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Written statement: school and community-based counselling operating toolkit (revised 2020)

CABINET STATEMENT

Written statement: school and community-based counselling operating toolkit (revised 2020)

Kirsty Williams MS, Minister for Education

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Today I am delighted to launch the updated *School and Community-Based Counselling Operating Toolkit* which can be accessed here:

<https://gov.wales/school-and-community-based-counselling-operating-toolkit>

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The current Covid-19 pandemic will undoubtedly mean that many children and young people who previously might not have required mental health support are more likely to need it now and in the future. As the impact of the pandemic and the restrictions on their lives continues to sink in, more young people are likely to experience feelings of loss from the social constraints placed upon them. Many will experience worries about returning to school; moving on to the next step in their learning and the impact on their future prospects; concerns about their own and their family's health; and, sadly for some, the impact of bereavement too.

Therefore, it is now more important than ever that our learners have early and easy access to good quality counselling which is proven to help prevent emotional health issues developing or becoming more serious. This is why in April I announced an additional £1.252m to extend counselling provision.

Although the preparatory work for the updated counselling toolkit was carried out prior to the Covid-19 outbreak, it has been reviewed in light of the pandemic and updated to reflect its impact. The toolkit also reflects various changes since the original guidance was published in March 2011, such as changes in law and policy, increased provision of counselling for children and young people in a community setting and includes revised standards and guidance for counsellors and counselling services. This will help enable counselling providers in schools and, increasingly in the wider community, to deliver services that are of high quality, safe, easily accessible and available at the point of need.

Importantly the revised toolkit also includes information on the use of online counselling which most providers have turned to as normal face to face counselling during the current pandemic has proved almost impossible. It also links to a FAQ document which includes useful hints and tips on the provision of online counselling training. The FAQ also includes information on the best ways to ensure remote counselling services remain as responsive and adaptive as possible during the current Covid-19 pandemic, and a list of precautions to which counsellors should adhere to when moving back to face to face counselling.

Both the toolkit and the counselling FAQ have been developed with support from LA counselling leads, service providers and other colleagues, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their contribution.

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