



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

STATISTICS, DOCUMENT

Counselling for children and young people: September 2021 to August 2022

Provision of independent counselling services for children and young people aged between 11 and 18 and pupils in Year 6 of primary school for September 2021 to August 2022.

First published: 30 March 2023

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Introduction

Local authorities in Wales are required to make reasonable provision of independent counselling services for children and young people aged between 11 and 18 on the site of each secondary school that it maintains and for pupils in Year 6 of primary school. A local authority may in addition offer counselling services at other locations, e.g. at independent schools, further education colleges or at other community facilities.

This data informs the development of counselling services for children and young people in Wales.

Counselling in this context gives children and young people the opportunity to talk face to face with a counsellor about their worries and concerns, to work through difficult feelings so that they can learn to manage them. Where appropriate counselling may lead to a referral to another service (e.g. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), child protection services).

All data in this report is collected by the Welsh Government from local authorities in an aggregated data collection form.

Timing

This report covers a time period which includes the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The statistics prior to March 2020 include face to face counselling only. Since March 2020 counselling carried out via online face to face sessions has been included to reflect changes to counselling provision during the pandemic. School closures between March and August 2020 and January to March 2021 are likely to have had an impact on the 2019/20 and 2020/21 statistics presented within this report.

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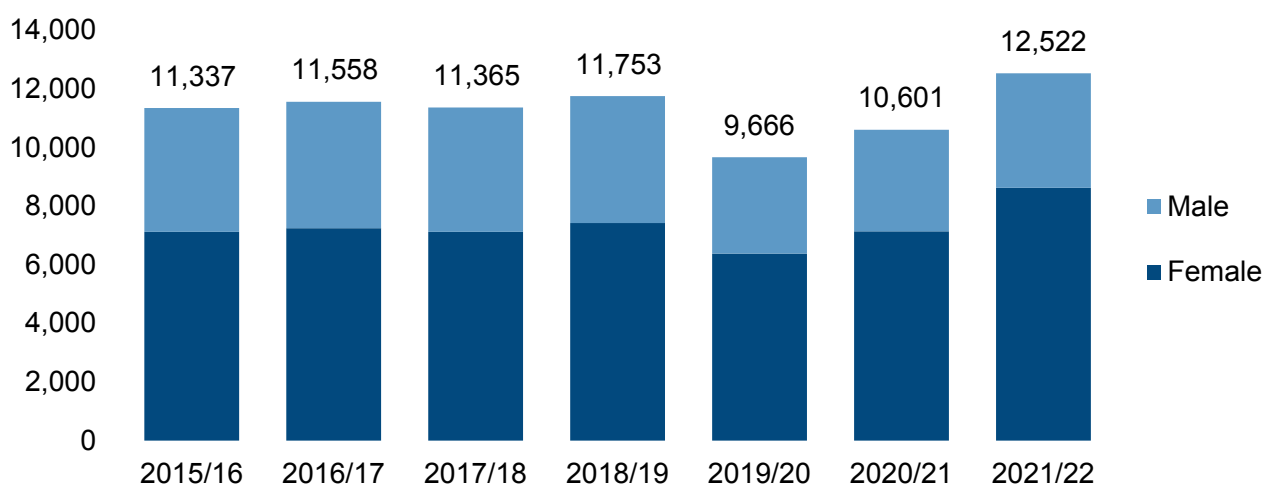
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Main points

- 12,522 children or young people received counselling services in 2021/22.
- School-based and other education staff were the most common form of referral, accounting for over half of all referrals (56%).
- Females accounted for around two thirds of children and young people who received counselling in 2021/22 and males accounted for a third.
- 20% of all children and young people who received counselling were in Year 10.
- Anxiety and family issues were the most common type of issue for children and young people who received counselling.
- 87% of children and young people did not require onward referral after completion of counselling sessions.

Gender, local authority, form of referral, age group and ethnicity

Figure 1: Number of children and young people who received counselling in Wales, by gender, 2015/16 to 2021/22 [Note 1]



Description of Figure 1: A stacked bar chart showing that around two-thirds of children and young people who received counselling were female and one-third were male in each year since 2015/16.

Number of children and young people attending counselling by area and gender (StatsWales)

[Note 1] In addition, local authorities reported that 322 children or young people who received counselling did not identify as male or female or preferred not to say their gender in 2021/22. The data collection form will be developed in future and include additional gender categories.

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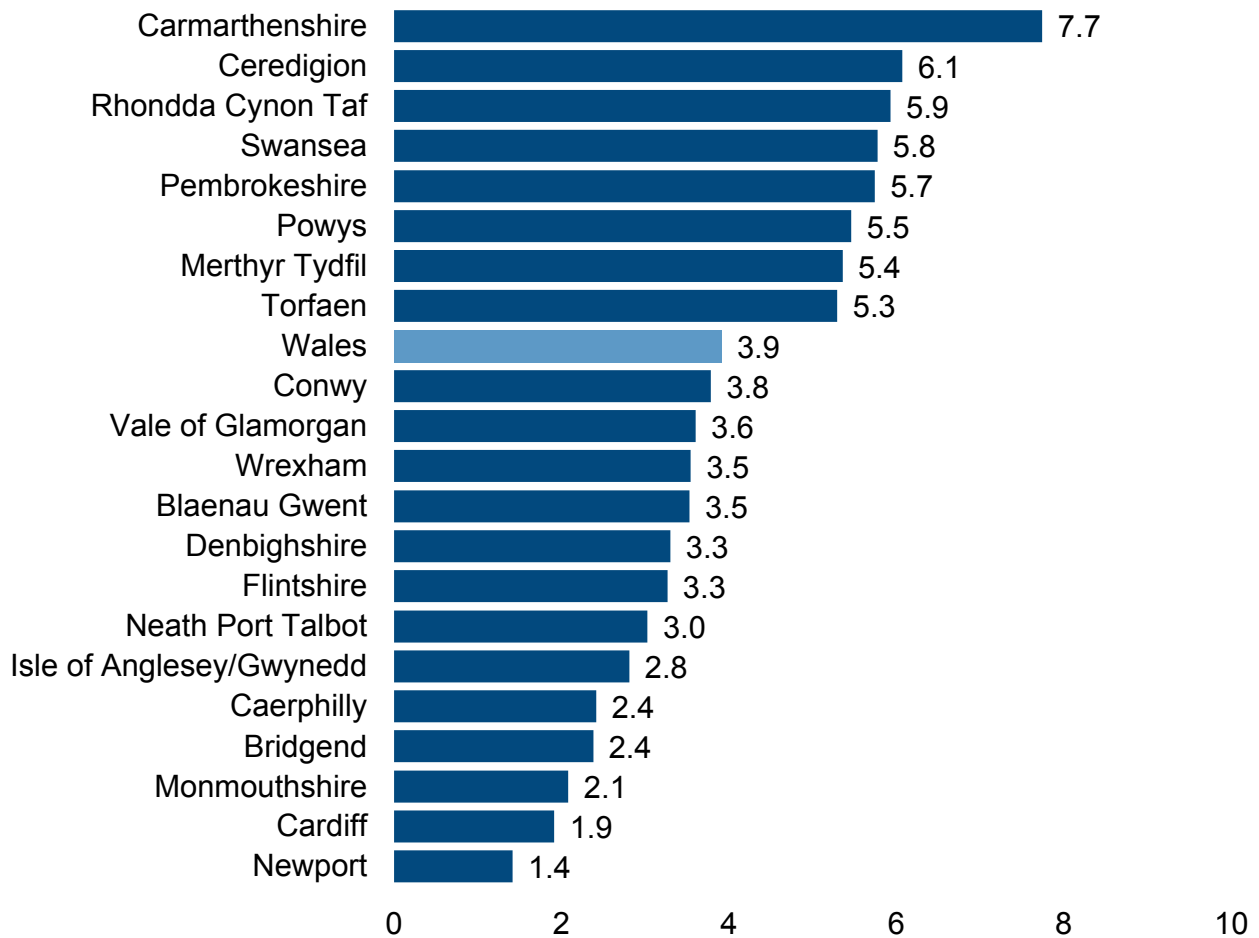
- 12,522 children or young people received counselling services in 2021/22, the highest number since this data collection began and up by 18% compared with 2020/21. School closures between March and August 2020 and January to March 2021 due to the pandemic are likely to have had an impact on the figures in 2019/20 and 2020/21.

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Figure 2: Number of children and young people (per 100 of resident 10-18 year olds) who received counselling in Wales by local authority, September 2021 to August 2022 [Note 1]



Description of Figure 2: A bar chart showing that Carmarthenshire had the highest rate of children and young people receiving counselling and Newport had the lowest rate.

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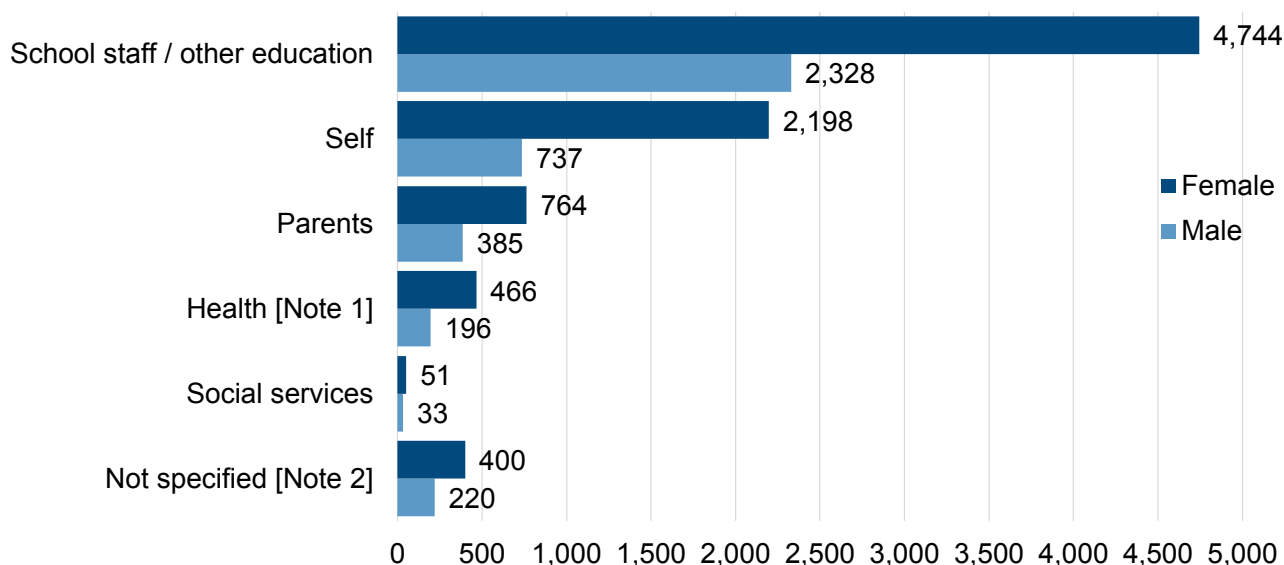
Number of children and young people attending counselling by area and gender (StatsWales)

Population estimates by local authority, region and age (StatsWales)

[Note 1] Population estimates obtained from 2021 Mid-year population estimates produced by the Office for National Statistics.

- 3.9 children and young people per 100 of resident 10-18 year olds received counselling in Wales in 2021/22.
- The rates for local authorities ranged from 1.4 in Newport to 7.7 in Carmarthenshire.

Figure 3: Form of referral of children and young people who received counselling by gender, September 2021 to August 2022



Description of Figure 3: A bar chart showing that over half of the children and

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young people who received counselling were referred by school based or other education staff for both males and females.

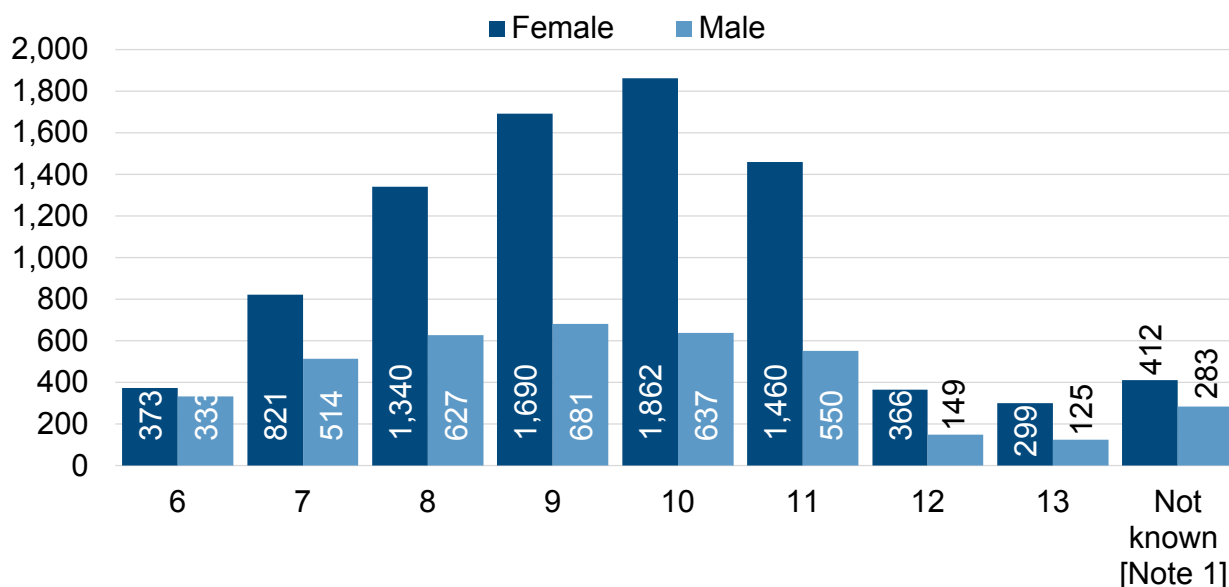
Number of referrals of children and young people attending counselling by area, year and gender (StatsWales)

[Note 1] GP, hospital, school nurse etc.

[Note 2] Not specified includes the categories 'Prefer not to say', 'Not known' and 'Other'.

- The most common form of referral was by school-based and other education staff, which accounted for over half of all referrals (56%) in 2021/22.
- Self referral was the second most common form of referral (23%), followed by parents (9%).
- Males and females displayed a similar trend in their form of referral, with referral by school-based and other education staff the most common, followed by self referral.
- Males were more likely to have been referred by school-based and other education staff (60% of all male referrals), compared with 55% of all female referrals.
- Females were more likely to refer themselves (25% of all female referrals), compared with 19% of all male referrals.

Figure 4: Number of children and young people who received counselling in Wales by gender and school year age group, September 2021 to August 2022



Description of Figure 4: A bar chart showing that the most common school year group for children and young people who received counselling was Year 10 for females and Year 9 for males.

Number of children and young people who received counselling in Wales by school year age group, year and gender (StatsWales)

[Note 1] Not known included 50 children who received counselling in school years 1 to 5.

- The Year 10 age group (for the most part, these are children aged 14 to 15) had the highest number of children and young people who received counselling, followed by the Year 9 age group in 2021/22.
- The Year 13 age group (that is, those young people in sixth form or having

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left school) had the lowest number.

- The Year 10 age group accounted for 20% of all children and young people who received counselling in 2021/22.
- There were more females than males who received counselling in all year groups, though Year 6 numbers for males and females are similar.
- From Year 7 to Year 11 the number of males who attended counselling remained relatively similar, between 500 and 700 in each year group.
- The number of females increased considerably from Year 7 to Year 10 compared to their male counterparts, to a peak in Year 10 of 1,862.

Table 1: Number and percentage of children and young people who received counselling in Wales, by ethnic background, September 2021 to August 2022

Ethnic background	Number	Per cent
White	11,626	92.8
Mixed Race	297	2.4
Asian or Asian British	152	1.2
Black or Black British	94	0.8
Chinese or Chinese British	15	0.1
Any other ethnic background	151	1.2
Not known	187	1.5

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Ethnic background	Number	Per cent
Total	12,522	100.0

Source: Counselling for children and young people, Welsh Government

The table shows that the majority (93%) of children and young people who received counselling identified themselves as White in 2021/22. The distribution is broadly representative of the distribution of young people in the wider school population.

Presenting and predominant issues

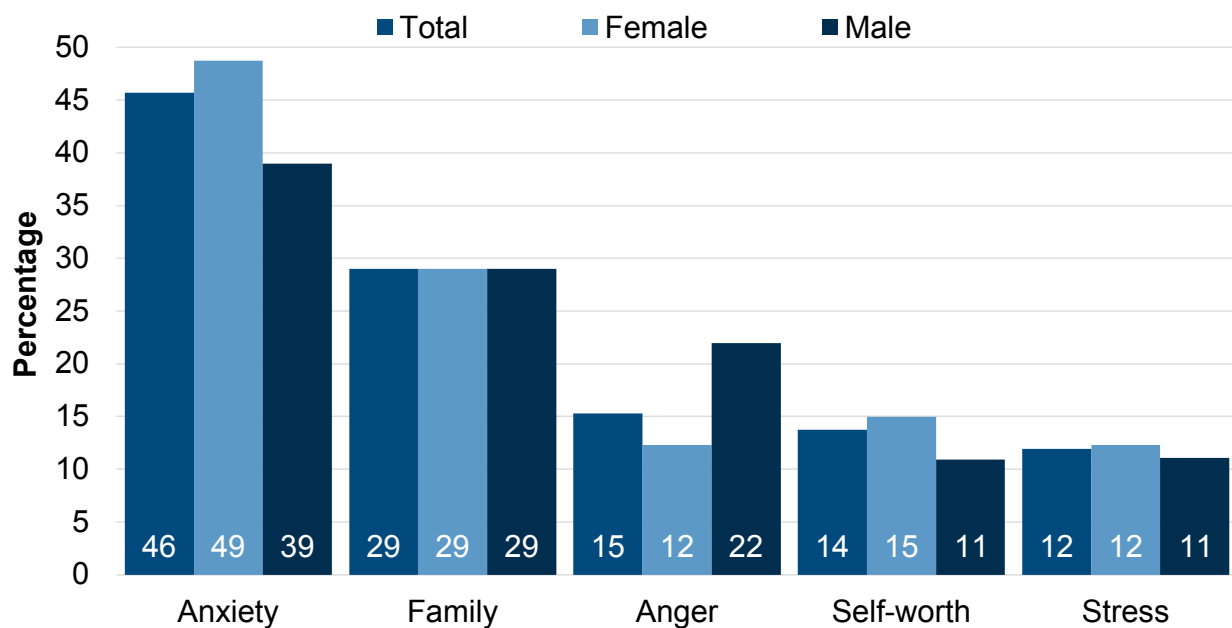
A presenting issue is the reason that a client self-refers or is referred to a counsellor. Local authorities are asked to record up to three presenting issues per child or young person. The figure below shows the percentage of children and young people who received counselling with each of the five most common presenting issues. The percentages are based on the total number of children and young people, not the total number of issues recorded.

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Figure 5: Main presenting issues for children and young people who received counselling in Wales, September 2021 to August 2022



Description of Figure 5: A bar chart showing that anxiety, family issues, anger, self-worth and stress were the most common presenting issues.

Main presenting issues on referral for children and young people receiving counselling by presenting issues and year (StatsWales)

- Anxiety was the most common presenting issue for both females (49%) and males (39%) in 2021/22.
- Anxiety has increased as a presenting issue from 12% in 2015/16 to 46% in 2021/22.
- Family issues was the next most common presenting issue for males and females, both 29%.

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- Family issues are down from 35% in 2015/16 to 29% in 2021/22 and stress is down from 16% in 2015/16 to 12% in 2021/22.
- Males were more likely than females to be referred due to anger issues, 22% for males compared with 12% for females.

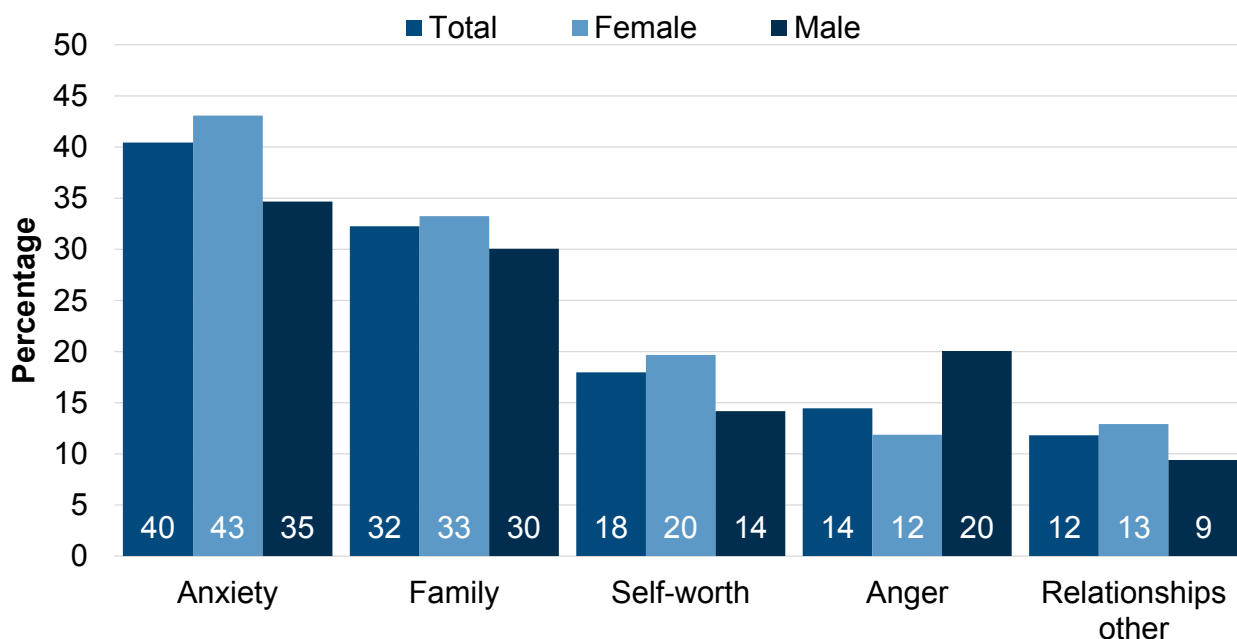
A predominant issue is the underlying issue(s) that is identified during the counselling process. For example, a young person's presenting issue may be anger, but through the counselling process, he/she may come to realise that the predominant issue is family relationships. Local authorities are asked to record up to three predominant issues per child or young person. The chart below shows the percentage of children and young people who received counselling with each of the five most common predominant issues. The percentages are based on the total number of children and young people, not the total number of issues recorded.

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Figure 6: Main predominant issues for children and young people who received counselling in Wales, September 2021 to August 2022 [Note 1]



Description of Figure 6: A bar chart showing that anxiety, family issues, self-worth, anger and other relationships were the most common predominant issues.

Predominant issues for children and young people who receive counselling by predominant issues and year (StatsWales)

[Note 1] ‘Relationships other’ are relationships other than with boyfriend/ girlfriend or with teachers.

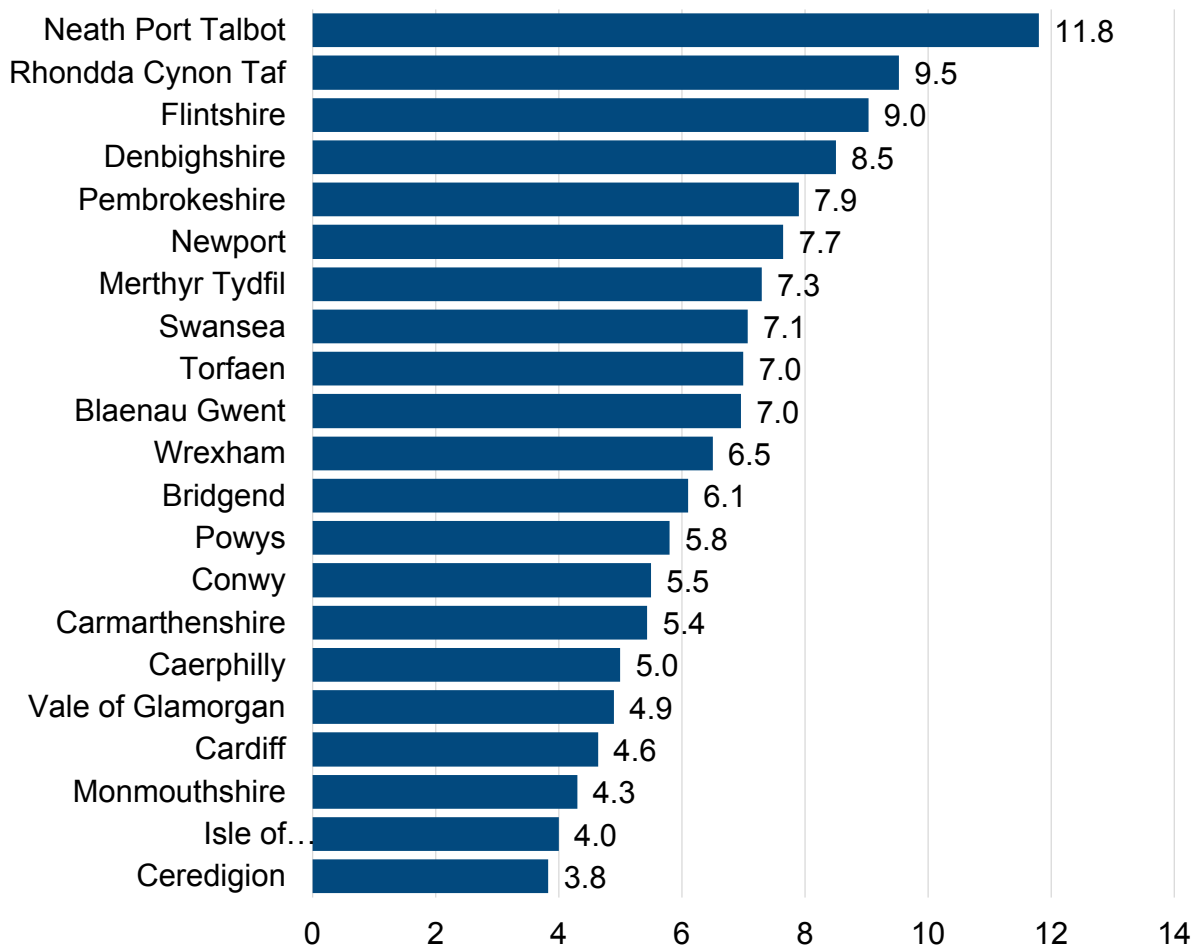
- The two most common predominant issues were the same as the two most common presenting issues overall (anxiety and family).

- A higher percentage of pupils had family and self-worth issues as predominant issues compared with presenting issues and anxiety was lower.
- Stress was the fifth most common presenting issue overall, but other relationships were identified as the fifth most common predominant issue.
- Anxiety has increased as a predominant issue from 12% in 2015/16 to 40% in 2021/22.
- Family issues are down from 38% in 2015/16 to 32% in 2021/22 and stress is down from 16% in 2015/16 to 12% in 2021/22.

Average YP Core scores

YP Core is a measure of psychological distress reported by young people, both before and after counselling. For further information on the form completed by young people please refer to the following link: [CORE Measurement Tools \(CORE-10\) \(Child Outcomes Research Consortium\)](#).

Figure 7: Average improvement in YP Core score for children and young people who received counselling in Wales by local authority, September 2021 to August 2022



Description of Figure 7: A bar chart showing that the average improvement in YP Core score amongst children and young people who received counselling in 2021/22 ranged from 3.8 in Ceredigion to 11.8 in Neath Port Talbot.

Number of children and young people attending more than one

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Onward referrals

Table 2: Onward referrals of children and young people who received counselling in Wales, September 2021 to August 2022

Onward referral	Number	Per cent
Specialist CAMHS	443	3.5
Child Protection	328	2.6
Other	613	4.9
None	10,952	87.5
Not known	186	1.5
Total	12,522	100

Source: Counselling for children and young people, Welsh Government

The table shows that most children and young people who received counselling did not require any form of onward referral once counselling sessions had been completed (87.5% in 2021/22).

3.5% of children and young people who received counselling were referred

onwards to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) in 2021/22. This is similar to previous years.

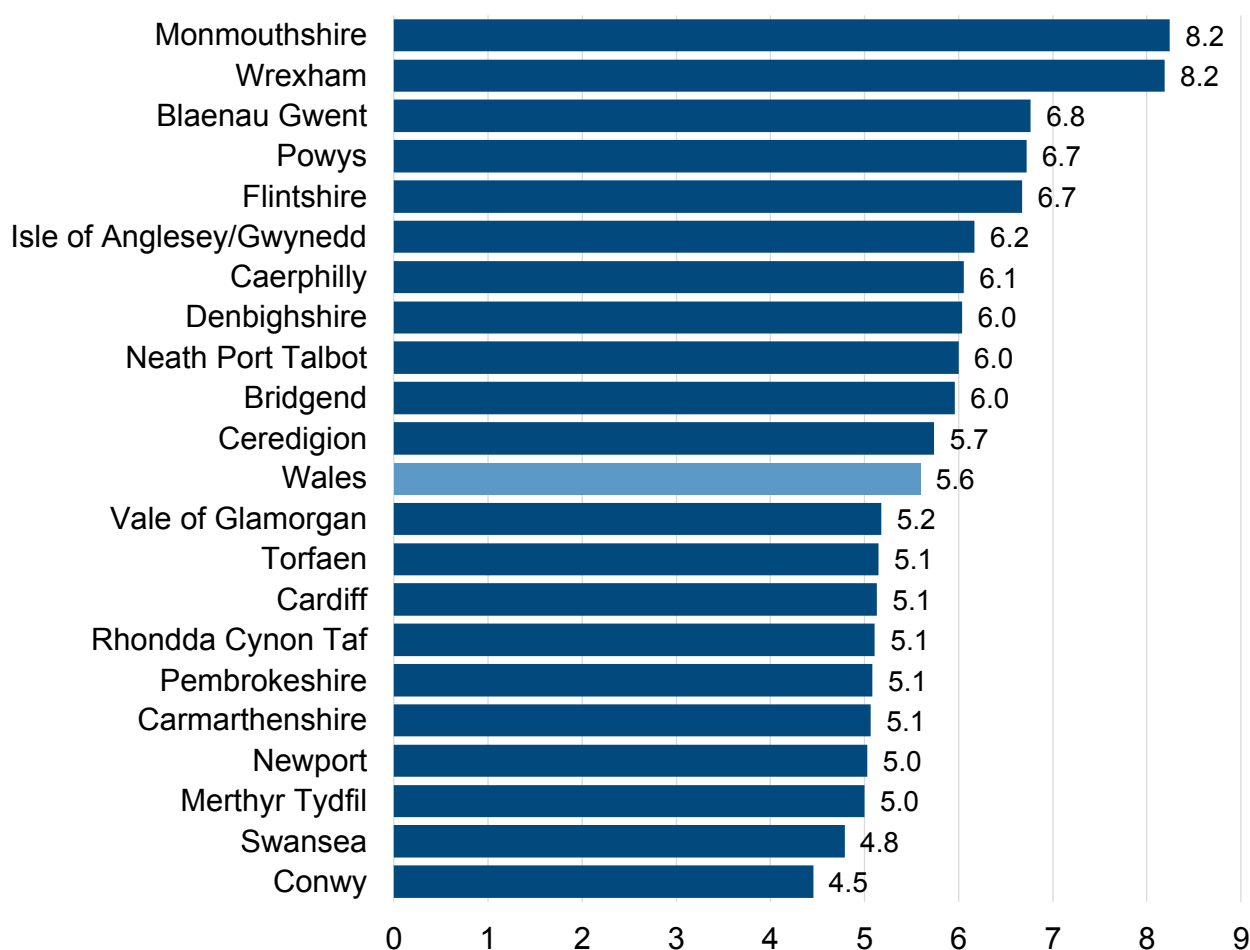
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Counselling sessions attended

Figure 8: Average number of counselling sessions attended by children and young people in Wales who received counselling in Wales by local authority, September 2021 to August 2022



Description of Figure 8: A bar chart showing that Monmouthshire and Wrexham had the highest average number of counselling sessions attended by children

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and young people and Conwy had the lowest.

Number of children and young people attending more than one counselling episode by area and episode (StatsWales)

- In 2021/22 the average number of counselling sessions attended by children and young people who received counselling in Wales was 5.6, up from 5.2 in 2020/21.
- The average number of counselling sessions attended in local authorities ranged from 4.5 in Conwy to 8.2 in Monmouthshire and Wrexham.
- 95% of counselling sessions were carried out face to face in 2021/22 and 5% were carried out remotely. Face to face counselling was lower in 2020/21 at 71%, due to the pandemic.

Quality and methodology information

National Statistics status

These statistics are not National Statistics. However, as far as has been practicable, they have been collected and validated in accordance with the pillars and principles within the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). We continue to develop the data collection and quality assurance process to improve the data.

This section provides a summary of information on this output against five dimensions of quality: Relevance, Accuracy, Timeliness and Punctuality, Accessibility and Clarity, and Comparability.

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Relevance

Policy and operational context

Counselling in this context gives children and young people the opportunity to talk face to face with a counsellor about their worries and concerns, to work through difficult feelings so that they can learn to manage them. Where appropriate counselling may lead to a referral to another service (e.g. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), child protection).

The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 requires a Local Authority to provide an independent counselling service on the site of each secondary school that it maintains. A Local Authority may in addition offer counselling services at other locations, e.g. at independent schools or at a local community centre, youth centre or other community facility for young persons who are not in school and/or wish to access counselling outside of a formal education setting.

In the 2022-23 financial year the Welsh Government provided over £2m additional funding for school counselling services to support improvements in and an expansion of counselling to existing and new clients. The Welsh Government are in the process of commissioning independent research to examine the impact of counselling, the results of which are expected to be published by early 2024. This will support commissioners and providers of counselling services in ensuring the most appropriate interventions are used and that they are able to consistently evidence impact across Wales.

School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013

The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 became law in Wales

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on 4 March 2013. The purpose of the Act sets out proposals to strengthen school standards, enhance local determination and reduce complexity. Under Section 92 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, local authorities are required to make reasonable provision of independent counselling services for children and young people aged between 11 and 18 and pupils in Year 6 of primary school. Under Section 93 local authorities are required to provide anonymised information about these counselling services to the Welsh Government, in compliance with a direction issued by the Welsh Ministers under Section 93 of the 2013 Act.

Where a local authority has arranged for a person to provide an independent counselling service on its behalf, the authority must give the person a copy of the Welsh Ministers' direction and that person must compile the information necessary for compliance with the direction and submit it to the local authority.

Further information on the [School Standards and Organisation \(Wales\) Act 2013](#).

Who are the key users of this data?

These statistics are used widely both within and outside the Welsh Government. Some of the key users are:

- ministers and the Senedd Research in the Senedd
- members of the Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament
- other government departments
- local authorities
- local Health Boards including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- the Education Directorate in the Welsh Government
- other areas of the Welsh Government
- the research community

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- students, academics and universities
- individual citizens and private companies

What are the data used for?

These statistics are used in a variety of ways. Some examples of these are:

- advice to ministers
- to inform the education policy decision-making process in Wales
- to assist in research in counselling for children and young people
- to monitor and evaluate counselling services in Wales, at a local level and at a national level. Local authorities can use the data they collect to monitor and evaluate the counselling services provided in their area, in order to drive service improvement
- to identify key issues and concerns for children and young people which can impinge on their mental health

Accuracy

This is an annual collection that local authorities are required to provide to the Welsh Government.

The local authorities Isle of Anglesey and Gwynedd provide a joint data collection return, therefore the data for these local authorities cannot be shown separately.

Figures are based on the numbers of children and young people who have received counselling and have finished their episode(s) of counselling during the period. The statistics prior to March 2020 include face to face counselling only. Since March 2020 counselling carried out via online face to face sessions has been included to reflect changes to counselling provision during the pandemic.

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Local authorities commented that 322 children or young people who received counselling did not identify as male or female or preferred not to say their gender in 2021/22. The data collection form will be developed in future and include additional gender categories.

The age group of those children and young people who received counselling is based on their school year rather than actual age. Please note not all the children and young people who receive counselling are school pupils. Where this occurs these children and young people are included in the school year age group they would typically attend if they were in school.

Due to the sensitivity of the data it must be transferred to the Welsh Government via a secure medium and also held in a secure environment. The secure medium for transferring the data is AFON.

The local authority, or the person who provides the counselling service, must not provide information about an identified individual or provide information in such a way (either by itself or combined with other information) that it identifies an individual or enables an individual to be identified.

Further information on the data requirements is available in '[Statutory guidance to Welsh local authorities on the provision of independent counselling services](#)'.

Timeliness and punctuality

Local authorities, and their counselling providers where applicable, compile aggregated data on children and young people accessing counselling and submit that data to the Welsh Government. Information compiled for each academic school year is required to be provided by 31 October following the end of the academic school year. The returns are then validated by the Welsh Government and published in a statistical release in March.

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Accessibility and clarity

This Statistical First Release is pre-announced and then published on the Statistics and Research section of the Welsh Government website. It is accompanied by more detailed tables on [StatsWales](#), a free to use service that allows visitors to view, manipulate, create and download data.

Comparability and coherence

Since 2014 there has been considerable work on guidance and definitions to ensure consistency between authorities, to clarify some known issues, and reflect current policy. For this reason comparisons with data prior to 2015/16 should be treated with considerable caution. There are no official statistics published by other UK countries on counselling for children and young people.

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. The Act puts in place seven wellbeing goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators (“national indicators”) that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Well-being goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before Senedd Cymru. Under section 10(8) of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, where the Welsh Ministers revise the national indicators, they must as soon as reasonably practicable (a) publish the indicators as revised and (b) lay a copy of them before the Senedd. These national indicators were laid before the

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Senedd in 2021. The indicators laid on 14 December 2021 replace the set laid on 16 March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the wellbeing goals and associated technical information is available in the [Wellbeing of Wales report](#).

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local wellbeing assessments and local wellbeing plans.

Contact details

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SFR 29/2023

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For more information refer to our [accessibility statement](#).

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