

youth ACCESS

to information, advice and counselling



Counselling Workforce Development Project

(CwdP)

*key findings and
recommendations
from the young
people's
consultation*

Youth Access is the national membership organisation for YIACS who predominately work with 11 to 25 year olds. Youth Access believes that all young people have a right to locally accessible, free and impartial information, advice, counselling and support. We work in partnership with our members, the National Youth Agency and other organisations to promote the development of high quality, young people-friendly services.

If you want to know more about the CwdP project please contact Catherine@youthaccess.org.uk or go to the Youth Access website at www.youthaccess.org.uk

About the briefing

This briefing summarises the results of a consultation with young people accessing Youth Information, Advice Counselling and Support Services (YIACS). The consultation gathered information from young people about their experience of counselling and their suggestions for improving counselling services in YIACS.

About the project

The young people's consultation is part of the Counselling Workforce Development Project (CwdP) - taking place from February to July 2008 - and funded by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC)'s Workforce Strategy Partners Programme.

One of the aims of the CwdP is to identify the training needs of counsellors and support and promote the local funding of high quality youth counselling services in YIACS.

'They don't judge you – you can say pretty much anything – they are unshockable'.

Young person's feedback

The project did this by:

- Carrying out a national survey to find out what kind of training counsellors attend, any gaps and the counselling services offered to young people across the country in YIACS.
- Asking groups of young people for their views about youth counsellors and their experiences of counselling.
- Using the information provided by young people to make recommendations on how to improve training for counsellors and make sure that funders pay attention to the work of young people's counselling services so they can fund them.



Consulting young people

Youth Access worked with Cathy Street (Health and Social Policy Consultant) and her colleagues Brenda Allan (Mental Health Consultant) and Judi Barker (Counselling Consultant) to carry out the young people's consultation.

The consultation took place between April and June 2008. Views were gathered from 23 young people from 5 YIACS across the country

All the young people involved in the consultation reported very positively their experiences of counselling and had a variety of suggestions for improving services.

A striking feature was the huge range and complexity of problems and needs that young people wanted to speak to youth counselling services about, which clearly raised the issue of the training and skills youth counsellors need to have.

Young people's views of counsellors

- Mostly young people reported very positive experiences - better than those with other professionals in other services.
- Young people liked counsellors who gave practical advice, worked at their pace and let them stay in control, were uncritical, helped them work things out for themselves and were responsive.
- Young people highlighted the importance of the same counsellor being available over a period of

*'someone to talk to,
someone who won't judge
you,
someone who won't worry
like your family would..
someone to give
advice and guidance,
someone to help you sort
things out.'*
Young person's feedback

time, and the one-to-one relationship offered by this form of help.

- None raised any concerns about the age, gender or ethnicity of the counsellor they had seen.

Counselling helped young people to:

- grow and gain confidence.
- develop problem solving skills and understand things differently.
- improve the practical things in life e.g. going to college, finding a job.
- prevent an over-reliance on family and friends – several mentioned that it was better for them to have someone outside their family or friends to talk to, or that they didn't want to burden them.
- And most would recommend youth counselling to a friend.



Suggestions to improve services or help keep them good

- More publicity about the projects and the benefits of counselling.
- Increase counsellor numbers and space to reduce waiting lists.
- Offer flexibility for appointments and length of sessions.
- Recruit counsellors who like and are comfortable with young people.
- Be flexible to allow for attendance beyond 25 years (the usual upper age limit) and the importance of the continuing to offer a free service.

*'they make me feel
human and not
alone'*
Young person's feedback

Youth Access next steps

Youth Access will share the project's findings and recommendations nationally to members, CWDC, government decision makers and those responsible for funding, with the aim of strengthening youth counselling services in YIACS and improving young people's access to