*" the data, ie identifying "... *units of information that will, sooner or later, serve as*

the basis for defining categories". Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p31) highlight that such coding is about breaking the data apart in analytically relevant ways.

However, as I began to print off the transcriptions, I could see a more efficient way of handling the data. Rather than physically cut and paste the responses, I decided to do it electronically on the computer. Each response in the transcriptions was already coded with the gender, age, school of the participant and a number to indicate the order of the response within the interview. This would enable me to locate comments within the context of the overall interview at a later date.

I enlarged the transcriptions and highlighted each one in a different colour. I then began to paste each unit of data into a blank page. As Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p134) state:

As each new unit of meaning is selected for analysis, it is compared to all other units of meaning and subsequently grouped (categorised and coded) with similar units of meaning. If there is no similar units of meaning, a new category [or page in my case] is formed.

Thus I adapted their "*Inductive Category Coding*". As I immersed myself in the young peoples' comments and really tried to get into what they were saying, themes began to emerge, ie certain pages began to fill up with comments of a similar nature. Tentative, loose headings were initially applied.

Strauss and Corbin (1998, p136 - 7) state that conceptualising data in this way requires some degree of interpretation, and is thus a form of deduction. They say:

... whenever we conceptualise data ... we are interpreting to some degree. To us, an interpretation is a form of deduction. We are deducting what is going on based on data but also based on our reading of that data along with our assumptions about the nature of life, the literature that we carry in our heads, and the discussions that we have with our colleagues.

By using the Constant Comparative Method I believe I minimised this tendency.

I was also aware of Coffey and Atkinson's (1996, p46) concerns that coding or

unitising data can result in a loss of meaning and I constantly returned to the original transcripts to locate each data segment in its original context.

Rodgers (2002) in his excellent study of client experiences of counselling takes the concept of holding the clients' meaning one stage further by analysing the interview material directly from the audio-recordings. He used a computer program (designed for the purpose of his study) to digitise each segment of data which was then coded and categorised in a similar way to the manual system. In this way Rodgers was able to allow voice inflections, pauses and other verbal clues to form an integral part of the analysis – something the manual system does not facilitate.

The cutting and pasting facility enabled me to move segments of text quickly and easily. I spent weeks immersed in the transcriptions and themes began to consolidate. Certain categories emerged:

- The referral process.
- Confidentiality.
- The location of the counselling.
- The person of the counsellor.
- The promotion of the service within the school.
- Helpful aspects of the counselling process.
- Areas for improvement of the counselling service.
- Miscellaneous

Validity and Trustworthiness of the Research.

As a teacher and a counsellor of young people I had certain assumptions about what would be useful for clients and what would not. However, I had to put these assumptions to one side – my opinions were not what was wanted here. I needed to 'tune in' to what the young people were saying. This was not an easy task, and as Strauss and Corbin (1998) have already highlighted (see p18 above) our life

experiences do get involved. By applying the “*Constant Comparative Method*” to different segments of data I was able to minimise distortions.

Rodgers (2002, p187) argues that the researcher’s subjective involvement can be considered a strength as it offers the opportunity for new perspectives and understanding of the phenomenon. McLeod (2001) states that the researcher’s approach and experience will influence the findings. However, I do believe the data presented represents what the young people were saying. My outcome propositions emerged from their words.

I present a clear and logical audit trail as Appendix 6 in an effort to show how I carried out the study. My huge respect and admiration for the young people involved in the research cannot be ignored. My belief is that my professionalism has let their opinions come through.

Ethical Considerations.

Given the age of my potential interviewees, this was an area for particular focus. When I approached the administrators in the schools, I emphasised I needed young people who had finished their counselling work. Initially a verbal enquiry from the administrator was made to ascertain interest. I felt this would be more objective than a request from the counsellor – the client may want to please the counsellor. I also gained permission to carry out the research from the Headteacher in each school.

Obviously due to the circumstances, I had not been able to raise the idea of a post-counselling interview with the young people at the commencement of their therapy, and I appreciate the comment in Bond (2004, p13):

Seeking consent for participation in a research study at some point after the person has entered counselling or psychotherapy raises serious issues about the potential for coercion.

Once an expression of willingness to be involved was obtained, I then contacted the young people with a letter outlining my research (Appendix 5). I provided

them with a consent form and asked them to complete this as an agreement to taking part in the study. At all stages I have adhered to BACP Ethical Guidelines for Researching Counselling and Psychotherapy (Bond, 2004) and promoted a culture of informed consent.

The protection of the young people who agreed to be involved was paramount. The protocols have been strictly adhered to, and after each interview the young person was reminded the counsellors were in school should they be required.

The identities of the interviewees and their schools have been protected, and certain elements of the data have been disguised to ensure anonymity.

Limitations of the Study.

Many of the studies examined in the literature review use a variety of different research methodologies and consult other groups of people in addition to the young people. Given the size of this study, it was not feasible, or necessary, to involve other parties, for example: teachers, parents, health professionals.

I make no apologies for my focus on the young people. It was their opinions I was interested in and this, for me, was the strength of my work. As already discussed in this study, it is the opinion of the users of a service that matter most.

As I was relying on other people to identify interviewees, my sample could be deemed biased. The criteria for inclusion were that the young person had had counselling, had now finished the process and in the administrator's and counsellor's opinions would be appropriate for interviewing. Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p145) highlight how we must sample purposefully in order to work efficiently. Given the constraints of time and access, I was not able to interview a wider sample of young people who may or may not have had counselling in school. Although this might have provided a wider range of issues, it could equally have made the research project unmanageable and unwieldy.

Chapter 4 – Presentation of Data.

Introduction.

In this chapter I will present some of the comments made by the interviewees to demonstrate how I analysed the data to develop the outcome propositions. Taylor and Bogdon (1994, p134) provide a succinct definition of a proposition as “...a general statement of fact grounded in the data”. As I refined and further refined the categories, discrete statements emerged. Some provisional categories were combined with others, for example there was a close relationship between comments made about referral and confidentiality (see Appendix 7). Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p32) remind us that:

... codes are organising principles that are not set in stone. They are our own creations ... they are tools to think with. They can be expanded, changed or scrapped altogether as our ideas develop through repeated interactions with the data.

Four main outcome propositions emerged from the data. I present them in no particular order, together with excerpts from the data to illustrate their significance. The code following each excerpt represents gender (F or M), age, school and position of response in the transcript.

Outcome proposition 1. Young people place great importance on the element of choice around sharing with others the fact that they are receiving counselling.

It was not a problem to the young people in my sample that others knew they were receiving counselling, in fact they often chose to disclose this. What was important was the choice. This is also relevant to systems of referral as again young clients want to be in control of to whom, and when, they disclose the fact they are having counselling and/or what was discussed during the sessions.

Yes, there were times when I talked about the sessions with my family and my friends – and that was because I chose to – which was also about the confidentiality. (F182B22)

Yeah, I did tell my Nan what it was, but I just think that it helped that it was off my own back, and I had started it before hand. (M162A9)

Ehm, I do not know, maybe and again I think it depends on the child's preference of ehm of confidentiality because whether they think "Oh no, if it is after school people are going to know what I am up to?" My parents are going to want to know, and if their parents do not know they would have to lie to their parents to say where they were. (M162A36)

Well, from certain people it was important, like I did not want my Dad finding out. I told my Mum straight away. When they put appointment sheets in the register – you know sometimes I was not bothered - the pupils in the form found out what it was but at first I did not want them to know so my appointment sheet came in a blank envelope just with my name on. Then I could open the envelope without them seeing what it was. (M171A29)

Certain friends, close close friends. Because now I have got a group of close friends, just the lads and they all asked me how it was going. They were really supportive, but then there were others who you would call friends but you were not that close to them – you did not really say nothing to. (M171A32)

That it was confidential? Very important because I told her a lot about my close friends, and my partner, and my close family so if anybody found out about anything I would be really upset. So I would say it was majorly important that it was confidential because it was what you personally feel. It is easier to talk as well because it is like a stranger so they do not know hardly anything about you at first, so it is so much easier and they do not judge you. (F183B17)

Yeah, ehm, one of my close friends who I actually came to my counsellor for advice about. I talk to her about it. She says, "Oh, have you seen your counsellor today?" and I say "Oh, yeah". I do not tell her what we say. I say "She helped me see it from this view and that view". I never go into detail about what I have said because as my counsellor keeps it confidential, so do I. It is a 2 way thing. (F183B18)

Outcome Proposition 2. Young People are more likely to attend counselling if it is provided within their own school setting.

The written transcriptions do not do justice to the emphasis the young people put on this. In each case there was an immediate negative response to the inquiry about counselling in a non-school setting. This is where I can appreciate how helpful Rodger's (2002, p187) use of audio analysis would be.

I do not think I would have gone. No, I just liked the convenience and a surrounding that I trust. Like a doctor's surgery – I don't really feel comfortable in. It's like eh, I think I would have bottled it (laughs) if I had had to go out of school ... (F182B24)

I would not have gone, I do not think. I don't think counselling, as far as I know, I do not think it is readily advertised within your community anyway. I would not have gone. I would not have ... because at first it was a major,

like a big deal to me. I definitely would not have gone to the Doctor's and I would not have gone to a Youth Club or anything. I just would not have gone. (F183B22)

NO. Ehm, no it's probably because again I probably .. it's mad because even though I did not know my counsellor at the time, I got to know her really quick and I felt safe again because she was coming into my school. It was on my premises and she was coming to visit, and I felt safe. I suppose if I had had to go somewhere else, I'd feel, I'd feel misplaced – I feel like I wouldn't want to be there. (M162A27)

No, I do not think so. I think I would have just left it and things would have built up. But with it being in school and knowing the people involved who helped set it up, and the Pastoral Office, that felt a bit more secure. But then asking a complete stranger to do it, and then seeing another complete stranger – I think that would have put me off a bit. (M171A36)

Yes, that was in a nearby village. In fact that was a pain getting there by bus after a bit. I wish I could have just come here in dinnertime, just come and do it. (M161B34)

Outcome Proposition 3. There are certain characteristics of the counsellor and the relationship that she facilitates that young people find helpful.

a) Ability to empathise:

She really tuned in and ... (M162A20)

She just listened a lot. She is very ehm, she can empathise with me. I think sympathise is the wrong word; she can empathises with me and we have a lot in common. So ehm, she was just very compassionate as well about everything. She just really empathised with me. She put herself in my shoes which is an excellent quality. (F183B14)

b) Non-judgemental

She didn't really ask questions, she just said "if you want to say something, say it". And I would ask her opinion, and she would like kind of, kind of given it but in a way she would let me make my own decisions about things which I thought was good. (F182B11)

Oh, ehm, she was brilliant. Ehm, what I like about her a lot, is not what someone ever really done before. She took my side and she gave me like, she criticised me when I needed criticising and said I was in the wrong or whatever. (M16A20)

You feel a lot more comfortable talking to her because you know she's not going to say nothing. She is not going to judge you on anything and it's all mutual, like that ... (M162A21)

... when I was little I had to go to like this, it was like a family thing – Child and Family Services it was, with my mother. I used to hate it because it used to be like the lady that did it, ehm, she was like, she always used to take my

mother's side and shift the blame. And you know I was only little, but now I have grown up I realise she should not have done that – she should have heard both sides of the argument. That is what I like about my counsellor. (M162A28)

c) Ways forward

It is still an outsider's point of view and she helps me see things from different perspectives and occasionally I have just sat there and said, "Oh yeah, I know now ... because something has just clicked inside my head". So I find it very helpful; to say it is helpful is an understatement, I think. (F183B13)

Just to get everything out because I had so much stuff to say but found it hard to tell certain people. And then if I was in a room like this with a counsellor then I got told how to think about it in different ways. (M171A12)

When I had finished it had really, really helped. What happened was it brought me back to where I was before everything had happened. And then made me think about the bad things in a good way. So that if I was down, I was thinking about the good times instead of the bad times which made me have like a laugh, memories and stuff. (M171A20)

It was just looking at the problems, I could not see where the problems were coming from and what to do about it. So I found out the cause and she suggested some ways of getting around it. (M161B21)

Outcome Proposition 4. Many young people have an unrealistic idea of what constitutes counselling and some do not even know the service exists.

Better, I thought she was going to lie me down on a sofa and, you know, psychoanalyse me or something. But it was much better than I expected, definitely. (F183B12)

Ehm, I thought, ehm, well with it being Anger Management I thought, oh no, I am going to have to sit there, sort of like a baby and get told off and stuff like that. Like being back at primary school, but it was a shock because it wasn't what I expected. (M162A13)

I was not too sure. I had a mate who experienced it when he was a bit younger and he told me little bits. And then some one else told me some thing which contradicted the first thing so I was a bit confused. I just went in with an empty mind to get my own views really. (M171A14)

I thought it would be one of those couch kind of things that you have to do. (M161B15)

But I didn't need her then but I only found out because she came to Higher Ed College with us. And then I was thinking "Who's she?" and then I realised – "God!" I've seen her around but I did not know who she was because nobody had actually told us there was a counselling service. But yeah, now that I know, I am glad. (F182B26)

Well, I know that my mates in school know about it because of some of their mates, and like me who have had it. But if there is a group of pupils and none of them have had it then I am not too sure whether they would know. (M171A38)

Oh, will they have to get someone in very specially?” And I come over here and I found out that there is a lady that comes in every week, in fact there’s more than 1, there’s 3. And I was really surprised because that was 3 years into my schooling life, and I did not have a clue. You can ask a lot of my friends who are 5 years into school here and they would not have a clue. They would probably think you were having them on. (M162A31)

Young people need clear and accurate information about what to expect so they are able to make informed choices about using the service. Well informed young people are the best ambassadors of a service as they will recommend it to peers.

I think it is a really positive thing. I think, ehm, like I know friends who do it, you know, who struggle and like they come and I’d like to tell them, “Yeah, she’s brilliant, you know I really suggest you go to her even if it is just about coursework and stuff”. And like they have gone, and they come back and say, “Yeah, it was brilliant, and she really understood, and I feel a lot more positive now”, and I say, “I told you so”, and I really enjoyed it. (F182B12)

And with my friends, with me talking about them – it encouraged them to go, in a way – and friends that have been here have said, “Oh, yeah – it was good. I found it really helpful. And yeah, “I will go again. I won’t be scared to go next time. (F182B22)

I’m not sure, but I know, like a couple of my friends are really against me going to see her – especially my closest friend because she said to me “We do not need counselling because we have got friends to speak to.” But I said that is not the case because you need to see things from a different point of view and that is what I think a counsellor provides for you. But I think on the whole that is just my personal friend, but on the whole I think (pause) because it is just in the Sixth Form and not a lot of people recognise the good it can do. I think it should be throughout all the whole school to be honest with you. But I think it has got a positive outlook, everyone looks at it positively. (F183B10)

Yeah, well, A (that is my mate) she said she had seen a change in me, so it cannot be all that bad. (F183B11)

Chapter 5 - Analysis and discussion of the data.

The outcome propositions link back to my title – “Young peoples’ perceptions of their experience of counselling in a school setting”. I will now take what they have told me, locate it in the existing literature and present a discussion on the implications of my findings.

Outcome proposition 1. Young people place great importance on the element of choice around sharing with others the fact that they are receiving counselling.

The fact that the young people I interviewed were able to share they were receiving counselling with others of their choice was a most refreshing surprise.

My assumption had been that most young people would not want others to know.

There are 3 groups of ‘others’ – parents, teachers and peers.

This attitude would seem to be prevalent in Le Surf (1997, p107 – 113), Baginsky (2003, p37) and Fox and Butler (2003, p72). One young person in Le Surf’s (1997, p112) study puts it most eloquently:

If you tell the teacher in school you might as well put it in the fucking paper I’ll tell you ... Like marmalade they spread it around.

Perhaps as one of the Youth Workers in Le Surf’s (1997, p108) study states, “Confidentiality is maybe more about keeping control than about keeping it secret”.

Young people do not have a great deal of control over their lives, and their counselling relationship is one place where they hopefully feel they have some.

Choice and control are very closely linked.

The opinions of my interviewees are mirrored by some in the Cooper (2004, p40) study. Although 40% of the respondents said they would have been less likely to use the counselling service if parental permission had been sought, 53% said that seeking parental permission would not have made a difference to their willingness to attend counselling. One participant even said it would have been a good thing as his parents might worry less about him.

In the same study (p51 - 3), 63% of respondents stated that confidentiality was important, and a surprising 26% said that it was not. Of the 53% who had said they did not mind their parents knowing they were going to counselling, some reported they discussed their counselling sessions with their parents, again emphasising what matters is choice. This fact is most encouraging given the desirability of communication within families and supports the educative value of counselling as far as relationships are concerned.

There is a debate around what information teachers need to have about pupils attending counselling. As the majority of young people are referred by teachers (see for example Sherry 1999, p3), it is inherent in the system that certain pastoral staff will know about attendance. In Cooper's (2006a, p69 – 70) latest study communication with counsellors was an area for potential improvement highlighted by pastoral care staff in half of the 10 schools involved. Interviewees were not interested in knowing the intricate details of the young person's difficulties; just some idea of the sort of issues they were struggling with.

However, as one respondent succinctly puts it:

Personally I would like more feedback but then again that takes away the whole point of the counselling service.

In the first study (Cooper 2004, p53) 37% of the young people state that it was not particularly important that teachers did not know they were attending counselling. A further 32% said it would depend on which teachers received the information. This view was present in my own research where each interviewee had been referred by a particular member of staff and was quite at ease with this. The attitude was very much, "Well, of course knows, he suggested it".

As Baginsky (2003, p36 – 7) notes, there are 2 strands to confidentiality. There is confidentiality around attendance at counselling sessions and secondly around

what is discussed in them. It is the later that young people, understandably, mention as being more of an issue.

Schools need to be extremely sensitive to the opinions of service users if they are to provide a counselling service that is accessible to all. Discretion in informing young people about appointments is highlighted in Fox and Butler's (2003, p72) and Baginsky's (2003, p37) studies. One of my own interviewees celebrates the discretion of his service when he mentions how his appointment slip came in a plain white envelope. A public announcement from an insensitive teacher is certainly not what any young person would want (and unfortunately this does happen). Young people report on the stigma associated with needing help (see Fox and Butler 2003, p66 and 72) and this is where the educative part of promotion is so important (discussed under Outcome Proposition 4).

In all the studies examined young people seem to have an awareness of what cannot be kept confidential (see Baginsky 2003, p37, Burnison 2003, p21 and Fox and Butler 2003, p72). A comment made by one of my respondents highlights the need for sensitivity around contracting when he says:

Ehm, I also, I know it's legal or whatever – but I also think at the very beginning of, when you start counselling, you get a warning about if you are being abused in any form, or whatever – they have to tell someone. I think, that scares, well it scared me – do you know what I mean. I thought “Oh, no. I don't know,” because if I let something slip you know what I mean, I'll be in big trouble or whatever, and ehm, and I do think that scares – so (M162A37)

My own recent experience of working with a young person whom I felt was at risk of harming herself reinforces the essence of making boundaries very clear right from the start. One of my interviewees shows her understanding of the legal obligations of counsellors working with young people when she says:

No, I do not think so, unless there was something really wrong – sort of physical or sexual or emotional abuse, I think that is when Child Protection, they would have to inform your parents but otherwise it is totally confidential – as far as I know. (F183B5)

I am aware that some schools do seek parental permission as a matter of procedure before allowing any outside agency to work with their pupils. If this is the decision of the Headteacher then a counsellor working in that school would need to respect this, or negotiate their exception. However, from the comments made in the studies, for example Cooper (2004, p52) such disclosure might discourage a small number of young people from seeking help. This was not an issue for the respondents in my study as both of the schools involved left it to the young person to disclose attendance to parents (as does Cooper 2006, p12).

This area can present a dilemma for schools. There is tension between the legislation around Child Protection where it is a school's duty to pass any suspicion about abuse or self-harm on, and the young person's right to confidentiality. Daniels and Jenkins (2000) present an excellent discussion of the debate. Daniels is a school counsellor and Jenkins an expert in the field of counselling and the law. The book charts several of Daniels difficult cases that involved child protection issues and thus referral to Social Services. It was her experience that this did more harm than good as the family turned against the abused child. Chapter 8 describes her very successful work with a borderline psychotic pupil who refused to give permission for his parents to be informed he was having therapy.

There is no legal obligation to inform parents where a child is considered to be *Gillick* competent (see Daniels and Jenkins 2000 p16 – 21 for full explanation). This is based on case law that gives professionals the responsibility of making a judgement about whether a child client/patient has the cognitive ability to make decisions regarding their healthcare (in this case, counselling). There is no clear statutory guidance on how old a child will be, it is left to the healthcare professional to decide.

Daniels made the decision not to inform the parents of their son's mental health issues or that she was working with him. The school would appear to have supported her decision, although Daniels reports that her supervisor was not at all comfortable with the situation.

The work with the pupil was extremely successful and Daniels qualifies her decision to maintain confidentiality with the scenario of what might have happened had she disclosed. In this case maintaining confidentiality would seem to have been in the client's best interest. However, I was left with an overwhelming feeling of "what if..?" The client could have had a psychotic breakdown, and then, as Daniels herself states: "*... the outcome for himself and for the therapist would have been very different.*"

In the same situation I wonder whether I would have maintained confidentiality. I also wonder whether a 12 year old with borderline psychosis was *Gillick* competent. There is no right answer here. What is vital is that the counsellor is clear with the young person from the very beginning what the boundaries of confidentiality are. BACP's (2006, p18 - 25) latest edition of "Good practice guidance for counselling in schools" gives lengthy information on confidentiality with the underlying message of giving young clients a clear and periodical explanation of boundaries.

Outcome Proposition 2. Young People are more likely to attend counselling if it is provided within their own school setting.

Of all the issues I asked the young people about during my interviews, this was the one that received the most definite response. I alluded to the work of Rodgers (2002, p187) earlier, as the written word does not do justice to the emphasis of the spoken word. However, I have to remember that each of my respondents had had a successful experience of counselling in a school setting and so their response will be influenced by this.

Cooper's (2006a, p9) study celebrates the concept of a counselling service that is *in* the school but not *of* the school. 74% of respondents in a recent survey by Cooper (2006b) state they would prefer to see a counsellor in a school setting. In his original study (Cooper 2004, p53) 58% of respondents said they would rather have seen a counsellor in school than in an external setting such as a GP practice or Youth Centre. 37% expressed no preference.

Flexibility and convenience are mentioned by young people as some of the advantages of having counselling available in school (see Cooper 2004, p54 and 2006b, p9). As one of my respondents says about his experience of going for therapy out of school:

Yes, that was in a nearby village. In fact that was a pain getting there by bus after a bit. I wish I could have just come here in dinnertime, just come and do it. (M161B34)

Feelings are mixed around whether it is more discrete to go in school or out. 2 pupils in Cooper's (2004, p54) study state there would be less anxiety around going out of school because other pupils would be less likely to find out. This view is supported in Fox and Butler's (2003, p66) study. Young people interviewed in a group highlight it is common knowledge where the counselling room is located and so consequently peers know where you are going. Despite this problem of privacy, Fox and Butler (2003, p67) report there are advantages of school-based counselling, for example, it is easily accessible. They summarise this debate well when they say:

It is interesting to note how what may be perceived as administrative problems to adults involved in delivering a service (room, appointment arrangements, access/gate-keeping of referrals) were seen as essential to the experience of receiving counselling by potential users to the degree that they might be decisive in their decision as to whether to make use of the service.

The Burnison (2003, p18) report highlights when setting up a counselling service, schools need to be cognisant of the surroundings, both in terms of actual location and decoration. One of my respondents emphasises this when he says:

Yesterday we were down in the Common Room and everybody saw me go in. Every now and again I did not like that. (M161B26)

In his latest report Cooper (2006a, p25) discusses location and quotes 2 rigorously controlled studies which suggest that young people are 10 times more likely to access a school-based mental health service compared to a community-based one. Cooper quotes Kazdin as saying, “... *the potential for treatment in the schools may be greater than in clinic settings*”.

Although my research, and that of Baginsky (2003), Burnison (2003), Fox and Butler (2003) and Cooper (2004, 2006a and b) all support the advantages of providing counselling in a school setting, it is important to remember that they are studies which focus on this. The young people consulted are in schools and many of them have had counselling there. By the very nature of the studies, the findings could be biased.

The young people may want to present their counselling service in a positive way, the environment is familiar and safe. Cooper (2006b, p9) states that a similar question needs to be asked in a non-school environment, such as a youth club, to see whether a preference for a school-based service is maintained. There will be young people who are not comfortable in school and therefore it might be the last place they would ask for help.

Le Surf (1997) and Pope (2002) presents some interesting comments about developing youth-friendly counselling based in the community. Although in Pope the location of the service is not discussed, what is highlighted by both studies is the need to consult the young people on what they feel about counselling.

Outcome Proposition 3. There are certain characteristics of the counsellor and the relationship that she facilitates that young people find helpful.

Young people are very discerning. Many of the more vulnerable adolescents I have worked with seem to have a sixth sense, an ability to pick up whether you

are with them, whether you like them. In an article discussing the training of counsellors to work with young people, Sunderland (2007) says:

If you don't absolutely delight in a child's company then you shouldn't be a child counsellor or therapist. That has to be there – a real love of children.

If it is not, they will know and will not engage.

In an interview with McGinnis (2001, p11), Mearns is discussing a training course for working with young people. He says: “.... *to get access to that level (of an adolescent) we have to be real in their world...*”. Mearns goes on to say this means we do not talk like another adolescent, or as a counsellor – rather some one who is used to talking to adolescents. I believe this is absolutely crucial. Adolescents are very perceptive and they will soon spot incongruence.

This sets the scene for an examination of the qualities young people look for in a counsellor and the relationship she facilitates. It is interesting to note how frequently empathy and being non-judgemental came up in my respondents' replies – 2 of Roger's core conditions. One interviewee puts it so well when she refers to her counsellor being able to, “... *put herself in my shoes*” (F183B14). I picked up a real sense of felt mutuality from the respondents regarding their relationship with their counsellor.

Everall and Paulson (2002, p78 – 87) present a conceptualisation of the therapeutic alliance from the adolescent perspective. They summarise (p85):

It appears that when the adolescent has positive feelings towards their therapist, the relationship has an affective component that supports the adolescent working purposefully on resolving problems.

They identify the adolescent's perception of equality as vital to engagement, and the need to clarify issues of confidentiality. Here Rogers 3 core conditions are highlighted together with the need to educate clients regarding the therapeutic process prior to therapy.

Everall and Paulson (2002) quote 2 further studies that support their findings (Diamond et al, 1999; Hanna et al, 1999) and state that their participants responded better to therapy when they perceived the therapist to be an ally rather than an authority figure. Trustworthiness and “just be real” were qualities identified by Hanna et al (1999). What was not helpful to young people was the sharing of information with parents, the therapist taking the “expert” position and not listening. A perceived lack of respect resulted in withdrawal from engagement. All these points are strongly echoed in the quotes provided by Le Surf (1997) in her study of adolescent perceptions of counselling. One in particular illustrates what young people are looking for:

Someone who doesn't look all sort of authoritarian and official, someone who's kind of dressed casually.

The age of the counsellor would seem to be an issue as it is mentioned by young people in 3 of the studies examined, (Le Surf 1997, Sherry 1999 and Pope 2002).

In Pope's study she quotes one respondent as saying:

I'd like to talk to someone in their 20s ... old enough to be experienced but not too old to be crinkly around the edges!

Fortunately for older counsellors this is contradicted in Le Surf's study:

I wouldn't mind talking to an older person because they are experienced ... I would probably value the advice of an older person more.

Although it would not normally be seen as the role of the counsellor to provide advice, this does seem to be helpful to young people. Cooper's (2004, p80) study found that “advice” was the second most mentioned requirement for a counselling service. Several of my respondents mention how helpful suggestions for “ways forward” were.

Both Le Surf (1997, p49) and Pope (2002) mention the need for a young persons' counselling service to offer more than just counselling, ie be an integrated service offering advice and information alongside counselling.

I believe there are personal characteristics that are necessary for counsellors who are going to relate successfully with young people. They are trying out different ways of being – identity v identity confusion. They will be trying us out, maybe trying to shock us initially. We have to be congruent, true to ourselves and as Mearns says above all – we have to be real. The emotional weight of working with young people necessitates the very best of supervision, not only to protect the clients – also to protect the emotional well being of the counsellor.

Those who take on the challenge of providing the emotional education of the future must not do so lightly. As Goleman (1995, pxiii & p45) says:

This means that childhood and adolescence are critical windows of opportunity for setting down the essential emotional habits that will govern our lives... People with greater certainty about their feelings are better pilots of their lives.

The adolescent client/counsellor relationship needs to provide a good model of relating. As I highlighted at the end of Chapter 1 (p11 - 12), adolescents are still forming their identity – struggling with who they are. If we are to believe the social constructionist theories (for example Gergen and Warhus 2001) then the relationships that young people create contribute to the development of their identity – who they are. This provides an excellent opportunity for the counsellor to help the young person grow. If we are socially constructed then what we can become during the therapeutic alliance depends on the space between therapist and client.

Many of the young people who present for counselling have very little experience of successful relationships with, and between adults. Hess (1995, p172)

highlights:

The studies reviewed provide consistent evidence that the family structural changes marked by marital dissolution and reorganisation place children and adolescents at significantly higher risk for short-term problems in psychosocial well-being, as well as for longer term difficulties in forming and maintaining families of their own.

Although she goes on to add:

Living with both parents is no guarantee that fathers and mothers will be emotionally present and invested in the socialisation of adolescents.

Thus a successful experience of counselling can enhance the clients' ability to form successful relationships in the future.

Outcome Proposition 4. Many young people have an unrealistic idea of what constitutes counselling and some do not even know the service exists.

When I asked my respondents whether they thought other young people in their school were aware of the existence of a counselling service, I noted a perceived lack of awareness amongst their peers. For example:

And I was really surprised because that was 3 years into my schooling life, and I did not have a clue. You can ask a lot of my friends who are 5 years into school here and they would not have a clue. They would probably think you were having them on. (M162A31)

Another respondent made a well-thought out comment when he said:

Well, some people have not got the need to know. If people have not experienced things, then they do not need to have it really. But then at least as soon as something does happen, or is happening – you get offered it. And that is when you need it so ... (M171A18)

This would seem to presuppose an effective method of referral as the young person is presuming that should a pupil have problems, someone will notice and refer them for counselling.

In Fox and Butler (2003, p53), Baginsky (2003, p39) and Cooper (2004, p66) pupils were surveyed about their awareness of a counselling service in their school. These young people may or may not have received counselling.

Fox and Butler found that an average of 79% of pupils (785 surveyed across 13 schools) were aware of the service. Baginsky had an impressive 87% positive response (1569 surveyed across 7 schools). However, as he points out, this means 13% did not know. He also states that in the section where pupils were invited to suggest how the service might be improved, raising awareness was at the top of

the list. Awareness was lower in Cooper's study, 57% (457 surveyed in 3 schools) knew about the service.

The data would seem to suggest a need for improved promotion of the service and its existence. However, as one of my respondents perceptively comments:

No, I don't think it is ... my personal opinion is, I do not think it is broadcasted around school but also to be fair I think if you did that you would get a lot of people, you know ... wanting to bunk lessons or whatever. Or take advantage of the service possibly. (M162A31)

This fear is expressed in the Cooper (2006, p25) report. However, it is my belief (based on 7 years experience of counselling young people in school) that the majority attend because they need to, not because they want to miss Maths. This is where an effective system of referral and assessment is important.

Another related issue here is the availability of counselling. It would be unethical to promote a service and generate more need than can be accommodated. Cooper (2006, p14) highlights this when he says, "*... promotion has been fairly low key in order not to raise expectations that cannot be met*".

What is apparent from my respondents is an initial lack of understanding of what counselling is. The perception that a couch is involved is echoed in Cooper's study (2004, p41). All the reports reviewed call for more information about the service (for example Fox and Butler 2003, p68) and include suggestions such as the counsellors giving assemblies about their work, putting up posters and distributing leaflets. However, the effectiveness of assemblies is questioned by one of my respondents when he says:

Oh, I do not know if I listened in assemblies! Ehm, couldn't the teachers just tell them in the lesson at the start of the year. (M161B42)

One respondent in Fox and Butler's (2003, p68) study puts the anonymity of the counsellor most humorously when he says, "*It's like the men in black, isn't it? No one knows who they are*".

This highlights the whole issue of the integration of a service and new personnel into a school. The BACP (2006, p15 – 18) good practice guidance gives thorough and helpful advice regarding setting up a service. Lack of communication between counsellors and guidance staff and unclear protocols are the main area for development of Cooper’s (2004, p86 - 7) study. Schools are established institutions and personnel need training and awareness raising of any new initiative.

Le Surf (1997, p57) emphasises it is not enough to hand out leaflets and put up posters. Counsellors need to actually get into the organisation and raise awareness of counselling. Barwick (2000, p5) says:

... counsellors who properly take note of the context in which they work and breathe may contribute something vital not only to the life of the child but also to the life of an effective and affectively orientated school.

As is the case with many things, satisfied users are the best promoters of a service. My respondents underline this with examples of friends and peers going for counselling after their recommendation. One of Le Surf’s (1997, p125) respondents is commenting on positive peer attitudes to counselling when she says, “*From the counsellor, well they would say that, it’s their job, but from other young people that’s really positive*”. It is often my experience that young people value the opinion of their peers far more highly than that of an adult.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion.

My original aim was to find out what were the characteristics that would make a school counselling service ‘user friendly’. The underlying themes here seem to be about choice and communication. As I have worked through this study, I have frequently gone back to p11 – 12 where I presented some thoughts about adolescents, particularly around power and control. These thoughts are echoed in what young people look for in a counselling service.

It is by giving young people choice, that we offer power and control - responsibility. If my respondents are representative of adolescents in general they have welcomed the opportunity and taken control of their lives.

So what are the characteristics that would encourage a young person to use a school counselling service and how can schools ensure they are addressed? My first outcome proposition is related to the ethos and organisation of a counselling service. The establishment of protocols and procedures in the initial Glasgow Project were one of the main areas for improvement quoted in Cooper’s (2004, p86 - 7) study. I would recommend that a school wishing to set up a service plans and clarifies protocols extremely carefully, and consults service users on what they consider appropriate. The findings of this study would be useful in illustrating what young people have identified as helpful, for example choice around informing parents, and discretion regarding referral and appointments.

The concept of *in* the school but not *of* the school is most pertinent. This study and those examined, suggest that many young people would prefer to receive counselling in school. It is convenient, flexible, accessible, and with proper attention to outcome 1, can be discrete. However, it is important to also provide alternatives for those who would not want to use a school service. The room or rooms where counselling takes place need to be planned carefully. A warm,

welcoming environment, preferably off main corridors so that young people can attend anonymously if required, is essential .

The person of the counsellor would appear to be crucial in the success of a service. Those with the responsibility of recruiting counsellors would do well to follow the current trend of including young people on interview panels. Young people are most astute in selecting personnel with whom they can work. School counsellors need an acute awareness of the differences in working with this particular client group. Specific training would be ideal, and also experience of working in a school situation. Schools can be hierarchical and teacher-orientated. It is helpful for non-teaching staff to be aware of this, and subtly work towards equality of status.

If the above points are addressed then the service should promote itself and the counsellors and their service integrate within the school. Young people will know who they are, and referral will be a normal part of school procedure.

In the course of carrying out this study, I feel I have done what I set out to do, ie given young people a voice. As ever they have responded with perception and poise. My greatest regard goes to all users of school counselling services. They have sometimes had to dare to be different, stand out in front of the crowd in order to get their needs met. And yet as we see from my respondents and other studies, young people advise their friends to go for counselling. What greater recognition of a service's credibility can there be?

In an educational environment where value for money is an every day issue, the provision of a counselling service will have to be justified on educational grounds. This is the direction Cooper (2006a) has taken in his second evaluation project of the Glasgow Counselling in Schools Project. Questionnaires and interviews have included a focus on how counselling has affected educational performance. Cooper (2006a, p28) states that:

There are some indications that the greatest impact of school-based counselling is in the classroom, as compared with the home or peer environment.

However, he goes on to say:

Findings concerning the impact of counselling on pupils' capacities to study and learn are mixed and require further examination.

This needs to be the direction of further research if we are to convince school managers of the need to provide a counselling service in their school.

Participating in a successful counselling relationship will provide education in relating to others – emotional literacy. As Cooper (2007, p35) states: “ ... *clients have a fundamental need to relate to others, and this capacity to relate is a key element of psychological wellbeing ...*”. What further justification for providing counselling in schools do we need?

Emotional literacy and well-being is high on the educational agenda at the moment, and this could be a ‘way in’ for those of us who are keen to see counselling in all our schools. I would like to finish with a quote from one of my respondents that encapsulates the essence of providing counselling for young people:

I also think that if ehm, I had counselling 2 years ago, I also think if I had not had counselling I would not be as happy as I am now. I would probably still be miserable and horrible, and naughty – ‘cos I am like really focused now and I get on with everyone and I am not horrible or anything like that. So I think it has helped me in a lot of ways. (M162A39)

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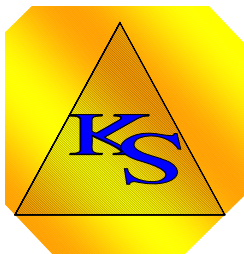
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Job Specification for: Linda Bassett

Job title: Outreach Co-ordinator and teacher

Line Manager: Headteacher

The role of the Outreach Co-ordinator is to:

- 1. Develop opportunities to raise the profile of the Outreach Service by fostering positive relationships with key staff in mainstream schools and with LEA officers.**
- 2. Attend relevant meetings and courses concerning behaviour support, SEBD/SEBS and provide feedback to other Outreach staff.**
- 3. Organise regular half-termly meetings with the Outreach team and produce action points for Headteacher.**
- 4. Share any special projects developed in schools with other Outreach staff.**
- 5. Liaise with other Outreach staff and provide support as necessary.**
- 6. Evaluate and review the Service towards the end of each year with a view to improvement for the next.**
- 7. Take responsibility for own professional development and be involved in Performance Management.**

The role of the Outreach teacher is to support designated schools as outlined below:

- 1. Provide one-to-one work with pupils to help modify identified patterns of behaviour that lead to difficulties.**
- 2. Work with pairs or small groups of pupils who have similar needs in terms of their behaviour and who may benefit from working with others.**
- 3. Observe an individual or group of pupils in a lesson in order to identify problems and subsequently advise staff on strategies to adopt, and/or work with the pupils concerned.**
- 4. Meet with groups of teachers to advise on strategies to adopt when teaching a particular pupil.**
- 5. Advise on producing generic behaviour monitoring and reporting systems for whole school use, or a specific report to monitor a particular pupil.**

6. **Meet with parents to discuss how they can support their child in meeting school expectations.**

Some schools have further developed the links with the Outreach Service to include:

1. **Provision of behaviour and classroom management INSET, advice and support to NQTs, student teachers and newly appointed staff.**
2. **Whole school INSET on behaviour and classroom management.**
3. **Professional development for mainstream staff through developing projects to work with our pupils both at our site and in the mainstream school.**

Additional role:

1. **To develop Counselling Service for pupils at our school and attend monthly supervision.**

This job description does not replace or supplant the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions document; it is subject to re-negotiation at the instigation of the teacher or headteacher and is not exclusive of the full range of professional duties.

APPENDIX 2

An edited section of my Research Diary which outlines the process of my Literature Review.

16/01/06	First supervision session. Went to library to get books on literature review. Re-read Strathclyde project. Read a bit of Chris Hart book.
24/01/06	Spent time in library looking at previous dissertations.
30/01/06	Initial ideas sheet, timetable and supervision record. Getting sorted and started. Sent to Ann. Began to look at some of literature I already have.
31/01/06	Spent time on internet looking at Strathclyde stuff. E-mailed Mick Cooper. Spoke to Janette Newton - Head of Dudley Counselling Service.
06/02/06	Received huge amount of information from Janette Newton. Began to read it. Also looking at Every Child Matters and Childrens' Act 2004 to gather thoughts on introduction. Needs to be placed in context of what is happening nationally and locally around Childrens' Services.
07/02/06	Actually got a page (300 words) of introduction written! Spoke to Joanne and Rita at university. Rita brilliant in clearing up issues around using Strathclyde study protocols for interviews. E-mail from Mick Cooper - now Professor Cooper. Very supportive.
13/02/06	Read chapter from Hart book to try and get head around where to start literature review. Spoke to Ann on phone. E-mailed Mick Cooper and Mary Baginsky - NSPCC.
20/02/06	Spoke to Mary Baginsky on phone. She is going to send me NSPCC report (done in conjunction with Keele University). Worked on beginning of literature review. Rationale for doing. Reading through some of papers in CPR. Phoned library to arrange to go and do electronic search - any time this week.
21/02/06	Searches on NSPCC inform (library). Retrieved literature review by William Baginsky - very useful. Working on my literature review. Categories of client response - trying to organise my thoughts around exactly what I want to know. Read John Sherry's evaluation of the Dudley Counselling Service.
22/02/06	Re-reading Strathclyde Project. What did the respondents actually say? Analysis of Sherry's report. Categories common to that and Strathclyde.
23/02/06	Further work and refining of literature review. Inclusion of BACP review (yellow book).
24/02/06	The NSPCC report arrived in the post - 111 pages.
08/03/06	Received a real 'goody bag' of reports and articles from Mary Baginsky.
13/03/06	Reading Burnison and Baginsky NSPCC reports. Also found good article on 'Youth friendly counselling' in BACP journal. Phoned Relate and Open Door to try and obtain anything they have published on their work with young people. Focused thinking about exactly what I am trying to find out - brain aching stuff.
27/03/06	Reading material e-mailed from Relate re their evaluation of their counselling of young people. Back to the 'brain aching' stuff - what

	exactly am I trying to find out? Revising literature review. Compiled grid to show the issues examined in the 7 main studies.
01/04/06	Went to hear Dave Mearns talk about Relational Depth - inspirational. Had opportunity to talk to him - told me about funding of Strathclyde evaluation and gave me current reference in TES 24/03/06.
04/04/06	Spoke to Carmel at Open Door. She is sending me copy of their evaluation.
11/04/06	Spent morning in library following up some references and re-reading Howard Watkins dissertation. This provides a structure for me and enables me to have a vision of where I am going.
07/10/06	Went to Mick Cooper Masterclass and had discussion with him over lunch. He gave me some encouragement and asked me to e-mail him in 2 weeks to remind him to send Phase 2 of his evaluation.
16/10/06	Re-read work done so far. Further revision and refinement of introduction and literature search.
24/10/06	E-mailed Mick Cooper during halfterm week.
31/10/06	Spent some time in library looking at further information for literature research and reading Howard's dissertation re methodology.
10/11/06	Read Mick Cooper's Phase 2 report.

Protocol for interview with young people – adapted, with permission, from Appendix 6: Protocols for interviews “Counselling in Schools Project” Mick Cooper 2004 University of Strathclyde.

Welcome student and introduce self. Many thanks for coming, it is much appreciated.

Informed consent

I need to go over a few things with you before we begin.

I am Linda Bassett. I am a teacher, a counsellor and a student.

I am looking at young peoples’ experiences of counselling in schools, to both help improve counselling at this school, and for all young people.

The aim of the interview:

- ☉ To get a detailed understanding of how you experienced counselling
- ☉ What you found helpful
- ☉ What you did not find helpful
- ☉ Your view of counselling in your school

I need to remind you of some of the points in my original letter – all for your protection and safety:

- ☉ I would expect the interview to last about 30 minutes.
- ☉ It is not about the issues you took to counselling – it is about your experience of the counselling service.
- ☉ There are no right or wrong answers – whatever you say is important. Please feel free to say whatever you feel – it is OK to say counselling was not helpful.
- ☉ Just say ‘pass’ if there is a question you do not want to answer.
- ☉ You can get up and leave at any time without saying why.
- ☉ The whole meeting is being recorded – let me know if you want a copy. Some of what you say may be used in my research report.
- ☉ I will never use your name or that of your school.
- ☉ Everything you say will be treated in confidence, except, as stated in the letter, if you tell me about an experience of abuse that you have not told anyone about before. We will then need to discuss passing this information on. However, this is unlikely as we are not here to talk about your specific issues.
- ☉ If at any point during the interview you feel uncomfortable or upset, please let me know and we can discuss this.
- ☉ The counsellor will be available should you need to talk to her after the interview.

Just because you are here now does not mean we have to continue. Are you OK to continue? Is there anything you would like to ask me?

Questions

Attributes

- ☉ How long ago did you finish counselling?
- ☉ How long did you go to counselling for? Roughly how many sessions?

Referral

- ☉ How did you come to be referred for counselling?
- ☉ Did you have a choice in whether or not you went to see the counsellor?
- ☉ Going to see the counsellor was your decision. If the school had had to ask permission from your parents/carers, do you think that would have made you more or less likely to use the service? Can you say a little more about that?
- ☉ Overall, were you happy with the process of referral?
- ☉ What did you want from counselling?

Expectations

- ☉ What did you imagine would happen when you saw the counsellor?
- ☉ How do you think counselling is seen within the school?
- ☉ Was the counselling better or worse than your expectations? Could you say a little more about that?

Counselling Process

- ☉ Did you find counselling helpful or unhelpful?
- ☉ In what specific ways was it helpful?
- ☉ What were the qualities/characteristics of the counsellor that helped you?
- ☉ What were the things that the counsellor did during counselling that you found helpful?
- ☉ What were the things that you did during counselling that were helpful?
- ☉ Are there any ways in which counselling could have been more helpful to you?
- ☉ Were there any things that were not helpful?

Confidentiality

- ☉ The things you talked about with your counsellor were confidential between the 2 of you. How important or unimportant was that for you in your counselling work? Need to raise parents/carers, teachers and fellow students here.
- ☉ Did you talk about counselling with your friends?
- ☉ Are there other people you would like to have known about the things you discussed?

Location

- ☉ The counselling you received took place here at school, rather than outside at a Doctor's surgery or a youth centre. Would you rather that it was outside, or did being in school suit you best, or does it not really make a difference? Could you say a little more about that?
- ☉ What did you think about the room where your counselling took place?

Promotion of service

- ☉ Do you think students in school are aware there is a counselling service?

- ☹ Do you have any ideas for improving the way in which students find out about the counselling service?

Service improvement

- ☹ Do you have any other thoughts on how the counselling service could be improved?

Conclusion

- ☹ Do you have any other thoughts or comments on the school counselling service?

Finish

- ☹ How did you find the interview?
- ☹ How are you feeling now?
- ☹ Many thanks.

April 2006

Dear Student

My name is Linda Bassett. I am a student at the University of Chester where I am studying for a degree in Counselling. My main area of interest is counselling young people and I am currently undertaking some research on how young people have found counselling at their school. The administrator has spoken to you about this and you have said that you would be willing to be interviewed by me. I felt before we met, it was important for you to have some information.

The interview will probably last about 30 minutes. During that time I will be asking you about what you found helpful and unhelpful, and how you think the service could be improved. The things you have to say will be useful in helping schools to improve their counselling services for students in the future.

The interview will take place in school, at your convenience. You will be asked about your experience of the counselling service. You will not be asked about the particular issues and/or events that brought you to counselling, or about the particular things you discussed with your counsellor. It is a chance for you to talk about the counselling service: what you liked about it, what you did not like, and ways in which you think it could be improved.

Your interview will be recorded, transcribed (typed out in words) and analysed (I will pick out the main things you, and other students have said), and then use the comments for a report on counselling young people. If you would like a copy of the things you have said, I will provide you with one. Whenever I use anything you have said, I will make sure that no-one can tell it was you that said it: I will never put your name or school next to the things you have said.

As far as possible, everything that you say to me during the interview will be confidential. Your counsellor will not be told about the things you have said, and nor will your teachers or parents. The only time when this may not be the case is in the exceptional circumstance that, during the interview, new information comes to light about experiences of emotional, physical or sexual abuse, in which case I will need to talk to you about passing this information on to a member of the school's staff.

Our meeting will be recorded right from the beginning. If at any point you want me to stop recording what you are saying, I will do so, and you can ask to have the recording destroyed. If, at a later date, you decide you do not want your comments used in the study, you can let me know and I will respect your wishes. You are also free not to answer any questions you are not happy with, or to leave the interview at any time.

Due to the personal nature of counselling, there is a small chance that you may feel some discomfort when talking about your experience of counselling. If you do so, I will be as sensitive as possible. If, at the end of the interview, you are still feeling uncomfortable, the counsellor will be available if you should wish to speak to her.

Please be aware that you are under no obligation to take part in this interview. If you are happy to do so, please complete the form enclosed and return it to the administrator in the envelope provided. I need your written consent before I can interview you. If you agree, the administrator will contact you to arrange a convenient date and time. If you do not want to take part, please complete the form so that I am aware of your decision.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me via e-mail or through the administrator.

Yours truly

Linda Bassett
Student and counsellor.

To be completed by the student

I have read the information about the interview study looking at clients' experiences of school counselling, and understand the purpose, principles and procedures to my satisfaction.

I agree to take part in this study

I do not agree to take part in this study

(please tick as appropriate)

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Please complete this form, place it in the envelope provided and return to the administrator as soon as possible.

Adapted, with permission, from Appendix 5: Letter to potential interviewees "Counselling in Schools Project" Mick Cooper 2004 University of Strathclyde.

Outline Audit Trail.

The purpose of this audit trail is to enable replication of this study should it be required and to exhibit trustworthiness.

1. **Topic – the idea for this study came when I was working on the Counselling in Today’s World module. Most of my counselling work at that time was with young people. I thought it would be useful to give them a voice, and say what was helpful and unhelpful in their experience of counselling.**
2. **Title - when I met with my dissertation supervisor she helped me to focus and clarify what my area of study was to be. Although I had initially considered interviewing my own past clients, my employment situation had changed and I was able to gain access to young people who had received counselling from other therapists. We felt this would be more ethical given the power differential between client and counsellor, particularly adolescent clients. I decided to focus on counselling in a school setting.**
3. **Literature review – in 2002 when I did my research proposal there was very little literature available on my subject. Due to an unavoidable delay in the completion of my dissertation, 4 (and subsequently 5) landmark studies have been published. Although my study was no longer original, it does serve to reinforce findings made by other authors namely Baginsky (2003), Burnison (2003), Fox and Butler (2003), Cooper (2004) and now Cooper (2006).**
4. **Research design and methodology – the evaluation of the Glasgow Counselling in Schools Project (Cooper 2004) asked the young people many of the questions I thought relevant to what I wanted to find out. I**

approached Professor Cooper and he agreed I could use the interview protocols from his study (see Appendix 3).

This part of the Glasgow evaluation was qualitative in nature and fitted well with my philosophy of giving clients a voice. My methodology was based on the Constant Comparative Method (see Chapter 2, p14 in main text for more detail).

5. **Sample and access** – I was most fortunate in working in 2 schools with well established counselling services. The administrators and counsellors identified possible interviewees and the administrator approached them on my behalf. The young people were interviewed in the same rooms where they received counselling.
6. **Data collection** – before carrying out the interviews, the Headteachers in the schools were informed of my proposed study and their consent gained. The young people were interviewed using an adapted version of the Glasgow protocol (see Appendix 4, p52) and the interviews were taped and transcribed.
7. **Analysis of data** – the data was analysed using the Constant Comparative Method, an emergent design where propositional outcomes emerge from the data. This method is justified in the main text (Chapter 2, p14).
8. **Outcome propositions** – these arose from the data. I rigorously tried to put my perceptions to one side, and applied the concept of epoche. This is a process where the researcher tries to “... remove or at least become aware of prejudices, viewpoints or assumptions regarding the phenomena under investigation” (Katz 1987 quoted in Maykut and Morehouse 1994, p123). Appendix 7 is an example of how I worked towards the Outcome Propositions.

9. Validity – is supported by the comments above in 7 and 8. I kept a Research Diary in which I recorded the process of my work. I used my Dissertation Supervisor to help provide objectivity and reduce personal bias.

10. Ethical considerations – these were crucial given the age group of my interviewees. I adhered strictly to the interview protocols, the concept of informed consent and BACP Ethical Guidelines for Researching Counselling and Psychotherapy (Bond 2004). For more detail see p20 in main text.

My life and counselling experience is hard to separate from a subject about which I feel most passionate, ie helping young people to lead emotionally fulfilling and successful lives. However, I have used the Constant Comparative Method to avoid possible distortion and I believe this has enabled me to ‘tune in’ to what the young people were saying.

In order to make my work as transparent as possible I present below all the comments I eventually grouped together under the heading: **CONFIDENTIALITY AND REFERRAL**. It was from these that Outcome Proposition 1 evolved. I worked through these comments over and over again trying to tease out how to communicate the message behind their words. A similar exercise was undertaken with each Outcome Proposition.

F182B3 In the toilets there is a poster so I just texted her and said I would like to talk to her and she got back to me and said “Yeah” and then we arranged a time.

F182B7 Yeah, I thought it was good the way there was no pressure. The way that, like, I did not have to ehm, like – be forced into it. I know that T*** did make a suggestion of it, but I had already chosen to do it myself so it wasn’t really a problem.

F182B8 Yes, it made me feel much better about it, than being pushed into it. Because it is not compulsory.

F182B21 I think it was really important because I knew then that the things that I told her would not be devolved to anyone else, because some of the things I told her were like really private. And I did not want anyone else to find out, so ehm, it was good that the confidentiality was there.

F182B22 Yes, there were times when I talked about the sessions with my family and my friends – and that was because I chose to – which was also about the confidentiality. And with my friends, with me talking about them – it encouraged them to go, in a way – and friends that have been here have said, “Oh, yeah – it was good. I found it really helpful. And yeah, “I will go again. I won’t be scared to go next time”.

F183B4 You mean how did I find out ... We went on this, when we started in September we went to a University and she was there then and she stood up in front of every one and said “I am providing a counselling service. Would you like to, if you feel there is anything wrong?”. And I actually missed her little talk so but I found out because in the toilets, on the back of the door, there was a little poster saying “If you need it”. But originally there wasn’t anything particularly wrong, I just wanted advice and then I began talking a lot.

F183B5 No, I do not think so, unless there was something really wrong – sort of physical or sexual or emotional abuse, I think that is when

Child Protection, they would have to inform your parents but otherwise it is totally confidential – as far as I know.

- F183B17** That it was confidential? Very important because I told her a lot about my close friends, and my partner, and my close family so if anybody found out about anything I would be really upset. So I would say it was majorly important that it was confidential because it was what you personally feel. It is easier to talk as well because it is like a stranger so they do not know hardly anything about you at first, so it is so much easier and they do not judge you.
- F183B18** Yeah, ehm, one of my close friends who I actually came to my counsellor for advice about. I talk to her about it. She says, “Oh, have you seen your counsellor today?” and I say “Oh, yeah”. I do not tell her what we say. I say “She helped me see it from this view and that view”. I never go into detail about what I have said because as my counsellor keeps it confidential, so do I. It is a 2 way thing.
- M162A5** Yeah, what it was, I was really naughty when I was in Y7, 8 and 9. It is only the past year that I was actually good and my Head of House put in the referral for Anger Management and I got a counsellor and she worked through like, techniques of staying calm. And then we sort of like .. I got talking to my counsellor about my past and then it did turn into proper counselling sessions.
- M162A8** Em, maybe yeah, because I live with my Nan and she would probably think you know, ‘Why don’t you talk to me about it’. So probably it was a better thing that it was confidential.
- M162A9** Yeah, I did tell my Nan what it was, but I just think that it helped that it was off my own back, and I had started it before hand.
- M162A18** A lot better because again when I knew it was turning into counselling I thought do I really want to go in there and tell everyone my business. And I thought what if she goes and tells someone, but then – to be honest now, I am still the same. I am not a very trusting person. I do not trust people easily, and not saying that because you are strange but honestly it takes a long time for me to trust someone. And I thought I honestly do not know whether I can trust this woman. At first, when it first started, I would only give her little bits of information – bits that were unimportant. And then once I got to know her I knew that everything I said went no further than that room, I started to tell her everything – because I got to trust her. It was, it was just like having a friend, it was mad yeah.
- M162A21** You feel a lot more comfortable talking to her because you know she’s not going to say nothing. She is not going to judge you on anything and it’s all mutual, like that ...

- M162A22** Well, confidentiality was, did play a major part in it actually, because I did not want everyone to know what, where I was going or disappearing to once a week for a lesson. And, ehm, I did tell my Nan but again I did not want everyone else to know my business, and stuff like that. People around here, it is actually surprising considering this is a school, how fast word gets around. It's as bad as Everyone seemed to get the jist but the wrong idea because they add their own bits to it.
- M162A23** Yeah, and to be quite honest I was one of those little hard nuts and nothing really bothered me at the time, you know what I mean. People could have said anything to me. And to be quite fair, I used to get on with absolutely everyone and no one would ever say anything, they would just know about it. And I was quite comfortable with that. But my mates saw me as someone who liked to have a laugh in lessons, and wind the teacher up. It was mad because they sort of respected me for that and I liked it, I sort of liked the attention. But for someone to see me, the class clown, going for counselling once a week or whatever – they would think, “Hey, what is going on there?”
- M162A24** It does not, yeah. And it was just really important for me because I thought if they found out then they would not talk to me. It was important from that side and from my family's side as well.
- M162A25** Yeah, I did not tell my Dad at all. It's really complicated in my family. I live with my Dad's Mum and like sometimes I stay at my Dad's and my step-mum's – it just depends how I feel and which ever is closest to school, 'cos they live in ***** and I live in *****. So ehm, I stay with my Nan most of the time because I like it there and I get spoilt. And I told my Nan at the time because I am quite close to my Nan but I did not feel the need to tell my Dad because ... I thought that, like he does not want to have to drag it all up.
- M162A36** Ehm, I do not know, maybe and again I think it depends on the child's preference of ehm of confidentiality because whether they think “Oh no, if it is after school people are going to know what I am up to.” (LB – yeah, where I am) My parents are going to want to know, and if their parents do not know they would have to lie to their parents to say where they were.
- M162A38** Do I want to do this? and is she going to tell people, you know what I mean. You don't know, so the trust is sort of broken straight away and you do, you wonder and you think “Hang on, do I really want to do this?” Do I feel as if I can sit here and talk about all my worries or whatever without the counsellor going and telling someone else and everyone getting involved.
- M171A4** **The House Office offered me the service when I came back after what had happened.**
- M171A6** **Yes. They said to me it is completely up to you. It is your decision whether you want to go or not.**

- M171A7** I asked whether I could keep ... whether I could leave it up to me to tell my parents. They said it was up to me, strictly confidential. So I did not tell them, not at first anyway.
- M171A8** Well no not really. When I first got offered the service they said it would be confidential and it was up to me whether the school told my parents or not.
- M171A9** Well, yes because my Dad had the view that if I could tell a counsellor, why could I not tell him. Which is hard because he is close, he is closer. He does not sort of agree with stuff like that. I found it easier talking to the counsellor so I kept it away from my Dad. He still does not know, now.
- M171A29** Well, from certain people it was important, like I did not want my Dad finding out. I told my Mum straight away. When they put appointment sheets in the register – you know sometimes I was not bothered - the lads in the form found out what it was but at first I did not want them to know so my appointment sheet came in a blank envelope just with my name on. Then I could open the envelope without them seeing what it was.
- M171A31** No, they all found out - I told them all because if I had a session one day I would be missing a certain lesson so I had to tell them. But if I did not want to tell them, the House Officer just said tell them you have got to see some one but do not tell them who you are seeing. So I could have kept it confidential but I just told the teachers because I knew they would not say anything to any one I did not want to tell.
- M161B5** We went to a school trip in Y11, at the end of it, and I met a girl there called H and she went to ... where the counsellor goes. She knew the counsellor and I told H I had a problem, she told the counsellor and the counsellor was happy to come to school.
- M161B9** No, I told my Mum and Dad that I was seeing someone.
- M161B27** Really important, I did not want people to know what we were talking about.
- M161B43** Couldn't there be a way where if you wanted to self-refer you could go to a teacher like T and ask them, and if they thought it was necessary then you could go.