

ANGUS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 30 March 2021

ACCESS TO COUNSELLING IN SCHOOLS

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In August 2019, the Scottish Government announced funding for qualified counsellors to provide access to counselling in schools for pupils aged 10 years of age and over.
- 1.2 Funding allocated to Angus Council over 4 years (2019-2023) amounts to £264,000 in the first year, and £346,000 in each of the 3 subsequent years.
- 1.3. Planning and implementation of counselling services in schools have been taken forward on a Tayside-wide basis.
- 1.4 This regional approach was to avoid the duplication of time and effort across the 3 local authorities and builds on 'Connected Tayside Emotional Health & Wellbeing Strategy for Children and Young People' developed through the Tayside Collaborative.

2 CURRENT POSITION

- 2.1 A Tayside procurement exercise took place in July and August 2020 to identify qualified counsellors. Counsellors have been appointed for all Angus schools, albeit some appointments being very recent. Scottish Government is aware that there has been an unavoidable delay with regards to full implementation due to COVID-19 and lockdown, and availability of counsellors appropriately qualified to work with children and young people.
- 2.2 Some Angus secondary schools had already made provision for counselling services through use of their own Pupil Equity Fund monies. Continuation of such arrangements were supported through the allocated funding.
- 2.3 The range of local and national organisations appointed to provide counselling services across Angus includes Place2Be, New Solutions, Scottish Counselling Services, Wellbeing Scotland and TCA.
- 2.4 A Tayside Co-ordinator has been appointed to ensure a high-quality approach to the co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation of counselling in schools across Tayside. Meetings have taken place with the co-ordinator in all clusters to review the implementation aims and principles, and to plan for appropriate referral pathways in each locality.
- 2.5 The challenge of supporting young people during lockdown is being met through the development of telephone and online counselling.
- 2.6 Over 300 school staff have completed Place2Be's Mental Health Champion's Digital Foundation Programme to help them gain a deeper understanding of mental health.
- 2.7 Training has been provided, through Abertay University, for Pupil Care and Support Teachers in Angus to promote understanding of young people's mental health, and to highlight how and when to signpost for counselling.
- 2.8 A leading digital mental health service, Togetherall, has been available since December 2020 to support all 16-24 year olds in Angus.

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