



PRESS RELEASE

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Four Full-Time Counsellors Start Work at Gibraltar's Schools

Earlier this year the Government announced the creation of four posts of full-time Counsellor for Gibraltar's schools. A long process of preparation was spearheaded by the Education Department's Education Advisor (Welfare) Jackie Linares and Healthcare Professional Wayne Barton. Both have been working extensively with schools and other agencies both locally and abroad to enhance and develop social, emotional and mental health wellbeing in education. The Counsellors have now been appointed and start work with our young people this term.

This is where the Counsellors come in, as qualified and regulated counsellors and psychotherapists, with specific training and experience working with children and young people.

The benefits of offering a school based counselling service include, but are not limited to, improving attendance, performance, social wellbeing, and relationships with peers, teachers and parents. It enables students to access support without compromising their contact time at school or extracurricular activities after the school day. They will be working closely with teachers and pupils to ensure that there is minimal disruption to their lesson times and to become an embedded part of the schools' culture.

The Department of Education is very conscious of the public's expectations and, in order to facilitate an understanding of the service provision, will be managing these expectations by providing information via multiple platforms. These will include information leaflets for students, teachers and parents/carers shortly to be distributed, appearances on GBC's The Hub, contributions to formal inductions within existing and new schools, and multiagency collaborative approaches. In order to ensure the service remains current, a process of continuous evaluation will be observed.

The Counselling team commented, "We are incredibly excited to be a part of the Department of Education's first school-based counselling service and look forward to working together with teachers and other professionals to support and encourage the younger generation's positive mental health."

Minister for Education John Cortes said, "What we are doing to improve our children's education is astounding, and it goes much further than new school buildings and exceptional facilities. Child



mental wellbeing is key to our children now and our community in the future, and we are determined to make a difference. This team of committed new professional counsellors is a massive step in that direction.”

Counselling facts:

What might your child gain from counselling?

- Self-empowerment
- Increased self-confidence and self esteem
- Self-regulation
- Understanding of the world
- Stronger and more meaningful relationships
- Coping skills
- Resilience
- Empathy
- Emotional intelligence
- Stronger communication and self-expression skills
- Processing difficult feelings and life events
- Improved play and social skills
- Unconditional support from their counsellor

What is counselling?

Counselling offers a safe and supportive environment where children and young people can express themselves without judgement, develop their self-awareness and understand the world around them through verbal and creative means.

We aim to facilitate this process by listening and responding to the child or young person’s concerns. In each case, we get to know the child or young person and apply our varied skillset to tailor their counselling experience in order to meet their individual needs. In the therapeutic space, we respect and welcome all feelings, thoughts and ideas which may arise.

Counsellors are mental health professionals and are trained to help with a range of matters, such as: Exam stress, relationships, mental health concerns or concerning behaviour, special educational needs, anger, low mood, bereavement and grief, parental separation, significant transitions and life events.