

## School-based counselling: A review of the evidence

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# Background



### Mental health problems in young people



- 1 in 10 have diagnosable mental health condition
- Mental health difficulties associated with: lower levels of academic achievement and engagement, ongoing difficulties into adulthood

Source: Colman, 2009; WHO, 2006



## Overview

- What is school-based counselling?
- Does school-based counselling reduce mental health problems?
- How might school-based counselling be helpful?
- What national developments are there?
- The ESRC-funded ETHOS trial of school-based counselling
- Implications

## What is school-based counselling in the UK?



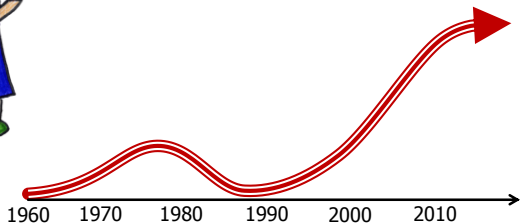
## Review of the evidence

Google search: BACP Scoping Reports





## The emergence of school-based counselling for young people in the UK



Source: Baginsky, 2004; Cooper, 2013

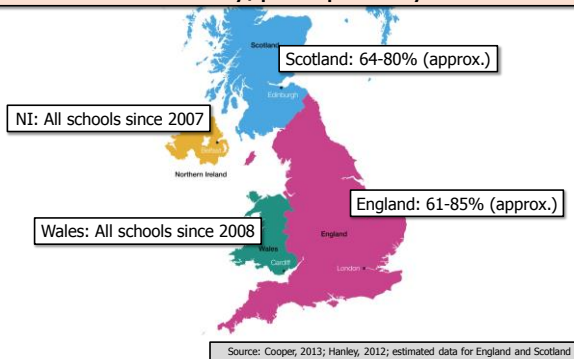
## Widely disseminated



One of most common provisions for mental health problems in young people in the UK

Source: Cooper, 2013; Hill, 2011; estimated figures

## Dissemination of school-based counselling in UK secondary/post-primary schools



Source: Cooper, 2013; Hanley, 2012; estimated data for England and Scotland

## Estimated cases per year

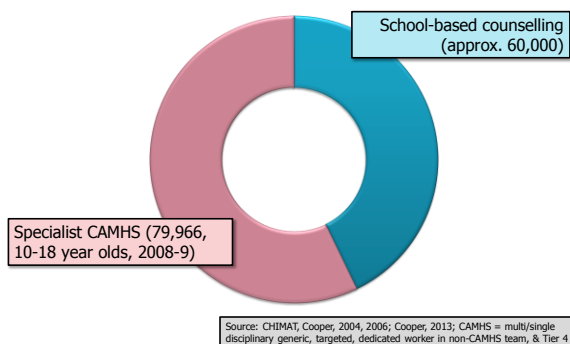


Approximately 70,000-90,000 in UK

Approximately 50,000-70,000 in England

Source: Cooper, 2013

## Cases in England (per year)



Source: CHIMAT, Cooper, 2004, 2006; Cooper, 2013; CAMHS = multi/single disciplinary generic, targeted, dedicated worker in non-CAMHS team, & Tier 4

## Service modality in UK



- Primarily 'humanistic'/'person-centred'/'integrative': similar to 'non-directive supportive therapy' (approved by NICE for mild depression)
- Aims to help young people find own answers through listening, warmth and empathic reflections
- Focuses on general emotional and interpersonal problems (cf. specific diagnoses)
- Generally one-to-one (cf. group/family)

Source: Cooper, 2009; Hill, 2011; NICE 2015

## Case example: Anya



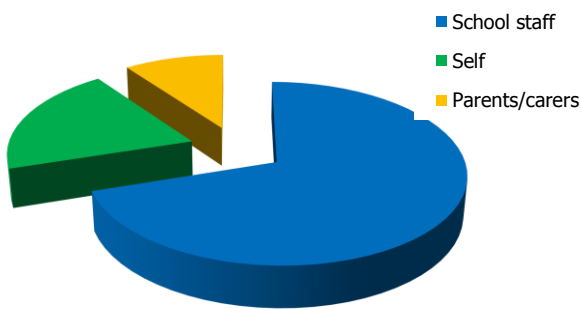
- 14 year old from central England
- Referred for missing school, aggressive behaviour
- Reported experiencing periods of 'depression'
- Devastated by father's recent stroke
- Fighting constantly with father, regularly grounded

Details of this client have been changed to protect anonymity

### Anya: Dialogue with counsellor, Session 2

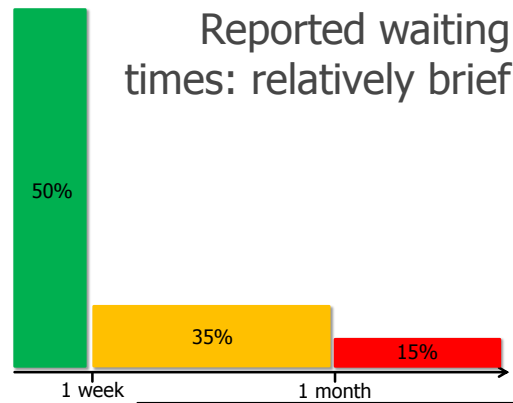


## Referral routes



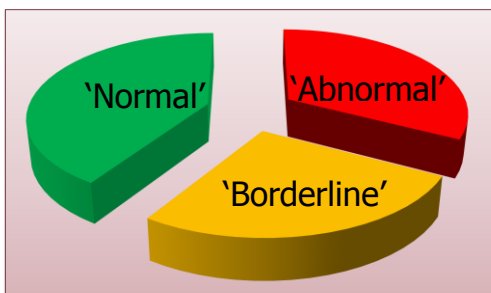
Source: Cooper, 2009; Hill, 2011, estimates from approximately 20,000 young people

## Reported waiting times: relatively brief



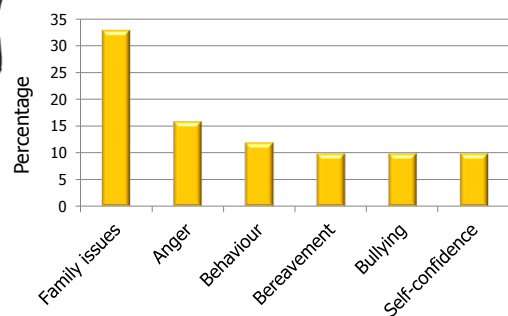
Source: Cooper, 2013; Hill, 2011; as reported by school staff and local authority leads

## Psychological difficulties at assessment (SDQ) (counselling)

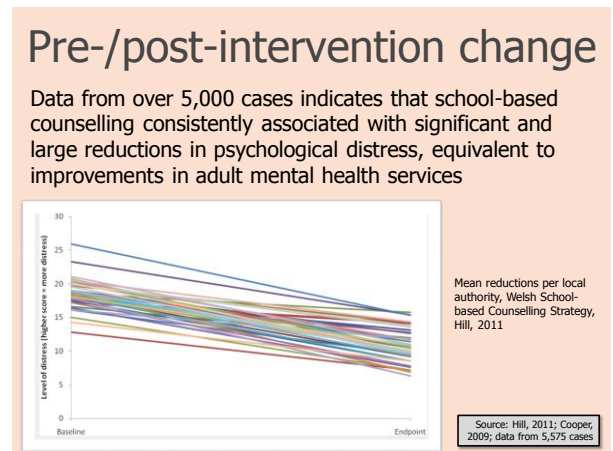
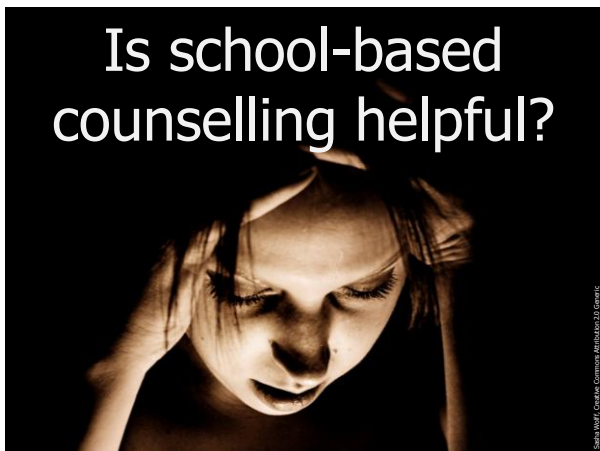
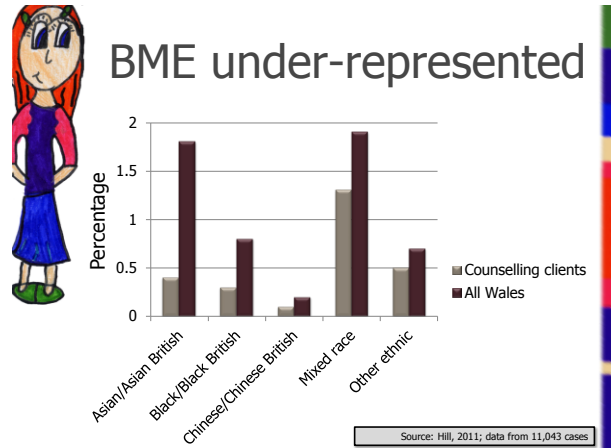
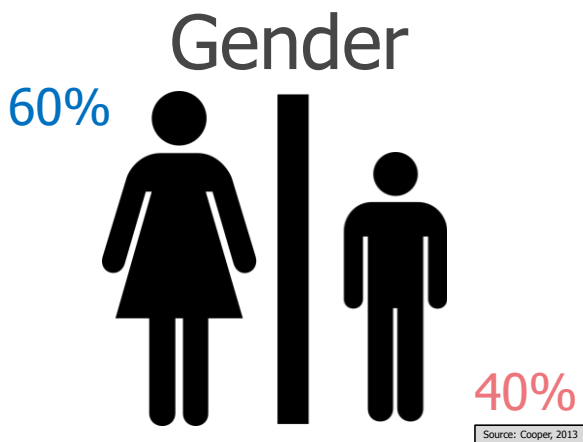


Source: Cooper, 2009, from 611 young people

## Presenting/developing issues



Source: Cooper, 2009; Hill, 2011; approximate data from over 20,000 cases



# But

Would those improvements just happen anyway?

# 'School-based humanistic counselling'

- Distillation of UK counselling practice
- Based on humanistic/person-centred competences
- Weekly sessions (max. 10)
- 2009-2014: Four pilot randomised trials comparing against usual care ( $Ns = 32-64$ )

Source: Cooper, 2010, 2013; McArthur, 2013; Pybis, 2014; Pearce, 2017



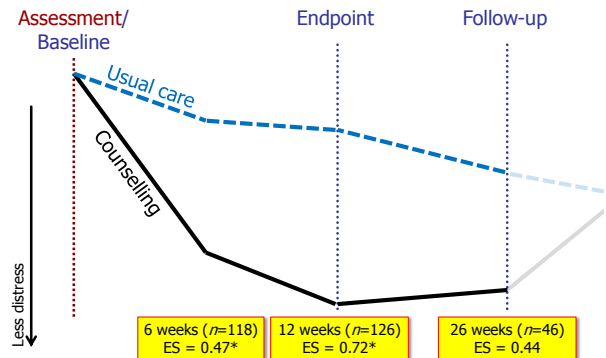
## School-based humanistic counselling: **Findings**

### Associated with:

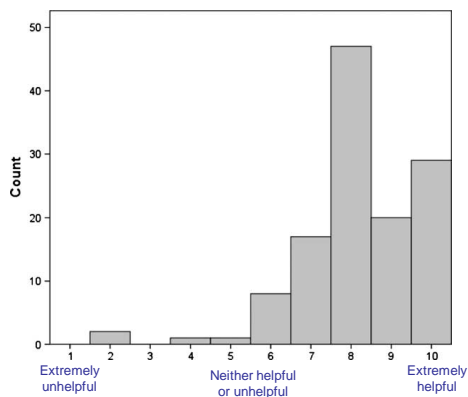
- Moderate short term reductions in psychological distress and difficulties
- Moderate short term improvements in self-esteem and personal goal attainment

Source: Cooper, 2010, 2013; McArthur, 2013; Pybis, 2014; Pearce, 2017

## RCT combined results (YP-CORE)



## Teachers' ratings of helpfulness of counselling for their pupils



n = 125, Source: Cooper, 2009

## Pastoral care teachers' perceptions of helpful aspects of counselling/'added value'

1. Independence
2. Confidentiality
3. Accessibility
4. Expertise
5. Time



k = 7 studies, Source: Cooper, 2009

## Pastoral care teachers' perceptions of areas for improvement

1. Greater availability
2. Greater promotion
3. Better communication
4. Greater range of activities



k = 7 studies, Source: Cooper, 2009

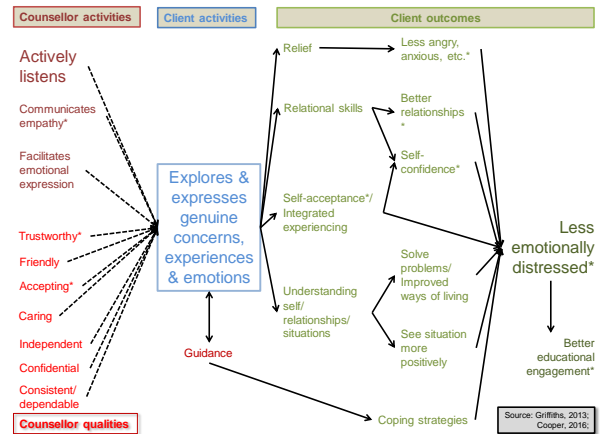
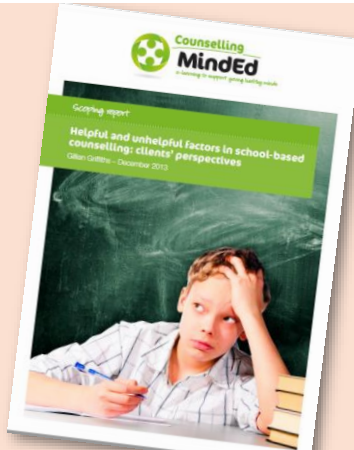
## What might be the process of change?





## Review of the qualitative evidence

Google search: BACP Scoping Reports



## A relationship that develops... over time

'I brought up something that like I'd never told anyone so it just goes to show how much the relationship's changed over time cos I've never trusted anyone with it, and then, I trusted [counsellor]' (Carl)

'In counselling, I always start with like little things and then, from them little things if I know, like, I can trust them and they're helping with the situation and that they didn't pass judgement on me or anything it then—it's like a build-up on- the next thing I tell them is more important to me.' (Annabelle)

Source: Gurvitz, 2017



Source: Cooper, 2010; Family kids, 2012

## An intervention for young people with no-one to talk to?

No-one to talk to (≈60)

...that they'd talk to someone about (≈300)

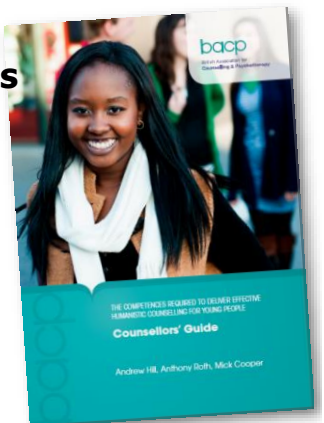
An emotional concern (≈600)

School students (≈1000)

## National developments

### From research to competences

2012: Evidence of effectiveness from pilot RCTs formed basis for developing competences for humanistic counselling with young people



Ability to offer a therapeutic relationship that facilitates experiential separation within a relational context

Core competences for work with young people	Specific therapeutic competences	Basic competences for humanistic counselling with young people	Specific competences for humanistic counselling with young people	Meta-competences	Working in an interprofessional context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge of development in young people and of family development and transitions</li> <li>Knowledge and understanding of mental health problems in young people and ability</li> <li>Professional ethics</li> <li>Knowledge of legal framework (ability to work with young people)</li> <li>Knowledge of, and ability to operate within, professional and ethical guidelines</li> <li>Knowledge of, and ability to work with, issues of confidentiality, consent and capacity</li> <li>Ability to work within and across agencies</li> <li>Ability to work in a 'culturally competent' manner</li> <li>Engagement &amp; communication</li> <li>Ability to recognise and respond to concerns about child protection</li> <li>Ability to communicate with young people of differing ages, developmental level and background</li> <li>Knowledge of psychotherapeutic work with young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge of models of experience, and their employment in practice</li> <li>Ability to foster and maintain a good therapeutic alliance, and to grasp the client's perspective and 'world view'</li> <li>Ability to work with the emotional content of the session</li> <li>Ability to manage endings and session transitions</li> <li>Ability to work with groups of young people and/or parent/careers</li> <li>Ability to make use of measures (including monitoring of outcomes)</li> <li>Ability to make use of supervision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge of the basic assumptions and principles of humanistic counselling</li> <li>Ability to initiate therapeutic relationships</li> <li>Ability to explore and demonstrate the rationale for humanistic approaches to therapy</li> <li>Ability to establish and agree a therapeutic focus/goals</li> <li>Ability to develop a contract for the therapeutic work</li> <li>Ability to maintain and develop therapeutic relationships</li> <li>Ability to experience and communicate a humanistic approach to young people</li> <li>Ability to maintain authority in the counselling relationship</li> <li>Ability to conduct a collaborative relationship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approaches to working with, and making sense of, ambivalence</li> <li>Ability to help young people to access and express emotions</li> <li>Ability to help young people articulate emotions</li> <li>Ability to help young people reflect on emotions and develop new understandings</li> <li>Ability to help young people make sense of experience that are confusing and distressing</li> <li>Ability to use creative methods and resources to help young people access, reflect upon, and make sense of their experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Metacompetences for humanistic counselling with young people</li> <li>Ability to work within a school context</li> <li>Ability to promote emotional health in schools</li> <li>Ability to work within a voluntary and community (third) sector context</li> <li>Ability to use additional therapeutic interventions</li> <li>Ability to use self-help materials for a range of problems</li> <li>Ability to use applied research</li> </ul>	

Competences for work with young people (11-18 years) bacp Other resources for Counselling & Psychotherapy

[http://www.bacp.co.uk/ethics/competences\\_and\\_curricula/cyp\\_competences.php](http://www.bacp.co.uk/ethics/competences_and_curricula/cyp_competences.php)

# From competences to training



**E-learning training for child counsellors**  
**45, half-hour sessions**  
**Funded by the UK Department of Health**  
**[minded.org.uk](http://minded.org.uk)**



**MindEd**  
 e-learning to support young healthy minds

Home > Welcome to Counselling MindEd

Welcome to Counselling MindEd

Welcome to Counselling MindEd

What is Counselling MindEd?

Click on each link and then click on the play button to watch the video.

In these videos some of the key people involved in creating Counselling MindEd talk about the programme:

- Welcome to the programme
- Who is Counselling MindEd for?
- What's in Counselling MindEd?

Note that the videos may take a few moments to load.

**New BACP curriculum framework for counselling young people based on competences, incorporating Counselling MindEd**

**Young People (11-18 Years) Training Curriculum**

BACP Professional Standards

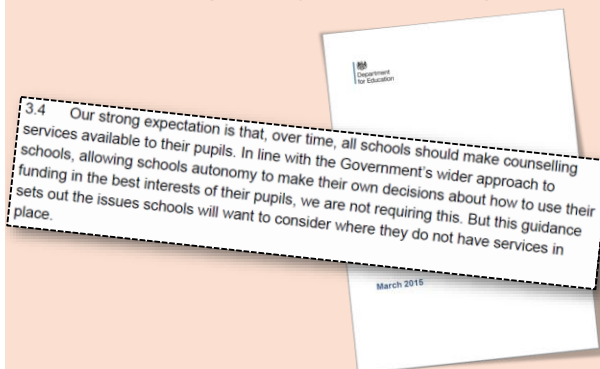
**Development of first CYP IAPT curriculum for counselling, including module on CBT**

**Course Guide**  
 Postgraduate Certificate Children and Young People's IAPT Therapy: Evidence-Based Counselling Practice (EBCP)

**Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families**

**UCL** **KINGS LONDON**

## DfE Publishes Departmental Advice on Counselling in Schools (2015, updated Feb 2016)



# But

1. Definitive evidence of effectiveness is still lacking, particularly at follow-up
2. Even if it is effective, is it cost-effective?
3. How does it work: and how can we improve it?



## Effectiveness and cost-effectiveness Trial of Humanistic cOunselling in Schools: Individual RCT (ETHOS)

**Research team:** Mick Cooper, Meg Stafford, Tiffany Rameswari (University of Roehampton); Karen Cromarty (independent consultant); Michael Barkham (University of Sheffield); Peter Bower (University of Manchester); Charlie Jackson (BACP); Jenni Beachem (LSE), Andy Fugard (Birkbeck); Peter Pearce (Metanoia); Cathy Street, Rebekah Ryder, Ed Mortimer, Joanna Lea (NCB); Manchester Academic Health Science Centre Trials Co-ordination Unit

**Dates:** 1st April 2016 – 1st March 2019 (35 months)

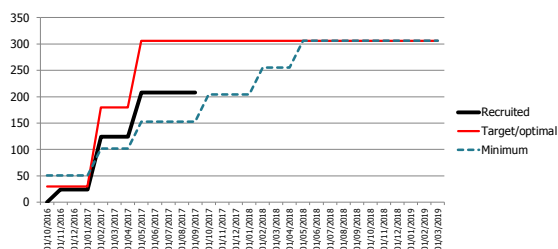
**Participants:** 18 schools (with no current counselling service), 306 young people (13-16 years old) experiencing moderate to high emotional symptoms

**Randomisation:** School-based Humanistic Counselling or Pastoral Care as Usual (with option for counselling at end)

**Outcomes** (6 weeks, 12 weeks/endpoint, 6 month follow-up): Differences in psychological wellbeing (e.g., YP-CORE, RCADS, SDQ, GBOM), cost-effectiveness (CSRI), academic engagement (e.g., attendance); perceptions of helpful/unhelpful aspects (young people, teachers, parents/carers)

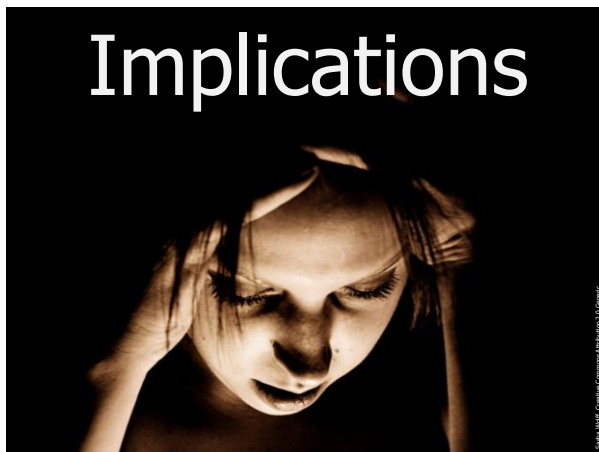
**Funding** ESRC: £835,000 (with additional support from Department of Psychology, University of Roehampton; BACP)

## ETHOS Progress (as of Sept. 2017)



- 208 young people recruited (of 306, 68%)
  - 105 allocated to SBHC, 103 to PCAU
- Completion rates at testing points: 98%-100%
- 20 interviews with young people completed
- Final round of recruitment due Spring 2018
- Results due Spring 2019

# Implications





## Schools

- Consider how you ensure that **all** young people in your school have a skilled adult they can talk to, at a level of depth
- Consider appointing a school-based counsellor to help young people address broad-spectrum emotional and interpersonal problems
- Ensure that a counsellor is practising an evidence-based method
- Ensure that any counselling provision is integrated within a wider framework of mental health pathways and interventions



## Commissioners and policy makers

- Consider how you ensure that **all** young people in your area have a skilled adult they can talk to, at a level of depth
- Consider commissioning school-based counselling as part of an **integrated** service framework
- Consider commissioning training in CYP IAPT Evidence-based Counselling Practice



## Researchers

- Consider conducting research into a range of questions regarding SBHC:
  - Is SBHC effective for specific client groups (e.g., bereaved, bullying)?
  - What is the process of change in SBHC (and how can this be used to enhance the intervention)?
  - What are the unhelpful elements of SBHC (e.g., lack of direction)?
  - Is the effectiveness of SBHC enhanced through the addition of specific methods (e.g., feedback monitoring)?
  - Are other interventions more effective than SBHC for specific client groups (e.g., mindfulness for anxiety)?
  - Who, if anyone, is SBHC most effective for?
- Consider applying to use ETHOS data for range of analyses
- Consider research on other standardised forms of school counselling
- Consider research on primary school counselling
- Consider research on effectively integrating counselling into a wider mental health service framework



## Thank you

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