# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Consultation on the Draft School and Community-Based Counselling Operating Toolkit** |
| **DATE**  | **23 October 2019**  |
| **BY** | **Kirsty Williams AM, Minister for Education**  |

Across the UK, it is estimated that three children in an average-size classroom will have a mental health problem. Data from the latest Welsh Government statistical release[[1]](#footnote-1) shows that 11,365 young people received counselling during 2017-18. 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.

In recognition of the debilitating effects mental health issues can have on children and young people’s lives, we established a working group consisting of local authority counselling leads, counselling providers and representatives of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) to revise the Welsh Government’s *School-based Counselling Operating Toolkit* which was first published in collaboration with BACP in 2011.

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

[https://gov.wales/draft-school-and-community-based-counselling-operating-toolkit](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fgov.wales%2Fdraft-school-and-community-based-counselling-operating-toolkit&data=02%7C01%7CDavid.Tutton%40gov.wales%7C0837be6aa72c47501b7208d756fd2351%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637073517525487439&sdata=75Mk668XbA%2FUuS1DoGHcNjBtUjGQ3%2Bcb9yBSs2XzXag%3D&reserved=0)

The consultation will close on 18 December 2019.

The revised toolkit reflects various changes since the original guidance was published, such as changes in law and policy, increased provision of counselling for children and young people in a community setting, and the use of online counselling. It 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.

Our counselling service is an important element of our work to improve and embed whole school approaches to emotional and mental wellbeing. However, I know the service can be further improved, which is why we are looking at developing online provision to compliment face-to-face activity.

We have also made additional funding of £626,000 available to local authorities in the current year to address waiting lists for the service and foster collaborative arrangements with other counselling providers and other complimentary services such as those offered by the NHS. The service is also part of much wider improvements we are making, such as through our CAMHS school in-reach pilots, to which we have provided over £1.4m of funding. I expect preliminary evaluation findings on how the pilots are operating to be published in December.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to all members of the working group for their hard work in the preparation of revised toolkit, which will provide an important contribution to our work in this area.

1. [Counselling for children and young people: September 2017 to August 2018 | GOV.WALES](https://gov.wales/counselling-children-and-young-people-september-2017-august-2018) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)