EVALUATION OF THE
YOUTH COUNSELLING SERVICE,
AIRDRIE LOCAL HEALTH CARE
CO-OPERATIVE

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## Summary of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction to the Evaluation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Context and Development of the Youth Counselling Service, Airdrie LHCC</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Methodology for the Evaluation</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Service-Users and Service Delivery</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Views and Experiences of Service Users</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Perceptions of School Pupils</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Perceptions of Young People in the Community</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The Views of Pupil Support Staff</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The Views of Partner Agencies and Other Referrers</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The Views of Advisory Group Members</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Summary and Synthesis of Findings</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>References</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Detailed Contents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1</strong> <strong>Introduction to the Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 2</strong> <strong>The Context and Development of the Youth Counselling Service, Airdrie LHCC</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Introduction</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 The policy context</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 Scottish health and education policy</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 North Lanarkshire plans for integrated mental health services for children and young people</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.3 Summary</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Research on counselling for children and young people</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 A brief profile of the Airdrie LHCC area</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 The development and operation of the YCS</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.1 Initiating the project and recruiting the counsellor and project co-ordinator</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.2 Developing service protocols, promotional materials and networking activities</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.3 The operation of the YCS</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.4 Website usage</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.5 The evaluation</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 3</strong> <strong>Methodology for the Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Introduction</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Consideration of ethical issues</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Note on terminology and language</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Service-user data</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Interviews with service-users</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 The questionnaire survey at the school and the community centre</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Focus groups and paired interviews with young people</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8 Interviews with pupil support staff</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9 Interviews with staff at partner agencies and other referrers</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10 Interviews with members of the advisory group</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.11 Interviews with YCS staff</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4  Service-Users and Service Delivery

4.1  Introduction
4.2  Service-users by age and gender
4.3  Socio-economic status of service-users
4.4  Sources of referral
4.5  Onward referral arrangements
4.6  Reasons for requesting counselling
4.7  Number of sessions attended
4.8  Trends in service usage and waiting times
4.9  Evidence of therapeutic change and effectiveness
4.10  Summary

Chapter 5  The Views and Experiences of Service Users

5.1  Introduction
5.2  Accessing counselling
5.3  Presenting problems
5.4  Accounts of feelings before seeing the counsellor
  5.4.1  Isolation: “Bottling it all up inside”
  5.4.2  Memories of other distressing feelings
  5.4.3  Hopes and expectations
  5.4.4  Fears and anxieties
5.5  Perceptions of change
  5.5.1  Improved relationships
  5.5.2  Accepting what cannot be changed
  5.5.3  Being more honest and authentic
  5.5.4  Acknowledging own needs and rights
  5.5.5  Managing feelings more constructively
  5.5.6  Letting go of the past
  5.5.7  Doing better at school
  5.5.8  Reduced need for referral to other services
  5.5.9  Gaining perspective and regaining equilibrium
  5.5.10  Feeling lighter and more relaxed
  5.5.11  Rating change
5.6  How counselling helped
  5.6.1  The counsellor as a person and the quality of relationship she offered
  5.6.2  The exercises, activities and use of creative Media
  5.6.3  The advice, strategies, options and techniques offered by the counsellor
  5.6.4  The counsellor’s flexibility, availability and responsiveness between counselling sessions
  5.6.5  The counselling room
  5.6.6  The work the young person themselves put into the counselling process
5.7  Satisfaction with the YCS
5.8  Young people’s recommendations for changes
EVALUATION OF THE YCS, AIRDRIE LHCC

Chapter 6  The Perceptions of School Pupils  55
6.1 Introduction  55
6.2 Results of the questionnaire survey  55
   6.2.1 Awareness of the YCS  55
   6.2.2 Young people's worries  56
   6.2.3 Sources of support  58
   6.2.4 Location of the YCS  58
   6.2.5 Pupils' comments  60
   6.2.6 Summary  60
6.3 Pupil Focus Groups  61
   6.3.1 Awareness of counselling and the YCS  61
   6.3.2 Pupils' worries  61
   6.3.3 Support from friends and family  62
   6.3.4 Support from teachers  63
   6.3.5 Support from counsellors  64
   6.3.6 The importance of trust  65
   6.3.7 What pupils want from a counselling service  66
   6.3.8 Summary  66

Chapter 7  The Perceptions of Young People in the Community  68
7.1 Introduction  68
7.2 Results of the questionnaire survey  68
   7.2.1 Awareness of the YCS  68
   7.2.2 Young people's worries  68
   7.2.3 Sources of support  69
   7.2.4 The importance and location of the YCS  69
   7.2.5 Summary  70
7.3 Interviews with young people in the community centre  70
   7.3.1 Awareness of counselling and the YCS  70
   7.3.2 Young people's worries  71
   7.3.3 Support from friends and family  71
   7.3.4 Support from teachers and other professionals  71
   7.3.5 Support from counsellors  72
   7.3.6 What young people want from a counselling service  73
   7.3.7 Summary  74

Chapter 8  The Views of Pupil Support Staff  75
8.1 Introduction  75
8.2 The need for the YCS  75
8.3 Demand for the YCS  76
Chapter 9  The Views of Partner Agencies and Other Referrers
9.1 Introduction 80
9.2 Contact and relationship with the YCS 80
9.3 The purpose of the YCS 82
9.4 The need for the YCS 82
9.5 The referral process 84
  9.5.1 Quality of information for making referrals 84
  9.5.2 Circumstances in which referrals are made 85
  9.5.3 How referrals are facilitated 86
  9.5.4 Referral by parents 87
9.6 The accessibility of the YCS 87
9.7 The effectiveness of the YCS 88
9.8 Potential improvements to the YCS 88
  9.8.1 Extending the Service beyond Airdrie 88
  9.8.2 Further promotional activities 89
  9.8.3 Raising the profile of the Service with young People 89
9.9 Summary 90

Chapter 10  The Views of Advisory Group Members
10.1 Involvement with the YCS: partnership approach 92
10.2 The purpose of the YCS 92
10.3 The need for the YCS 93
10.4 The effectiveness of the YCS 93
10.5 Areas for development 94
10.6 The future of the YCS 96
10.7 Summary 97

Chapter 11  Summary and Synthesis of Findings
11.1 Who contacts and uses the YCS 98
11.2 The organisation and delivery of counselling at the YCS 98
11.3 Therapeutic change and effectiveness 99
11.4 Satisfaction with the YCS among service-users 100
11.5 Awareness and perceptions of school pupils and young people in the community 100
11.6 The views of pupils support staff, staff at partner agencies and other referrers 101
11.7 Evidence of unmet need 102
11.8 The impact of the YCS within the school and the wider community 102
11.9 Partnership working and the YCS 103
11.10 Personal qualities and the approach of the youth counsellor 103
11.11 Strengths and weaknesses of the YCS 103
11.12 Potential improvements to the YCS 104
11.13 Sustaining and developing the YCS 104

Chapter 12 Recommendations 106
1. Mainstreaming the YCS within a partnership approach 106
2. Expansion of provision at the Airdrie YCS 106
3. A systemic and flexible therapeutic approach 106
4. Awareness-raising among young people 106
5. Networking with partner agencies 107
6. Working with referrers 107
7. Service-user monitoring and feedback 107
8. Rolling-out the YCS across Lanarkshire 107

References 108

Appendix 1: Members of the YCS Advisory Group 110
Appendix 2: YCS Partner Agencies 111
Appendix 3: Request for Counselling Form 112
Appendix 4: Counselling Synopsis Form 113
Appendix 5: Interview Schedule for Service-Users 115
Appendix 6: The Questionnaire Survey 120
Appendix 7: Schedule for Focus Group and Paired Interviews 122
Appendix 8: Interview Schedule for Pupils Support Staff 124
Appendix 9: Interview Schedule for Staff from Partner Agencies 125
Appendix 10: Interview Schedule for Advisory Group Members 126
Appendix 11: Service-User Data Tables 127
Executive Summary

1. In July 2004, Airdrie Local Health Care Co-operative set up the Youth Counselling Service (YCS) as a two-year pilot project. This report evaluates the success of the YCS in providing an independent counselling service for young people of secondary school age in school and in the community.

2. The YCS responds to Scottish Executive and North Lanarkshire policies for providing multi-agency, community-based, early intervention mental health support for children and young people. The Service has its origins in the identification by Airdrie LHCC and partners from North Lanarkshire Council of a gap in the availability of therapeutic support for young people in the area. The YCS was set up with counselling delivered in one secondary school and a local community centre. It accepts self-referrals as well as referrals facilitated by parents, pupil support staff, health professionals and a wide range of other organisations.

3. The evaluation gathered and analysed interview data from service-users, school pupils, young people in the community, pupil support staff, staff in partner agencies and other referrers, and members of the YCS advisory group. Young people completed questionnaires and the Service provided data about referrals and service-users.

4. Between late October 2004 and the end of January 2006 (15 months), the YCS received 73 requests for counselling and delivered 345 counselling sessions, with an average number of 7.1 sessions for all completed contracts that proceeded beyond the first session. Demand for counselling increased as the YCS entered its second year of operation, resulting in the development of a substantial waiting list by January 2006. Equal numbers of boys and girls access the YCS in the school setting; substantially more girls than boys access the YCS in the community setting. Service-users are drawn from across the target age-range and from socio-economically varied local neighbourhoods. Nearly half make their requests for counselling with the help of pupil support staff in the school setting (47%) and a further 20 per cent with the help of other school-based staff. The remainder self-refer (12%) or are referred by other organisations (12%), professionals (4%) or their parents (3%). Reasons for requesting counselling vary widely, with family circumstances (especially fractured families) and troubling emotions or behaviour (including self-harm, depression and anger) the most widely cited. Over half of all service-users (55%) cite two or more reasons for requesting counselling. A substantial minority of service-users (28%) attend for one session only, most of whom decide within that session that continuing counselling is not appropriate to their needs. About half of these service-users are referred on to other services. Of those who attend at least two sessions, the great majority report improvements in self-rated well-being (77%), sometimes very substantial (14%), and none report any deterioration (14% report no change; with 9% of cases missing). On average, those reporting the worst self-rated well-being
at the start are seen more often than those in less distress, and those who attend more sessions report greater improvements in self-rated well-being.

5. Service-users who participated in in-depth interviews report high levels of distress immediately prior to seeing the counsellor and describe not knowing who to turn to for support. Some were already in contact with statutory services; others described a series of escalating problems that would have resulted in referral to statutory services had they not accessed counselling. All derived substantial benefit from counselling and expressed very high levels of satisfaction. They described improvements in relationships with others and in their capacity to regulate their emotions. They describe the YCS as highly trustworthy, and their counselling work as both challenging and effective.

6. The great majority of school pupils (89% of those surveyed) are not aware of the existence of the YCS. They are well aware that young people may have worries with which they need help, and have a rich understanding of the range, complexity and intensity of problems that can affect young people. Their understanding of counselling varies, with confusion and misunderstanding common among younger school pupils. School pupils express a high degree of concern about confidentiality and trustworthiness, and tend to doubt the trustworthiness of teachers. Nevertheless, the majority of school pupils consider it important to have a youth counselling service available to them (56%, with 36% not sure).

7. Young people who use the community centre at which the YCS is based proved difficult to reach. Of the small number who completed the questionnaire survey the majority (77%) were not aware of the existence of the YCS. When engaged in conversation they demonstrate a high level of awareness of the problems that young people face. Those surveyed were equivocal about the importance of having a youth counselling service available to them (31% considered it important, 31% considered it unimportant and 38% had no opinion or did not respond).

8. Pupil support staff at the school in which the YCS operates consider it to be a much-needed, and very useful, supportive and effective innovation. They stress the prevalence of needs among school pupils to which they are not qualified or equipped to respond. They describe how the presence of the YCS supports them in their own roles as well as providing important benefits for service-users. They are very satisfied with the operation of the YCS and would like the availability of the youth counsellor in the school to be increased.

9. Staff in partner agencies and other potential or actual referrers vary widely in their awareness of the YCS. Despite networking activities, and the availability of information in paper form and on the web, the existence of the YCS has not yet registered with staff in half of the partner agencies. Staff in other agencies and other referrers are strongly supportive of the YCS, considering it to be a useful addition to the range of resources available to young people in the area. They are very satisfied with the operation of the YCS, finding it accessible, effective and complementary to existing forms of provision.
10. Membership of the YCS advisory group reflects the partnership approach that underlies the pilot project. Members are pleased with how the pilot has progressed and support its continuation based in partnership working.

11. Overall, the YCS pilot project has been highly successful in addressing unmet needs of young people experiencing behavioural, social and emotional problems. It is strongly supported by actual and potential service-users and referrers. Awareness of the existence of the YCS among partner agencies and young people could be improved. However, the YCS has built up a waiting list and care is therefore required in balancing additional promotional activities with the availability of counselling sessions.

12. The evaluators recommend that consideration be given to:
   • mainstreaming the YCS within a partnership approach
   • expanding provision at the Airdrie YCS
   • retaining the systemic and flexible therapeutic approach adopted by the YCS to date
   • further awareness-raising activities for potential service-users
   • further networking activities with partner agencies
   • continuing work with referrers
   • further development of service-user monitoring and feedback forms
   • rolling out the YCS across North Lanarkshire
List of Figures

Figure 2.1: Number of website visits per month 17

Figure 4.1: Service-users by date of birth and location 26
Figure 4.2: Service-users by gender and location 26
Figure 4.3: Socio-economic status of neighbourhoods from which service-users are drawn – social rented accommodation 27
Figure 4.4: Sources of referral to the YCS 28
Figure 4.5: Reasons for requesting counselling 29
Figure 4.6: Number of sessions attended 31
Figure 4.7: Monthly trends in referrals and usage – Airdrie Academy 32
Figure 4.8: Monthly trends in referral and service usage – Community Centre 32
Figure 4.9: Waiting times 33
Figure 4.10: Self-rated well-being at the beginning and end of counselling by gender 35
Figure 4.11: Self-rated well-being at the beginning and end of counselling by location 35
Figure 4.12: Change in self-rated well-being 36

Figure 6.1: Percentage of pupils who have heard of the YCS 56
Figure 6.2: Percentage of pupils who know others who need help 57
Figure 6.3: Percentage of pupils who have had worries with which they need help 57
Figure 6.4: Sources of support to which pupils would turn 58
Figure 6.5: The importance of having a counsellor based in the school 59
Figure 6.6: The importance of having a counsellor based in the community 59

Figure 7.1: Sources of support to which young people would turn 69
Figure 7.2: The importance of having a counsellor based in the school and in the community 70
List of Tables

Table 4.1: Self-rated well-being and number of sessions attended 34
Table 4.2: Change in self-rated well-being by number of sessions attended 36
Table 5.1: Relationships improved as a result of the counselling 43
Table 5.2: Service-user satisfaction with the YCS 51

Table A11.1: Service-users by date of birth 127
Table A11.2 Service-users by year group 127
Table A11.3: Service-users by gender 127
Table A11.4: Neighbourhood profiles of YCS service-users 128
Table A11.5: Sources of referral 128
Table A11.6: Reasons for requesting counselling 128
Table A11.7: Number of counselling sessions attended 129
Table A11.8: Monthly trends in referrals and usage – Airdrie Academy 129
Table A11.9: Monthly trends in referral and service usage – Community Centre 130
Table A11.10: Change in self-rated well-being 130
Chapter 1

Introduction to the Evaluation

This document reports on the evaluation of the Youth Counselling Service (YCS) based in Airdrie Local Health Care Co-operative (LHCC). The evaluation addresses the following research question:

How successful has the YCS been in providing an independent and confidential counselling service for young people in school and in the community, and in supporting young people experiencing behavioural, social and emotional problems in their personal development and in fulfilling their potential?

This report presents data, analysis and recommendations based on information drawn from a diverse range of data sets. The data contained in this report stems from field work conducted between December 2004 and February 2006. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were adopted, and a range of stakeholders were invited to participate in a number of different ways, to ascertain their views, experiences and thoughts, including:

- counselling request and service-user data from the counselling service for all 73 referrals received by the end of January 2006
- 9 semi-structured interviews with service-users who had completed counselling work with the YCS between March and November 2005
- 431 questionnaire surveys completed by students at Airdrie Academy
- 11 focus group interviews with pupils at Airdrie Academy
- 13 questionnaire surveys completed by young people in the community
- 1 focus group and 2 paired interviews with young people in the community
- 5 structured interviews with pupil support staff (who refer pupils to the YCS)
- 11 structured interviews with representatives of partner agencies
- 11 semi-structured interviews with members of the YCS advisory group
- informal conversations and semi-structured interviews with the YCS counsellor, and the General Manager of the Airdrie Local Health Care Cooperative

Analysis of the data offers insight into the following issues, which form the objectives of the evaluation:

- who contacts and uses the service
- the organisation and delivery of the counselling service
- therapeutic change and effectiveness
- satisfaction with the YCS among young people who have used it
- awareness and perceptions of the YCS among pupils and school staff at Airdrie Academy
- awareness and perceptions of the YCS among young people in the community
- awareness and perceptions of the YCS among partner agencies
- evidence of unmet need
EVALUATION OF THE YCS, AIRDRIE LHCC

- the impact of the YCS within the school and the wider community
- strengths and weaknesses of the YCS
- potential improvements to the YCS
- the sustainability, future funding and development of the YCS

Chapter two of this report introduces the background to, and development of, the YCS.

Chapter three outlines the methods used in the evaluation.

Chapter four uses service monitoring data to provide an overview of who uses the Service, trends in service usage and therapeutic effectiveness.

Chapter five reports on semi-structured interviews with service-users to explore their views and experiences of the YCS in depth.

Chapters six and seven report on the perceptions of the YCS among school pupils and young people in the community respectively using responses to the questionnaire survey, focus groups and paired interviews.

Chapter eight draws on semi-structured interviews to report on the views of the Service held by pupil support staff at Airdrie Academy.

Chapter nine draws on semi-structured interviews to report on the views of the Service held by partner agency staff and other referrers

Chapter ten discusses the expert views of advisory group members.

Chapter eleven summarises and synthesises the findings presented in chapters four to ten inclusive in relation to the objectives of the evaluation.

Chapter twelve presents recommendations flowing from the evaluation.
Chapter 2
The Context and Development of the Youth Counselling Service, Airdrie LHCC

2.1 Introduction

In Scotland, the mental health of children and young people has been attracting considerable concern and policy interest. *Choose Life*, the national suicide prevention programme for Scotland, is of great importance, given that suicide is one of the main causes of death among young people (www.chooselife.net). Similarly, *See Me*, the national campaign to challenge stigma and discrimination around mental health, highlights the needs of young people (www.seemescotland.org.uk). In 2003, the Scottish Needs Assessment Project (SNAP) report on Child and Adolescent Mental Health (www.headsupscotland.co.uk/snap.html) noted that at any one time 10 per cent of under 19s in Scotland are experiencing mental health problems, a statistic that echoes the finding by Meltzer *et al.* (2000) that up to 10 per cent of children and young people in the UK experience mental health problems. The SNAP report contributed to the creation of HeadsUpScotland, whose purpose it is “to make a major contribution to the activity already underway in Scotland to improve the mental health and well-being of children and young people”. HeadsUpScotland is funded by the National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Well-being, which has identified children and young people as one of six priority areas (www.headsupscotland.co.uk).

Against this background, this chapter summarises key features of the policy context at the Scottish and North Lanarkshire levels, which led to the development of the YCS. The chapter then provides a brief overview of existing research about counselling for children and young people, and of the profile of the area served by the Airdrie LHCC. Finally, it describes how the YCS was set up.

2.2 The policy context

2.2.1 Scottish health and education policy

A series of Scottish Executive policy documents have sought to develop integrated mental health services for children and young people through multi-agency working. *For Scotland’s Children* (Scottish Executive, 2001) promotes multi-agency working to improve children’s services across schools, health and social care, and across the voluntary and statutory sector providers. The document highlights the diversity of problems affecting children in Scotland, which include several for which counselling services are relevant, such as the impacts of domestic violence, abuse and mental
EVALUATION OF THE YCS, AIRDRIE LHCC

health problems. It positions health and education as key guides in the child’s journey from childhood to adulthood, and critical sites for intervention and support. In this context, it suggests a need for therapeutic services to work with the whole family system, thereby indicating a need for workers to be skilled in such approaches.

Making it Work for Scotland’s Children (Scottish Executive, 2003) focuses on inequalities and improving child health services, based on the work of the Child Health Support Group. It builds on For Scotland’s Children by seeking to co-ordinate a comprehensive, seamless, responsive and effective child health system. In relation to mental health provision, Making it Work identifies the need for support to be in place as early as possible for best outcomes for the child. The report also acknowledges a range of impediments to early intervention, including, for example, fractured service structures and stigma associated with service use. Mental health services for young people are highlighted as a necessary intervention, which require “considerable attention” (p. 7). Community-based child health services are seen as central to the delivery of services that tackle inequalities and are required to avoid adding to the pressure on already overloaded Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Community-based therapeutic services for children are cited by the Report of the Child Protection Audit and Review (Scottish Executive 2002) as best practice in responding to children who have experienced, or are at risk of, abuse. The need for new provision is also clear:

“A few authorities provided directly or commissioned therapeutic support from voluntary agencies and where these were offered they were valued and made a good contribution to the welfare of the children. On the whole, however, there was a shortage of skilled workers with time to offer children practical and emotional support and psychology, psychiatry and specialist counselling waiting lists were so long that children could not gain access in a reasonable timescale.” (Scottish Executive, 2002, p. 10).

Against this background, The Mental Health of Children and Young People (Scottish Executive, 2005) emphasises that mental health promotion and ill-health prevention should be at the heart of service design and delivery, and should be mainstreamed within children’s services. It identifies schools as occupying a key role in this, and calls for the planning and promotion of training in mental health issues for staff. Importantly, it also identifies the contribution of non-stigmatising, accessible and confidential counselling provision, and cites therapeutic services as an example of best practice in responding to children at risk.

More recently still, policy has indicated the need for child-oriented, age appropriate services, which serve the specific needs of this client group (Scottish Executive, 2006). A key outcome from this report is the need for schools to identify, by 2008, a mental health link worker.

Schools are clearly central to the realisation of the vision of integrated services, with Scottish policies advocating the provision of social work, family support and health promotion services alongside formal education. The New Community Schools Prospectus (Scottish Office, 1998) stipulated that schools should have a range of measures in place which would promote physical and mental well-being, which would
“at the earliest possible stage, address the needs of vulnerable children”. To this end, schools have been encouraged to involve health professionals in their work and to strive to become health-promoting schools.

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 widened the definition of needs that qualify children for co-ordinated additional support within state education. Children are now deemed to have additional support needs if they would not, or would be unlikely to, benefit from school education without support beyond that which would otherwise be offered (s1.1). This includes children with issues that might be addressed in counselling such as family difficulties, abuse, and mental health. The Act stipulates that education authorities may, where they see fit, request the help of other agencies such as health boards in providing for additional support needs (s23.1), which must comply with these requests unless there are extenuating circumstances. This reflects the commitment towards multi-agency solutions that integrate health and education services.

LHCCs and their successors, Community Health Partnerships (CHPs), (Scottish Executive, 2004) have important roles in co-ordinating, developing, re-designing, planning and improving local services as required by Scottish Executive policies. These include specific responsibilities in the domains of mental health, vulnerable children and school health services.

2.2.2 North Lanarkshire plans for integrated mental health services for children and young people

The North Lanarkshire Joint Health Improvement Plan 2003/04 to 2007/08 identifies the need for health promotion. North Lanarkshire is identified as a deprived community with poor health indicators, which therefore requires health improvement services. In relation to mental health provision, the Plan aims to “determine the positive mental health impact of a range of activities, policies and initiatives”. It identifies five specific areas for this, three of which are related to children and young people:

“Our approach is to focus on positive mental health and well being, in line with national developments and underpinned by social justice values. Particular focus will be on:

**Early years** – ensuring the best possible start for children in the early years of life.

**Childhood and young adulthood** – developing and building the emotional literacy of our children and young people and supporting them through the many transitions they face.

**Community mental health and well being** – building improved community capacity for mental health and well being.”

The North Lanarkshire Integrated Children’s Services Plan 2005/2006 to 2007/2008 (NLICSP, 2005-08) also contributes to the implementation of the Scottish Executive’s commitment to integrated children’s services. Its vision for the health of children and young people states that:
“Children and young people should enjoy the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health, with access to suitable healthcare and support for safe and health lifestyle choices” (NLICSP, 2005-08: 12).

The plan identifies children and young people who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and children and young people who have mental health problems as requiring additional support (NLICSP, 2005-08: 26). Early intervention, joint assessment teams in education and working in partnership with children, young people, their families and carers are part of the objective to improve the positive mental health and well-being of children and young people in North Lanarkshire (NLICSP, 2005-08: 29-30).

2.2.3 Summary

As the preceding overview indicates, policy drivers at the Scottish and North Lanarkshire levels require action to provide early intervention support to children and young people whose mental health and school performance might otherwise be at risk. Such support needs to be fully integrated with other children’s services, including education, and grounded in effective, co-ordinated, multi-agency working. Against this background, Airdrie LHCC and partners from North Lanarkshire Council identified a gap in the availability of early intervention, therapeutic support for young people in the area. A Steering Group was set up to develop plans for filling this gap. Funding from the Changing Children’s Services Fund, and enabled the YCS to come into being.

2.3 Research on counselling for children and young people

Clinical guidance issued by the NHS indicates that children and young people at risk of developing mental health problems should be monitored and supported in primary care and community settings (NICE, 2005). As noted above, recent Scottish Executive policy documents clearly suggest that counselling is one form such provision might usefully and appropriately take. In response, youth counselling services and/or schools counselling services have been set up in a number of areas in Scotland. Projects include the Counselling in Schools Project in Glasgow, funded by Greater Glasgow NHS Board (Cooper, 2005), the East Renfrewshire Youth Counselling Service, funded by the Changing Children’s Services Fund as part of the Choose Life national suicide prevention programme (www.ea.e-renfrew.sch.uk/woodfarm/PupilSupport/youthcounselling.htm), as well as the Airdrie LHCC Youth Counselling Service, on which this report focuses.

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy has recently published a systematic scoping review of the clinical effectiveness of counselling for children and young people (Harris with Pattison, 2004). It found evidence for the effectiveness of different therapeutic approaches in relation to each of a range of specific issues including behavioural and conduct problems, emotional problems, self-harm and sexual abuse. It noted that

“there is some evidence that a combination of [therapeutic approaches] enhances the effectiveness of therapy using a single approach” (Harris with Pattison, 2004, p. 3)
The review is limited by the absence of discussion of generic counselling services, which are most suitable for community provision, and by lack of discussion of the context in which counselling is offered. However, it does provide broad support for the clinical effectiveness of counselling for children and young people.

Other studies have considered how counselling services are used by children and young people, finding that where counselling is available young people seek, take up and withdraw from counselling for a very wide variety of reasons (Carr 1999; Cooper, 2005; Daniels and Jenkins 2000; Luxmoore, 2000; Sharp & Cowie, 1998). A recent evaluation of the Counselling in Schools Project in Glasgow reported that the service was perceived positively by both pupils and teachers, as well as providing psychological benefits to service-users (Cooper, 2005). The evaluation drew attention to the importance of privacy and confidentiality for young people using the counselling service, and to the visibility of the service within school settings. The report also drew attention to the need for regular contact and communication between counsellors and key members of school teaching staff, and to the importance of a flexible, open and responsive therapeutic approach.

2.4 A brief profile of the Airdrie LHCC area

As noted above, it has been estimated that 10 per cent of young people suffer from mental health problems. These rates suggest that at any one time approximately 400 young people in Airdrie aged between 12 and 19 are experiencing mental health problems. Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that rates of poor mental health among young people in Airdrie are likely to be above national average. North Lanarkshire Council is characterised by relatively high rates of poor health, and this is likely to apply to young people’s mental health as well as other aspects of population health. In addition, recent surveys of the incidence of psychological trauma and post-trauma symptoms among primary school children in Clackmannanshire and Inverclyde suggest that socio-economic status is a risk factor for exposure to trauma, and that children attending schools with lower socio-economic status are more likely than others to report post-trauma symptoms (O’Connor and Russell, 2004). Since the North Lanarkshire area is one of relatively high levels of disadvantage, it is, therefore, also one in which the incidence of psychological trauma and post-trauma symptoms among children and young people are likely to be above national averages.

A few facts and figures drawn from the 2001 Census and North Lanarkshire Council provide a broad indication of the profile of the Airdrie area. It consists a variety of neighbourhoods including some large social rented housing estates. Overall, 38 per cent of households rent from the local authority or housing associations, compared to 27 per cent in Scotland as a whole.

One of the strongest indicators of disadvantage is given by unemployment statistics. Of Airdrie residents in total 4.9 per cent are unemployed, compared to 4.0 per cent for Scotland as a whole. The negative impacts of unemployment affect those in the households of people who are unemployed as well the unemployed themselves. In Airdrie, 7.6 per cent of households with dependent children do not have any adults in employment, compared to 5.3 per cent for Scotland as a whole. Conversely, of those
in employment, 19 per cent of Airdrie residents are in professional or managerial occupations, compared to 24.8 per cent for Scotland as a whole.

With respect to health status, 23.2 per cent of Airdrie residents have limiting long-term illnesses compared to 20.3 per cent for Scotland as a whole. Standardised mortality for death from all causes for North Lanarkshire are above the Scottish average, meaning that, at any given age, those in North Lanarkshire are more likely to die from, say, coronary heart disease, than those in Scotland as a whole.

The educational qualifications of adults in Airdrie are also below the Scottish average, with 41.6 per cent having no qualifications, compared to 33.2 per cent for Scotland as a whole. Conversely, in Airdrie, 12.3 per cent of adults hold a first degree or the equivalent, compared to 19.5 per cent for Scotland as a whole.

These statistics show that on a wide variety of indicators residents of Airdrie include a relatively high proportion of households whose members experience poor health and/or disadvantage. It is against this background that Airdrie LHCC has considered how best to respond to the mental health support needs of young people in the area.

2.5 The development and operation of the YCS

2.5.1 Initiating the project and recruiting the counsellor and project co-ordinator

In response to the identification of a gap in provision for young people, Airdrie LHCC and partners in North Lanarkshire Council established a steering group and secured funding from the Changing Children’s Services Fund. The funding included provision for a two-year pilot project, together with an independent evaluation of the project. When the project began, the steering group became an advisory group, which has continued to meet approximately four times a year throughout the life of the project (see appendix 1).

The YCS was conceived as one that would be available to all young people aged 12 to 19 living in the Airdrie area whether or not they were at school. Therefore, as well as offering counselling in a local secondary school (Airdrie Academy), it would be offered in a local community centre.

Having secured funding for a two-year pilot project (subsequently extended for a third year), the steering group recruited a full-time youth counsellor and project coordinator (referred to henceforth as the counsellor). The post was located in the Airdrie LHCC, line managed by the general manager of the LHCC and with shared office space at Wester Moffat Hospital. The remit for the post-holder included setting up, delivering and administering the Service. This required the capacity to undertake networking activities with a wide range of stakeholders as well as delivering counselling to young people in both the school and community contexts. Because of the integration of the Service into a school environment, the youth counsellor also fulfils the recent Scottish Executive (2006) requirement for schools to identify a mental health link worker.
The steering group favoured the recruitment of a counsellor willing to approach the work from a systemic perspective, which would ensure that therapeutic work with young people would always be informed by the various “systems” within which they are located, including their families, schools and the wider community. In this way it adopted the Scottish Executive (2001) emphasis on working with children in the context of their whole family systems. It also successfully anticipated key findings emerging from the Counselling in Schools Project in Glasgow, which found that what young people felt they most needed was support in finding their way through “the maze of family, school and life” (Cooper, 2005, p. 85).

The person appointed came into post in July 2004. She has experience of working in both Education and Social Work as a counsellor for children and young people. She is professionally accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). Her initial training was based on psychodynamic perspectives. She combines this background with a diverse range of techniques including cognitive work and the use of expressive and play materials. As noted above, existing research evidence supports the use of a combined approach of this kind. During the pilot project, the counsellor has been undertaking a Postgraduate Diploma in Play Therapy, which is consolidating and extending her experience of therapeutic work with children and young people.

The counsellor attends clinical supervision as per BACP guidelines. This provides a regular opportunity (one and a half hours per month) to discuss therapeutic work confidentially with an experienced practitioner who is independent from line management. In addition, the counsellor has joined the local CAMHS Adolescent Special Interest Group, which she also attends monthly. Participation in clinical supervision and the special interest group ensure that the counsellor is well-supported by others familiar with the kind of therapeutic work she undertakes. This is particularly important given her position as a lone worker.

2.5.2 Developing service protocols, promotional materials and networking activities

The first three months of the pilot were devoted to designing and setting up the Service. The counsellor met with the members of the advisory group together and individually. From these meetings and subsequent meetings with statutory and voluntary groups working in the local community she was better able to understand what the local community were looking for and expecting from a counselling service.

On the basis of these conversations together with her own prior experience, the counsellor drew up protocols for the Service. These covered issues concerning confidentiality, referral arrangements, response times, contracting arrangements, practice guidelines and the complaints procedure.

With the help of local young people and a local company, Scotch Pie Designs (now Whisky Cart Designs), a logo for the service was designed. Leaflets and an information pack were designed and produced. These include

- a distinctive and attractive small leaflet for young people (A4 folded to give three panels on each side) describing what the Service offers, the kinds of
things that might lead to a referral, service protocols, contact information and a tear-off slip for requesting counselling

- a distinctive and attractive small leaflet for adults similar to the young person’s leaflet but without the tear-off slip and addressed to parents/guardians and potential referrers
- colour-coded information sheets for young people and parents or guardians, expanding upon the information included in the leaflets
- a colour-coded guidance sheet for referrers about facilitating requests for counselling
- a document setting out the YCS protocol in 28 numbered points
- a leaflet explaining the complaints procedure
- a folder for enclosing these materials to form an information pack

Scotch Pie, with the counsellor, also designed and set up the YCS website, www.youthcounsellingservice.com. The website includes the same information as that provided in the printed information.

Information packs and leaflets were distributed in the school and sent to organisations providing services to young people throughout the local area. Some of these organisations provide their services across the whole of North Lanarkshire or the area covered by NHS Lanarkshire.

The counsellor set up meetings to introduce herself and the Service to potential referrers and partners at the school and in the community. At Airdrie Academy she met with pupil support staff and with all other teachers. At partner agencies, wherever possible, she arranged to attend team meetings in order to meet as many staff as possible. If this was not possible, meetings were arranged with team leaders. The counsellor also met with representatives from other schools in North Lanarkshire.

Awareness-raising and networking has continued throughout the life of the project. This work has focussed intentionally on those most likely to facilitate the referral of young people.

During this period the provision of appropriate space for counselling sessions was negotiated with the school and the community centre. At the school, a dedicated room was provided on the top floor of the school, close to the pupil support base and away from classrooms. The room opens onto an area from which other school-based support services are accessed. This helps to ensure that pupils can access the counselling room without being observed by their class-mates and without drawing attention to exactly where they are going. The room was painted during the preparatory period and was furnished with comfy chairs. It is light, airy and comfortable. It has space for storing art and play materials and has been designed to accommodate the art made by pupils during their counselling sessions. Replacement accommodation is currently being built for the school. Where counselling will be accommodated in the new school building is not yet known.

In the community centre, counselling takes place in a room used by others at other times in the week. It has space set aside to store art and play materials, which can be called upon as necessary.

Before the Service began to receive referrals, monitoring systems were set up. Sheets for requesting counselling were designed, which capture information about
the young person’s demographic attributes, background, circumstances and contact information. These may be completed at referral or in the first counselling session. Case record, review and synopsis forms were also designed with a view to capturing core information agreed by the service-user and the counsellor in a clear and accessible manner. A coding system for reasons for requesting counselling was also devised. Referrals were also logged confidentially on an Excel spreadsheet, which includes a code for each young person, date of birth, year group, gender, location of counselling, reasons for requesting counselling, referrer if any, onward referral if relevant, date of referral, date of first session, date of last session and total number of sessions.

2.5.3 The operation of the YCS

A guiding principle informing the therapeutic work offered by the YCS is a commitment to the autonomy and empowerment of service-users. All referrals are therefore completed with the full knowledge and consent of the young person concerned. Self-referrals are welcome but the Service recognises that many young people will require some assistance in order to access counselling. Consequently, in order to support young people effectively, the YCS works with others to facilitate referrals. The YCS accepts confidential requests for counselling that come through pupil support teachers, partner agencies, parents or guardians and others.

After all the preparations for the Service had been put in place, the YCS began to receive referrals (mid-October 2004). The very first counselling sessions were offered in the school and in the community centre in the last week of October 2004.

The counsellor made available a total of fifteen counselling sessions per week, including eleven at Airdrie Academy, all during school hours, on two or three days per week, and four at the community centre, which may be after school hours. She reserves one day per week for administrative work, in addition to which she reserves time for supervision, attending special interest group meetings, ongoing networking activities and her own training. On the days she is in the school she is in regular contact with pupil support staff.

Counselling sessions are offered at the school throughout the school year. However it is not possible to continue sessions at the school during the summer vacation. During this period, young people attending at the Service in the school are offered sessions at the community centre. The counsellor takes her own annual leave during school breaks and uses quieter times for networking, administration and personal development.

Service-users are offered counselling sessions at regular times each week. For those attending the YCS in the school this means missing the same classes for a number of weeks. To minimise disruption to school work without disrupting the regularity of contact with the counsellor, the weekly time-slot is changed after a few weeks.
2.5.4 Website Usage

The website began to receive visitors in May 2005. Visits have increased steadily since then as shown in figure 2.1, tending to level off since the start of 2006.

Visits occur through the week, with the largest numbers on Mondays to Thursdays. The site is visited at all times of day and night, with the largest numbers between 10.00 and 19.00. The majority of hits come from Great Britain, but with sizeable numbers from the United States and elsewhere in Europe. Many web visitors, therefore, are not from the local area. However, during between May 2005 and March 2006, 69 per cent of hits came via use of the direct address or a bookmark, and only 24 per cent via search engines. A small but important number (6%) come via links from other websites such as the Airdrie LHCC site, the NHS Lanarkshire list of services, the Mental Health Service Directory and the Health Promoting Schools website.

![Figure 2.1: Number of website visits by month](chart)

2.5.5 The evaluation

Provision was made in the original funding for independent external evaluation of the Service. The evaluation was put out to tender in September 2004. In late November, after presentations to the advisory group, subsequent discussion and agreement, the evaluation was offered to Professor Liz Bondi of the University of Edinburgh. The evaluation was based on the first 15 months of the operation of the Service from its inception until early 2006.
Chapter 3

Methodology for the Evaluation

3.1 Introduction

Guided by the YCS advisory group, the research team identified a range of informants and stakeholders who would be consulted as part of the evaluation of the YCS:

- Young people who have used the service. Data from this group provide the most immediate measure of how successful the counselling provided by the YCS has been to date.

- Young people who have not used the service. It was essential to gather the views of potential users of the service, particularly the reasons why they might be disinclined to seek counselling, and what could be done to make the YCS more accessible and appealing to them.

- Community partners, both actual and potential. To evaluate how the YCS fits in with other services, it was important to gather the views of those who have referred young people to the YCS, or who might do so in future.

- Referrers, who include representatives of school-based staff, parents and community-based agencies.

A range of qualitative and quantitative methods were used to gather data from each of these groups. These are detailed below.

3.2 Consideration of ethical issues

The evaluation study was submitted to Lanarkshire Local Research Ethics Committee, and was approved to proceed on 1st March 2005. Following approval, information was supplied to parents of all pupils at Airdrie Academy, with an invitation to opt their child out of the research if they wished. The parents of 19 pupils took up this offer. Logistical difficulties made it impossible to reach the parents of all young people who might use the community centre. The research team therefore determined to limit the recruitment of young people to those aged 16 or over. Information about, and invitations to participate in, the project were then circulated in the school and at the community centre. In all the ensuing contacts between researchers and participants, the voluntary nature of participation has been stressed, and informed consent has been negotiated orally.
3.3 Notes on terminology and language

The project timetable spanned the transition between two school years. Consequently, when discussing data collected in the school, pupil cohorts are referred to as follows:

- **New S1** – pupils who entered S1 in the school year 2005/2006
- **S1-S2** – pupils who were S1 during the school year 2004/2005 and entered S2 in the school year 2005-2006
- **S2-S3** – pupils who were S2 during the school year 2004/2005 and entered S3 in the school year 2005-2006
- **S3-S4** – pupils who were S3 during the school year 2004/2005 and entered S4 in the school year 2005-2006
- **S4-S5** – pupils who were S4 during the school year 2004/2005 and entered S5 in the school year 2005-2006
- **S5-S6** – pupils who were S5 during the school year 2004/2005 and entered S6 in the school year 2005-2006

The school’s terminology for staff with a pastoral support role has recently changed from ‘guidance’ to ‘pupil support’. Whilst the research team have used the newer terminology in writing this report, a number of respondents quoted in the report refer to ‘guidance teachers’.

Where referring to young people attending Airdrie Academy, the term ‘pupil’ is used. In reference to people contacted through the community centre, who may no longer be attending school, the term ‘young people’ is used. When referring to both groups the term ‘young people’ is used. When solely those attending the community centre are discussed, this is clear in the context of the text.

Throughout, the terms YCS and ‘the Service’ are used interchangeably.

All people contacted to take part in contributing to this evaluation were assured that their identity would not be revealed. The names of participants are therefore not included.

3.4 Service-user data

Service-user records were collected in collaboration with the counsellor. At the beginning of the evaluation, careful consideration was given to the adequacy of the record-keeping set up by the counsellor. The evaluation team decided that they were able to work with the records the counsellor was already using, subject to the addition of a question about self-rated well-being to be asked at the beginning and the end of counselling. This approach had the advantages of maximising consistency of data available from the start of the project, minimising change in service-users experience of accessing the Service, and avoiding the imposition of additional paperwork on either service-users or the counsellor. See appendix 3 for a copy of the form used to request counselling, and appendix 4 for a copy of the counselling synopsis form.
Data were collected for 73 service-users referred to the YCS between 14th October 2004 and 31st January 2006. The data collected covered:

- Demographics of the service users
- Where the counselling took place
- Referral routes
- Issues identified at the time of the request for counselling
- Waiting times, uptake rates, contract lengths, onward referral arrangements, and non-attendance rates.
- Self-rated well-being scores at the beginning and at the end of counselling.

The evaluation did not apply pre- and post-counselling psychometric tests as used in some studies (e.g. Cooper 2005). Such tests are useful only if the service wishes to compare objective measures of psychological distress experienced by its own service-users with those using other services. Their administration would make additional demands on both the counselling service and service-users.

### 3.5 Interviews with service-users

To obtain a more in-depth understanding of the effectiveness and experience of using the youth counselling service, service-users who had completed counselling contracts were invited to participate in confidential semi-structured research interviews. This invitation was extended to 19 service-users who finished counselling sessions after ethical approval was granted at the beginning of March 2005 and the end of November 2005. Of these, ten agreed to participate in interviews, of whom one did not attend the interview offered because of another commitment, so that a total of nine interviews were conducted. This response rate (47%) is very high for opt-in recruitment, and substantially higher than rates typically achieved in self-completion questionnaires.

The interviews were conducted between August and December 2005 at a location suitable for the service-user. For those who had used the Service at the school (eight), the counselling room was used. For those who had attended the Service at the community centre (one), alternative accommodation was found. Seven of those interviewed were female and two were male. They were aged between 13 and 17. All had seen the counsellor for at least seven sessions.

Service-users invited to participate in interviews were explicitly informed that they would not be asked about their reasons for attending counselling or the content of the counselling sessions; however, if they wished to talk about these subjects, they could do so. The schedule for the interviews covered experiences of accessing counselling (the referral process); expectations of counselling; experiences of therapeutic change inside themselves and in their ways of engaging with their external environments and satisfaction with the Service (see appendix 5). Eight of the interviews lasted for between 25 and 40 minutes, with one being shorter (13 minutes) because the young person forgot to attend and was contacted confidentially via pupil support staff, as a result of which the start time was delayed. Eight of the nine interviews were digitally recorded. One interviewee did not wish to be recorded, but gave permission for written notes to be made. In this case, the interviewer wrote detailed notes of the interview immediately afterwards from memory.
The researcher who conducted these interviews is a counsellor with extensive clinical experience of working with children and young people, including referrals via statutory services. He was selected to conduct this component of the study because of this background, which ensured that he would be able to address the research questions at the same time as being mindful of the potential for these conversations to stir up difficult feelings or memories for the young people concerned.

Young people self-selected to be interviewed and may therefore include those who felt especially satisfied with their experience of counselling. Compared to all service-users who had completed their counselling sessions by the end of January 2006, the interview sample was representative in terms of presenting issues, waiting time, referral route and age. It was not representative in terms of

- the balance of service-users seen at Airdrie Academy and the community centre, with the latter under-represented
- gender, with boys under-represented
- the number of sessions attended, with service-users attended fewer than seven sessions under-represented
- experience of positive benefits, with those reporting little or no improvement under-represented

3.6 The questionnaire survey at the school and the community centre

A questionnaire survey was designed to gather data about young people’s awareness of the YCS, their thoughts on the location of counselling provision, the extent of young people’s worries and the sources of support to which young people expect to turn if they experience difficulties (see appendix 6). It was piloted with two groups of S1-S2 pupils in the school and revised according to their suggestions. These groups were selected because difficulties of comprehension were most likely to be evident with youngest pupils.

The pilot work and the main administration of the questionnaire survey for all year groups at Airdrie Academy except sixth years was conducted during Personal, Health and Social Education (PHSE) classes. Sixth years do not have PHSE and therefore registration classes were used. These arrangements were designed to minimise disruption of the curriculum. Where possible, the questionnaire survey was administered by a research assistant, who was able to address any issues or questions about the survey, the evaluation, or the YCS raised by the pupils. However, time constraints meant that PHSE staff were enlisted to survey some classes.

A total of 431 questionnaires were completed by school pupils, amounting to 39 per cent of all pupils at the school. This return rate was lower than initially anticipated for the following reasons:

- some PHSE classes in Airdrie Academy (e.g. new S1) were involved in out-of-class activities and could not therefore be included in the survey
- response rates from some classes where school staff administered the survey were rather low
• some pupils were absent from school when their classes were surveyed
• the researchers stressed that participation in the research was voluntary prompting some pupils to ‘opt out’ by returning blank questionnaires

Of the questionnaires completed by pupils at Airdrie Academy, 52 per cent were completed by girls, 46 per cent were completed by boys and 2 per cent did not answer the question about gender. The gender mix of respondents is close to that of the school as a whole, representing a response rate of 40 per cent of girls and 38 per cent of boys. The numbers returned by each year group at the school varied between 42 (21 per cent of the year group) for the new S1 and 106 (48 per cent of the year group of the total) for S3-S4 pupils. While this distribution means that the new S1 year group are slightly under-represented, numbers in all year groups are sufficiently substantial to allow analysis of variations by year group.

To reach young people in the community, questionnaire surveys were distributed at the community centre. This location presented a number of challenges. In the school, large numbers of children could be given a paper exercise as part of their classes, but many young people use the community centre in a transitory way, often for social and leisure activities at weekends or in the evenings. It was therefore difficult for the researchers to administer the survey effectively. Initially 200 questionnaires were left for young people to pick up, complete and return. This yielded no returns at all. An organisation working with young people at the centre was then approached and asked for assistance. A further 40 questionnaires were made available in this way but the return rate was still disappointing, amounting to only thirteen (5 per cent of the total number distributed and 33 per cent of those distributed via the local organisation).

Of the 13 young people at the community centre who returned completed questionnaires, three were girls and ten were boys. Ten were aged 16, two were 17 and one was 18.

3.7 Focus group and paired interviews with young people

Focus group interviews with young people were conducted with a view to complementing and extending the evidence gathered from the questionnaire survey (see appendix 7). The groups discussed a range of issues, including awareness and perceptions of counselling, the kind of difficulties faced by young people and their relative importance, sources of help for young people with worries, and what young people would want from a counselling service, including the preferred location. Data from these discussions provided more detailed insight into the beliefs and perceptions of potential users of the YCS, complementing the data collected in the questionnaire survey.

Interviews carried out with eleven groups of pupils at Airdrie Academy and three groups of young people at the community centre. Recruitment was via an opt-in form containing information about the project, which was distributed with the questionnaire survey plus approaches made via an organisation that works with young people at the community centre. The interviews were conducted by two experienced researchers with backgrounds in interviewing and working with children and young
people. Their experiences were drawn on to ensure the best possible combination of research skills and abilities to generate fruitful discussions with young people.

In the school, groups of five to six pupils were selected at random from those who had opted in. As far as possible, pupils from the same classes were grouped together in order to maximise the chance of working with friendship networks. Care was taken to create some mixed sex groups and some single sex groups. Some pupils who volunteered for focus group interviews did not attend, and in practice group sizes varied from two to six.

Ten young people in the community centre were recruited into one mixed-sex group on behalf of the research team by a worker based there. The focus group interview used the same approach that had worked well with pupils of similar ages in Airdrie Academy. However, most members of the group at the community centre were very reticent to speak. The reasons for this are not known, but the larger size of the group and its mixed sex composition may have been factors. Two further paired interviews were therefore carried out in this setting, one with two young men and one with two young women, which enabled the collection of more detailed data.

3.8 Interviews with pupil support staff

All six pupil support staff at Airdrie Academy were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews, of whom five (83%) took part. These interviews gathered evidence about perceptions of the YCS held by a key group of those involved in supporting school pupils (see appendix 8). They covered experiences and views of the process of referral to the YCS, the perceived level of need and demand for the service, and how the YCS fits with other sources of support, particularly the pupil support staff themselves. These interviews lasted for between 20 and 35 minutes.

3.9 Interviews with staff at partner agencies and other referrers

Interviews with staff at partner agencies and other referrers were conducted to gather evidence of perceptions of the YCS among potential referrers in the wider community (see appendix 9). The interviews covered the interviewees’ relationship with the YCS, their knowledge and understanding of the YCS, perceptions of levels of need and demand for the YCS, the referral process, how the YCS fits in with other sources of support in the community and their hopes for the YCS in the future. The interviews lasted between 25 and 40 minutes.

The counsellor provided an initial contact list of 16 partner agencies (see appendix 2) and a parent who had referred their child. All of these people were contacted and invited to take part in the evaluation, with eight (50%) responding positively. Advisory group members were also asked to suggest contact names, generating one further interview. In addition, two interviews were carried out with staff at a project based at the community centre. In total, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of eleven people from partner agencies in the community. Those interviewed included people drawn from social work, health visiting, General Practice, support work, community learning and development, and other counselling services. One of
the people interviewed was a parent who had facilitated her child’s referral to the YCS. Ten of these people participated in either telephone or face-to-face interviews and one person chose to provide a written response to the interview schedule.

3.10 Interviews with members of the advisory group

All eleven members of the advisory group were approached to be interviewed; where members did not have time to respond themselves, they were invited to nominate someone else to speak with the researcher. Semi-structured telephone interviews were carried out with six of the eleven members of the advisory group (55% response rate). Interviewees included staff from the health and education sectors. These covered the nature of their involvement in the advisory group and with the YCS, and their perspectives on the purpose and effectiveness of the YCS and on the future of the YCS (see appendix 10). These interviews lasted for between 20 and 35 minutes.

3.11 Interviews with YCS staff

The General Manager of Airdrie Local Health Care Cooperative and the counsellor based at the YCS were interviewed towards the end of the evaluation to help fill in gaps in knowledge and to elicit their perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of the project.

3.12 Limitations of the evaluation

As the summary of data collection methods indicates, the evaluation gathered some forms of evidence more easily than others. It proved much more difficult to recruit young people in the community than in Airdrie Academy, especially for the questionnaire survey and for interviews with service-users. Moreover, although a total of 14 young people participated in focus group or paired interviews, it proved harder to engage them effectively in the community than in the case of pupils within Airdrie Academy. Had additional resources been available for the evaluation, a range of methods might have been used to assist recruitment among young people in the community. These include extended periods of participant observation at the community centre and intensive follow-up work to reach service-users.
Chapter 4
Service-Users and Service Delivery

4.1 Introduction

Data about service-users come from the forms used to request counselling, records of the counselling contract and the synopsis forms completed in the final session with the young person. On the request and synopsis forms, the young person is asked to self-rate how they are feeling at that moment. These data enable analysis of who is using the service, sources of referral and onward referral arrangements, reasons for requesting counselling, numbers of sessions attended, trends in service usage and waiting times, and changes in self-assessed well-being. Key findings are presented in this chapter, with tabulated data provided in appendix 11.

By the end of January 2006, the service had received 73 referrals, with 19 young people currently on the waiting list, and 16 currently using the service. One young person was referred and offered sessions but never attended. The remaining 37 young people have attended at least one session and have completed counselling contracts. Of the 73 young people requesting counselling, 44 were referred to the Service at Airdrie Academy and 29 were referred to the Service at the community centre.

4.2 Service-users by age and gender

Service-users are drawn from across the target age range and include both girls and boys. At both Airdrie Academy and the community centre, the majority of service-users are drawn from S3 and S4, being in the 14-16 age band (born 1989-1991) (see figure 4.1). Overall, girls outnumber boys but at Airdrie Academy equal numbers of boys and girls contact the service, whereas at the community centre the great majority of young people referred are girls (see figure 4.2). Thus, location within the school setting appears to make counselling services more accessible to boys.

Two of those referred to the YCS report learning difficulties. All are white British.
4.3 Socio-economic status of service-users

Young people living in Airdrie and its environs come from a variety of neighbourhoods and socio-economic backgrounds. Data about the socio-economic status of the households from which service-users are drawn is not collected. However, the postcodes of their home addresses are collected and these provide information about the socio-economic profiles of the neighbourhoods in which
service-users live. In order to provide some insight into the range of neighbourhoods from which service-users are drawn, three variables were selected from the 2001 Census:

- the percentage of people aged 16-74 in employment who work as managers, senior officials or in professional occupations
- the percentage of people whose highest educational qualification is at level 4 (at least the level of a first degree)
- the percentage of households living in social rented accommodation (including council houses)

With reference to all these variables, YCS service-users are drawn from across the local socio-economic spectrum (see appendix 11, table A11.4). Figure 4.3 illustrates this with reference to the percentage of households living in social rented accommodation. For Airdrie as a whole 38 per cent of households live in social rented accommodation. Forty-eight per cent of service-users came from neighbourhoods where more than 38 per cent of households live in social rented accommodation. There are no marked differences between Airdrie Academy and the community centre in terms of the neighbourhoods from which service-users are drawn.

Figure 4.3: Socio-economic status of neighbourhoods from which service-users are drawn – social rented accommodation

4.4 Sources of referral

Of the 73 young people referred to the YCS to date, nearly half (34 or 47%) have been referred by pupil support staff at Airdrie Academy. Home-school partnerships, pupil support staff at other schools and other teachers account for nearly a quarter of referrals (16 or 22%). The number of self-referrals (9 or 12%) demonstrates that
some young people are able to contact the service without the assistance of anyone else. Young people who self-refer are drawn from across the age range, including those in S2 and S3 as well as young people in their late teens. The remaining referrals have come through a variety of partnership agencies (Reachout, Youth Advice Project, Women’s Aid, Victim Information and Advice and the Eva Project) and health professionals (GPs and specialist nurses). As might be expected, the source of referrals differs between those accessing counselling at Airdrie Academy and those accessing counselling at the community centre (see figures 4.4), with the latter receiving the majority of self-referrals, all the referrals from pupil support staff at other schools and most of the referrals from partnership organisations other than home-school partnerships.

**Figure 4.4: Sources of referral to the YCS**

For self-referrals or parental referrals to the YCS, initial and ongoing contact is recorded as being made either through phoning or texting the Service’s mobile, via email or through a leaflet. Numbers are small, but referrers make use of the full range of contact methods offered by the Service, with mobile and text used in seven of eleven cases.

**4.5 Onward referral arrangements**

The decision to refer young people to other services is made if it appears that support from another agency is more appropriate to the needs of the young person concerned. This usually happens through discussion with the young person in the first session, sometimes supplemented by discussion in clinical supervision (see chapter 2 for further information about clinical supervision). To date, nine young people have been referred from the YCS to other agencies, six after one session and a further three after between two and four sessions. Agencies to which young people have been referred by the YCS include Child and Family Clinics, Rushes (young
persons drug and alcohol project), EVA (for women who have experienced abuse), Reachout Youth Advice Project, Social Work and Home-School Partnership officers. The onward referral of young people indicates clearly that the YCS works in partnership with other agencies, and that the counsellor is able to assess at the first session what kind of service is most appropriate for the various young people.

### 4.6 Reasons for requesting counselling

The issues prompting young people to come to the YCS vary widely including behavioural issues, depression, bereavement, sexual abuse and fractured families. Of 38 young people who have attended two or more counselling sessions, including those currently attending sessions, 17 identified one issue, 18 identified two issues and 3 identified three issues at the start of the counselling. The number presenting with more than one issue indicates the complexity of needs experienced by many of the young people accessing counselling. Taking the total of 62 reasons for requesting counselling, fractured families is the commonest reason for requesting counselling (eight referrals), with sexual abuse, self harm, depression, a traumatic event, anger and family issues each identified by at least four young people (see appendix 11, table A11.6).

Grouping the reasons into broad categories, two overarching themes emerge: issues about young people’s identities, emotional experiences and own behaviour, and family relationships (see figure 4.5)

*Figure 4.5: Reasons for requesting counselling*
4.7 Number of sessions attended

Through the first year of operation of the Service, 15 weekly counselling sessions were available, consisting of eleven at Airdrie Academy and four at the community centre. During the first few weeks only two or three of these weekly sessions were used. However, by December 2004, twelve sessions a week were being used, and a high level of take-up has continued since then, except during the summer months when no sessions are available at Airdrie Academy. Overall 345 of a maximum possible of 400 counselling sessions had been delivered by the end of January 2006.

Of the 345 sessions delivered, 193 relate to counselling contracts with 37 young people who had finished their sessions and were no longer using the service at the end of January 2006. The remaining 152 sessions relate to ongoing counselling contracts with 16 young people.

Of the 37 young people referred to the service who have completed their counselling sessions, 15 saw the counsellor only once. In most of these cases (12 of the total), the first session enabled the counsellor and young person to agree that counselling was not, in fact, what the young person was looking for at that time, with the young person always being given the choice whether or not to continue. In the other three cases the young person made the decision not to continue after the first session. In six cases the young person was referred on to other services directly, by the YCS. For some young people a single session may have been very helpful to clarify their needs, resolve their issues or assist them in finding other forms of support (see for example the comment from a referrer in section 9.7 below). For others, their motivation for counselling may have waned since the referral was made, especially if they have had to wait for a long time before seeing the counsellor (see section 4.8 below). The 15 referrals that lead to single sessions came through a wide variety of referral routes, including pupil support staff, partner agencies and self-referrals, to both outlets of the Service.

Of the 22 young people who saw the counsellor more than once, the number of counselling sessions attended varied between 2 and 15 (see table 4.6).
Figure 4.6: Number of sessions attended

The mean number of sessions for these 22 service users was 7.1. Girls tended to complete slightly more sessions than boys (7.3 on average compared to 6.6 for boys), as did service-users at Airdrie Academy compared to those at the community centre (7.4 on average compared to 6.1). Among those currently being seen, a further eight young people have already attended at least 10 sessions. Consequently the mean number of counselling sessions will rise as more of the longer contracts are completed.

All counselling services experience some unplanned non-attendance by service-users (e.g. Snape et al., 2003). Non-attendance rates at the YCS are very low, amounting to only four sessions in the period from late October 2004 to January 2006. This low level of non-attendance reflects the pro-active stance taken by the service. If a young person attending at Airdrie Academy does not turn up within the first 10 minutes of a session, the counsellor checks whether or not they are absent from school. If they are not absent, they are contacted via the pupil support system and reminded that they have a counselling session. At the community centre, all service-users are asked for permission for contact to be made between sessions in ways they feel comfortable with if the need arises, for example if they miss a session without prior arrangements. Non-attenders are contacted and after two successive non-attendances the case is closed, with the young person given advice about how to resume contact with the service.

4.8 Trends in service usage and waiting times

As noted above, the number of sessions delivered to service-users increased rapidly during the first few weeks in which the service was operational. Figures 4.7 and 4.8 show monthly trends in referrals and service usage since its inception.
Because total numbers are small, there are substantial month-by-month fluctuations, which make it difficult to detect trends with great confidence. However, referrals have clearly increased from September 2005. At Airdrie Academy this is evident in clusters of referrals in September 2005 and in January 2006. At the community centre, the rise in referrals is evident from October 2005, with a temporary drop in December 2005. Until September 2005 the service was running without a waiting list.
Thereafter, the counsellor has increased the number of sessions available at Airdrie Academy from 12 per week to 13 per week. However, this increase has not been sufficient to prevent a substantial increase in the number of young people on the waiting list at both locations.

To date, 53 young people have had at least one counselling session. As shown in figure 4.9, over half (32) had their first counselling session within 7 days of a request being made, with 11 being seen on the same day that the request was made. A further 13 waited for between one and four weeks. Eight young people have waited for longer periods (up to four months). Of these, four saw the counsellor once only and agreed in that session that counselling was not what they were looking for at that time. It is possible that these young people had lost their motivation to engage in counselling because of the long delay. This interpretation is endorsed by the counsellor.

Waiting times are broadly similar for service-users referred to Airdrie Academy and the community centre, except that a higher proportion are seen within one week at Airdrie Academy (52%) compared to the community centre (32%). By the end of January 2006, 16 young people were on the waiting list, including four who had been waiting for between one and two months. Longer waiting times are therefore becoming more likely.

4.9 Evidence of therapeutic change and effectiveness

As explained in chapter 3, data on therapeutic change were generated by the inclusion of a question about self-rated (subjective) well-being on forms completed at the first and the final counselling sessions. This question was designed to be as
simple as possible and to be readily understood by all young people using the Service, without needing to be explained to them. After discussion with the counsellor, four simple descriptors of well-being were developed:

1. “I feel fine. I don’t have any major problems”
2. “I feel okay. I have some problems, but I am coping with them”
3. “I feel bad. I have some problems I feel I can’t cope with no matter how hard I try”
4. “I feel awful. It feels like things are out of control and I don’t know what to do”

Each young person was asked which of these statements best represented how they felt at their first counselling session and at their last counselling session. The forms also provided space for young people to add comments if they wished. The counsellor reported that young people found the question easy to understand, that they did not need to be guided or helped in any way in order to answer it, and that it aided their subjective reflection at the start and end of the counselling.

At the start, the great majority selected descriptor 3 or 4, whilst at the end none selected 4 and many selected 1 or 2 (table 4.1). For all 22 service-users, the mean rating at the start was 3.4 and at the end was 1.8. Overall improvements in self-rated well-being therefore indicate that service-users find counselling helpful.

Table 4.1: Self-rated well-being and number of sessions attended

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-rated well-being</th>
<th>Number of young people: first session</th>
<th>Average number of sessions attended</th>
<th>Number of young people: final session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (feeling fine)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (feeling awful)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among these 22 service-users, girls tended to self-rate their distress using slightly higher scores than boys at both the start and at the end (see figure 4.10). Service-users at Airdrie Academy (of whom eight were boys and six were girls) tended to self-rate their distress using slightly higher scores than those at the community centre (two boys and six girls) at the start but slightly lower at the end (see figure 4.11).
Closer examination of the data provides considerable evidence of therapeutic effectiveness, as well as therapeutic change. Three key points merit particular attention.
First, as shown in figure 4.12, 16 service-users reported an improvement in self-rated well-being, three reported no change, and no service-user reported a decrease in self-rated well-being. This indicates that the service is safe and effective across the full range of referrals. Three young people reported shifting from “feeling awful” to “feeling fine” (i.e. from the worst to the best categories) indicating a very high degree of benefit for some service-users who were deeply distressed at the point of referral.

Figure 4.12: Change in self-rated well-being

Second, there is a clear tendency for those with poorer self-rated well-being at the start to attend more counselling sessions than those with higher self-rated well-being at the start (see table 4.1 above). This indicates that the service is highly effective in responding proportionately to the degree of distress experienced by young people, and that it successfully manages contracts in a way that avoids encouraging young people to continue counselling for longer than necessary.

Third, there is a clear tendency for those who attend more counselling sessions to report a larger improvement in self-rated well-being while those who attend fewer counselling sessions report more modest gains (see table 4.2). This provides important evidence of the effectiveness of counselling sessions: on average, more sessions generate greater benefit.

Table 4.2: Change in self-rated well-being by number of sessions attended

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of sessions attended</th>
<th>Mean self-rated well-being at the first session</th>
<th>Mean self-rated well-being at the final session</th>
<th>Mean improvement in self-rated well-being</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-4 (6 young people)</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 (9 young people)</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-10 (4 young people)</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 10 (3 young people)</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall, this evidence indicates that the great majority of young people accessing the YCS benefit from the service, often to a substantial degree. The evidence is limited by virtue of the small number of service-users to date, but is nevertheless very encouraging given the clear evidence of positive therapeutic change and therapeutic effectiveness. For its own service-users there is no doubt that the YCS is providing considerable benefit. As discussed in section 8.2 and 9.7 below, some of those who refer young people to the YCS are also impressed and encouraged by the benefits to service-users.

4.10 Summary

Monitoring data for service-users indicates that the Service is operating efficiently and effectively. Both boys and girls access the Service at similar rates within the school, but girls are much more numerous than boys among service-users in the community setting. Service-users are drawn from across the age range and from a socially diverse range of neighbourhoods.

Within the school, most referrals come via pupil support staff. The number of self-referrals, especially in the community setting, indicates that young people are able to approach the Service without the assistance of others. The number of referrals coming from pupil support staff at other schools provides clear indication of wider, unmet demand for youth counselling beyond Airdrie and Airdrie Academy. Partner agencies are referring young people to the Service, although total numbers remain quite small. The YCS works closely with other agencies, and refers young people on to other services if appropriate.

Counselling is requested for a wide variety of reasons, among which family relationships, and young people’s own identities and self-experience are most prominent. A substantial number of young people seek help with more than one problem.

The number of sessions attended by service-users varies widely. Some see the counsellor only once because counselling turns out not to be the most suitable form of support for them at that time. The single session may nevertheless prove very helpful. Others see the counsellor for anything between two and over twenty sessions. Very few sessions are lost through non-attendance.

Demand for the Service is increasing. Consequently waiting times for the Service are increasing at both the school and the community centre.

Changes in self-rated well-being indicate that service-users secure substantial benefits from the service. Rates of improvement are greatest for those who attend longest, and these are the same young people who present with the highest degree of distress. The service is, therefore, highly effective therapeutically.
Chapter 5

The Views and Experiences of Service Users

5.1 Introduction

To explore the views and experiences of service-users in greater depth, all those who finished their counselling sessions between March and November 2005 were invited to take part in a research interview with a member of the research team who has previous experience of counselling young people referred via statutory services. Of 19 potential service-users, ten offered to be interviewed. One was not able to attend so a total of nine interviews were conducted representing a 47 per cent response rate. The interviews explored service-users’ experiences of accessing the YCS, their expectations and experiences of counselling, descriptions of therapeutic change and their satisfaction with the Service (see appendix 5).

5.2 Accessing counselling

Six of the young people accessed the YCS through their pupil support teacher, two through the home school partnership officer and one was referred by her mother. All had seen the counsellor within one week of deciding that they wished to do so.

Of the eight young people who were referred through school staff, seven expressed confidence in this system, especially in relation to respect for confidentiality. While young people felt comfortable about pupil support staff knowing that they were attending counselling, most were explicit about their need that other students should not find out, because they were anxious about potential stigmatisation.

“It was all done in a subtle kind of way. It takes away the worry that anyone might find out.”

Young people reported that they were encouraged by school staff to attend counselling without feeling pressurised. Many emphasised the importance of it being their choice and decision.

“My teacher told me I didn’t need to go if I didn’t want to go, but I wanted to go, so I went.”

One young person expressed discontent with the way in which a teacher, who had seen marks on her arms, had referred her anonymously to pupil support staff, and the latter would not reveal the source of the referral. In terms of referral to the YCS, however, she was satisfied.
5.3 Presenting problems

Although young people were not asked directly about the issues that brought them into counselling, all interviewees offered some comments on their reasons for attending. Young people reported a complex range of interacting relationship, psychological, behavioural and educational problems. For example, family problems caused stress and anxiety which led to young people engaging in troubled behaviours in the community or at school which then drew the attention of pupil support staff or other professionals.

Most young people reported significant issues in their family or their past, including parental separation and divorce, a parent’s death, conflict between parents, conflict with parents, emotional neglect at home, parental inability to supervise and control the young person, running away from home, conflict with siblings and sexual abuse.

Some young people reported problems in the community including alcohol abuse and involvement in other risk-taking behaviours, such as under-age sexual relations. School problems included difficulties concentrating, disruptive, aggressive and confrontational behaviour, school refusal and truancy. Peer difficulties included conflict, aggression, bullying, stigmatisation and general mistrust. One young person was under considerable strain because she was required to appear as a prosecution witness in the trial of the person who had assaulted her at the same time as she was sitting an important set of exams.

All young people spoke of feeling under considerable stress, which could be manifested in angry outbursts, withdrawal, isolation or self-harming. Some young people reported clinical symptoms such as suicidal ideation and hearing voices.

While some had not yet come to the attention of, or accessed, health or social services, other young people were already in contact with statutory services on account of their difficulties. In the interviewer’s experience, many of the presenting problems facing these young people were not markedly different from those that result in referrals to health and social services, such as CAMHS or education-social work partnership agencies.

5.4 Accounts of feelings before seeing the counsellor

5.4.1 Isolation: “Bottling it all up inside”

In describing their situations prior to counselling, all young people spoke of feeling isolated and alone with near overwhelming feelings or anxieties which they could not share with family, peers or teachers, a feeling sometimes referred to as “bottling it all up inside”. They provided a number of reasons for their inability to express thoughts and feelings to others known to them, including:

- the need to protect family and friends from the disturbing nature of the young person’s thoughts and feelings
- feelings of shame and guilt in relation to what they needed to talk about
- lack of trust in others’ ability to maintain confidentiality
• anxiety about the potential consequences of disclosing to others
• the need to appear happy, normal or carefree especially for their peer group, with some interviewees using the word “false” in this context.

“I didn’t feel I could talk about it at home. Mum and Dad would be really upset if they knew I was upset.”

“I could never tell my Mum the kind of problems I got because she’d be angry with me. […] I talk to my best pal but sometimes I can’t tell her all the stuff because I know she’ll go round and tell people”.

“I just didn’t feel I could trust people”.

5.4.2 Memories of other distressing feelings

In recalling their emotional and psychological state prior to counselling, young people’s faces often registered pain and worry as they described themselves in what they see now as a desperate situation. Along with the sense of feeling isolated and unable to trust others, their accounts described:

• Feelings of confusion and disorientation
  “It was like a heaviness in my chest and in my stomach. I could feel I had a smile on my face but that was just for the outside world. Inside I was all messed up.”
  “My head was just away with it. I wasn’t quite here.”

• A sense of being out of control
  “Before I came everything was just blowing up and it was just a case of everything was just, nothing was in place basically, it was all a big cuffuffle.”

• Suicidal feelings
  “I just felt there was no point in me being here. I just wanted to get away from everything.”

• Feeling burdened, preoccupied and unable to see a way through
  “I just wanted to get on with my life and stop thinking about all the bad things that happened to me.”

• Feeling caught up in past hurts and losses and unable to consider the future

• A sense of living a false life, of presenting a front or being ‘not me’
  “I sort of had a false feeling about myself, putting on this over-confident cocky kind of guy, that wasn’t really me.”

• Feeling overwhelmed by a sense of duty, obligation to and responsibility for others

• Being stuck in a cycle of repeating destructive behaviours
• Being depressed
  
  “I remember feeling really bad.”
  “I just felt pure down.”

• Being dissociated, or cut off from feelings

5.4.3 Hopes and expectations

Service users’ reports of their hopes and expectations of the counselling prior to attending contain a mixture of uncertainty about what they were looking for, a general sense of needing or wanting to get help through talking and/or more specific objectives:

  “I didn’t know whether it would help, but I came to give it a try.”
  “I didn’t know what to expect. I just thought I’d give it a go.”
  “I don’t know. Someone to talk to.”
  “I wanted help with my problems.”

Some young people were seeking in the counsellor someone different from the other professionals available to them: someone who was perceived as having more expertise in dealing with young people experiencing distress and, crucially, someone separate and entirely confidential.

  “I thought it might be a good idea to speak to someone who would know more and be able to help me more [than the teachers].”
  “Because of all my different problems, I wanted somebody that I could see that wouldn’t go back and tell anybody about it.”

Two young people reported seeking relief from troubling thoughts and preoccupations.

  “Just talking. Just to see things the way they should be. I think too much. I see things more the bad way than the good way […]. I was hoping to change my way of thinking.”
  “I knew I needed help. I wanted to get peace of mind and I got it.”

A further two service-users stated that they were seeking solutions or strategies to help them deal with their difficulties.

  “Just ideas on how to resolve my situation, on how to cope with everything that was happening, basically, ideas on how to keep it at bay.”
“I thought [the counsellor] could maybe help me with my problem, get help, give me options what to do”.

As a group these young people were very motivated at the point of engaging in counselling. Even when uncertain about what to expect, for the most part they had a good sense of what they needed and wanted to achieve through the counselling. All interviewees reported that their expectations of the counselling were met.

5.4.4 Fears and anxieties

When recalling their fears and anxieties about the counselling prior to their first session, service users' most common response focused on anxiety associated with talking privately to a stranger about personal issues.

“It felt weird. I don’t talk to somebody about my past.”

“I was very wary of one-on-one conversation. It scared me a wee bit, direct contact with one person I didn’t really know.”

Another common response was the fear of stigma associated with seeking help for emotional or psychological problems.

“Some people could be a bit spiteful if they found you were going to see [the counsellor …]. At the start I thought that the teachers would know that I needed help”.

“I thought people might think I was psycho.”

While this apprehension was mostly related to other students discovering that an individual was accessing counselling and thinking less of them on account of that, some young people also worried that through their involvement with a counsellor they might find themselves to be mentally unstable.

“I felt weird. I thought that counsellors [are] for someone who’s mental and I thought ‘that’s not me’.”

Prior to counselling the young people were also concerned that the counsellor might not keep their disclosures confidential. All interviewees noted how much attention the counsellor paid to this concern and how this anxiety was relieved by the end of the introductory meeting or first session with the counsellor.

“I worried that my Mum and Dad would find out, well really my Mum.”

Before meeting the counsellor, some service-users were also concerned that they might be questioned, talked down to, told what to do or in some way judged or criticised by the counsellor.

“I thought she was going to say ‘You have to do this, you have to do that’, but she didn’t, she gave me options.”
“I worried what she might think of me.”

“I expected lots of questions getting fired at me, but [the counsellor] just sat and listened. It was more like a conversation. I thought, because of my age, she would treat me like a child, but she treated me more like a grown-up.”

The last of these comments was echoed by other service-users who reported a similar realisation that they would be listened to, treated with respect and not judged, and that the interaction would be more conversational and equal than interrogational and adult-led.

This group was unanimous in finding their fears and anxieties relieved on initial contact with the counsellor. They reported that she demonstrated a keen sensitivity to their anxieties and put arrangements in place around sessions which set them at their ease, such as leaving gaps between sessions so that young people accessing the YCS did not meet, and addressing with them the issue of what would happen if they met the counsellor in the corridor.

5.5 Perceptions of change

While each interviewee’s narrative of their experience of change as a result of the counselling is unique, several common themes emerged through the interviews, which are examined in this section.

5.5.1 Improved relationships

All nine interviewees reported improved relationships with others as a significant outcome of the counselling. The improved relationships described are summarised in Table 5.1. The total sums to more than nine because some service-users reported improvements in more than one type of relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improved relationship with:</th>
<th>Number of young people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People/others</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some young people made a direct link between gaining in self-confidence through “opening up” in counselling and their increased capacity to trust others outside of the counselling room.
“Definitely the counselling’s made me feel able to open up more. Before I shielded myself from other people. I learned to open up to other people and let them know what’s going on.”

For others, an improved relationship with another person was the specific objective of the counselling and formed the focus of many of the sessions. For example one service-user who began counselling feeling alienated from her parents and emotionally neglected by them, described how the counsellor helped her understand qualities of parental love:

“...She showed me how my Mum cared about me. She used the wee sandbox and she showed me how a Mum doesnae care and how a Mum does care and how she really cares.”

This example illustrates the counsellor’s commitment to understand and work with the young person within the context of their family system, rather than in isolation from it. The counsellor’s assistance in helping young people to make sense of their relationships with family members and others, and to implement strategies to improve these relationships, is a recurring theme in young people’s accounts.

5.5.2 Accepting what cannot be changed

For some service-users, accepting that certain relationships could not be improved was a significant outcome of the counselling. Two young people came to accept that they would not receive the love and attention they wished for from their fathers, and were able to relinquish their attempts to pursue this goal, whilst acknowledging the feelings of hurt and loss involved. Another young person learned to accept that her divorced and remarried parents were necessarily preoccupied with their new families. She was able to express her anger and disappointment whilst acknowledging that she could not change this situation.

5.5.3 Being more honest and authentic

For some service-users, improved relating to others involved being more assertive, expressing potentially negative and conflictual thoughts and feelings, and reducing their reliance on pleasing and protecting others at a cost to themselves. They describe how the experience of being more truly themselves with the counsellor, sharing their disturbing thoughts and feelings or shameful secrets with a trusted other, and increased self-acceptance, resulted in more open and authentic relating to others outside the counselling room. Several used the analogy of removing a mask, a false face or a front to capture this newfound authenticity in their relationships.

“It’s me and then people are taking me, everything, not ‘I’m only like that because of that’. It’s all of me and if they don’t like that, then I’m still gonna be happy, because it’s, because I’ll be myself rather than putting a mask on for them and think ‘They’ll like this part of me so I’ll be that way with them’. It’s everything.”
“Before I wouldn’t say anything to anyone. I used to always turn away from them. I just don’t stand back any more.”

“I became more confident. I’m not two-faced any more. Some people in my year don’t like that because now I say what I’m thinking and if they don’t like me, I don’t worry about that, it’s no skin off my nose, because I’ve been able to open up to certain people, I know they’ll back me up.”

5.5.4 Acknowledging own needs and rights

Some service-users describe how the processes of change they experienced involved acknowledging their own needs and entitlement to care, support and consideration. For those who had prioritised others’ needs over their own, a rebalancing occurred.

“I used to stay in and do everything in the house. I realised I don’t have to do everything I thought I should do and now I say ‘Look, help’ and I know how to ask for help now.”

“I started talking to my parents about how I was feeling, learning to talk to them like and getting them to see that it’s partly me that’s the main centre point in all this. I’m the oldest. I’m the one who’s under pressure to choose who to live with, but I don’t want one of them, I want both.”

“I feel more in control about my feelings and I feel like I’m not blocking them off from anyone any more. I don’t block them off because I understand what could happen to me. I’m a better person now for it.”

5.5.5 Managing feelings more constructively

Interviewees also describe a shift from expressing feelings in unhelpful ways to more constructive modes of expression, often drawing on thought, feeling and behaviour management techniques they learnt during the counselling. Among techniques described were taking deep breaths, counting to ten, thinking before speaking or acting, recognising cycles of unhelpful thinking and replacing negative though patterns with positive ones. One service-user said:

“I was arguing all the time. With my Mum and my sister. Having tantrums. Now I bite my tongue. [The counsellor] helped me. She gave me advice. I was always leaving before, always going to my Nan’s. But now me and my Mum get on better and I stay in the house more.”

Another described how he implemented strategies given by the counsellor:

“It helped me stay more in control of my emotions and when everything was going on, how to walk out and clam down and just keep it and not bother with it, and I’d just go back and talk to [the counsellor] and tell her what had happened and she’d go over it with me.”
With young people for whom self-harming or violent outbursts had become an habitual method of relieving pent-up feelings, the interviewees described how the counsellor undertook a proactive and effective educational approach:

“I used to slit my wrist a lot and she’s helped me realise there’s no point in doing that because that’s not going to change any of your problems if you’re hurting yourself.”

“Now I let a lot of my emotions out. I don’t have to take my anger out on people any more, or on myself. I’m feeling more confident to talk to my Mum about things. Sometimes I still cannae control it. I still hit things but it’s not people I hit.”

This theme of gaining control or mastery over emotions, thoughts and behaviours is a recurring theme in young people’s accounts of change.

“It’s definitely made everything a lot easier for me now because I don’t have to worry so much.”

“Everything helped me. About the dreams I was having, about the voices.”

5.5.6 Letting go of the past

For young people who had been abused or who had experienced significant traumas or losses, letting go of the past and becoming re-oriented towards the future was a key theme of their experience of change.

“It helped me a lot, it helped me move on, helped me think about the future. It helped me come to terms with some things, make decisions about some things and changing some things.”

“I don’t sit and worry about things now, I just bounce about. Most of it was to do with the past and I realised you can’t hold on, you just have to let it go and move on.”

“She’s got me over most of my problems and got me to get on with my life, and that, all my past, and that, has just mucked up my head, and that, but she’s helped me see through it all, and just get on with it, and look to my school, and that, and get on with my school work, and make sure I get good qualifications like when I’m older.”

5.5.7 Doing better at school

Other service-users also noted a significant improvement in their ability to manage work, pressures and relationships at school, as a result of feeling more in control of thoughts, feelings and behaviour.
“I get on better in class. I’m not always in trouble. I do my work now.”

“Before I was always up at guidance, shouting at people, hitting people. I’m able to cope with it now. I’m more well-behaved and I keep out of trouble.”

“I used to take my anger out at school and on my school work. I don’t do that any more.”

5.5.8 Reduced need for referral to other services

Several young people commented on their risk of school exclusion prior to their involvement in counselling. One recounted how her use of alcohol before coming into school had left her facing possible permanent exclusion and that this concern was no longer relevant, largely as a result of the counselling. Others stated that their difficulties controlling their anger at school had been leading to an escalating series of referrals to pupil support staff prior to attending counselling. One young person described how, during a short period of in-patient treatment, hospital staff were concerned about her mental health and referred her to the local psychological service. By the time she attended the appointment, she was engaged in the YCS, was assessed to be doing well and was discharged. Two young people’s self-harming had also drawn professional concerns, which might have led to onward referral had they not gained control over these behaviours with the counsellor’s help. In one way or another, many service-users described how a spiralling out of control had been averted through their engagement with the YCS.

5.5.9 Gaining perspective and regaining equilibrium

Most interviewees described a process of gaining perspective and regaining equilibrium through the counselling. Sharing previously undisclosed feelings, concerns and preoccupations with the counsellor enabled them to see their issues more clearly and feel more in control of them. Service-users recognised that their problems did not disappear; rather they perceived them as less powerful and dominant, reduced in emotional and psychological intensity, and more manageable and ‘normal’.

“It was like carrying a big heavy bag and every week you took something out and it got lighter.”

“She’s helped me with a lot of things I couldn’t get through. I was growing up too fast for my age. I’ve still got my actual problem, but now it’s just teenagers.”

5.5.10 Feeling lighter and more relaxed

Another young person described changes in her physical sensations and behaviours as a result of the counselling: feeling lighter and less burdened, exhibiting less nervous traits such as twitching, fidgeting or cracking her knuckles, and feeling less
tension in her shoulders. The words ‘calm’, ‘relaxed’ and ‘comfortable’ recurred in several interviews, with service-users applying these adjectives to the counsellor as a person, the relationship she offered, the counselling room and, most significantly, to how they feel inside themselves as a consequence of the counselling.

“It made me feel more relaxed. It’s a nice place to come. I think I’m more relaxed with people than I was before. I didn’t have the trust and [the counsellor] helped me with that and I feel I can trust people now.”

“It’s a place to relax and let it all out.”

“When you come here you just get like calm and relaxed and you get the chance to talk about how you feel.”

5.5.11 Rating change

All interviewees were asked a simple rating question regarding their perception of internal change:

“If you think back to how you felt in yourself before you started counselling, and tried to give a mark out of 10, to how you felt, where 10 is the best you’ve ever felt and 0 is the worst, what number would you give to how you felt then? And what number would you give to how you feel today?”

The nine interviewees rated their pre-counselling feelings between 0 and 4, with a mean of 2.6, and their feelings now between 7 and 9, with a mean of 8.3. On average they perceived changes of 5.8 out of a maximum possible of 10.

5.6 How the counselling helped

When asked to evaluate how much the counselling had contributed to the changes and improvements reported, all young people stated that the counselling was responsible for most or all of the positive change they had experienced. Some service-users commented on their own contribution to effect change through their efforts both inside and outside the counselling room.

No interviewee reported extra-therapeutic factors other than those brought about by the counselling itself. For example, while one young person was feeling happier because she had moved out of the family home, the decision to move was itself a consequence of the counselling process, which helped her acknowledge her entitlement to care and recognise that her needs were not being met at home.

The service-users’ views on how the counselling helped effect change fell into six broad and overlapping groups.
5.6.1 The counsellor as a person and the quality of relationship she offered

Service-users described the counsellor’s warmth, approachability, naturalness and commitment to treating them as equals as essential elements in the effectiveness of the counselling.

“She’s so cool. She knows about, she’s not an older person who’s out of touch with young people. She’s relaxed, she’s cool, she’s like an equal, like a friend.”

“The way like I could open up to her, she treated me like we were best pals, like you could tell her stuff and nobody else would find out. She treated me like an equal and that’s why we got on so well.”

5.6.2 The exercises, activities and use of creative media

All the service-users interviewed appreciated the range of activities on offer in the counselling room. Some gained a great deal from doing exercises suggested by the counsellor, focusing on a relevant aspect of their situation. These included drawing family trees and pictures, listing their personal qualities and making self-portraits and masks. Others talked of the value of using creative media such as clay, sand and paints. These activities helped some young people connect with a younger self, providing a brief experience of feeling care free and calm. Others used painting and wearing masks they had made to explore private and public selves, or to express the contrast between different parts of themselves.

“The exercises made me think about what was happening, what’s missing from your character, what’s missing from your life really.”

“Using the play-dough and doing the mask, I was seeing the funnier side of trying to work things out, seeing that not everything had to be so dramatic.”

5.6.3 The advice, strategies, options and techniques offered by the counsellor

In the context of the egalitarian and respectful therapeutic relationships offered by the counsellor, service-users noted how the counsellor helped them think through their situation and identify options or strategies for achieving their goals. For young people prone to losing control or self-harming, they reported benefits of being taught techniques for managing their feelings and impulses, and for identifying alternative courses of action. Some described the counsellor showing them how to interrupt negative thinking patterns.

“That night, the night after it, you just lie in your bed and you think about everything she said and, you just, you smile to yourself and you know you’re getting better and you know when this is finished that you’ll be really good again and you can’t wait for that day and it has a big impact on your life really, counselling, because it helps you through everything.”
5.6.4 The counsellor’s flexibility, availability and responsiveness between the counselling sessions

The counsellor’s availability between sessions, either on the ‘phone or in person, was highly regarded by service-users, and contributed to them feeling well supported and cared for. Some appreciated knowing she was there even if they did not actually contact her. For others who faced particularly challenging events, the counsellor made an explicit arrangement to talk with them on the ‘phone before or after the event in question. One young person noted how the counsellor responded proactively when she heard from teaching staff that the young person was experiencing acute difficulties.

“She gave me her phone number so I could call her if I needed to.”

“I liked the follow-up. That was important as well.”

“She took me to the hospital when I hurt my hand in class. I felt ‘Oh my God, somebody cares’.”

5.6.5 The counselling room

The quality of the physical environment in which counselling is offered, including its location in an appropriately furnished room free from external impingements, helped service-users to make effective use of the YCS. All the young people interviewed valued the counselling room as a quiet, reflective and peaceful place. For some who experienced significant stress at home and at school, the counselling room was the only place where they could experience freedom and calm. The following quotation sums this up, also illustrating how the experience of being in the physical space of the counselling room was an integral part of the counselling process and relationship:

“It’s ‘me time’ basically and it’s about me and I get a chance to focus on myself and it’s calm and you just come and sit down and it makes you relaxed and you can just tell her ‘This is how I’m feeling’ and then she just says to you ‘Well, try this’ and then she just makes you, it’s like you have a laugh as well, and it gives you a chance to really just think about yourself and focus on myself for once and give yourself a bit of a rest from everything, because in this room nothing else goes outside and she doesn’t say and it’s as if you’re in your own wee world when you’re in this room and it’s really good.”

5.6.6 The work the young person themselves put into the counselling process.

Crucial to the effectiveness of counselling is the active part played by service-users, as these young people fully appreciate:

“You can’t have a process like this and it’s all easy-going because otherwise it wouldn’t work.”
“It’s quite a bit of a rush. You’re going through all these things. So many things coming up unexpected. It can be quite tough on you, quite deep for you. Things you don’t see come up and then you talk about things. You can’t help that. At some points it’s quite scary.”

5.7 Satisfaction with the YCS

Service-users were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the YCS on a 10 point scale where 10 is maximum satisfaction. All interviewees rated their satisfaction between 8 and 10 out of 10 with a mean rating of 9.2 (see table 5.2).

Table 5.2: Service-user satisfaction with YCS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction rating</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No of young people</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviewees’ comments on their satisfaction rating question speak for themselves:

“It really helped me. It’s, it’s really the best thing I’ve ever done.”

“It’s very helpful and understanding. Talking, in the long run, works.”

“I loved coming to see her.”

“Really helpful.”

“It’s very, very good.”

“She’s really good. It felt right. It wasn’t forced. It was on my terms.”

5.8 Young people’s recommendations for changes to the YCS

Service-users were invited to imagine being in charge of the service and were asked what changes, if any, they would implement. Some responded by saying that they would not change anything:

“I think it’s fine just the way it is”.

Some said that they would increase availability. They would make the counsellor full-time so that she could see more young people and be more available and responsive outside counselling sessions. For example, if a service-user was having a difficult day, s/he could drop in and see the counsellor for a few minutes if necessary. One interviewee said she would like there to be a full-time counsellor in every school.

Others recommended more publicity to make the YCS more widely known among both young people and staff. One service-user said she would ensure that all
students had both the email address and the phone number to facilitate self-referral, and she would increase teachers’ knowledge of the service. Another acknowledged the need to balance greater accessibility with the protection of confidentiality:

“What’s important is getting the message through to people who are in need of it without taking away the privacy”.

When asked about the location of counselling sessions all interviewees emphasised the importance of being able to access the Service without being questioned or observed.

5.9 Composite case studies

These case studies combine elements of various young people’s accounts of the circumstances surrounding their accessing counselling and their experience of counselling. This approach provides a full picture of young people’s experiences without compromising the confidentiality of any particular young person. They are drawn entirely from interviews with service-users and use fictional names.

5.9.1 “Sarah”

Sarah is fifteen and lives with her father. She has an older sister who moved out of the family home two years ago to live with her boyfriend. Sarah’s mother died when she was twelve. Over the last year, Sarah’s attendance at school and her school work deteriorated. Her friendships also seemed to have fallen apart and teachers overheard students using sexual insults against her during angry exchanges. Her pupil support teacher tried talking to Sarah, but she refused to tell him anything about what was going on for her. Matters came to a head some months ago when Sarah came into school looking dishevelled and appeared to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Facing exclusion, Sarah admitted that there were things happening in her life that she couldn’t talk about and she accepted a referral to the YCS counsellor.

After two sessions testing out the counsellor, checking out specifically the possible consequences of certain disclosures, Sarah said that she was able to open up to the counsellor about her situation. She described a conflictual relationship with her father who objected to her friendships, especially with boys, to her going out late, her clothes and her make-up which he found too grown-up for her age. She also talked about her sister moving out as a significant loss and realised how it had brought back feelings about losing her mother. This was a family tragedy which had never been spoken about.

A year before, Sarah had fallen into the company of some older young people, aged seventeen to nineteen. They offered her fun and excitement and a break from her family situation and preoccupations. However, Sarah acknowledged that aspects of this social scene had “gone a bit too far” and she was struggling to pull back from certain activities into which she felt pressurised. These included alcohol and drug use, theft from shops and a sexual relationship with an older boy. Sarah had not told anyone else about any of this, because she was ashamed and confused and was
anxious about the consequences; she thought she might “get put in a home” and get into trouble with the police.

Sarah described how the counsellor worked with her on this complex range of issues over fourteen sessions. The work included helping her extricate herself from this group of older young people, re-engage with her same-age friends and try to rebuild her relationship with her father. Sarah chose to use masks to explore the difference between how she really felt inside and how she presented herself to others and she was surprised at how much she learnt about herself through this. The counsellor also helped her think about how her present difficulties might be related to the loss of her mother and Sarah spent a number of sessions exploring thoughts and feelings about this loss which she had never talked, or even thought, about before.

Sarah feels back on track now. She reports that her teachers have noted a marked improvement in her school work. Her attendance record is nearly full. She is working for her exams with a view to going to college to train as a beautician.

5.9.2 “John”

John is thirteen and the eldest of four children. Nine months ago his parents’ marriage broke down and his father moved away. John’s mother was diagnosed with depression and treated with anti-depressants. Negotiations between the parents over contact with the children remained very acrimonious and the respective families had taken sides, exacerbating rather than relieving the conflict.

John’s school work, friendships and attendance all deteriorated. He described how he angrily rebuffed his teachers’ attempts to talk with him. His school difficulties increased, with angry exchanges between him and other pupils turning violent. One teacher described John as a “powder keg” and it was looking increasingly likely that he would be excluded. John admitted to his pupil support teacher that there were problems at home and accepted a referral to the YCS counsellor.

John was initially unsure about counselling, not knowing what it was all about, and feeling anxious that other students would find out he was going to see a counsellor and would think he was a “psycho”. He knew he needed to talk to someone and this, combined with the counsellor’s explanation of counselling and the arrangements for protecting confidentiality during an introductory meeting, helped him make up his mind to give it a try.

John felt safe in the counselling from the first session. He told the counsellor about the events of the past year and the “nightmare” of his parents’ ongoing arguments in which he often had to intervene. He described his real concerns for his mother who spent most of the day in bed and the strain of having to take responsibility for looking after his younger brother and sisters and the house. He was able to talk about family matters and feelings that he had felt too ashamed to talk about to anyone else. In his second session, he cried for the first time since his parents’ separation. While acutely embarrassing for him, it was also a huge release.
Over his ten sessions he worked through many thoughts and feelings about his family situation and the difficulties he was having at school. He surprised himself by using art materials, especially clay, to express feelings and the counsellor introduced him to a range of self-calming strategies to try out when things were getting too much for him. John tried these out and found them very helpful. Following discussion with the counsellor, John also spoke to his parents about the impact of their ongoing conflict on him and his siblings and the unfair burden of responsibility he was having to shoulder. This led to some positive changes in his family situation.

John says that he is now managing better at school, showing improvement in all areas. Since finishing the counselling, he has twice been back to see the counsellor at times of stress. He calls this “touching base”. He is clear, however, that he does not need to restart weekly counselling and is supported in this by his counsellor and pupil support teacher.

5.10 Summary

All nine service-users interviewed expressed very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the YCS and reported significant therapeutic benefits. Some young people described attending counselling as a life-changing experience.

Young people interviewed presented with a complex range of interacting social, psychological, emotional and behavioural problems which were not markedly different from those that lead to referrals to health and social services. They describe feeling deeply isolated with feelings that threatened to overwhelm them immediately prior to their counselling. They were apprehensive as well as hopeful about counselling.

All interviewees reported positive changes brought about by the counselling. In many cases, service-users described closely linked shifts inside themselves and in their external worlds. All reported improved relationships with others. Other important changes include acceptance of what cannot be changed, including past events; greater acceptance of their own feelings and needs; enhanced capacity to manage their feelings constructively; and the regaining of personal equilibrium. Some interviewees described in detail how their engagement with the YCS had obviated the need for other services.

Interviewees singled out choice, control and confidentiality as key features of the Service, leading to their full engagement and its positive consequences. They also praised the counsellor’s personality, the quality of the relationship she offered, the counselling room and its contents. Young people valued the counsellor’s flexibility and availability between sessions.
Chapter 6

The Perceptions of School Pupils

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the perceptions of school pupils at Airdrie Academy. It draws on two datasets: the results of a questionnaire survey completed by 431 school pupils (39 per cent of the total number of pupils at the school) and 11 focus group interviews each attended by between two and six school pupils, including at least one with each year group. It presents evidence concerning school pupils’ awareness of the YCS, their understandings of counselling, their views about the support needs of young people, their views about potential sources of support and what they want from a youth counselling service.

6.2 Results of the questionnaire survey

6.2.1 Awareness of the YCS

After recording the respondent’s gender and year group, the questionnaire asked whether or not the respondent had heard of the YCS (see appendix 6). Although all pupils had received a leaflet about the Service in the months prior to the implementation of the questionnaire survey, the majority (88.6%) replied that they had not heard of it. Girls are more likely to have heard of the Service than boys: 14.2 per cent of girls and 8.1 per cent of boys indicated that they had heard of it. Younger pupils are less likely to have heard of the Service than older pupils (see figure 6.1).
6.2.2 Young people's worries

The need for a service to support young people with worries was addressed through questions that asked pupils if they knew of other young people who had worries they needed help with and if they had ever experienced worries they needed help with themselves. Just under half of respondents (48.5%) know of other young people who had worries with which they needed help, with girls more likely than boys to know of such needs (see figure 6.2).
A slightly smaller percentage of respondents (43%) stated that they themselves had had worries with which they needed help. Again, girls are more likely than boys to say that they have had worries with which they needed help (see figure 6.3).

Overall, these results indicate a high level of felt need among school pupils, especially among girls.
6.2.3 Sources of support

Respondents were asked where they turn to get support with their worries. The questionnaire invited respondents to tick one or more potential source of support, and about a quarter of respondents did so. As figure 6.4 shows, the great majority of pupils look primarily to friends and family for support. The next most frequently cited source of support consists of other adults such as a doctor, social worker or teacher. Smaller numbers consider the YCS a suitable source of support, which is not surprising since most pupils indicate that they have not heard of the Service. This suggests that for most pupils, referral to the YCS is likely to need to be facilitated by adults. This is reinforced by the fact that a substantial minority of respondents do not know who to turn to for support.

![Figure 6.4: Sources of support to which pupils would turn](image)

Gender differences in choice of support sources are small, except that twice as many boys as girls do not know who to turn to (24.6% compared to 11.9%). Differences by year group are also small, with the percentage citing friends and family tending to decrease with age (92.3% for the new S1 year group, falling to 76.6% for the S5-S6 year group).

6.2.4 Location of the YCS

Pupils were asked to rate how important they perceived a school-based and a community-based youth counselling service. As figures 6.5 and 6.6 show that the majority of school pupils consider that it is quite important or very important to have a counsellor in both locations. Girls are more likely than boys to consider it quite important or very important to have a counsellor in both locations (64.7% compared to 45.9% for the school location and 73.0% compared to 51.0% for the community).
Figure 6.5: The importance of having a counsellor based in the school

Figure 6.6: The importance of having a counsellor based in the community
6.2.5 Pupils’ comments

Pupils were invited to add a comment at the end of the questionnaire, which 25 chose to do. Twelve of these comments expressed confusion, uncertainty or lack of awareness of the YCS. Four expressed negative comments about the existence of the Service, including such remarks as:

“I think the YCS is not important because some people do not want to share problems with people they don’t know. It is OK if you know people but some you can’t trust”

The remaining nine comments expressed support for the Service. Some came from pupils who indicated that they had used the Service; others came from pupils who understand what the Service is for:

“For people who don’t have family that can relate to their problems the YCS would be the perfect solution”

“The youth counsellor has made a great improvement to Airdrie Academy”

“I found talking to people, especially the youth counsellor, is extremely helpful. She is really great to talk to and has helped me a tremendous amount”

“I think this counselling service is really important as some people have greater problems to deal with and don’t have family to help or that help all the time. My friend has used this and it really helps her a lot. I’m grateful it’s there for her.”

6.2.6 Summary

The questionnaire survey shows that the majority of pupils are not aware of the existence of the YCS at their school. Boys and younger pupils are especially likely to be unaware of the Service. However, the majority of pupils are aware of the existence of needs for which they and/or others need help. While most identify family and friends as the most appropriate source of the kind of help they need, a substantial minority either do not know who to turn to, or would turn to the YCS. A majority also support the idea of having a counsellor available in the school and in the community. Overall therefore, although awareness of the Service is limited, needs of the kind for which the Service is designed are widespread, as is support for the existence of a counselling service of the form offered by the YCS.
6.3 Pupil focus groups

6.3.1 Awareness of Counselling and of the YCS

In the focus group interviews, pupils were asked about what they understood counselling to be. Many were unsure, saying that they did not know what it was or hadn’t heard of it. A number of young people confused ‘counsellor’ with ‘councillor’, suggesting that counsellors might help with housing problems or litter, and mentioning social services or government. Others confused ‘youth counsellor’ with the local youth council.

Despite this uncertainty and confusion, many participants were aware that counselling is a way of helping people and that is about “understanding people’s thoughts and feelings”. Some participants gave examples of what they thought counselling is for, such as being listened to, being helped with problems, and being given support and advice. Suggested reasons why people might use a counsellor include: bullying, family problems, parental relationship break-up, anger management, alcohol, drugs, smoking, teenage pregnancy, sexual abuse, death of a family member, problems with school work depression, stress, suicide and peer pressure.

The majority of pupils contributing to focus groups had not heard of the YCS prior to the research, and many said they had not seen the YCS publicity materials. A group of S5-S6 pupils felt that the Service should be more widely publicised, and that their school is poor at giving pupils information.

Some young people who knew about the Service had misconceptions about how it operates: for example, one S2-S3 girl was unaware of the possibility of pupil self-referral, complaining vociferously that the YCS could only be accessed through pupil support teachers.

6.3.2 Pupils’ worries

Pupils have a well-developed understanding of the kinds of problems facing their peer group. When asked which problems are worst in their school, they often disagree with one another. However, overall, the death of someone special is often seen as the worst problem:

“I’d rather be dead than my Ma and Da be dead”

Many pupils cite the permanence of death as the key factor. Others counter that one can get over a death in time, whereas other problems might continue indefinitely. Being bullied is repeatedly identified as an ongoing problem for pupils at the school, particularly amongst the younger age groups:

“Because you don’t know when it [being bullied] is going to stop, unless you get help, and some people don’t get help”
“People get bullied for the slightest thing. Aye, the way they look, the way they talk. The way they dress.”

Chaos at home and parents separating are also felt to be serious problems for young people.

Difficulties with school work are generally felt to be a less serious problem and one for which it is easier to get help:

“It’s so easy to get help with your school work though. It’s a lot easier to get help with that than for any of the other things. You can deal with that a lot easier.”

YP1: You feel a bit more confident talking about your schoolwork. You’d feel a bit uneasy talking about, like
YP2: relationships
YP3: anything like that.

Many young people also display a well-developed understanding of how different problems can be related to one another, with one problem (such as the death of someone special) having knock-on effects in other areas of life (such as feeling angry, which could lead to trouble making friends, being bullied and problems with schoolwork). In particular, many young people feel that problems such as bullying and parents separating can have adverse effects upon school work:

“Chaos at home, that’ll lead onto difficulties with schoolwork because you’ll be thinking about it all day”

“I think being bullied because you don’t know, you’re distracted because you don’t know if they’re going to hit you after class”

YP1: Because when you go to school you’re not going to think, “Oh, mum and dad’s separating that’s fine – maths”. You don’t.
YP2: I know what you mean. And when you’re at school going through that sort of stuff, all you’re really thinking about is going home, because you know that at half three…
Interviewer: … You’ve got to go home, yeah.

6.3.3 Support from friends and family

Focus group participants identify a range of sources to which young people look for help in times of trouble. Family is often mentioned, as are friends. Views vary about which are most important. One important factor concerns who can be trusted. Thus, although friends are often seen as good sources of support, this may not always be the case:

“What if you’ve not got any friends? What if they’re not trustworthy? What if your friends go and tell the whole class? That’s why you’d tell pupil support or a counsellor”
“A lot of young people, like friends, couldn’t understand what I was actually going through because they hadn’t been through it themselves”

Focus group participants also consider how the nature of the problem may influence who one can turn to for support:

“If you have problems with your family, you won’t talk to your family”

“I think there’s only so much you can offload to your family.”

Participants are also aware that friends and family may have their own problems to deal with, making them less available to give support:

“What if they’re sad as well?”

“What if friends have problems of their own?”

A few young people mention older siblings and grandparents as being particularly good sources of help.

6.3.4 Support from teachers

Many young people express negative feelings about teachers’ capacity to provide confidential support:

“I would trust hardly any teachers”

“You could tell them something, they phone your home, ‘hey momma, she done this’ [laughter], like, woah, what you doing?!”

“In the staff room, they laugh at you. Then it gets out through people.”

“There’s been incidents when people have, they’ve told teachers, and then that teacher’s told somebody else and then that teacher’s told somebody else, and it just gets about. And then you’ve got complete strangers coming up to you and being like ‘Are you O.K.?’”

Consequently, the majority of young people do not see teachers as a source of support:

“I wouldn’t tell pupil support because then they would tell [head of year] and every teacher.”

“I know that I probably could talk to them, but I wouldn’t feel comfortable, because someone who’s in a position of authority, they’re not someone who I would think to talk about my personal life with.”
“I’d rather talk to someone who didn’t know me at all than someone who stands in front of a class and teaches you.”

However, a few pupils, particularly those in the lower years, regard some teachers as good sources of support, especially with school problems:

“I would go to pupil support if I was getting bullied inside the school”

“I’d trust the head teacher. But not any that teach me”

“I’d trust my primary seven teacher”.

Some new S1 pupils also mention prefects and sixth year peer supporters as potential sources of support.

6.3.5 Support from counsellors

In general, the young people do not view counsellors as potential sources of support, primarily because they are not convinced that they can talk to or trust someone they do not know:

“You’re better talking to somebody that you know and that you can confide in”

“I just don’t think that I’d want to talk about personal stuff with someone I don’t really know.”

“I’d be more likely to, like, if it was problems at home, talk to my friends, or problems with my friends, talk to my mum and dad about it. I don’t think that I would think to go and talk to someone else.”

“Be better talking to someone that cared about me and knew me. Because with a counsellor, what are they going to care about me for? They don’t know me.”

“The things that I couldn’t talk to my mum about, I’d just try and figure it out for myself, in my head. Because talking to somebody else wouldn’t help me at all. It’s just different personalities.”

Many young people think that counselling could have negative consequences for them:

“People might laugh at you for going.”

“You’ll just get slagged more if you go to counselling”

“They’d be feart [afraid] to [speak to a counsellor] in case something happened. And then you get bullied more.”

However, a few young people report more positive views of counselling:
“The counsellor in my last school, she was good… Because she understood what you said… Very private.”

“I think it’s a really big advantage to have a counsellor within the school. I think we’re, like, privileged to have her. I think that it’s helped a great deal in our school, having known people that have went through it an’ stuff.”

One young person described her experience of counselling with a support worker as having been extremely beneficial:

“she helped, like, so much more, because she just understood more about it. Because I felt a bit, like, I could speak to my family about it, but I just couldn’t tell my family everything. So that’s where the support worker came in, just to offload everything else.”

A number of young people say that they would call ChildLine if they needed confidential help with problems.

6.3.6 The importance of trust

Pupils identify trust as a key factor making them wary of approaching adults for help. They are concerned about how they can find out whether or not a counsellor is trustworthy. Some claim that first impressions suffice, whilst others suggest “scoping out” the counsellor for the first couple of sessions.

“I would go to them a couple of times before I said my question, just to see what they were like”

Some pupils suggest that it might help if the counsellor was introduced to them, so that they knew who he or she is. Others insisted that a counsellor can be trusted because it is their job to help you and not to tell anyone else, adding that you can get to know a counsellor over time.

Some young people insist that no adults can be trusted, and that ultimately you can trust no one at all:

“adults lie to you”

“you can’t trust your friends or adults”

“I don’t tell adults anything. Adults let you down”.

Participants justify this conclusion on the basis of previous experiences. It is echoed by many of the service-users interviewed for this evaluation (see chapter 5) in relation to the specific problems they were experiencing at the time of referral.
6.3.7 What pupils want from a counselling service

Pupils were asked what they would hope for from a counselling service. Common responses were that the counsellor would: give advice, help, support and answers to questions; listen to and understand their problems; be friendly and make them feel comfortable; and be trustworthy and non-judgemental. They also hoped for a confidential service, and they hoped that counselling would make them feel better or more self-confident. Conversely, their greatest fears were that the counsellor would laugh at them, judge them or would not understand them; that the service would not be confidential, with information being passed to their parents or to the police; that they would be stigmatised for using the service; that they would be too uncomfortable or embarrassed to say what their problem was; that they would be forced to talk about something they didn’t want to and/or that their problems would get worse.

The young people were asked whether or not a counselling service should be located within the school. Opinion was divided, with advantages and disadvantages noted for both locations in and out of school. In particular, they were concerned that going to see the counsellor would mark out the young person and make them subject to ridicule from peers. They wanted to ensure that it would be impossible for others to know if a young person was going for counselling. Locating the YCS outside of the school was not perceived as a viable solution, because young people would still be asked where they were going after school. Pupils were also concerned that this would increase the likelihood of parents knowing if a young person was seeing a counsellor.

Where it was discussed, pupils felt that they should have the option of self-referral (as they do), rather than having to access the Service via pupil support staff.

6.3.8 Summary

Pupils’ comprehension of counselling is very varied. Many know that it has to do with helping people with problems, but few have a detailed understanding of how this works. Several confused ‘counsellor’ with ‘councillor’. Most have not heard of the YCS, and some have misconceptions about how the service operates. However, the young people do have a detailed understanding of the kinds of problems faced by pupils at the school, with the death of someone special, bullying and family problems being rated as the most serious. Many young people also point out how problems are often related to each other.

Confirming the questionnaire survey findings, pupils generally feel that friends and family provide the best source of support, although they also articulate circumstances in which it may not be possible to turn to them. Most see teachers as being unsupportive in various ways, objecting in particular to their tendency to breach confidentiality. Many pupils are also sceptical about counselling as a source of support, saying that they would be reluctant to speak to someone that they do not know about personal matters. Their main concern is that they would not be able to trust someone that they do not know to maintain their confidentiality. They are also worried about others finding out that they are going for counselling and being ridiculed for this, or problems getting worse.
When asked what they would hope for from a counselling service, pupils say that the counsellor should give advice, help and support, answer questions and listen to their problems. The counsellor should be trustworthy and confidential, friendly, non-judgmental and should make you feel comfortable. Common fears are breach of confidentiality, stigmatisation for using the service, an unsympathetic counsellor, embarrassment/being unable to talk, and problems getting worse.

Pupils discussed the advantages and disadvantages of locating the counselling service in schools and also in the community. Often these discussions focused on the need for confidentiality when accessing a youth counselling service.
Chapter 7

The Perceptions of Young People in the Community

7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the perceptions of the YCS among young people who use the community centre in which YCS counselling sessions are offered. It draws on two datasets: the results of a questionnaire survey completed by thirteen young people, and three interviews, one with a mixed group of ten young people, one with two young men and one with two young women, all of whom use the community centre. The number of questionnaire surveys returned was disappointing, representing only 5 per cent of those supplied. Nevertheless, the two datasets provide evidence concerning young people’s awareness of the YCS, their understanding of counselling, their views about the support needs of young people, their views about potential sources of support and what they want from a youth counselling service.

7.2 Results of the questionnaire survey

7.2.1 Awareness of the YCS

Only three (23%) of the young people stated that they had heard of the YCS prior to the questionnaire survey, despite the fact that the counsellor previously met and distributed leaflets to the group from which these young people were drawn and posters about the Service clearly displayed at the community centre. Two young people claim to have used the Service, although one of these also claims not to have heard about the YCS before the survey, which suggests that the data collected for this young person may be invalid. The other young person classified the YCS as having been 'a bit helpful'.

7.2.2 Young people's worries

Only two young people report that they know young people who have worries with which they need help, and likewise only two report that they have experienced worries that they needed help with themselves. This contrasts with the data collected both through the focus group and paired interviews with the young people (see below) and through interviews with staff members working with the group, which are included in the chapter on partner agencies (chapter 9), both of which highlight that many young people do have a wide range of support needs.
7.2.3 Sources of support

Figure 7.1 shows to whom young people say they would turn if they needed help with their worries. Compared to school pupils at Airdrie Academy (see figure 6.4), these young people are less likely to feel able to turn to friends and family and more likely not to know who to turn to.

*Figure 7.1: Sources of support to which young people would turn*

7.2.4 The importance and location of the YCS

When asked how important it is to have a counsellor working in school and how important it is to have a counsellor working in the local community, each young person who responded to the questionnaire survey gave the same ratings for each location. Figure 7.2 summarises the results. Compared to school pupils at Airdrie Academy, these young people are less convinced that it is important to have a local youth counselling service.
Figure 7.2: Importance of having a counselling service in school and in the community

7.2.5 Summary

Despite efforts to advertise the YCS at the community centre, only a minority of respondents had heard of the YCS prior to the questionnaire survey. Likewise, only a minority reported that they or other young people they know had worries with which they needed support, a finding which is at odds with other sources of evidence from the community centre. The most likely sources of support are friends and family, with only one young person saying that they would use the YCS in the community centre if they needed help with worries. Almost half of the group said that they did not know who they would go to for help with problems. Respondents had no clear preference for either counselling in school or counselling in the community. They were divided on the importance of a counselling service in either location, with 31 per cent saying that it was not important and 31 per cent that it was quite or very important.

7.3 Interviews with young people at the community centre

7.3.1 Awareness of counselling and of the YCS

Many of the young people in the community centre understand what counselling is, mentioning help with problems, advice, talking and listening to you, discussing issues such as family and school, and confidentiality. Several either know someone who has experience of counselling, or have some personal experience of counselling services. Some have no personal experience of a counsellor, however, and are
unsure of what it might involve. None of the young people with whom the researchers spoke said that they knew that the YCS is available at the community centre.

7.3.2 Young people's worries

In the focus group, the young people ranked the death of someone special and parents separating as the most serious problems faced by young people. Bullying was also seen as a common problem. In the paired interviews, the young people spoke in more detail about a range of issues that might be addressed by counselling, many of which were current concerns for them. These included (in no particular order):

- Being asked to leave home; homelessness
- Arguments at home, with parents
- Gambling
- Trouble with the police
- Trouble at school e.g. being suspended repeatedly
- Anger and frustration
- Rape
- Domestic violence
- Alcohol and drugs
- Depression

7.3.3 Support from family and friends

The two young women interviewed together see friends and family members as important sources of support in times of difficulty, but differ as to whom they trust:

YP1: If I need to talk to anybody, I just go and talk to my best pal, so I do. Aye, you’d think she’s a counsellor, I just sit and talk to her and that, if I’ve ever got any problems, and she talks to me.
YP2: I don’t tell anybody my business, I’m not like that, I can’t do that, in case you fell out with her and then she tells the whole world. I wouldn’t do that.

The first young woman also cited her mother as the first person she would talk to, while the second young woman spoke about using her auntie as a confidante, noting the limitations of this source of support:

“She’s my best pal in the whole world, she’s like a big sister, so she knows most things about me. But sometimes I cannot tell her things, in case I upset her or worry her.”

7.3.4 Support from teachers and other professionals

The two young men interviewed together spoke at length about their negative experiences of schooling, and the lack of effective support for them in that environment. Both had been suspended and eventually excluded from their schools.
One young man spoke about his negative experience of being sent to a school for young people with behavioural difficulties:

“I wouldn’t even call it a school because you don’t do anything. Mental man. See lunchtime, I was in with all these mental xxxx, and I mean they weren’t right in the head… See when I got sent to that school, that just made me worse. There was no point sending me to that, because it makes you think you’re like them.”

The other young man spoke about being given a behaviour card as a way of monitoring his progress, but this had failed to help him control his anger.

One young man spoke about his experience of being bullied in school, which had only ended when he retaliated. He felt that the school’s formal response was ineffectual, and left him with no other realistic option:

“It’s a load of shite, [you] tell them you’re getting bullied and they’ll just, ‘Aye nae bother, we’ll follow it up’… I just went mental one day… just kicked his xxxx in, and nobody ever touched me ever again in the school.”

One young man spoke about being unfairly labelled on the basis of his siblings’ reputation, while another spoke about a teacher behaving violently towards him on one occasion. On the whole, neither had seen their teachers as supportive or trustworthy:

YP1: There were only a couple of teachers in that school I trusted because they liked me.
YP2: My guidance teacher, that was about it.

One young man mentioned ChildLine, social workers and the police as possible source of support for problems such as bullying.

7.3.5 Support from counsellors

The young people were divided on their opinions of counselling. One young woman spoke of a brother who had been to see a counsellor and hadn’t found it helpful. One of the young men had been to a counsellor before, and it had helped “a wee bit but no’ much”. But he said would go back again:

YP: Because I’m having trouble [now]
Interviewer: In what way does it help? Just being able to talk?
YP2: Aye, it’s like, all your anger’s comin’ oot.

Two young men discussed a range of problems that they had experienced at school, and whether counselling might have helped with these:

Interviewer: If you had got counselling when you were at school, would that have helped?
YP1: Aye, maybe it would.
YP2: It would have helped me.
YP1: I dunno about me, I listen with one ear and it goes out the other, with my ma and my da, and my uncle.

One also felt that a counsellor would be likely to collude with a school on issues such as bullying, thus rendering them unattractive as a source of support:

YP1: Because when you go to tell a teacher or something that you’re being bullied, they don’t do anything
YP2: Counsellor’s not the same as a teacher.
YP1: Aye but it’s just the same thing. Because if they go up and tell the school, the school’s got to follow it up, and then you’re going to get bullied even more.

However, one young woman spoke of her experience of counselling in very positive terms. She felt that counselling was valuable:

“Because there’s somebody there to talk to who’s not part of your family, and it’s confidential. And you can tell them anything because it’s not a member of your family. Sometimes a member of your family, you can’t tell them somethings because you’re scared they’re going to go off their head. But if you tell a counsellor, they can’t say nothing, only to my social worker if they think it’s really bad, really serious.”

7.3.6 What young people want from a counselling service

One of the young women felt that none of the young people she knows from the community centre would use the YCS, because they wouldn’t trust someone who they didn’t know well, reiterating the importance of trust discussed in the preceding chapter. The researchers’ experience of the focus group, in which most of the young people said little or nothing, also suggested that the young people who use the centre are wary of sharing information with ‘outsiders’.

The young men insisted that the best counsellor would be someone who had been in the same situation as them:

“Somebody that understands, somebody that’s been there before, that’d be one of the best counsellors...somebody that’s been chucked out the house and that.”

Both spoke positively about having met ex-drug users and ex-alcoholics in drug and alcohol education programmes. They wanted to be able to hear someone’s own story: “My life was ruined, but now it’s back on track”. When asked whether professional training might substitute for experience, the young men were unconvinced:

“Aye but even if they are trained they still don’t know what it’s like.”

“You need somebody that like knows what he’s talking about.”
The young woman who had experience of counselling suggested that counsellors should not press young people to explore things they do not wish to talk about:

“I will not go to this psychiatrist because he freaks me out, I will not go to him. Because he asks too much detailed questions, some counsellors go into too much detail, that just scares them off a bit. Like going too much into their past.”

7.3.7 Summary

Most of the young people at the community centre who participated in the research have a good understanding of counselling and the issues that a young person could go to a counsellor with. These include issues of current concerns to the participants, suggesting the value of having a counselling service in a community setting provided that young people’s distrust and wariness can be overcome.

Despite extensive advertising the young people interviewed did not appear to be aware of the existence of the YCS.

The young people at the community centre offered personal accounts to support their distrust of professionals and also spoke at length about the difficulties young people they knew would have in trusting someone they do not know. However, one young person who had in the past seen a counsellor spoke very positively about the experience.

When asked what they would like from a counselling service the young people spoke about the importance of trust, the value placed on shared experience, and fear of about being forced to talk about things they do not wish to disclose.
Chapter 8

The Views of Pupil Support Staff

8.1 Introduction

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five of the six pupil support staff at Airdrie Academy (83% response rate). The findings generated by these interviews are presented in this chapter in terms of the need for the YCS, trends in demand, experiences of referring pupils, how the YCS relates to other support services, and potential improvements to the Service.

8.2 The need for the YCS

Pupil support staff at Airdrie Academy emphasise the need for the YCS at the school. They report that the YCS offers an important source of support, different from, and beyond that which family and friends can provide:

“We’ve got kids just now who are being supported by their family, and within their class by their pals. But they’re still struggling. We’re needing to put in a wee bit of extra help.”

“Friends aren’t always as supportive maybe, in the right way, or they can’t understand or empathise. If a kid’s having a bereavement issue or a sex abuse issue, with the best will in the world, another child can’t understand that. I think a qualified trained adult beats that hands down.”

“The baggage that kids come to school with is quite phenomenal, and in a lot of cases it’s surprising that they make it here at all in the morning. And if that person’s at least been given a chance to talk to somebody who’s prepared to listen to them, that’s got to be good.”

Pupil support staff highlight the need for expertise additional to, and more specialist than, that which they can provide:

“We wouldn’t be able to do the counselling work that she does. We’re not trained for that.”

“There’s certain levels of response with kids that I think we feel very confident and very happy in dealing with. But there’s always times when we think “Oh sugar”, we need somebody who not only can spend a bit more time but has perhaps got a bit more expertise and knowledge in this area of counselling.”
“When kids are disclosing to me, I can listen, I can empathise, I can do a wee bit, but I can’t help too much, it’s way outwith … and I don’t have the time to sit down with you and follow that through. So I think there’s definitely a need for it”.

“People would give me leaflets on what to say, what to do, and I think ‘I could be doing all the wrong things’, because this is not part of my training. I’ve done some counselling, I’ve done some brief therapy work but it’s not what I do, I’m not trained to do this, and it’s not fair on the young people [if] they’re not getting professional help.”

They also highlight the need for pupils to be able to talk to someone who is not a teacher and who is wholly independent of the teaching staff:

“The kids may be more likely to open up to [the counsellor] than us in the first instance”

“They don’t necessarily want to talk too long and hard to somebody who knows them, or who knows their family, or who knows the set-up. So they’re not keen to disclose an awful lot of information to us at times.”

“Although I hope the kids would trust us, there is always, I think, a slight barrier because we work for the school, whereas [the counsellor] is totally independent.”

“I think if there is somebody else that they can talk to where it’s totally confidential, it’s not going to be somebody who will judge them or perhaps see them in a class the next day.”

“The bells don’t matter to her, and the heads of school don’t matter to her and the referral that I’ve got on the desk for the kid that I need to talk to them about … that doesn’t come into it for [the counsellor]”

Pupil support staff consider that the YCS has been of great benefit to pupils who have used the Service and to themselves:

“I think the children have benefited enormously from [the counsellor] being here and so have we.”

“She’s [the youth counsellor] wonderful!”

8.3 Demand for the YCS

Pupil support staff describe a high level of demand for the YCS, which is increasing as more pupils hear about the YCS and what it does. Pupil support staff are also more aware of the service and more likely recommend it to pupils. Staff therefore think that demand will continue to rise:

“I don’t think there’ll ever be a lack of demand”
Pupil support staff emphasise that if, having become established, the service were to be removed, it would be “disastrous”:

“I remember a few years back we had a social worker who was allocated to the school and spent time in the school working with the kids informally. And that was so, so good. And then all of a sudden funding stopped, it was gone, and then we were left with a void that we couldn’t fill. So [the counsellor] is, she’s irreplaceable.”

8.4 The referral process

The pupil support staff describe referring pupils who have needs of a kind and intensity requiring more time or expertise than they can offer themselves, or who are not responding to the support offered by pupil support staff. They also value the opportunity to discuss potential referrals with the youth counsellor, which increases their confidence in making referrals as well as in their own support work with pupils. They report that having a counsellor in the school is a “resource” for them, providing “a sounding board” to whom they can go for advice about what might be done to support particular pupils:

“Before we had [the YCS], we were trying to be sort of social workers, psychologists. Now we’ve got somebody we can actually go and talk to.”

Pupil support staff report that the current referral system works well, because it is flexible and because they feel confident in the Service

“You can have the confidence that you’ve passed on that child, that they’re going to get the support they need. Whereas in the past you’ve been worried about kids and what might happen next.”

When asked about what might discourage them from making a referral pupil support staff referred to hypothetical situations such as serious legal issues or strong parental objections. They also refer to the fact that the number of counselling sessions available is limited and that this might lead them to refrain from suggesting counselling to a school pupil.

8.5 Relationship between YCS and other support services

Flexibility is described as key to effective pupil support. The larger the range of options, the better pupil support staff are able to respond effectively to problems presented by pupils:

“I think the more people with different expertise and different experiences that you can get involved, you’re likely to find somebody that a kid will relate to”

The YCS has added an extra layer to the options available, “another tool in our armoury”.

77
The YCS is seen as complementing rather than duplicating other forms of service provision. Staff describe other services as stretched and unable to cope with demand: “there’s not enough of the other services to go around!”

Staff refer to the long waiting times associated with other services:

“[before the YCS] it would be to things like the Child and Family Clinic, or it would be a referral to the educational psychologist, which takes forever. Staffing-wise there it’s just a nightmare. Or even Social Work sometimes, till things are sorted or put in place – that can take an awful long time.”

“There’s also sometimes long waiting lists and difficulty in contacting people and getting the right person or even knowing who they are. The Child and Family Centre can be months and months.”

Pupil support staff describe responsiveness as one of the key benefits of the YCS:

“I think kids in particular are looking for somebody now. It’s more useful for them, they perceive it to be more urgent.”

“In a lot of cases I think if we actually dealt with some of these low level things, the bigger ones wouldn’t come. So I think it’s actually – quicker input is beneficial to us”.

Pupil support staff consider that communication between the YCS and other services is good. They report that the YCS works with – and may refer children on to – the educational psychologist, the school nurse, social work, drugs advice services, etc. The counsellor attends the school’s Joint Assessment Team (JAT) meetings with psychological services, deputy heads and the partnership officer.

Pupil support staff report that their access to other services has improved as a result of having the YCS. The counsellor has good contacts with local services and has raised staff awareness of what is available.

8.6 Potential improvements to the YCS

Pupil support staff describe the main weakness of the YCS as being the limited availability of the YCS counsellor:

“Because [the counsellor] isn’t here all the time, there’s a gap. It’d be great to have someone here full-time. And I think it’s something we could easily use, somebody full-time.”

They value her willingness to see distressed pupils briefly outwith counselling sessions, when she helps to calm things down or to offer reassurance. They describe these as “emergency” situations and these add to their sense that the YCS could be improved by having a youth counsellor in school throughout the school day and week:
“It’s the emergency issue really because she’s [the counsellor] split timetable. Different places. When something arises it would be perfect to say, even if she’s with someone ‘can you, in the next hour or whatever, see this person?’ and invariably she would do it if she was here”.

Overall, therefore, the resounding message from the pupil support staff is that the YCS could be improved by becoming full-time: “can we get her full-time now?” They argue that this would improve the effectiveness of the service by:

a) increasing capacity in line with increasing demand
b) enabling better continuity of care especially in the event of unexpected events or episodes of acute distress when the counsellor is not in school
c) creating greater flexibility in appointment times

Pupil support staff also suggest that the YCS would benefit from a higher profile among other teachers who are not pupil support staff. Although the counsellor has talked to all teachers at the school, pupil support staff feel that some of them are not yet sufficiently aware of the YCS and how it works.

8.7 Summary

Pupil support staff describe the YCS as an excellent addition to the types of support available to pupils, which responds effectively to a substantial pool of needs that cannot be met by themselves or by friends and family. They report substantial and increasing demand of the Service. In addition to the direct benefits to pupils, they experience the YCS as a resource that enables them to do their own jobs more effectively because consulting with the youth counsellor may help them to make fuller use of other services and may help them in their own support work with pupils.

For pupil support staff the best way to improve the Service would be for the YCS to employ a full-time member of staff at Airdrie Academy, to provide continuity of presence within the school, and meet to rising demand for the service.
Chapter 9

The Views of Staff at Partner Agencies and Other Referrers

9.1 Introduction

With the assistance of the counsellor at the YCS, the researchers approached staff at sixteen partner agencies in the community for interviews. This generated seven interviews (44% response rate) one of which was in the form of a written response. The researchers also drew on suggestions made by other members of the advisory group and their own contacts to seek interviews with staff in local community organisations. This led to interviews with staff from a further three agencies.

Contact was made (sometimes on numerous occasions) with nine partner agency staff on the list provided by the counsellor without an interview being carried out. Members of staff at these agencies gave a variety of reasons as to why they declined to be interviewed. These were often related to a lack of knowledge or contact with the YCS. Sometimes the initial contact name no longer worked at the agency. Other staff had not heard of the YCS and therefore felt unable to comment on the service. On five occasions alternative members of staff were suggested. These suggestions were followed up but without success. Most of the partner agencies that did not give interviews for the evaluation expressed an interest in being networked with the YCS, saying that this is a service they would like to know more about.

One parent who had referred her child to the YCS was also interviewed and her responses are also included in this chapter.

This chapter presents findings from interviews with partner agencies and other actual or potential referrers, summarising accounts of contact with the YCS, views of the purpose of the YCS, perceptions of the need for the YCS, experiences of the referral process, the strengths of the YCS and ideas about potential improvements to the Service.

9.2 Contact and relationship with the YCS

The partner agencies with which interviews were conducted have all had some form of direct contact with the current youth counsellor. The most common way in which they report that became aware of the YCS was through meeting the current youth counsellor at networking events or local conferences. Some interviewees have also seen leaflets in GP surgeries and one person had found the service through an internet search.
Those who had referred to the YCS found the service approachable and felt they had developed a good relationship with the service:

“I think it’s really good to be able to just lift the phone and speak to the counsellor.”

“it’s very accessible and certainly having [the counsellor’s] mobile number is very accessible, it’s really handy. She certainly offered me it, which I felt was fantastic – you know if you were concerned you can get them or leave them a message and I’m sure they’d get back to you.”

The partner agency staff had initially heard about the YCS in a variety of ways. The following promotional/information material was mentioned:

- Information packs about the YCS that were available in their own offices
- Advertisements at the local GP
- The YCS website
- A reference to the YCS in the North Lanarkshire Parent Post

Staff at many of the partner agencies had heard about the YCS through meeting the youth counsellor at local networking meetings, conferences or because they are also based at the community centre.

The integration of the YCS into partner agencies’ information systems varied. Some interviewees were very aware of the existence of the Service and when they would use it:

“I was really interested in thinking that perhaps some of the children that I see that are going through other issues … then that Service would always be available. And so it happens it was only a few months after our first meeting I think that I recognised there was a young girl that I thought could maybe benefit from [the counsellor’s] input.”

Others relied on colleagues to remind them of the Service when necessary:

“This girl really needed a bit more input, and I was asking around and that jogged my memory. So I knew she was around but I didn’t know where she was and it was a colleague from here – my mental health and addictions colleague here – gave me her name and I found her.”

One interviewee felt their contact with the YCS had been limited, and, although leaflets had been distributed to the agency concerned, stated that they did not have information about the YCS in the right format:

“But again that’s me gaining from a conversation with her [the counsellor] and from other people, but I never had any information in a readily dispensable way.”
9.3 The purpose of the YCS

Most of those interviewed demonstrate a clear understanding of the role of the YCS accurately describing it as somewhere that young people of secondary school age in the Airdrie area can go for confidential help from a trained youth counsellor:

“[it provides] a safe therapeutic environment where children can offload.”

“Just to help counsel children with problems.”

“I understand it, in its broadest terms, to be an opportunity for young people to access counselling on a wide spectrum of needs from fairly low impact stuff right through to high tariff young people who are at risk from self harm etc.”

However, misunderstandings about how the Service works are also evident as in the following statement which incorrectly assumes that young people cannot self-refer:

“There has to be some ownership of the Service by young people. At present it’s held, no disrespect intended, but the health board appear to have parachuted in something with their criteria and their perception of what young people need as opposed to… [what the young people might ask …].”

As with pupil support staff, partner agency staff also perceive the YCS as a service that effectively supports them in their own role because it deals with problems outwith their own expertise:

“for my purposes, [the YCS helps by] dealing with problems that I am not equipped to deal with.”

“its basically another support hand for us.”

The interviewees mentioned the role of the YCS as a “signposting service to other services as well”. One discussed how the youth counsellor had helped her to make a referral to another service, which would not accept a direct referral from the interviewee for a young person she was working with. This demonstrates that the YCS has had an impact on the wider support network that exists in the community, and as one partner agency said the YCS helps in her work:

“because I think if you’ve got any problems that you are unsure of how to deal with, I think it’s really good to be able to just lift the phone and speak to the counsellor who can then advise you or suggest that you can refer on.”

9.4 The need for the YCS

The interviewees stress that there is “absolutely” and “definitely” a need for the YCS:

“Our youth workers are approached on a nightly basis to talk about issues with young people. So that would presuppose that young people have issues to discuss.”
“We need it, we do need it.”

One interviewee states that the need for a youth counselling service is greater than ever because of “peer pressure and alcohol misuse”.

Partner agency staff refer to the lack of alternative services available for young people locally before the YCS started:

“Before the youth counselling service, what I would do is try and work with the child through some of the issues that were coming up, but this was often very difficult and you’d end up giving them a card with a helpline number which was for the organisation that is set up in Dundee. But most of the time they wanted someone that they could speak to on a face-to-face basis”

“It’s an area that just hasn’t been looked into in terms of young people and what their issues are. There’s nothing in the area and GP counsellors won’t be appropriate either for the same reason, they’re not set up in a way that would encourage the young person to talk.”

Like pupil support staff at Airdrie Academy, partner agency staff highlight the need for expertise additional to or complementing their own, including occasions when a young person using an issue-based service presents with other issues:

“We’re not trained [in counselling] to do that, so you can’t, can’t offer that to them [the young people].”

“I’m very aware that I am not a counsellor, although a lot of the sessions can come close to it, and a lot of people are asking you things and I think I’m not really qualified to answer. I know that there is [the youth counsellor] now, and that we can refer on.”

“We have no skills to deal in a therapeutic way with young people in that sense. We’re a youth service that offers support and encouragement and so forth – confidence building and such like, but having information to pass on to young people to access services they need … is beneficial.”

“We aren’t trained counsellors. If they’ve done something … or if they need somebody to speak to, I will listen, but I can’t give them advice and that, I’m not trained to do that and I’m not going to kid on that I’m trained.”

“Part of my remit is quite specific to looking at the impact of mental ill-health issues. If other issues come up, or if it was something that wasn’t really actually related to mental ill-health, it is not within my remit.”

Overall, the interviewees strongly support the YCS because it adds something different and important to the pre-existing range of support services for young people:

“There is a real general feeling around a lot of the Airdrie areas and North Lanarkshire that there is not an awful lot of services out there, unless specific
to things like drugs and alcohol. I quite liked the idea that it was general counselling for a wide range of issues”

“it would be an addition to what we could advise young people to access if they see the need.”

“the young women that contact us are looking for something quite specific to them, and I think there was no youth orientated counselling in the area”

Some of those interviewed emphasised that they were prepared to travel across the Airdrie LHCC area to enable young people to access the YCS:

“the only problem I have is that she [the counsellor] is so far away […] I’m taking the young person over and it’s taking quite a chunk out of my time”

Interviewees were asked about other services they have used to support young people. One respondent discussed a counselling service they used to ‘buy in’ on an ad-hoc basis, and which used to work quite well, but which was stopped because it was too expensive. Also the project considered the YCS to be a more effective source of counselling because the service used previously was perceived as having sometimes “hung on” to young people longer that necessary when the people themselves felt ready to move on.

9.5 The referral process

9.5.1 Quality of information for making referrals

Five of the partner agency staff interviewed have successfully referred one or more young people to the YCS. One further partner agency has been in contact with the YCS about a referral, which had been discussed with the youth counsellor, leading to a decision to refer to another, more appropriate, service.

All of the interviewees whose job may involve making referrals to the YCS are confident that they have the necessary information to do so. The interviewees are positive about the referral packs they had received from the YCS. These included “really good” consent forms and information leaflets for young people and parents. Some express uncertainty about the criteria for making referrals, although most of these concerns are accompanied by the comment that partner agency staff are able to contact the counsellor for clarification.

All the interviewees that have made referrals are satisfied with their contact with the YCS. When asked whether they felt the referral process was working effectively the typical response is: “Yes, definitely, there hasn’t been a problem with that”.

The networking activities undertaken by the youth counsellor have also assisted partner agency staff to feel confident about making referrals:
“I mean we’ve met the youth counsellor and I think that made a difference – knowing who we were referring to. I mean I meet up with her for lunch, so I know her quite well really, we’ve got quite a good relationship.”

9.5.2 Circumstances in which referrals are made

The interviewees were asked about the situations in which they would suggest a referral to a young person. The sort of issues the cited as suitable for referring a young person to the YCS include:

- low self esteem
- abuse
- chaos at home
- anger management
- bullying
- problems at home
- bereavement
- self-harming
- when the young person needed to talk over their problems
- trauma
- family issues
- alcohol and substance abuse
- problems at school

The interviewees were asked if there was anything that would discourage them from approaching the YCS about a young person, or any reason why they would choose not to suggest the YCS to a young person. As expected, if the partner agency staff felt the young person’s issues fell within their remit and they could support them, they would not suggest a referral.

The interviewees stress that they only make appropriate and thoughtful referrals to the YCS. Some are acutely aware that the youth counsellor has a finite caseload available and emphasise that they check for other appropriate support services before making a referral:

“I wouldn’t just refer willy-nilly you know.”

“if I’ve gone through all my steps and linked in with other organisations and still I’m not getting anywhere, then I’ll maybe make referral to [the counsellor], if the young person agrees.”

Other make their own judgements about which young people should be given priority in making referrals:

“probably, if there were more youth counsellors, then you would be referring sooner rather than later, but with only one person there, then, it comes down to priority.”

A few interviewees mention finding out who else is involved in supporting the young person before making a referral and forming an holistic understanding of the young
person's life in order to guard against involving too many professionals in a young person's life:

“it’s important that you don’t involve too many people with a child that is having problems.”

9.5.3 How referrals are facilitated

Partner agency staff facilitate referrals to the YCS in a variety of ways. Some provide information regarding the YCS to young people who they think could benefit from seeing the youth counsellor, presenting the young person with the opportunity for self-referral. Others facilitate referrals more actively, giving the young person the YCS leaflets, discussing with them the option of referral, and contacting the YCS on behalf of the young person.

In line with YCS protocols, the partner agency staff are clear that the young person must decide whether or not they want to use the YCS, so that referral cannot happen without the young person's agreement:

“Obviously, if they didn’t want me to [refer them to the YCS] … I think that is a big issue – they would obviously have to give me the okay.”

“We can’t force them to go to the YCS, but we let them know that the availability is there, and also that it would be nice for them to go and have somebody outwith, who doesn’t know them, just to chat and view how they’re feeling. But nobody’s taken it up as yet.”

The interviewees are aware that young people may find self-referral difficult for a number of reasons including stigma, uncertainty about what counselling is, reluctance to trust a stranger and reluctance to see themselves as needing help.

“I would say it would have to an adult or somebody older who would just tell them. I don’t honestly think they would refer themselves.”

“I think a lot of the kids in this environment are very protective of who they are, what their feelings are and question who is actually going to make a difference by them telling somebody anyway? I mean what is the point of going to a counsellor? What are they going to do? Are they going to go home and stop the abuse at home? Are they going to stop the drug-taking at home, the alcohol at home? They don’t see the benefit of counselling and they’re too narrow-minded to actually see that talking to somebody can sometimes help. They’re very, very tight with their emotions.”

“But they [the young people at one of the projects] don’t understand how they feel about it, so they need people, they definitely need counselling. They need it for drugs, alcohol, emotional issues. It’d be so sad if it wasn’t used.”
Some of the partner agency staff see their own role as facilitating a young person’s awareness of the need for counselling to the extent of coaxing them into it because counselling is not part of the everyday worlds of the young people.

“I think they [young people] would rather try and work out things themselves, or speak to somebody in their peer group. But I think if someone came to them, be it ourselves, or be it a family member, or somebody just that wee bit older going “look I really do think that there maybe somebody that you can talk to, maybe somebody that can give you a wee bit more information than I can give you”, then the demand is there and they need it then and they can see that themselves. But for them to recognise it themselves is very doubtful and especially with the area we are in at the moment, because they don’t see that all the time, they don’t have people going “oh, I was at my counsellor”. In places like America, that’s an everyday occurrence whereas, here … If we can turn round and talk to them … or even a parent going – maybe somebody just a wee bit independent who doesn’t see you everyday, and then they go “yeah I think maybe you’re right then”. I think it works that way.”

9.5.4 Referral by parents

Another perspective on the referral process was provided by the parent who was interviewed. She was pleased with the quick response she received from the youth counsellor after contacting the YCS mobile phone number. She reported that the referral process was eased by the counsellor visiting her child prior to the first counselling session:

Parent: What she [the counsellor] did was, after I spoke to her, she came up to the house to speak to me and to speak to [child’s name] to basically say to both of what the whole counselling was going to entail and just to basically get to know her, that sort of thing.

Interviewer: Did you find that really helped having her come round?

Parent: Yes of course, because my daughter was worried about the confidentiality bit.

9.6 The accessibility of the YCS

Partner agency staff report that several features of the YCS help to make it accessible to a wide range of young people. Its location in both the school and the community centre is one factor cited:

“So there was a kind of general sense from me that that the counsellor because she was based in schools, and I’m in and out of schools, there was a very accessible service really.”

“I think the health centre and places that I would see young women in are inappropriate and sometimes that will scare them off. The surroundings, that
kind of thing, which I think in any counselling setting is really important – it is important to get the right location”

“I think it is good, because this building [the community centre] gets so many kids, if it’s here and it’s offered to them on a plate then I think it would maybe help them go.”

Ease of contacting the Service, the approachability of the youth counsellor, confidentiality and non-judgementalism also aid accessibility:

“I like the idea in the leaflet for example that you can text or you can call a mobile, you can email or that kind of thing, so it made it really friendly, child friendly, for the youngsters just now to be able to contact.”

“The youth counsellor is a very nice, open, approachable person, and seems knowledgeable.”

“… I think that ability to be anonymous – for the young people.”

“… someone there to talk to, not patronising, will listen and won't judge you because I thought ‘oh I'm a bad parent’.”

9.7 The effectiveness of the YCS

Partner agency staff and others who have referred to the YCS report that the Service has been effective in helping and supporting the young people:

“Well, I would say that there was a downhill slide, in [her] behaviour but since she been on it [the YCS] I saw a vast improvement.”

“Certainly in that case [young person referred to the YCS] that was fine and I think that she came out and her perception of the session was very good. She hasn’t wanted to go back, but things kind of within her life, within her family changed, and I think that contributed to her not returning, rather than anything that the counsellor or the service was providing.”

9.8 Potential improvements to the YCS

9.8.1 Extending the Service beyond Airdrie

Some of the partner agencies that have referred to the YCS serve areas that extend beyond Airdrie. They are keen for the YCS to be extended to other parts of North Lanarkshire:

“In the future I’d like to see it more widespread.”

“I would like to have more – one [youth counselling service] in every school.”
“you know there are restrictions … there are women that could benefit from our services but they are outside North Lanarkshire and I think that would be the same for the youth counselling service if it were specific to Airdrie.”

“There are not enough of them. I believe that the Airdrie youth counsellor is the only one.”

9.8.2 Further promotional activities

As previously noted, despite the systematic networking activities undertaken when the Service was first set up, awareness of the YCS remains uneven. Some partner agency staff are therefore keen for the Service to undertake further promotional activities:

“I think this is one of the failings of the Service – there has been no contact.”

“Maybe every so often they [the YCS] could you know come and give us a wee talk on it just to [keep us informed]. If there is anything new that they’re developing or bringing in it would be good to be updated.”

Some interviewees were under the impression that the YCS has been more focused on school settings than community settings. For example one interviewee claimed that the youth counsellor had visited other schools, which she has not done (although she has met with representatives from other schools):

“I know she [the counsellor] gets round the secondary schools and I know that the schools are very successful so there must be something we can transport for that. Why is it successful there and not so successful in the community?”

Partner agency staff suggest a variety of places in which the YCS might be advertised:

- schools
- Active Step (a lottery funded program that works with children who are non-attenders or who have been expelled)
- police stations
- homeless units
- leisure centres
- anywhere that young people hang about

9.8.3 Raising the profile of the Service with young people

Partner agency staff working with young people are acutely aware of the challenges of gaining the trust of young people:

“They [young people] don’t trust anybody, they wouldn’t trust anybody with holding their fags, never mind holding their thoughts.”
Interviewees also note that lots of the young people they work with are likely to have had negative experiences of being made to talk to a ‘professional’ (as confirmed by young people themselves – see chapter 7). They suggest that this may result in negative perceptions of counselling, which can be changed by building up trust:

“It’s like anybody – you’re not going to go into a pub and sit with somebody and talk to them and start saying, “oh by the way my whole life scenario is”, because they’ve asked you. It’s the same with the kids – you can’t do that. And it’s nice for them to get rid of the stigma, as well, with counsellors.”

In this context interviewees often responded to questions about how to improve the YCS by draw on their own experiences of working with young people:

“I think it’s got to work in conjunction with [other agencies] … interacting a wee bit more with training centres […] I think there has got to be a wee bit more rapport-building with the trainees first.”

“…there needs to be a relationship or some sort young people won’t access an adult service and I think that it’s unfortunate if the counsellor has no relationship with young people because there’s hardly likely to be access.”

“The only thing that I would say is for [the YCS] to be more visible, I mean as in the youth counsellor’ coming in and going “I’m here, hi, how are you doing” and gaining the trust with them before we have to get to the referral stage with them. I think that would be the only thing that I would maybe try and make a wee bit different.”

Some interviewees consider that the best way of raising the profile of the YCS is through young people themselves:

“Young people spread the good news faster than anything else”

“If you get people to come in, not sharing their problems, but saying ‘I’ve done this [gone to counselling] and it isn’t bad’ … Getting real life accounts - because it really is a big stigma with them – they say, ‘I’m not going to a counsellor, what would I need that for’ because they think it’s a bad thing. It is re-educating basically, saying ‘it’s not a bad thing, come on I’ve done it’. Or ‘I’m not a bad person look at me, I’ve done this, I’ve been here, I’ve bought this t-shirt and look at me I’m ready to go in and be at the workplace, I’m ready to move on, I’ve got my own house now and kids blah, blah, blah’ that kind of thing. Seeing a success story at the end of it and seeing at the beginning of it ‘no they weren’t such a bad person they were just a person in my situation that just needed that wee bit of extra help’”

9.9 Summary

Knowledge about the YCS varies widely among partner agency staff. Those that have taken note of its existence and understand how it works argue that it is a much-needed Service and strongly support its location in the community as well as Airdrie
Academy. Those who have either referred young people to the Service or consulted with the youth counsellor, are overwhelmingly positive about their interactions with the YCS. They find the YCS to be a useful support for young people and for themselves in their own roles. They are satisfied with the information they have received from the YCS and with the referral process. They appreciate the approachability of the youth counsellor and the variety of ways in which they can make contact with the Service.

Staff from some partner agencies have not yet integrated information about the YCS into their working knowledge of local services for young people. Others are not well-informed about how the Service works, for example not realising that the Service welcomes self-referrals. Further networking and promotional activities would be appreciated by these agencies.

The resounding message from the partner agencies is that there is a need for the YCS and that they would like to see the service expanded to enable more young people to access youth counselling services across North Lanarkshire.
Chapter 10

The Youth Counselling Service Advisory Group

10.1 Involvement with the YCS: Partnership Approach

The advisory group for the YCS reflects an inter-agency approach to service provision, and includes representatives from education, health and social work sectors, straddling statutory and voluntary sector settings. Six of the eleven members of the advisory group gave interviews (55% response rate). They had become involved with the YCS through a variety of routes, some having been involved in the conception of the YCS and others coming on board once it was set up. They report that the advisory group has worked together effectively, with no ‘insurmountable obstacles’. They became involved with the YCS because of their different expertise and experience, which is perceived as necessary to support and shape provision at the YCS. This combined involvement from education, health and social work is seen as something positive that should be continued:

“because everybody needs to commit to it and be involved in the thinking around it.”

10.2 The purpose of the YCS

Overall, the advisory group agree that the purpose of the YCS is to support young people and staff that work with young people whether this is in the school or community setting:

“To offer support to any young person... the idea behind it is that you don’t have to come with a social work label to get support.”

“Another avenue for pupils to seek support or advice on issues that they might not, otherwise take to the pupil support staff in school.”

“To provide a service for young people locally.”

“The purpose of it primarily, quite simply, was to support. I saw it from about supporting staff in the school ... Of course obviously it’s going to support the young people, but in supporting them it’s actually supporting the staff because the reality, as a guidance teacher, as a pupil support teacher, you're limited in the amount of time you can spend with one individual.”
10.3 The need for the YCS

The advisory group members stressed the importance of the YCS as providing a unique service to young people in the area. Its uniqueness hinged on the ability of the YCS to be an early intervention service that provides long term support, with the space and time for young people to feel they are being listened to.

“If you’re a young person who has a problem … a young person who most certainly doesn’t have any kind of serious problem in linking to social work, there really isn’t anything on the ground. So that was our starting point.”

“There are mental health services but you need to be really at the final stage of having a mental health problem before you’re able to access that. There was also at the time a big waiting list… What we looked at was that there was nothing to help young people locally even if they were stressed out. It had to be a major problem before they were able to access any kind of help.”

“The service would fill in the gap between what guidance staff, school staff, and the CAMHS team could do. There seems to be a need for early intervention over a sustained period of time … and I think that opportunity for short term early intervention seemed to be a pressing need.”

“I see it as a, as an extension of the guidance staff…The reality is, in a typical secondary school, no matter where you are, staff don’t have that luxury of being able to have a small case load. Well and I’m sure [the youth counsellor] might challenge whether [her load] is small or not, but they have a case load of individuals who they can spend a bit of time with … when it gets to be a really challenging situation or when it’s a very difficult situation or whether issues around child protection or issues about suicide or self-harm – where it’s not a case of just coming in, have a five minute chat, then “sorry I’m away to teach a class” or “oh there the bell goes, cheerio”, or “there’s the phone, I’d better take it”. That’s not to rubbish the work that the guidance staff are doing.”

10.4 The effectiveness of the YCS

There was strong consensus that the YCS is effective in meeting what the advisory group perceived as the purpose of the YCS and that it is currently providing a ‘very useful’ service. The advisory group members have not had direct contact with the service-users, so their perception of the effectiveness of the service is based on their involvement with the school, the youth counsellor, the community centre and partner agencies.

“The fact is that the project [the YCS] has allowed that extension, that development, that support to the staff, that support to the school, that support to the parents, the support to everybody in that community.”

“I think what is quite good about this project is that it is not specifically set up just for young people who are some way ‘in the system’, but it is open to young people for a wide range of issues, and some of them might not
necessarily be serious mental health issues but they may nevertheless affect young people’s mental health.”

“I’d just reinforce the fact that I think it’s a first class project, it’s doing a power of good, it’s very supportive of the school and of the community. I can’t think of any negative things.”

The effectiveness of the YCS (mostly talked about in the context of the school setting) is attributed to:

- getting the “right person” for the post of youth counsellor; the quality and professionalism of the YCS counsellor
- the integration of the YCS into the school support system: it “all gelled quite well” as the youth counsellor has “become part of the team”, aided by the Joint Assessment Team meetings that take place in the school
- the networking of the youth counsellor, who is “putting herself out there at different meetings” and contributing to local developments
- the groundwork having been “very thoroughly covered” by the youth counsellor before the YCS began seeing service-users in the school through the production of a comprehensive set of paperwork that the school staff could ask questions about and input into.
- the way the service was promoted in the school: in a “low key way but youngsters were made aware of the service and its existence and I think that it’s gone well”

10.5 Areas for development

Whilst there is a recognition that the YCS in the school has been particularly successful, some of the advisory group members feel that (resources permitting) there should now be a focus on developing the community-based side of the YCS, something that is also reflected in the interviews with the partner agencies (see chapter 9).

The location of the YCS in the community is deemed as important. Although location in the school creates a “captive audience” for the YCS, advisory group members emphasise the importance of making the YCS accessible to young people who are not at school or for whom the school is not the right environment:

“It’s [school] not always the appropriate place for young people to access services like that, I mean some would be quite happy with that but others don’t and I think it is important that you’ve got the two options really.”

To develop the community-based side of the YCS, the advisory group members suggest the need for more effective advertising and networking so that:

“young people knew it was there, and would be able to access it. I mean not a kind of drop-in thing, because it needs to be more than that, but if they’re aware that the service is there and aware what is provided, then they might access it more in a community setting as well.”
In this context it should be noted that some young people are referring themselves to the YCS at the community centre.

Some advisory group members echo staff from partner agencies (chapter 9) in stressing the importance of developing relationships with the young people at local community projects. Some consider that a slightly different approach to that taken in the school may therefore be necessary. For example, the anonymity of the youth counsellor might need to be partially sacrificed to develop a client base in the community, a comment made with awareness of the delicacy of such issues:

“The whole quandary about trying to assure confidentiality, which I think you can, but at the same time, in certain areas, maybe letting young people see you so they don’t think you’re this faceless person, or it’s like ‘oh god I need to get into that room and I don’t know who’s in that room’ – I think that would be quite daunting for some young people, particularly young people who haven’t accessed services before.”

There is a desire to see the YCS become more integrated with staff and community groups, like it has so successfully achieved in the school. The advisory group members suggest developing stronger links with:

- Local training organisations, especially for young people aged 16-18
- Community learning and development staff
- Health visitors, especially those working with young women, possibly postnatal care.
- Encouraging the spread of the YCS by word of mouth through the young people:

“Young people hear from other young people about the services available to them.”

Some of the advisory group members mentioned the role of the current counsellor in the future development of the service. Although the advisory group were asked about the YCS as a service rather than about the individual counsellor the members talked about the approach and skills of the current youth counsellor as crucial to the success of the current service and therefore also for its future development:

“I think, my concern would be that a lot of the how the YCS has turned out well is pinned on the individual worker and how she is.”

“When something’s built around one worker the strengths of, and the value is – I’ve seen how it is connected to [the youth counsellor] and how she is. So I would hope it would continue because it has been really effective. I would hope, if it was going to grow and develop that [the youth counsellor] would have some sort of role in that. I’d talk to her about how it might grow and what kind of people she would be looking for to join her. I think it would be really important that she’s in a good position to have a lead in developing a service like this.”
10.6 The future of the YCS

The advisory group members consider that the pilot has gone well and that the Service should be sustained. There is, therefore, unanimous support for the continuation of the YCS. There is a sense that to remove the YCS now would leave a significant gap in the provision of support to young people, and would be a massive blow for the school and community staff and young people who are in contact with the YCS, for whom the service is now ‘part and parcel’ of their existence. Uncertainty over the future availability of the YCS is therefore cause for concern.

Hopes for the future of the YCS are that the effectiveness and success of this pilot will be recognised and future funding secured:

“I think the main thing for us is about sustainability. One of the other issues for me is that this was meant to be a pilot in Airdrie, and I think to be fair to other young people in Lanarkshire it is about how we share these experiences. A pilot is meant to inform other developments. I think that there is a big issue about health services for young people more widely […] I would hate for us to continually pilot things that are successful, but then it’s like ‘oh well we don’t have funding’ and then ‘oh right okay we’ll pilot another health service for young people, oh right we don’t have funding to continue that’.”

“I think the pilot has gone very well. I think that it’s gaining in credibility with the youngsters and becoming an embedded aspect of pupil support in the school. I think that the way society is going just now, there’s more and more need for a whole range of supports, be it psychologists, or social workers or teachers working more closely together to try to resolve many of these young peoples issues and problems and concerns.”

“The big concern is what happens when the money runs out … As I say the council are working extremely closely with NHS Lanarkshire and already funding a number of different posts and I’d like to think that this would be something that could be supported within the council. I’m not the person that holds those purse strings so it’s easy for me to say that. But I will certainly be asking questions of the powers that be to see whether or not it is something that can be considered.”

With extra funding and more staff at the YCS then the service could be:

“more responsive to the needs of young people so you could publicise it better.”

Members of the advisory group interviewed strongly support the continuation of a multi-agency approach to the YCS. No strong opinions were expressed about which sector should provide continuation funding: the over-riding concern is simply that the YCS should continue.

To ensure the continuation of the YCS, advisory group members suggest that the evaluation needs to be taken to strategic levels, so that the effectiveness of the
Service is more widely recognised and its achievements shared with areas beyond Airdrie:

“it is about how does this piece of work inform the mental health agenda for young people across NHS Lanarkshire and I think there has to be quite a debate had around that and I know that that’s not happening at the moment. Otherwise we’ll just continually do wee small pieces of work and however effective they are, they go nowhere because we’re not linking, we’re not giving the information up to the more strategic offices and we’re not sharing that practice.”

10.7 Summary

The advisory group for the YCS reflects an inter-agency approach to service provision, which is perceived by those involved to have worked well. The input from health, education and social work is seen as one of the Service’s strengths.

The advisory group members consider the YCS pilot to be a success and believe that the Service is working effectively enough to continue and to develop. This effectiveness is discussed in terms of the unique service that the YCS provides in the area and its success in providing support to local young people and staff in both the school and the community. The advisory group agree that there is a need for the YCS to continue both in the school, where it has a captive audience, and in the community, where young people who cannot or will not access the service through the school can experience the benefits of the YCS.

Advisory group members are particularly impressed by the success of the YCS in the school setting, attributing this to the integration of the Service with the pupil support system. If resources allow, they would like to see this success mirrored in the community setting, through more intensive relationship-building with the workers and young people. It was suggested that for the YCS to be more successful in the community, a slightly different approach may be needed, which would involve increasing the visibility of the youth counsellor.

Overall, the perspectives of advisory group members are consistent with the information and views gathered from the school staff and partner agencies regarding the YCS.
Chapter 11

Summary and Discussion of Findings

11.1 Who contacts and uses the YCS

The young people who make use of the YCS include boys and girls across the target age range, from a range of neighbourhoods in and around Airdrie. Those using the Service at the school include an equal number of boys and girls, while among those using the Service in the community setting, girls substantially outnumber boys. In both locations, those aged 14-16 are the most numerous, but some younger and older children also attend.

The reasons for seeking counselling vary widely, with the most numerous arising from family circumstances (especially fractured families), problematic relationships with family members, and young people’s own emotional experiences. Over half of YCS service-users present with two or more issues for which they are seeking help. A recent study of the incidence of psychological trauma and post-trauma symptoms among primary school pupils in Clackmannanshire found that experiencing multiple traumatic events and different types of trauma was more likely to lead to post-trauma symptoms (O’Connor and Russell, 2004). A substantial number of YCS service-users cite traumatic events (such as family bereavement, parental separation or divorce, sexual abuse) and symptoms that may be generated by such events (such as anger and depression) in their requests for counselling. This indicates that the Service is used by young people experiencing high levels of psychological distress. Some are already in contact with statutory services when they begin counselling.

The great majority of service-users in Airdrie Academy are referred by pupil support staff. However, the school-based service also sees pupils who have self-referred or been referred by others. Service-users in the community setting are more likely to self-refer, with a wide range of others, including parents, also facilitating referrals.

Pupil support staff, staff at partner agencies and others contact the YCS to discuss potential referrals. They report that the availability of the youth counsellor for such discussions helps them to do their jobs more effectively both by assisting in decisions about referrals and in a more general way.

11.2 The organisation and delivery of counselling at the YCS

As well as receiving referrals from partner organisations, the YCS sometimes refers young people on to other kinds of services deemed to be more appropriate to their needs. A substantial minority of young people referred to the YCS see the counsellor only once. Those who continue with weekly sessions see the counsellor for widely varying numbers of sessions. For completed contracts the average session length is
7.1 but this average is still building up and will increase as current service-users finish their sessions.

Non-attendance rates at the YCS are very low, in part because the youth counsellor takes a proactive stance whenever a young person is late for a session. In a service for vulnerable young people and with limited resources this is an appropriate approach to adopt.

Waiting times for counselling are increasing. Among those who have seen the counsellor at least once, the great majority have been seen within a week. However, with 19 young people on the waiting list at the end of January 2006, an increasing number of young people are likely to wait for several weeks. This is cause for concern since one of the things service-users and referrers value is the capacity of the service to offer a swift response.

An important feature of the Service in the school is the flexibility of the youth counsellor. Pupil support staff and service-users greatly value the willingness of the youth counsellor to be available for contact outside of counselling sessions, typically to help calm things down if a pupil is distressed or to offer reassurance. Referrers in the school and the community also greatly value the opportunity to discuss actual or potential referrals with the youth counsellor.

11.3 Therapeutic change and effectiveness

Measured in terms of self-rated well-being, service-users experience considerable benefit from their counselling sessions at the YCS. Those who register the highest levels of distress at the start tend to stay for more sessions, and those continuing for more sessions experience larger improvements than those attending for fewer sessions. On these measures, the Service generates considerable therapeutic change and is highly effective.

Service-users describe feeling unable to trust anyone, including their friends and family, with the problems they were experiencing at the time of the referral. One of the things they value about the YCS is that it enabled them to find someone who they could trust. Placing their trust in the counsellor and finding their trust honoured was often the first step towards regaining trust in others around them.

Service-user interviews indicate that although they were apprehensive about seeing the counsellor, they were also highly motivated. Existing research indicates that client motivation at the outset of counselling is strongly correlated with effectiveness, perception of therapeutic benefit and client satisfaction (McLeod, 2001). This accords with the patterns observed among YCS service-users. Those interviewed had all begun to see the counsellor within a week of requesting counselling and had therefore not had to contain their own motivation for long. The recent increase in waiting times may therefore lead to reductions in therapeutic effectiveness and service-user satisfaction.

Service-users describe key effects of counselling as improving relationships with others (primarily other family members). They also report that counselling enhances
their capacity to regulate their emotions. This may involve becoming more able to tolerate sadness or anger without resorting to self-harm, or being able to contain anger without resorting to destructive forms of behaviour such as swearing at teachers or hitting people.

While it is impossible to be sure what might have happened to service-users had they not been able to access counselling, some of the accounts describe a series of escalating problems that would certainly have resulted in referral to outpatient services or other statutory services, or may even have led to hospital admission. Others already in contact with statutory services are discharged as a result of improvements achieved as a result of their counselling.

One recurrent feature of the accounts offered by service-users is their appreciation of opportunities to express themselves through the use of materials as well as words. Activities like drawing, making masks and moulding sand during counselling sessions were recounted by several as especially memorable. Indeed, all the young people interviewed described the significance of opportunities to express themselves through the use of creative media as a key part of the therapeutic process. For some it represented the turning point, which led to them seeing themselves and/or their relationships in a profoundly different way. For others, the opportunity to express their more disturbing feelings in a safe and supportive context helped them begin to develop the capacity to contain and control such feelings. Young people also valued the tranquility of moments of playful exploration in the sand or with the clay. This offered respite from the pressures of school and family life and connected them to the young child inside themselves.

11.4 Satisfaction with the YCS among service-users

Service-users express very high levels of satisfaction with all aspect of the YCS, giving it an average rating of 9.2 out of 10. They express particular appreciation of the youth counsellor’s trustworthiness and flexibility. They suggest improving the Service by creating more availability to enable more young people to benefit from it.

11.5 Awareness and perceptions of school pupils and young people in the community

The majority of pupils at Airdrie Academy are not aware of the existence of the YCS, with younger pupils and boys least likely to be aware of it. Young people who use other services at the community centre also have very little awareness of the existence of the YCS. Further and ongoing advertising is therefore needed to ensure that more pupils and young people in the community are aware of the Service. The majority of pupils at Airdrie Academy and young people at the community centre support the existence of a counselling service in the school and in the community.

Pupils’ understanding of what counselling is varies but tends to be quite limited. However, they are well aware that young people may have worries with which they need help, and have a rich understanding of the range, complexity and intensity of problems that can affect young people. Bullying is a major issue of concern, but is
not a common presenting issue among YCS service-users, arising in only three of the 73 referrals received by the end of January 2006. However, other issues highlighted as troubling, such as bereavement and parental separation correspond closely to presenting issues of service-users.

Young people in the community have a good understanding of counselling and support the existence of a community-based counselling service for young people. They express a high degree of concern about confidentiality and trustworthiness. They tend to doubt that professionals (teachers and others) will respect their confidentiality and actually help them, which may impede their willingness to access the YCS without the assistance of referrers.

Pupils and young people in the community consider that friends and family are generally the best sources of support. A minority, most of whom are boys, do not know who to turn to if they have worries with which they, or someone they know, need help. Comparing comments made in focus group interviews with feedback from service-users suggests that it is when young people find that support from friends and family is not available or is insufficient for their needs, that referral to the YCS is potentially very useful.

Pupils and young people in the community attach great importance to the trustworthiness of those in whom they confide. They are concerned about confidentiality and tend to be distrustful of teachers because of fears or stories about occasions on which teachers have breached confidentiality. They tend to be similarly distrustful of other professionals. Service-users find the Service entirely trustworthy and confidentially. Communicating the trustworthiness and confidentiality of the YCS effectively is crucial to its reputation among school pupils and young people in the community.

11.6 The views of pupil support staff, staff at partner agencies and other referrers

Pupil support staff at Airdrie Academy are well-informed about the YCS and value it very highly. They regard it as a very useful complement to other forms of provision. As well as providing an important service to which pupils can be referred, they report that the availability of a youth counsellor supports them in their own work and increases their knowledge of other sources of support.

Knowledge of the YCS varies widely among partner agencies. Some partner agency staff have developed good working relationships with YCS and regard it as a very useful complement to other resources available for young people in Airdrie. For some referrers based in locations elsewhere in North Lanarkshire, it is a much needed resource to which staff and young people are willing to travel.

However, the existence of the YCS has not yet registered with some partner agencies. Staff turnover is one factor that has undermined the effectiveness of the promotional and networking activities of the YCS. For the Service to gain increased visibility among partner agencies, such activities need to be further intensified.
Partner agency staff consider that there is a need for the Service to be located in the community as well as in the school. Because of the challenges of reaching young people outside of school environments, they are keen to see the YCS increase its visibility and accessibility for a wide range of potential service-users in (and potentially beyond) Airdrie.

All those involved in facilitating referrals consider the information supplied by the YCS to be useful and appropriate. The range of methods of contacting the Service is highly valued, as is the availability of the counsellor for conversations about actual or potential referrals. The web-site is attracting an increasing number of visits and a small but significant number from links from other sites. This indicates a growing use of the site by people wanting information on this specific service.

11.7 Evidence of unmet need

Objective measures of unmet need are difficult to generate. However, potential service-users at the school and at the community centre, pupil support staff, staff in partner agencies and advisory group members all concur that there is considerable unmet need among the young people for whom the Service is designed. Young people themselves are well aware of the potential for their peers or themselves to need the kind of help counselling provides. Appropriately, they tend to turn first to friends and families, but also understand that in some circumstances this may not be enough. Trustworthiness is a major issue in their willingness to seek help from others, and many express distrust of teachers and other professionals. Overcoming this distrust is important if the YCS is to be inclusive of hard-to-reach young people. However, testimony from former service-users indicates that a high level of trustworthiness is available.

The increasing length of the waiting list at the YCS suggests that, as the Service has developed, referrers and young people are realising that previously unmet needs might now be met. There is a risk, however, that if waiting times increase too much, people will feel that the response to such needs is inadequate because it is long delayed.

11.8 The impact of the YCS within the school and the wider community

The impact of the YCS within the school and the wider community is varied. Some potential partners and referrers lack awareness of the Service and what it offers. However, among those who are aware of its existence, the YCS is strongly supported and appreciated. It is seen as adding something new and complementary to existing provision for young people, and as enriching the network of support in important ways.
11.9 Partnership working and the YCS

The YCS is the product of partnership working and contributes to the further development of partnership working in Airdrie and North Lanarkshire. Partnership working is highly valued by staff at the YCS’s partner agencies. Those that have made contact with the YCS appreciate its openness to partnership working in the area, but more remains to be done to ensure that the YCS is well networked with all relevant agencies. Partnership working is most tangibly evident through referrals from partner agencies to the YCS and from the YCS to other services.

Those involved in the YCS advisory group strongly support continued partnership working beyond the pilot phase. Close links between education, health and social work are highly valued by all concerned.

11.10 Personal qualities and the approach of the youth counsellor

A counselling service managed and delivered by a lone worker depends to a considerable extent on the personal qualities and specific approach of that person. Numerous stakeholders, including service-users, pupil support staff, staff at partner agencies and members of the YCS advisory group drew attention to the importance of the counsellor’s personal qualities. Her systemically informed approach to the Service has been a key factor in her ability to work so effectively with a wide range of people.

11.11 Strengths and weaknesses of the YCS

Strengths of the YCS include:
- its unique qualities as a distinctive service complementing other forms of provision
- its capacity to meet previously unmet needs
- its joint location in the school and the community
- therapeutic effectiveness for service users
- its trustworthiness for service-users
- its flexibility in terms of contact with service-users and referrers
- its capacity to provide a resource to pupil support staff and other referrers in addition to the counselling work with young people
- the development of highly effective relationships with pupil support staff within Airdrie Academy and other referrers
- its variety of methods of making contact with referrers and potential service users
- good quality of partnership working with a wide range of partner agencies
- its expression of partnership working between education, health and social work
- its systemic approach, which has underpinned its therapeutic effectiveness and its successful partnership working

Weaknesses of the YCS include:
• lack of awareness of the Service among young people, especially younger pupils and boys
• the risk that waiting times become extended
• the limited number of counselling sessions available per week
• the limited time for which the youth counsellor is available within the school
• lack of effective networking with some partner agencies
• perceived difficulties of accessing the Service at the community centre, especially for hard-to-reach young people
• lack of availability beyond Airdrie

11.12 Potential improvements to the YCS

The results of the evaluation indicate that there are two main areas for improving the YCS, namely increasing capacity and increasing awareness. These improvements were suggested by referrers, service users, school pupils and other young people. It is important that the latter does not outstrip the former, especially given the waiting list that has already built up.

Suggestions for increasing the capacity of the YCS include:
• increasing the number of sessions available each week in the school and in the community setting, which is already necessary in order to reduce waiting lists and waiting times
• rolling the service out to new locations

Suggestions for increasing awareness of the YCS focus on several different groups and include:
• raising awareness among school pupils, which could be enhanced, especially among boys and younger pupils, through further and ongoing promotional activities within the school
• raising awareness among young people within the community, which could be enhanced through the introduction of new outreach activities that would raise the profile of the Service and its youth counsellor(s)
• raising awareness among partner agencies, which could be enhanced by continual and additional networking and promotional activities

11.13 Sustaining and developing the YCS

The YCS has established itself within the network of support services for young people in Airdrie. Were it to be wound down it would be sorely missed.

This report contains evidence that demonstrates that the YCS is highly successful as an early intervention for distressed young people. Qualitative evidence suggests that the Service successfully supports young people who would otherwise be referred to, or make heavier use of, statutory services. It is likely that it is cost effective as well as beneficial for young people, their families and others for such referral to be avoided. This report also contains evidence that suggest that the YCS helps others involved in supporting young people to do their jobs more effectively. This too is likely to have beneficial, preventative effects. Inferences of this kind are difficult to quantify but
qualitative evidence from a range of sources is highly consistent, adding confidence to these statements.

Given the success of the Service as an early intervention, sustaining and mainstreaming it within the wider network of provision is of interest and value to many. Those involved in the project to date are strongly supportive of its continuation. There is also strong support for continuing to ground the service in partnership working between education, health and social work.

The success of the YCS for young people in the area served by Airdrie LHCC indicates the scope, benefit and value that would follow from the development of similar services elsewhere in North Lanarkshire. Partner agencies serving areas outside Airdrie LHCC are especially keen to see such developments.
Chapter 12

Recommendations

1. Mainstreaming the YCS within a partnership approach

From the perspectives of all stakeholders, the YCS has been a highly successful pilot project. The evaluators recommend that mainstream funding be sought to provide continuity of funding. However the YCS is funded, the evaluators recommend that it should continue to be grounded in a partnership approach between health, education and social work.

2. Expansion of provision at the Airdrie YCS

The waiting list for counselling at the YCS is increasing and there is evidence of much unmet need. The evaluators therefore recommend that consideration be given to extending existing provision in the following ways:

- by recruiting additional counselling staff to enable the YCS to ensure that a youth counsellor is available within Airdrie Academy throughout the school day, week and year.
- by recruiting additional counselling staff to enable the YCS to offer more sessions in community settings
- by recruiting additional staff to enable the YCS to raise its profile through outreach work, for example by offering informal drop-in contact at the community centre

3. A systemic and flexible therapeutic approach

The systemic and flexible therapeutic approach adopted by the current youth counsellor has been an important ingredient in the success of the project. The evaluators therefore recommend a systemic approach and therapeutic flexibility are criteria for any future appointments. Forms of flexibility include: the use of a variety of media for service-user self-expression and communication, willingness to offer additional forms of contact to service-users between or after the completion of counselling sessions, and availability to referrers to discuss potential referrals.

4. Awareness-raising among young people

Further work is required to raise awareness of the existence of YCS among young people, focusing especially on boys, younger pupils and young people who are not at school. The evaluators recommend that

- such work be undertaken only after additional capacity has been put in place
• awareness-raising should include clear reference to the opportunity for self-referral
• consideration be given to drawing upon feedback from service-users about the trustworthiness, confidentiality and efficacy of the service

5. Networking with partner agencies

The evaluators recommend that networking activities and information circulation to partner agencies be increased to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are aware of the YCS. In order to counter the effects of staff turnover, it is suggested that contact is made with all partner agencies at least once and preferably twice per year.

6. Working with referrers

Ensuring that referrals are appropriate is important for the efficiency of the YCS. The evaluators therefore recommend that continuing work be undertaken to advise referrers about potential referrals. This is important in order to ensure that (a) the counselling sessions available are put to the best possible use, and (b) young people access the most appropriate forms of support as swiftly and efficiently as possible.

7. Service-user monitoring and feedback

The YCS has developed an effective system for capturing data about its service-users. During the evaluation this was supplemented by the inclusion of a question about self-rated well-being at the beginning and the end of counselling, together with in-depth interviews with service-users. In order to ensure that good quality data continue to be captured, the evaluators recommend that
• the self-rated well-being questions be retained
• a satisfaction rating question be added to the final counselling synopsis form

Although designed to provide counselling over more than one session, a substantial minority of service-users attend only once. Anecdotal evidence indicates that at least some of these service-users make good use of single sessions. The evaluators therefore recommend that consideration be given to securing systematic feedback from these service-users and perhaps also those who refer them to the Service.

8. Rolling-out the YCS across Lanarkshire

The YCS in Airdrie is a highly successful project that contributes to North Lanarkshire’s commitment to provide effective early intervention mental health services for young people from which other areas would also benefit. The evaluators therefore recommend that consideration be given to rolling out similar services across North Lanarkshire and throughout the whole of the area served by NHS Lanarkshire. The joint location of the YCS in a secondary school and a local community is key to its success and should be replicated in any future roll-out.
References


Appendix 1

Members of the YCS Advisory Group

Christine Boyle, Project leader, PHACTS (Airdrie Young Person’s Health Project), Airdrie

Tom Bryce, General Manager, Airdrie LHCC

Liz Cairns, Youth Counsellor and YCS Co-ordinator, Airdrie LHCC

David Craig, Quality Improvement Officer, Education Department, North Lanarkshire Council

Jacqueline Crawford, Clinical Governance Co-ordinator, Airdrie LHCC

Archie Ferguson, Quality Improvement Officer, Education Department, North Lanarkshire Council

Margaret French, Service Manager, Child and Family Services, North Lanarkshire Council Social Work Resources

Jean Logan, Family Therapist, Child and Family Clinic, Coathill Hospital, Coatbridge

Tom Lowe, Senior Educational Psychologist, Psychological Services, Airdrie

Kevin McGeever CDAR International, Edinburgh

Karen McNiven, Youth Health Development Officer, Airdrie LHCC

Marlene O’Neill, Airdrie LHCC

Bob Reid, Assistant Head Master, Airdrie Academy
Appendix 2

YCS Partner Agencies

@Home Centre, Airdrie
Caldervale High School, Airdrie
Domestic Abuse Partnership, NHS Lanarkshire
Domestic Abuse Unit, Motherwell Area Police Office
EVA Project, NHS Lanarkshire
Health Visitor Team, NHS Lanarkshire
Lanarkshire Rape Crisis
Positive Futures, Airdrie (now Careers Scotland)
Reachout Youth Advice Project, Airdrie
Routes to Work Ltd, North Lanarkshire
RUSHES, Young Persons Drug and Alcohol Project, Bellshill
Shotts Health Centre
Social Work Department, North Lanarkshire Council
Strathclyde Police, North Lanarkshire Division, Airdie Area Office
VIA (Victim Information and Advice), Procurator Fiscals Office
Victims Unit, Airdrie
## Request for Counselling Form

**Confidential Request for Counselling**

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### Reason for request (please tell us in a few words why you would like to meet with a counsellor):

**How do you feel about your situation at the moment?** (please circle one)

1. I feel fine. I don't have any major problems.
2. I feel OK. I have some problems, but I am coping with them.
3. I feel bad. I have some problems I feel I can't cope with, no matter how hard I try.
4. I feel awful. It feels like things are out of control and I don't know what to do.

**Have you read and understood "Information for Young People about Counselling"?** Yes/No

**Have your parents/guardians been informed of this request?** Yes/No

**Do you have any physical or learning difficulties?** Yes/No

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Young Person's Signature:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator's Signature:</td>
<td>Date:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please return this form to: Youth Counselling Service
Wester Moffat, Towers Road,
Airdrie, ML6 8LW

Date received: Counsellor's signature:
## Appendix 4

### Counselling Synopsis Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Synopsis</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Name:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Age:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male/Female:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reason for Request:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date of first session:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of sessions attended:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How do you feel about your situation at the moment?** (please circle one)

1. I feel fine. I don’t have any major problems.
2. I feel OK. I have some problems, but I am coping with them.
3. I feel bad. I have some problems I feel I can’t cope with, no matter how hard I try.
4. I feel awful. It feels like things are out of control and I don’t know what to do.

**Is there anything else you would like to say about your current situation?**

**Counsellor’s recommendation:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counsellor’s Signature:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young Person’s Signature:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Date:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please turn over…
Can you help?

The Youth Counselling Service is being evaluated by researchers from the University of Edinburgh. They want to find out how well the service is working and how it could be improved. Would you be willing to let them use the information you have given us on this form, and the information you gave us at the start on the request for counselling form, for their study?

If you say yes to this, copies of the forms will be given to the researchers with your name blanked out. They will not show these copies to anyone else.

If you say no to this, that is fine. You have the right to make up your own mind about this - it is your decision. What you decide will have no effect on what happens in any future counselling you might want and no-one else will know about it.

Please tick one of the following options:

| Yes, I'm happy for the researchers to use my forms for their study |
| No, I don't want the researchers to use my forms for their study |

The people doing the research would also like to talk with some young people who have used the Youth Counselling Service. This would mean meeting with one of the researchers to talk about what counselling was like and what you think would make the service better. You will not have to tell them about the reasons why you went to counselling. If you would like to do this, please:

- fill in your details below OR
- send an email to liz.bondi@ed.ac.uk or e.forbat@ed.ac.uk OR
- telephone Liz Bondi on 0131-650-2529 or Liz Forbat on 0131-650-4055 OR
- text Liz Cairns (07xx xxx xxx)

The researchers will get back to you to arrange a time. If you are at Airdrie Academy, your guidance teacher will be told so that you can be excused from class on the day.

Please tick one of the following options:

| Yes, I'd like to talk to the researchers about seeing the counsellor |
| No, I don’t want to talk to the researchers about seeing the counsellor |

If you have ticked the yes box, please tell us:

| Your NAME: |
| Your GUIDANCE TEACHER: (if you are at Airdrie Academy) |
| Your CLASS: (if you are at Airdrie Academy) |
Appendix 5

Interview Schedule for Service-Users

Introduction
1) Thank you for agreeing to talk with me today.
2) I would like to hear about your experience of the youth counselling service. The information you give will be used in an evaluation of the service. This will help us understand the good things about the service and about the things that need to be improved.
3) What you say will be treated as confidential and your name will not appear on any research findings.
4) There are no right or wrong answers to the questions.
5) If you do not wish to answer any questions please just say so and if you want to stop the interview at anytime that is fine as well.
6) The interview will last about 40 minutes.
7) I would like to record the interview, is that okay with you?
8) I’m not going to ask you about the things you talked about in counselling sessions or why you went to see [the counsellor] in the first place. But if this does come up and you want to talk about it, that’s OK too. What I’d like to hear about is what it was like to go and if seeing a counsellor has made a difference to you.

1. Basic details
Can you tell me your age? And your name is__?
Can you tell me when you first saw [the counsellor]? How many times you’ve seen her? Still going or stopped?

2. First heard about the counsellor
Can you tell me how you first heard about the counselling service?
   When you first heard about it, what did you think?
   What helped you make up your mind to go?
   When you thought about it, what put you off going?
What, if any, information did you get beforehand?
   What did you think about the information?
Did anyone help you get to see the counsellor, like put your name forward? If so, who?
   What did this feel like?
Did you have to wait before seeing [the counsellor]? If so, how long? What did it feel like waiting?

3. When you first went to see the counsellor
   Can you remember how you felt before your first counselling session with [the counsellor]? (explore reluctance, fears, anxieties etc)
   Do you remember what you expected before you first went to see [the counsellor]?
   Is there anything you would like to have known about the service before you used it?
   What did you hope to get out of the counselling?
   What did you think would happen in the counselling?
   Have you found that it turned out the same or differently from what you expected?

4. Evidence of therapeutic change and effectiveness
   Helpfulness
   Overall, do you think going to see [the counsellor] was helpful?
   In what ways was it helpful?
   In what ways was it not helpful?
   Can you remember anything that happened that made a difference to you?
   Can you think of anything about [the counsellor] that you found helpful? – anything about [the counsellor] as a person?
   Can you think of anything that [the counsellor] said or did that you found helpful?

   Can you give me an example of something that worked well about the counselling?
   And an example of something that didn’t work so well?

   Looking back over all your sessions, which one is the one that stands out the most for you?
   And what was it that made that session the most memorable?
   Are there other moments that stand out for you? Why?

   Personal Change
   Overall, do you feel that you have changed in any way since you went to see [the counsellor]?
   Explore further: if change, what do you think may have led to that change?
   Can you give me an example of how you have changed?
   How might the counselling have made a difference?
   If no change, why do you think that is? Explore how the counselling may have been helpful, but the young person or their situation stays stuck.
And what do you think people who know you very well would say if I asked them, do you think _____ has changed since going to see the counsellor at the school?

If you think back to how you felt before you started counselling, and tried to give a mark out of 10 to how you felt where 10 is the best you’ve ever felt and 0 is the worst, what number would you give that feeling?

And what number would you give to how you feel today?

**Strengths and weaknesses**

What would you say is the best thing about going to counselling?

And what is the worst or hardest thing about it?

If you could start the counselling all over again, what is anything would you do differently?

If you felt you had worries you needed help with, would you go to see a counsellor again?

Why/Why not?

**Referrals**

What do you think of the way young people are referred to the service?

Would you change anything about the way referrals happen?

What do you think of the timing when you went to see [the counsellor]?

Was it the right time for you?

What helped/did not help with this?

**Location**

What do you think of the location of the counselling service?

Do you think it was a good/bad location, why?

Was it easy for you to get to and to find?

Would you change anything about the location? If yes, what?

Explore: in school or off site as well as where in school

**Room**

What do you think of the counselling room?

Is it the right size, is it comfortable, is it private enough?

Is there anything you would change about the room?
**Trust**

Young people who have not used the service, have said they would be worried about **trusting a counsellor**. Do you think they should be?

Do you feel that you could trust [the counsellor] when you talk with her? Can you say what helps/does not help with this?

Can you think of any ways the service could help to convince others that they can trust a counsellor?

Can I ask if **anyone else knew/knows** that you are seeing/have seen [the counsellor]? If so, who?

How does it feel to you that they know about this?

**Recommendation**

Would you **recommend** the counselling service to a friend?

Why would you/Why would you not?

What would you tell them about the service?

5. **Satisfaction with the Service among the service users**

Think of a mark **between 0 and 10** for satisfaction with the counselling service, where 0 means totally unhappy with the service and 10 means totally pleased and happy with everything about the service. What number would you give to the counselling service?

If you could summarise your experience of counselling in **one sentence**, what would that be?

What would be the best **single word**, only one word, to describe how you feel about the counselling?

**If you were in charge** of the counselling service, what would you change about it?

Why would you do that?

What would you like to see the counselling service doing **more of**?

Why would you like that?

Do you have any ideas how the service might do what you suggest?

6. **Impact of the Service within the School and the Wider Community**

Do you think the **school has changed** in anyway since the youth counselling service was available?

If so, how do you think it has changed?

Do you think the school is a **friendlier** place to be in?
Do you think the school staff is more aware that sometimes pupils have worries they need help with?

What would you tell primary school kids moving up to Airdrie Academy about the school?

Would you mention the youth counselling service? Why/Why not?

Do you feel you could explain to someone else what a counsellor does? What would you say?

How would you describe counselling now?

What would you say it’s all about?

What would you say is the counsellor’s job?

What do you think counselling can help with?

And what do you think it doesn’t or can’t help with?

7. Finish

1. That is all of my questions, is there anything else you would like to say or to ask me about?

2. Thanks a lot for speaking with me it was really helpful.

3. You will be able to get a copy of the report when it comes out. Would you like that?
Appendix 6

The Questionnaire Survey

Evaluation of the Youth Counselling Service Project

What is this about?

This is a survey to find out what you think about the Youth Counselling Service (YCS). The YCS gives young people the chance to talk about things that worry them to someone who will listen and help them to work things out for themselves. The Service needs to know whether you would use it if you needed to, and if anything should be changed to make it better.

Important information!

• You do not have to take part in this survey if you do not want to. It's up to you.
• If you do not want to answer some of the questions, that is fine. Just leave them blank.
• When you have answered all the questions you wish to answer, please return the survey to your PHSE teacher at Airdrie Academy or the drop-off box at the Community Centre. Thanks for your time!

Q.1 Are you:  Female ☐  Male ☐

Q.2 If you are at Airdrie Academy, what year are you in?
S1 ☐  S2 ☐  S3 ☐  S4 ☐  S5 ☐  S6 ☐

If you are not at Airdrie Academy, how old are you?

Q.3 Had you heard of the Youth Counselling Service (YCS) before this survey?
Yes ☐  No ☐

Q.4 If you have used the Youth Counselling Service (YCS) or spoken to Liz Cairns, how helpful has this been?
Not helpful at all ☐  A bit helpful ☐  Very helpful ☐  Not sure ☐
I haven't used the YCS ☐

Q.5 Sometimes, young people have worries that they need help with.

(a) Do you know young people who have worries they need help with?  Yes ☐  No ☐
(b) Have you ever had worries you felt you needed help with?  Yes ☐  No ☐

Q.6 If you had worries you needed help with, what would you use out of these?

*You may tick more than one box or none at all*

Talk to friends/family ☐  YCS at Airdrie Academy ☐
YCS at the Community ☐  Other adult (e.g. doctor, social worker, teacher) ☐
Centre
Don't know ☐
Q.7 How important do you think it is to have a counsellor working in school?
Not important ☐  Quite important ☐  Very important ☐  No opinion ☐

Q.8 How important do you think it is to have a counsellor working in the local community?
Not important ☐  Quite important ☐  Very important ☐  No opinion ☐

Q.9 Is there anything else you would like to add?

And finally…

What should I do if I want to use the Youth Counselling Service?
If doing this survey has made you think that you would like to use the Youth Counselling Service, please speak to your pupil support teacher about this.

Would you like to be more involved in our project?
This survey is just the first part of our project to find out what you think about the Youth Counselling Service. We would also like to talk with some young people about the Service, so that we can hear what you have to say. You would have the choice of talking to us in a group, with a friend, or on your own. If you would like to do this please let us know by:
• filling in your details in the box below OR
• sending us an email (liz.bondi@ed.ac.uk or e.forbat@ed.ac.uk) OR
• telephoning us (0131-650-2529 or 0131-650-4055) OR
• texting Liz Cairns (07xxx xxxxxx)
We will get back to you to make sure you are still interested and to arrange a time which is good for you.

If you would like to talk to the researchers about the Youth Counselling Service, please write your name and, if at Airdrie Academy, your class and pupil support teacher:
Appendix 7

Schedule for Focus Group and Paired Interviews

NB Exercises are designed primarily to get the young people talking. We are unlikely to have time for them all but will use whatever seems to be working best. Will ask before each exercise if they have done this type of exercise before to gauge response.

1. Brief introduction names and where we are from
2. Ice breaker – their names and how they got them
3. Ground rules – go through flip chart of rights and responsibilities for session which we will have written up and will include researchers responsibility to tell about any disclosures of abuse. Also will include their right to time out if they are finding anything difficult and that there will be someone (pupil support staff) they can speak to if needed.
4. What this session is about – Explain aims of session written as follows on flipchart:
   - We need your help
   - We want to know if you know about the Youth Counselling Service pupils can use in this school
   - We want to find out what young people in this school want and need from a Counselling Service
   IMPORTANT: We are not counsellors and cannot answer questions about the Youth Counselling Service but we will give you a leaflet about it at the end of this session.
5. Brainstorm the meaning of the word “Counselling” with group. Explain that they shout out what they think the word means and it is written on the flipchart. They can say whatever they think – there is no discussion about the words written until everyone has had a chance to say all the things they think it means. Discuss and explain meaning of counselling using YCS description written on flipchart.
6. Hopes and fears: one thing (or more) you would hope for from counselling on a yellow post-it and one thing (or more) that you would be frightened of going to see a counsellor on a pink post-it. No names should be written. Stick the post-its on a piece of flip chart paper divided in half with hopes written on one side and fears written on the other.
7. What young people worry about:
   - Parents separating
   - Chaos at home
   - Making friends/keeping friends
   - Feeling angry/out of control
   - Being bullied
   - Difficulties with school work
   - The death of someone special
   In two small groups ask the young people to put these statements in order with the thing that they think young people worry most about at the top and then what comes next and so on. Explain that there are no right or wrong answers this is just a way to think about what matters most to young people. When they have done this ask them to come back to the big group and explain to the other group why they have put the statements in the order they have. Discuss
8. Debating game – put a piece of paper with “Totally Agree” written on it at one end of the room and a paper with “Totally Disagree” at the other end. Explain that statements (that people might disagree about) will be read out and if they totally agree with the statement they stand beside that piece of paper, or if they agree mostly then stand near it or not sure stand somewhere in the middle or disagree stand nearer the other end etc.

Read out the statement:
“If a young person in this school was really worried about something they would talk to their friends first”

If young people all stand together then researcher plays devils advocate taking an opposing position and asks pupils to persuade her/him to change position i.e. explain why they think what they do. If young people stand in different places then they have to persuade each other to change position.

Further Statements:
“A young person will find it easier to see a counsellor if they can see them in school”
“Young people don’t trust adults”

Researcher will raise issues such as preference (or not) for counselling at the Community Centre during the course of the discussion.

9. In small groups, on flipchart paper, design a poster for a counselling service that you think would appeal to young people in school. Bring the posters back to the big group and discuss why the pupils have marketed it the way they have.

10. Final exercise – pass a compliment – one thing you appreciated about the person sitting next to you during this session. OR on a piece of paper 1- 3 words that describe how you are feeling right now. Make the paper into paper aeroplanes – stand and launch at the same time. Everyone pick one up and read it out.

11. Thank them very much for their help – give out leaflets and briefly explain what will happen next re the evaluation.
Appendix 8

Interview Schedule for Pupil Support Staff

1) Referrals
   1.1 Purpose of the YCS?
   1.2 Deciding to refer a pupil to the YCS?
   1.3 Factors that encourage a referral?
   1.4 Factors that discourage a referral?
   1.5 Benefits and problems of referring through guidance staff?
   1.6 Benefits and the problems of pupil self-referral?

2) Need and demand for the YCS
   2.1 Demand for the YCS?
   2.2 Meeting the demand and need for the YCS?
   2.3 Changes in demand over time and affect on referrals?
   2.4 Advantages of the YCS being in the school?
   2.5 Disadvantages of the YCS being in the school?

3) The YCS and the school support system
   3.1 Problems pupils face that they need support for?
   3.2 Other support service options for pupils?
   3.3 Circumstances of referrals to other places that the YCS?
   3.4 YCS as a unique service in the school or duplicating other school services?
   3.5 Relationship between own role and the YCS?
   3.6 YCS help or hindrance in relation to own work?
   3.7 Changes to the YCS?
   3.8 Limitations to what the YCS can do for the pupils and the school?
   3.9 Hopes for the YCS in the future?
Appendix 9

Interview Schedule for Staff from Partner Agencies

1) **Characteristics of the Referrers**
   
   1.1 Name of person.
   
   1.2 Type of organisation.
   
   1.3 Role in the organisation.

2) **Your Organisation and the YCS**
   
   2.1 Initial awareness of the YCS.
   
   2.2 Purpose of the YCS.
   
   2.3 Relationship between the organisation and the YCS.
   
   2.4 YCS as a help or a hindrance in relation to own work.
   
   2.5 Need for the YCS and demand for the YCS.
   
   2.6 Effectiveness of the YCS.
   
   2.7 YCS as a unique or duplicate service in the community.
   
   2.8 Networking of the YCS.
   
   2.9 Agencies/services that the YCS should be in contact with.
   
   2.10 Agencies/service that the YCS should remain independent of.

3) **Referring young people to the YCS**
   
   3.1 Number of referrals to the YCS and why.
   
   3.2 How initiate the referral.
   
   3.3 Deciding to refer to the YCS.
   
   3.4 Issues to refer for and factors that encourage a referral.
   
   3.5 Issues not make a referral for and factors that discourage a referral.
   
   3.6 Accessibility when referring to the YCS. Demand for and availability of the YCS.
   
   3.7 Referrals to other support services for young people.
   
   3.8 Circumstances in which would refer to other support services.

4) **And finally....**
   
   4.1 Main strengths and weaknesses of the YCS.
   
   4.2 Changes to the YCS.
   
   4.3 Hopes for the YCS in the future.
Appendix 10

Interview Schedule for Advisory Group Members

1) Characteristics of the organisation and its relationship to the YCS
   1.1 Name of person and organisation
   1.2 Type of organisation.
   1.3 Role in the organisation.
   1.4 Relationship between the organisation and the YCS.
   1.5 Initial awareness of the idea of having a YCS.
   1.6 Involvement in referrals to, or from, the YCS.
   1.7 Process of recruitment as a member of the advisory group for the YCS.

2) Purpose and effectiveness of the YCS
   2.1 Purpose of the YCS, Airdrie.
   2.2 Effectiveness of the YCS from the organisation's perspective.
   2.3 Effectiveness of the YCS for the young people.
   2.4 Main strengths of the YCS at the moment.
   2.5 Key weaknesses of the YCS at the moment.
   2.6 The relationship of the YCS with existing youth services.
   2.7 The relationship between the YCS and Scotland's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
   2.8 Other agencies/services that are networked with the YCS.
   2.9 Agencies/services that the YCS should be in contact with.
   2.10 Agencies/services that the YCS should remain independent of.
   2.11 Knowledge of other youth counselling services.

3) The future of the YCS
   3.1 Sustainability of the YCS.
   3.2 Effectiveness and continued funding of the YCS.
   3.3 Possible funding opportunities for the YCS.
   3.4 Future development and direction of the YCS.
   3.5 Future strategic location of the YCS

4) And finally
   4.1 Recommendations of other people to speak with.
   4.2 Any additional comments.
# Appendix 11

## Service-User Data Tables

### Table A11.1: Service-users by date of birth

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### Table A11.2: Service-users by year group

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### Table A11.3: Service-users by gender

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<td>22 (30.1%)</td>
<td>25 (34.2%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>47 (64.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22 (30.1%)</td>
<td>4 (5.5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>26 (35.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>44 (60.3%)</td>
<td>29 (39.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>73 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table A11.4: Neighbourhood profiles of YCS service-users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% employees in managerial or professional grades</th>
<th>Number of young people</th>
<th>% people with level 4 qualifications</th>
<th>Number of young people</th>
<th>% households in social rented accommodation</th>
<th>Number of young people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>less than 10</td>
<td>22 (30.1%)</td>
<td>less than 5</td>
<td>13 (17.8%)</td>
<td>70 or more</td>
<td>9 (12.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19.9</td>
<td>25 (34.2%)</td>
<td>5-9.9</td>
<td>25 (34.2%)</td>
<td>50-69.9</td>
<td>15 (20.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29.9</td>
<td>11 (15.1%)</td>
<td>10-14.9</td>
<td>11 (15.1%)</td>
<td>30-49.9</td>
<td>15 (20.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39.9</td>
<td>10 (13.7%)</td>
<td>15-19.9</td>
<td>13 (17.8%)</td>
<td>10-29.9</td>
<td>14 (19.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 or more</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>20 or more</td>
<td>7 (9.6%)</td>
<td>less than 10</td>
<td>16 (21.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>missing</td>
<td>4 (5.5%)</td>
<td>missing</td>
<td>4 (5.5%)</td>
<td>missing</td>
<td>4 (5.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Airdrie rate = 19.0%   Airdrie rate = 12.3%   Airdrie rate = 38.1%

### Table A11.5: Sources of referral

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Number of young people</th>
<th>Airdrie Academy</th>
<th>Community Centre</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupil support (Airdrie Academy)</td>
<td>34 (46.6%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>34 (46.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil support (other schools)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7 (9.6%)</td>
<td>7 (9.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other teacher</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-School partnership officers</td>
<td>4 (5.5%)</td>
<td>4 (5.5%)</td>
<td>8 (11.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health professionals (GPs and nurses)</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>2 (2.7%)</td>
<td>3 (4.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other organisations</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>8 (11.0%)</td>
<td>9 (12.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>2 (2.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>2 (2.7%)</td>
<td>7 (9.6%)</td>
<td>9 (12.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>44 (60.3%)</td>
<td>29 (39.7%)</td>
<td>73 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table A11.6: Reasons for requesting counselling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Airdrie Academy</th>
<th>Community Centre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abuse, neglect and violence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-identity, self-experience &amp; own behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating disorder</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self harm</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety/stress</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour at school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender/sexuality</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trauma and bereavement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traumatic events</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bereavement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A11.7: Number of counselling sessions attended

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of sessions</th>
<th>Number of young people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Airdrie Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>3 (13.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>6 (27.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-10</td>
<td>4 (18.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11+</td>
<td>1 (4.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14 (63.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A11.8: Monthly trends in referrals and usage – Airdrie Academy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Referrals</th>
<th>New starts</th>
<th>Waiting</th>
<th>Completions</th>
<th>Continuing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 2004</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2004</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2004</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2005</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2005</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2005</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2005</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2005</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2005</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2005</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2005</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2005</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2005</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2005</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2005</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2006</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
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</table>
Table A11.9: Monthly trends in referral and usage – Community Centre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Referrals</th>
<th>New starts</th>
<th>Waiting</th>
<th>Completions</th>
<th>Continuing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 2004</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2004</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2004</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2005</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2005</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2005</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2005</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2005</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2005</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2005</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2005</td>
<td>*2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2005</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2005</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2005</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2005</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2006</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* One self-referrer was contacted but did not reply to two offers of initial sessions and therefore did not become a new start or an addition to the waiting list.

Table A11.10: Change in self-rated well-being

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in self-rated well-being</th>
<th>Airdrie Academy</th>
<th>Community Centre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
<td>1 (4.5%)</td>
<td>2 (9.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement by one category</td>
<td>2 (9.1%)</td>
<td>3 (13.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement by two categories</td>
<td>6 (27.2%)</td>
<td>3 (13.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum possible improvement (by three categories)</td>
<td>3 (13.6%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>1 (4.5%)</td>
<td>1 (4.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>