



COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland)
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COSCA PUBLICATION:

“Establishing Counselling Services for Children and Young People”

COSCA Guidance on Good Practice and the Law in Scotland

This publication by COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland):

- recommends service standards and practice guidelines for the provision of counselling and psychotherapeutic services for children and young people
- sets out the legal, ethical and professional foundations for counselling services for children and young people
- provides a recommended reading list and directory of relevant agencies

The guidance was produced by COSCA’s Children and Young Peoples Counselling Work Group.

A summary of the document is available on the COSCA website. If you would like to purchase a full copy of these guidelines, please complete the order slip below.

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Establishing Counselling Services for Children and Young People

COSCA Guidance on Good Practice and the Law in Scotland

Summary

This compact guidance of 16 pages, produced by COSCA's Counselling Children and Young People Work Group, recommends service standards and practice guidelines for the provision of counselling and psychotherapeutic services for children and young people.

It also sets out the legal, ethical and professional foundations on which service providers and practitioners can build and deliver bespoke counselling services for children and young people, promoting best practice and protecting the rights of all parties.

The guidance acknowledges that counselling services for children and young people are delivered by organisations within the statutory, voluntary and independent sectors e.g. in education, health, social work and community work. These services offer a variety of therapeutic orientations and contractual arrangements.

Much of this guidance will also be of use to independent counsellors/psychotherapists. However, issues regarding consent and legal matters, including confidentiality, have been written with a focus on counselling organisations.

The guidance:

- begins by defining the counselling task as therapeutic work carried out by practitioners whose role is clearly defined and protected as that of a counsellor/psychotherapist
- offers definitions of a child and young people, emphasising that in assessing legal capacity it is not the age of the child but the child's ability to understand the nature and consequences of counselling that matters more. The child's right to access counselling without parental involvement in different contexts is then discussed at some length e.g. in a school setting and in the community.
- identifies the key questions to ask on confidentiality in a counselling relationship with children and covers the extent of the child/young person's right to confidentiality
- deals with systems of referral and reasons for referring children/young people onto generic counselling services
- advises on the writing and adopting of suitable policies to underpin the counselling practice covering, among others, child protection and child witnesses.
- discusses the different kinds of records that may be used by counsellors, and, in line with The Data Protection Act 1998, how to store them and who can access them.
- recommends qualifications and experience needed to counsel children and young people and refers to the COSCA guidance document on current training and qualifications available on the COSCA website.
- emphasises the need for counselling supervision as a fundamental component of counselling children and young people
- considers the kind of appropriate physical environment in which counselling sessions should take place
- encourages evaluation and feedback systems, with the aim of continually improving the service offered
- recommends systems for registering dissatisfaction or complaint
- includes a reference section at the end, giving further reading and a short list of quality assurance tools.

Brian Magee
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