



# **Terms & Conditions of the Department of Education's Counselling in Primary Schools Pilot (CPS-P) 2023-2025<sup>1</sup>**

## **Purpose of the Pilot**

On the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2023 the Minister for Education announced a landmark programme of counselling supports to be piloted in all primary schools in Counties Cavan, Laois, Leitrim, Longford, Mayo, Monaghan, and Tipperary (Strand 1).

Each school in the pilot is given access to counselling supports, as determined by the Department of Education (DE), under the pilot. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) on behalf of the Department is responsible for the establishment of county panels of pre-approved private counsellors to provide in-person one-to-one counselling to support primary school pupils in these counties.

NEPS psychologists are available to support participating schools in identifying the pupils who will access the counselling service (subject to parental/ legal guardian consent). In the event that a participating school is awaiting the assignment of a NEPS psychologist, or if the assigned NEPS psychologist is on leave, NEPS will make a psychologist available for this purpose, as required.

The counselling service provided under the Pilot Programme is not a substitute for services provided by HSE Primary Care Psychology and/or CAMHS, nor does it replace the role of the NEPS psychologist within a school. The Pilot Programme is an interim measure intended to supplement these services and meet current urgent needs for counselling support for primary school pupils. The Counselling in Primary Schools Pilot is piloting the provision of counselling support for a small number of primary school children in their own school.

## **Operation of the Pilot**

The Department of Education selects and recruits private counsellors for placement on a panel. County panels for primary schools in Cavan, Laois, Leitrim, Longford, Mayo, Monaghan, and Tipperary are published on gov.ie. Participating schools are allocated blocks of up to eight counselling sessions, and will arrange this by making direct contact with a counsellor on the panel.

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<sup>1</sup> This document supersedes and replaces all previous versions of the Terms and Conditions of the Counselling in Primary Schools Pilot.



A link person within the participating school i.e. the principal, or a teacher designated to act on the principal's behalf, will be the point of contact for the counsellor. The link person will agree with the counsellor the day(s) and hour(s) they will attend the school.

The link person will manage and arrange the parental consent and referral(s) to the counsellor. The consent of *both* parents/legal guardians must be obtained prior to the involvement of the counsellor. If there are two parents/legal guardians and it has not been possible to obtain the consent of both, efforts taken by the school to obtain this consent must be documented, held on the Student Support File and also provided to the counsellor. If one parent/legal guardian *refuses* to give consent, the counsellor may not become involved with the pupil. If there is only one parent/legal guardian, then one signature is sufficient.

The link person will also provide the counsellor with relevant school policies and procedures for example, the schools Child Safeguarding Statement and the name of the Designated Liaison Person and Deputy; Behaviour Policy; Anti-bullying Policy.

In accordance with, and limited by, the school's allocation, Counsellors will agree hour(s) per week with the school(s). The counselling will be provided by the counsellor in-person in the school.

The Department of Education will endeavour to ensure that the counselling support provided is of a high professional standard and is also in line with best practice for counselling of children of the primary school age cohort.

**This document sets out the standards that must be met in the provision of counselling to primary school pupils, to ensure that the counsellor engagement is safe, congruent and responsive to needs. The standards also ensure that the counsellors have appropriate training, skills and competencies to engage ethically, professionally and effectively with this age group.**

**Appendix 1 contains the Agreement between the Minister for Education and an individual counsellor, which is to be completed by the counsellor once they have read and are satisfied with the Terms & Conditions of the Counselling in Primary Schools Pilot (CPS-P) 2023-2025.**

**Appendix 2 contains the Statement of Non-Disclosure, which should also be signed by the counsellor, who thereby agrees that all of the information received in the provision of the counselling under the CPS-P will be treated as confidential, will be stored safely and cannot be accessed by any third party.**



## The Panel of Counsellors

The Department of Education is responsible for the establishment of a panel of participating counsellors for the Pilot Programme 2023-2025. Any counsellor who wishes to be considered for placement on the panel is required to:

- (i) submit an application form by emailing [CounsellingPilot@education.gov.ie](mailto:CounsellingPilot@education.gov.ie), and
  - (ii) satisfy the following criteria
- Currently hold a recognised qualification at Level 7 (primary degree) or higher in a relevant human science as well as an accredited qualification in counselling or psychotherapy. This qualification must be recognised by the Psychological Society of Ireland; or the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy; or the Irish Association for Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy; or one of the ten accrediting psychotherapy bodies within the Irish Council for Psychotherapy (ICP); or the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP); or the Irish Association of Psychotherapy and Play Therapy (IAPTP); or the Association of Child Art Psychotherapists (ACAP)

**AND**

- have at least two years' (minimum of 150 hours), relevant supervised experience of providing counselling for children

**OR**

- Currently hold a professional accredited qualification in the area of child and adolescent counselling

**AND**

- have at least one year's supervised experience of providing counselling for children

**AND**

- be an accredited member of one of the following professional bodies: the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI); Irish Association of Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy (IAHIP); Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP); Irish Association of Psychotherapy and Play Therapy (IAPTP); Association of Child Art Psychotherapists (ACAP); or one of the ten accrediting psychotherapy bodies within the Irish Council for Psychotherapy (ICP).
- adhere to the Code of Ethics of their relevant accrediting body - Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI); Irish Association of Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy (IAHIP); Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP); Irish Association of Psychotherapy and Play Therapy (IAPTP); Association of Child Art Psychotherapists (ACAP); one of the ten



accrediting psychotherapy bodies within the Irish Council for Psychotherapy<sup>2</sup> (ICP)

- attend professional supervision while providing counselling as part of the Counselling in Primary Schools Pilot
- pass the Garda vetting process via the Department of Education
- furnish a Tax Clearance Access Number (obtainable from the Revenue Commissioners), and a PPSN
- complete the [Introduction to Children First' E-Learning Programme](#) and accept their responsibilities as a “mandated person” under the Children First Act, 2015
- hold up to-date professional indemnity insurance

The pilot will run up to 2025.

### What will be provided under this pilot:

Each block will consist of up to eight one-hour sessions overall.

- This will include six one-to-one counselling sessions with the pupil. Short follow-up consultation(s) with parents and school staff member, note-taking and/or preparatory/follow-up actions, may be part of this hour.
- Two of the sessions will be with parents/guardians and school staff:
  - The first will be the initial session to ensure that consent is fully informed, to discuss background information, gather information and to clarify referral issues, as appropriate.
  - The second will be the last session to provide verbal feedback to parents/guardians and school staff on the process and suggested next steps, to ensure that recommended strategies are integrated and reinforced in the child’s home and school life and therefore ensure ongoing support for the child.

Counsellors will only be paid for a maximum of 8 sessions, 6 of which need to be one-to-one counselling sessions with the child. There is no allowance for payment for additional hours in respect of an individual child under this pilot, with the exception of making a Child Protection Report to TUSLA. An additional hour at the rate of €80 for the hour<sup>3</sup>, will be paid for completion of a Child Protection Report to Tusla. This additional payment request should be included in the Certificate of Completion of Counselling Sessions Form, which is co-signed by the Principal/ link person. Any queries in relation to this should be addressed to the Counselling Pilot Team [Counsellingpilot@education.gov.ie](mailto:Counsellingpilot@education.gov.ie)

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<sup>2</sup> Family Therapy Association of Ireland (FTAI); Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapy Ireland (CBPI); Irish Association of Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy (IAHIP); the Association for Psychoanalysis & Psychotherapy in Ireland (APPI); Irish Analytical Psychology Association (IAPA); Irish Forum for Child & Adolescent Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (IFCAPP); Irish Forum for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (IFPP); Irish Group Analytic Society (IGAS); Northern Ireland Institute of Human Relations (NIIHR); Irish Psycho Analytical Association (IPAA)

<sup>3</sup> Subject to withholding tax @ 20%, resulting in a net fee of €64



## Procedures to be followed by Counsellors in Implementing the Pilot Programme of Counselling for Primary Schools

Counsellors are required to adhere to the following procedures, as laid out by the Department of Education:

- Ensure they are registered on the Pilot Programme of Counselling for Primary Schools Panel 2023-2025 prior to engaging with a participating school
- Provide a certificate of completion of the [Introduction to Children First' E-Learning Programme](#)
- Produce a form of photographic identification (e.g. Driving license, passport) upon attending the participating school

In providing counselling under the pilot, counsellors are required to:

- In advance of meeting a pupil, ensure that the **Consent and Referral Form**, has been duly completed and signed by the parents/ legal guardians and the school principal (or the person authorised on their behalf).
- In advance of meeting the pupil, meet with the parents/ legal guardians for a session, to ensure that consent is fully informed, to discuss background information, gather information and to clarify referral issues, as appropriate.
- The Department of Education is allowing that it will take an hour for each of the sessions under this pilot, this allows for preparation time e.g. room set-up, meeting with the child, meeting with parents and school staff, phone call to TUSLA duty social worker in relation to a Child Protection query<sup>4</sup>, and the counsellors own professional record keeping.
- Meet in-person with each individual pupil for up to 6 sessions in a secure and confidential space within the school (location to be arranged by the school). In some instances the counsellor may wish to meet with parents and or school staff member following each or some of the sessions with the child. This will be decided at a local level on a case-by-case basis.
- Following completion of up to 6 counselling sessions with each individual pupil, meet with the pupil's parents/ legal guardians and teachers for a session, to provide verbal feedback on the process and suggested next steps. This will also ensure that the therapeutic interventions and

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<sup>4</sup> [TUSLA Information for Mandated Persons](#) (pg 2) If, as a mandated person, you are in doubt about whether your concern reaches the legal threshold of harm for the purpose of making a mandated report, the Tusla social work department can advise you. You can find details of who to contact to discuss your concern with or to make a report to, on the Tusla website. You may also make a report using the Tusla Web Portal.



strategies from the counselling sessions can be integrated in the pupil's home and school life, ensure ongoing support for the child.

- Schools will make every effort to ensure that the child attends the counselling sessions. Schools shall inform the counsellor if it is known in advance that the child will be absent from school, giving adequate time to rearrange the session. If the counsellor arrives to the school and the child is absent, for example for medical reasons, the counsellor will be entitled to payment from the Department of Education for that session. When this occurs an email should be sent to [counsellingpilot@education.gov.ie](mailto:counsellingpilot@education.gov.ie), by the link person and copied to the counsellor, advising of the missed session and the reason for same, with initials only of the child. This will not be counted as one of the child's sessions, if missing the session was unavoidable (e.g. illness; medical appointment etc.) and a new session can be re-scheduled. If cancellations persist for the same child, the counsellor should speak to the school or a member of the DE Counselling Team for guidance on whether the child can continue in the programme
- Counsellors on the panel must adhere to the Code of Ethics of their relevant accrediting body and their record keeping policies, which includes a policy on record retention and disposal. In all aspects of data protection and record keeping the child's welfare is paramount and must remain the priority for the counsellor. The notes are the property of the counsellor and it is the counsellor's responsibility to ensure that they are stored securely and not on the school premises and remain confidential at all times. Document(s) containing personal information of a pupil are never sent electronically or by email.
- All counsellors on the panel have signed a Statement of Non-Disclosure (Appendix 2) agreeing that all of the information received in the provision of the counselling under the Pilot will be treated as confidential, will be stored safely and cannot be accessed by any third party. This is with the exception of a disclosure for the purpose of a child safeguarding or child protection. In such a case, the agreed procedures as a mandated person, under the Children First Act 2015 must be followed. See here. The counsellor will report their mandated concern to TUSLA. Mandated Persons have two main legal obligations under the Act:
  1. To report the harm of children above a defined threshold to Tusla - Child and Family Agency;
  2. To assist Tusla, if requested, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report.
- Submit a completed and signed original copy of a **Certificate of Completion of Counselling Sessions Form** to the link person in the school, for review by the school principal. If satisfied, the school principal will certify that the work has been fully completed and will make the submission for payment to the Department at [CounsellingPilot@education.gov.ie](mailto:CounsellingPilot@education.gov.ie)





- If the child and their parents/ legal guardians are satisfied that the child does not need any further sessions, they can request that their child's attendance at the counselling can end at any stage. In some instances a child may not require all 6 sessions.
- If a counsellor wishes to withdraw from the Pilot Programme of Counselling for Primary Schools panel, the counsellor should inform the DE in advance.

### Terms and Conditions of the Counselling in Primary Schools Pilot (CPS-P)

The following terms and conditions apply to all counsellors who provide counselling under the pilot:

- Each counselling session must be solely carried out by the counsellor whose name is on the CPS-P panel and who has been commissioned for the sessions.
- Counselling sessions and interactions with parents and school staff will be carried out in a professional manner.
- It is expected that each counsellor will provide no more than 20 hours per week in total across a number of schools, subject to a maximum of 5 sessions per school day, as part of this pilot.
- Each counselling session must be provided in person within the school premises during school hours. Online counselling sessions and/or office-based sessions are strictly prohibited.
- It is the responsibility of the school to provide a suitable space for the counselling sessions. This space should be warm and welcoming, have comfortable seats at the same level and be situated where there are no distractions and where the session can proceed uninterrupted. See page 9 *Department of Education Counselling in Primary Schools Pilot (CPSP) 2023-2025 Guidelines for Schools* here. Any issues that arise in relation to the suitability of the space can be referred directly to Counselling Pilot Team by email at [CounsellingPilot@education.gov.ie](mailto:CounsellingPilot@education.gov.ie) who will be happy to liaise with the school in relation to this matter.
- Over the course of the counselling sessions it may be evident to the counsellor that the pupil requires referral to a specialist service. The counsellor will consult with the school and the parents/ legal guardians prior to taking any actions regarding the referral. With the consent of the parent/legal guardian, counsellors may provide a summary of their involvement with the child together with a recommendation for onward referral, to the school/parent/legal guardian in order to support an onward referral to specialist services via the GP.
- Counsellors on the pilot must attend regular supervision in line with the recommendations of their accrediting body.



- Payment for sessions carried out under the pilot will be discharged from funding made available by the Department of Education to the CPS-P. Counsellors who accept commissions under the pilot may not seek or accept payment from any other source and will be required to certify that they have not done so, as a condition of receiving payment. Seeking or accepting payment from any other source in respect of counselling sessions under the pilot will constitute grounds for removal from the CPS-P panel.
- It is strictly prohibited to seek to contract to working privately with children who have already received a block of counselling under the CPS-P for the duration of the pilot. Any queries on this clause can be referred directly to Counselling Pilot Team by email at [CounsellingPilot@education.gov.ie](mailto:CounsellingPilot@education.gov.ie)

### Counsellor Fees

- The fee payable by the DE to a counsellor is €80 per session, subject to withholding tax @ 20%, resulting in a net fee of €64.
- Counsellors are required to meet any other expenses (including travel, subsistence and supervision costs) from the counselling session fee.
- The counsellor will be responsible for the payment of any additional tax due.

### Procedure for Payment under the Pilot

The Department of Education will initiate payment on receipt a **Certificate of Completion of Counselling Sessions Form (Appendix 6)** [here](#) completed by the school and agreed and signed by both the counsellor and by the school principal. The counsellor can agree with the principal when the form will be submitted to the Department for payment (e.g. on a monthly basis or when a certain number of sessions are completed). The principal is required to submit the form to NEPS within 3 months of the date of completion of the sessions. Payment may be withheld or refused until the Department of Education is satisfied that the Terms and Conditions of the pilot have been complied with. Once satisfied in this regard, the DE will arrange for payment to be made directly to the counsellor.

### Audit & Quality Assurance

The Department is obliged to complete a quality assurance exercise on the CPS-P. This will involve NEPS contacting a number of schools and counsellors participating in the Pilot programme, for a general update and/or the completion of a short survey on how the CPS-P is operating.





## Complaints

In accordance with the *Counselling in Primary Schools Pilot (CPS-P) 2023-2025 Complaints Procedure for Schools and Parents/Guardians* any complaint made regarding the provision of counselling by a counsellor, should aim to be resolved informally in the first instance, that is, between the school principal, parent/ legal guardian, and the counsellor. Where the informal resolution proves unsuccessful it is hoped that the formal resolution process will resolve the matter satisfactorily via the *Counselling in Primary Schools Pilot (CPS-P) 2023-2025 Complaints Procedure for Schools and Parents/Guardians*

## Evaluation

The DE will be commissioning an evaluation of the CPS-P once it concludes, and in this regard, will be seeking feedback from the participating counsellors, who will be required to fully participate in the Evaluation process, including paper based and/ or via web based systems.

## Grounds for Removal from Panel

The grounds upon which a counsellor may be removed/suspended (pending investigation) from the panel, include the following:

- Failure to comply with the Terms and Conditions of the Pilot Programme.
- Failure to provide the counselling sessions and/ or consultation sessions with school staff parents/ legal guardians in a professional manner, with reasonable care and diligence.
- Failure to provide sufficient time to the pupil in the counselling session, and/or teacher/parent consultations.
- Engaging in conduct that falls short of what would be expected from a professional counsellor.
- Seeking and/ or accepting payment from a source other than from funding provided by the Department of Education, in respect of counselling sessions conducted under the Pilot Programme.
- Failure to provide the agreed number of sessions (save where consent is withdrawn, or the individual pupil refuses to participate, or if a professional judgment is made in relation to the inappropriateness of the sessions for the child, which are explained to parents/guardians and school staff)
- Provision of false or misleading information in the **Certificate of Completion of Counselling Sessions Form**.
- Provision of false or misleading information in the Application Form or in the Acceptance to the panel.
- Conviction of a criminal offence.
- Representing themselves in an inaccurate or inappropriate manner.



## **Queries**

Any queries should be submitted by e-mail to [CounsellingPilot@education.gov.ie](mailto:CounsellingPilot@education.gov.ie). The Counselling Pilot Team will make every effort to respond to queries as soon as possible.

## **Disclaimers**

The CPS-P panel is not a register of counsellors. Membership of the panel does not constitute eligibility for statutory registration of counsellors.

CPS-P counsellors are not employees of the Department of Education.

Placement upon the CPS-P panel, shall not be interpreted or construed as granting a counsellor any right or entitlement to participation in the CPS-P.

Subject to the Department of Education's right of removal/discontinuance of the Pilot Programme (at the discretion of the Minister), placement upon the CPS-P panel is valid from the date of appointment until the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

**21<sup>st</sup> March 2024**

**National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)**

**Department of Education**



## Appendix 1

### Agreement between Minister for Education and the Participating Counsellor

I have read, understand and agree to be bound by the Terms & Conditions of the *Counselling in Primary Schools Pilot (CPS-P) 2023-2025*,

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Counsellor

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

On behalf of The Minister for Education

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_



## Appendix 2

### Statement of Non-Disclosure

I \_\_\_\_\_ the undersigned, understand that all of the information received by me in the provision of a counselling service under the Counselling in Primary Schools Pilot (CPS-P) is confidential and is disclosed to me for the purpose of completing such work, and I undertake to use/process it solely for that purpose.

I understand that the information is of a confidential nature and undertake to treat it as such, and hereby confirm that I will not disclose it to any third party.

I undertake to store it in a secure environment that cannot be accessed by any third party.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Counsellor

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_