

27 May 2021
SFR 159/2021

Counselling for Children and Young People, 2019/20

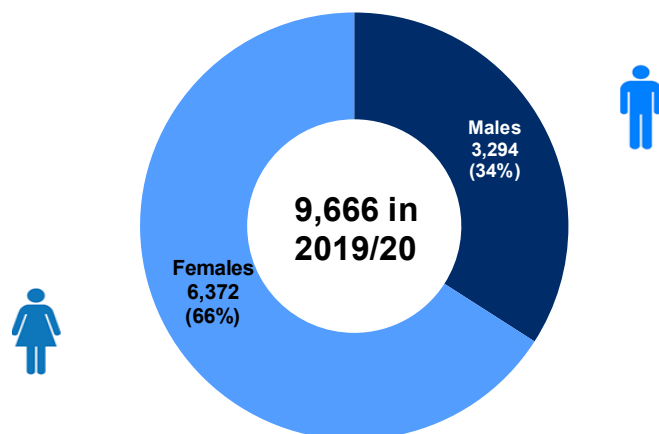
This report covers a time period which includes some of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. School closures between March and August 2020 are likely to have had an impact on the statistics presented within this report.

These statistics include face to face counselling only between September 2019 and March 2020 and counselling carried out via online face to face sessions during the pandemic.

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.

Chart 1: Number of children and young people who received counselling in Wales, by gender, 2019/20



- 85 per cent of all children and young people who received counselling were between the Year 7 and Year 11 age groups in 2019/20.
- The most common form of referral was by school-based and other education staff, accounting for just over half of all referrals.
- For the first time, anxiety issues were the most common form of presenting issue. Family issues continue to be the most common predominant issue.

About this release

This release covers the counselling services provided by local authorities for children and young people aged 10 to 18. It covers the 2019/20 school year; that is September 2019 to August 2020.

Data are shown for Wales and at local authority level.

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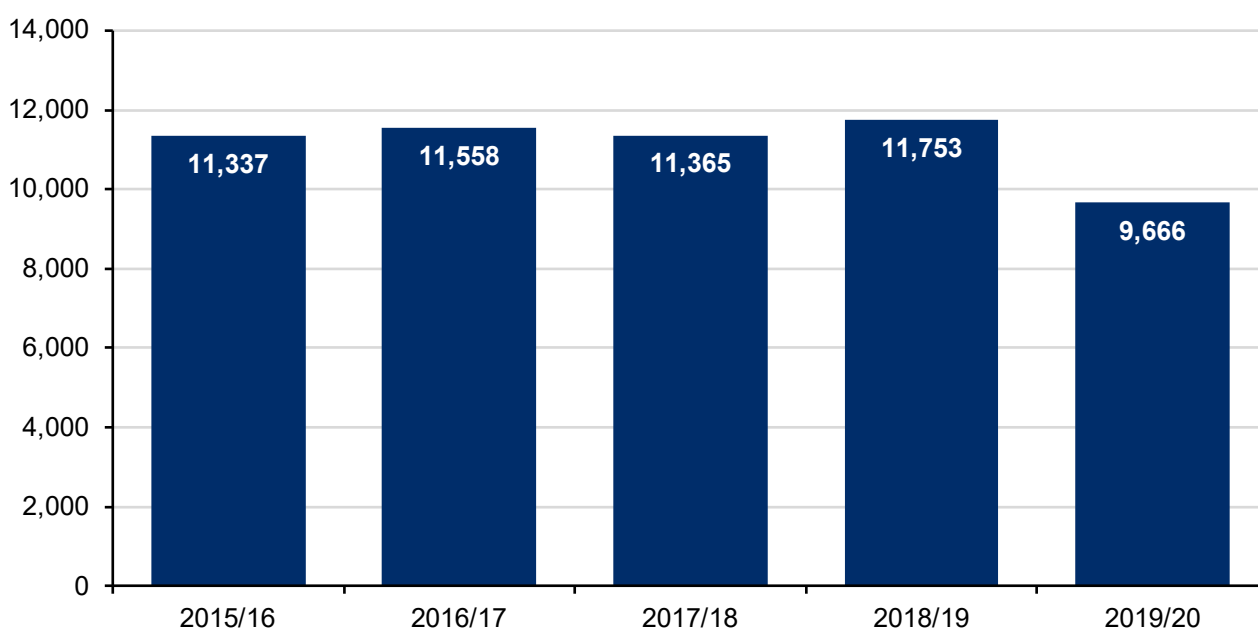
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Counselling in this context gives children and young people the opportunity to talk face to face with a counsellor about their worries and concerns, to work through difficult feelings so that they can learn to manage them. Where appropriate counselling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

All charts and tables below relate to face to face counselling only. However, counselling carried out via online face to face sessions between March and August 2020 has been included.

Section 1: Children and young people receiving counselling by gender, local authority, form of referral, age group and ethnicity

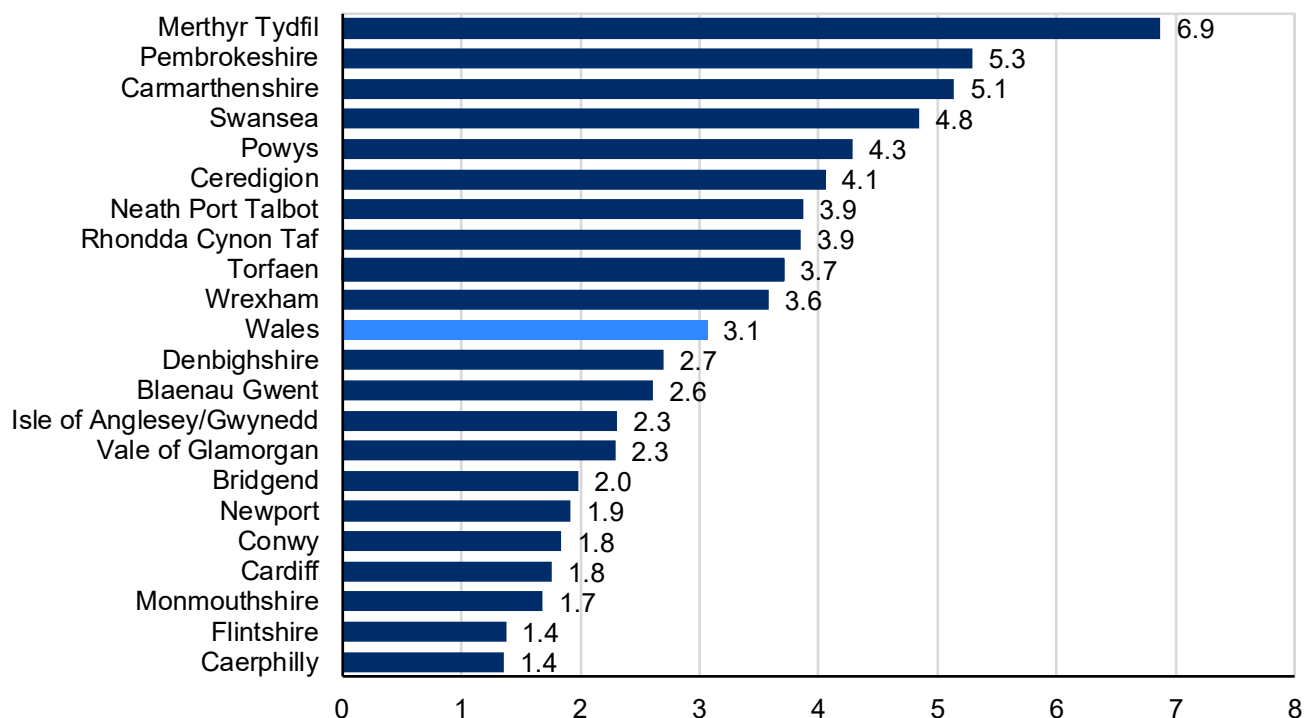
Chart 2: Number of children and young people who received counselling in Wales



Source: Counselling for children and young people, Welsh Government

- 9,666 children or young people received counselling services in 2019/20, a decrease of 18% compared with 2018/19. School closures between March and August 2020 due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic are likely to have had an impact on the figures for 2019/20.
- Females accounted for 66% or 6,372 of the 9,666 children and young people who received counselling in 2019/20, compared to 34% or 3,294 males (Chart 1). The gender split is similar to previous years.

Chart 3: Number of children and young people (per 100 of resident 10-18 year olds) who received counselling in Wales by local authority, 2019/20 (a)



Source: Counselling for children and young people, Welsh Government

(a) Population estimates obtained from 2019 Mid-year population estimates produced by the Office for National Statistics.

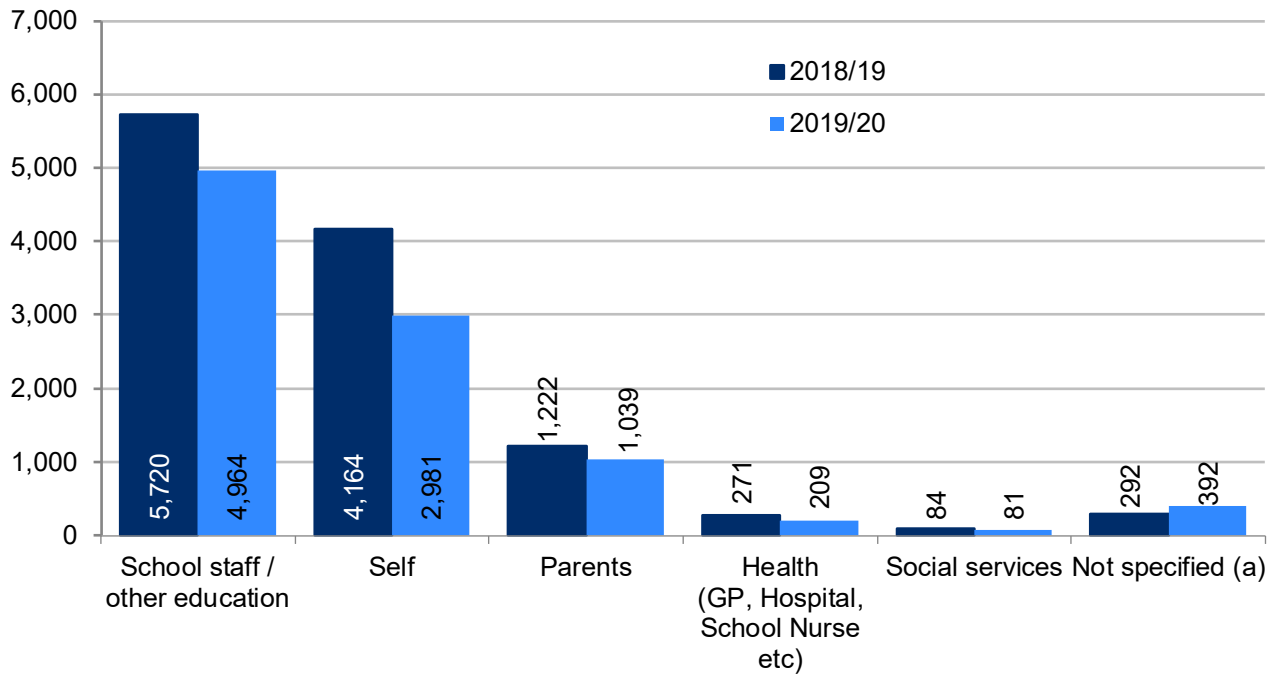
- 3.1 children and young people per 100 of resident 10-18 year olds received counselling in Wales in 2019/20.
- Merthyr Tydfil had the highest rate of children and young people per 100 of resident 10-18 year olds who received counselling (6.9 in 2019/20, Chart 3).
- Swansea had the most children and young people who received counselling (1,158 in 2019/20, Table 1).
- Caerphilly and Flintshire had the lowest rate of children and young people per 100 of resident 10-18 year olds who received counselling (1.4 in 2019/20, Chart 3).
- Monmouthshire had the fewest children and young people who received counselling (160 in 2019/20, Table 1).

Table 1: Number of children and young people who received counselling in Wales, by local authority, 2019/20

Local authority	Male	Female	Total
Isle of Anglesey/Gwynedd	131	302	433
Conwy	81	119	200
Denbighshire	96	169	265
Flintshire	75	151	226
Wrexham	191	322	513
Powys	175	367	542
Ceredigion	93	169	262
Pembrokeshire	215	444	659
Carmarthenshire	370	613	983
Swansea	384	774	1,158
Neath Port Talbot	181	370	551
Bridgend	86	202	288
Vale of Glamorgan	82	238	320
Cardiff	191	441	632
Rhondda Cynon Taf	368	581	949
Merthyr Tydfil	133	288	421
Caerphilly	110	150	260
Blaenau Gwent	69	105	174
Torfaen	96	256	352
Monmouthshire	64	96	160
Newport	103	215	318
Wales	3,294	6,372	9,666

Source: Counselling for children and young people, Welsh Government

Chart 4: Number of children and young people who received counselling in Wales by form of referral

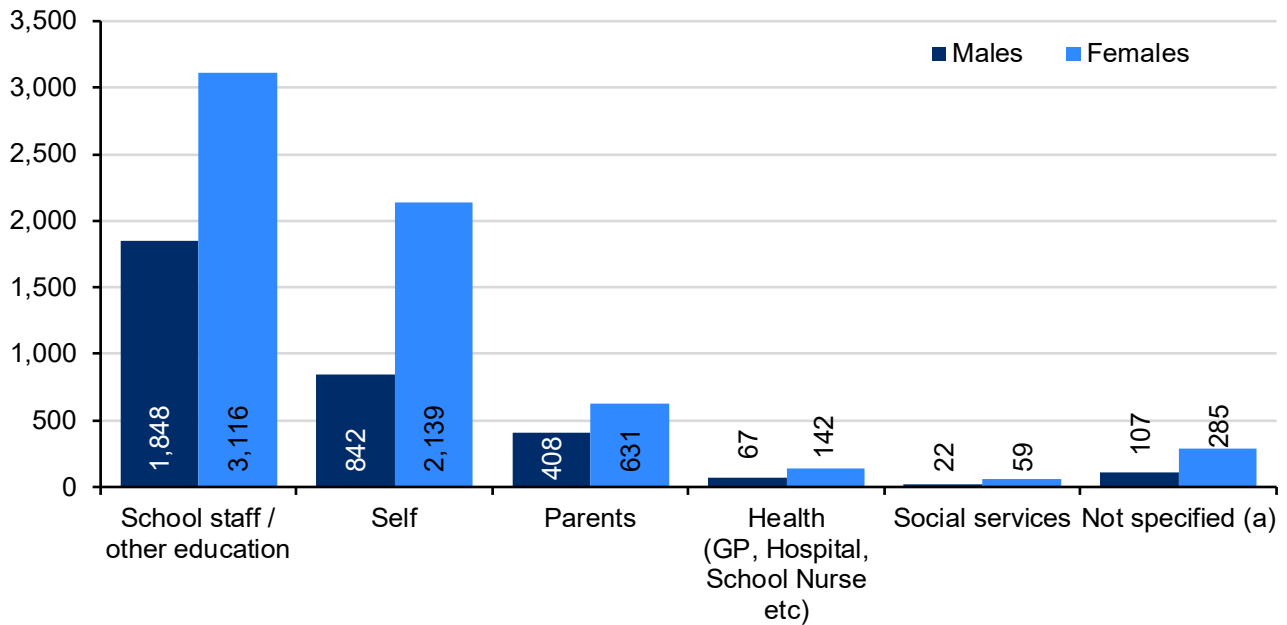


Source: Counselling for children and young people, Welsh Government

(a) 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 just over half of all referrals (51%) in 2019/20. Self referral was the second most common form of referral (31%) in 2019/20, followed by parents (11%).
- All forms of referral decreased compared with last year, with the exception of those not specified. Self referrals decreased the most.

Chart 5: Form of referral of children and young people who received counselling by gender in 2019/20

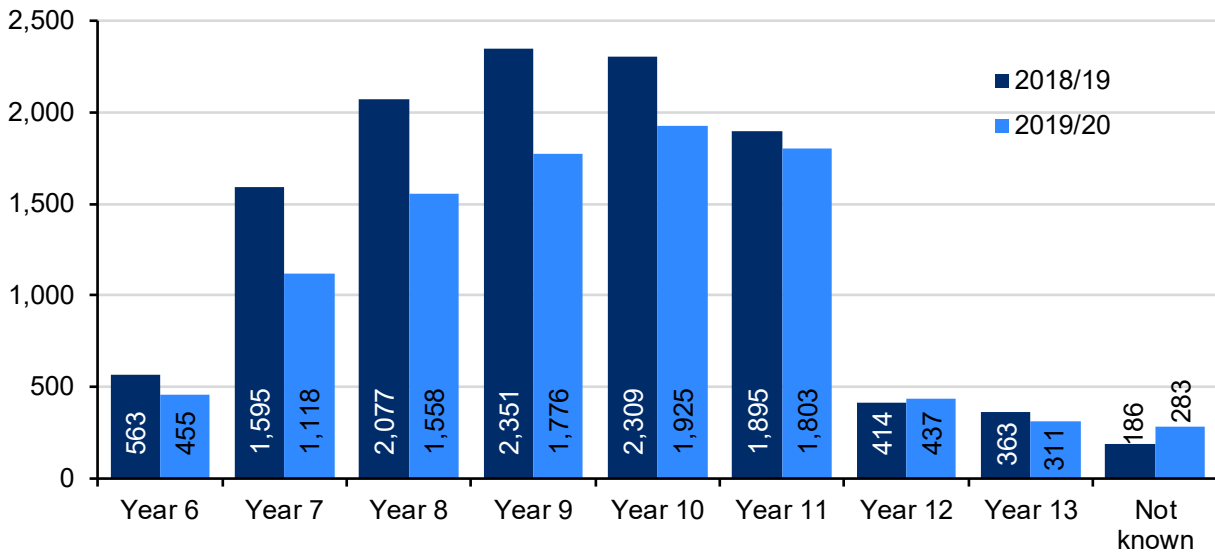


Source: Counselling for children and young people, Welsh Government

(a) Not specified includes the categories 'Prefer not to say', 'Not known' and 'Other'.

- Males and females attending counselling 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 for both males and females.
- However, males were more likely to have been referred by school-based and other education staff (56% of all male referrals) compared to their female counterparts (49% of all female referrals).
- Conversely, females were more likely to refer themselves (34% of all female referrals) compared to their male counterparts (26% of all male referrals).

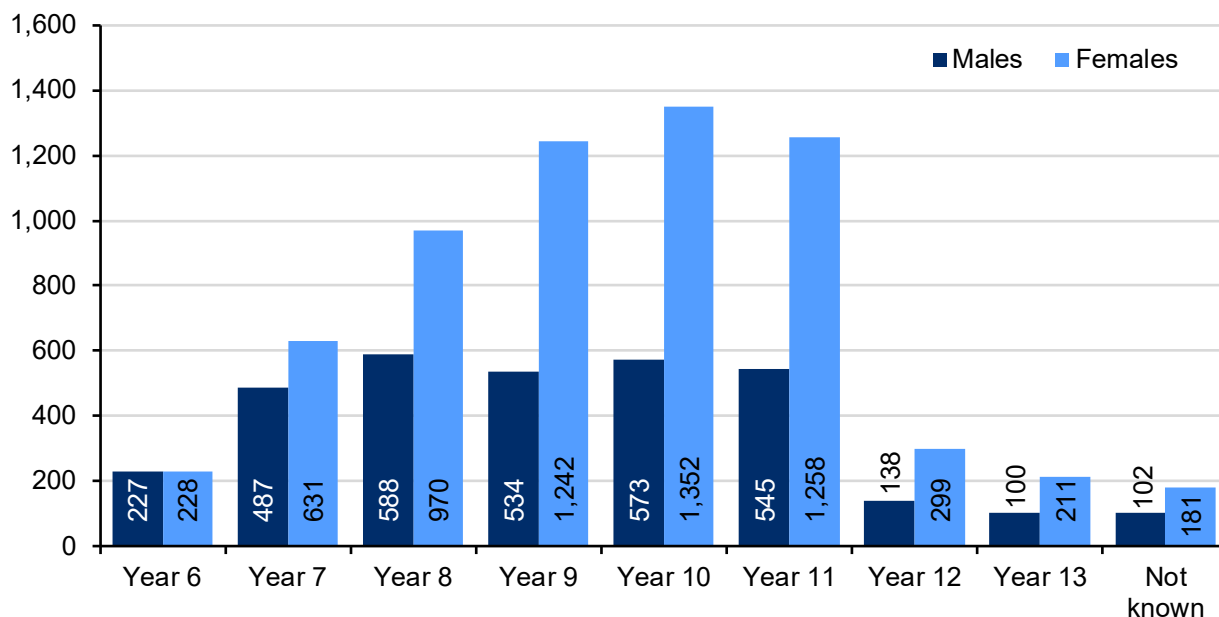
Chart 6: Number of children and young people who received counselling in Wales by school year age group



Source: Counselling for children and young people, Welsh Government

- The Year 10 age group (for the most part, these are children aged 14-15) had the highest number of children and young people who received counselling, followed by the Year 11 age group in 2019/20. The Year 13 age group (that is, those young people in sixth form or having left school) had the lowest number.
- The Year 10 age group accounted for 20% of all children and young people who received counselling in 2019/20.
- 85% of all children and young people who received counselling were between the Year 7 and Year 11 age groups in 2019/20, although this is primarily driven by trends across age in counselling for females as illustrated in the following section.
- The number of children and young people who received counselling decreased compared with last year for all year groups with the exception of Year 12.

Chart 7: Number of children and young people who received counselling in Wales by gender and school year age group in 2019/20



Source: Counselling for children and young people, Welsh Government

- 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 steady, between 450 and 600 in each year group. However, the number of females increased considerably from Year 7 to Year 10 compared to their male counterparts, to a peak in Year 10 of 1,352 females.

Table 2: Number and percentage of children and young people who received counselling in Wales, by ethnic background

Ethnic Background	2017/18		2018/19		2019/20	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
White	10,838	95.4	10,963	93.3	8,915	92.2
Mixed Race	231	2.0	257	2.2	190	2.0
Asian or Asian British	128	1.1	142	1.2	113	1.2
Black or Black British	45	0.4	51	0.4	56	0.6
Chinese or Chinese British	17	0.1	8	0.1	6	0.1
Any other ethnic background	60	0.5	115	1.0	75	0.8
Not known	46	0.4	217	1.8	311	3.2
Total	11,365	100.0	11,753	100.0	9,666	100.0

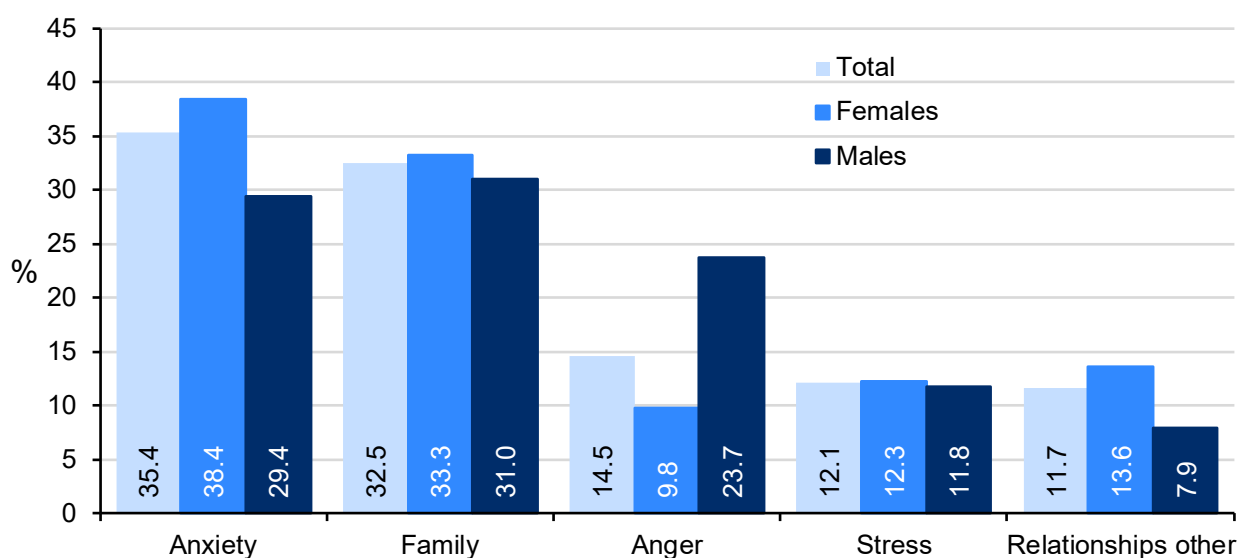
Source: Counselling for children and young people, Welsh Government

- The majority (92%) of children and young people who received counselling classified themselves as white in 2019/20. The distribution seen in Table 2 is broadly representative of the distribution of young people in the wider school population.

Section 2: 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 chart below shows the percentage of children and young people who received counselling with each of the five most common presenting issues.

Chart 8: Main presenting issues for children and young people who received counselling in Wales in 2019/20 (a)



Source: Counselling for children and young people, Welsh Government

(a) 'Relationships other' are relationships other than with boyfriend/girlfriend or with teachers.

- Presenting issues were recorded for each child and young person who received counselling services in Wales. The proportion presenting with anxiety was higher than family issues for the first time and has risen from 29% in 2018/19 to 35% in 2019/20.
- The most common form of presenting issue on referral for females was anxiety issues (38%). For males family issues was the most common (31%).
- Of the other most common presenting issues recorded, males were more likely than females to be referred due to anger issues, whilst females were more likely than males to be referred for issues relating to other relationships.
- The fourth highest presenting issue for males was behaviour related (15%) and the fourth highest issue for females was self-worth (13%) in Table 3.

Table 3: All presenting issues for children and young people who received counselling in Wales in 2019/20 (a)

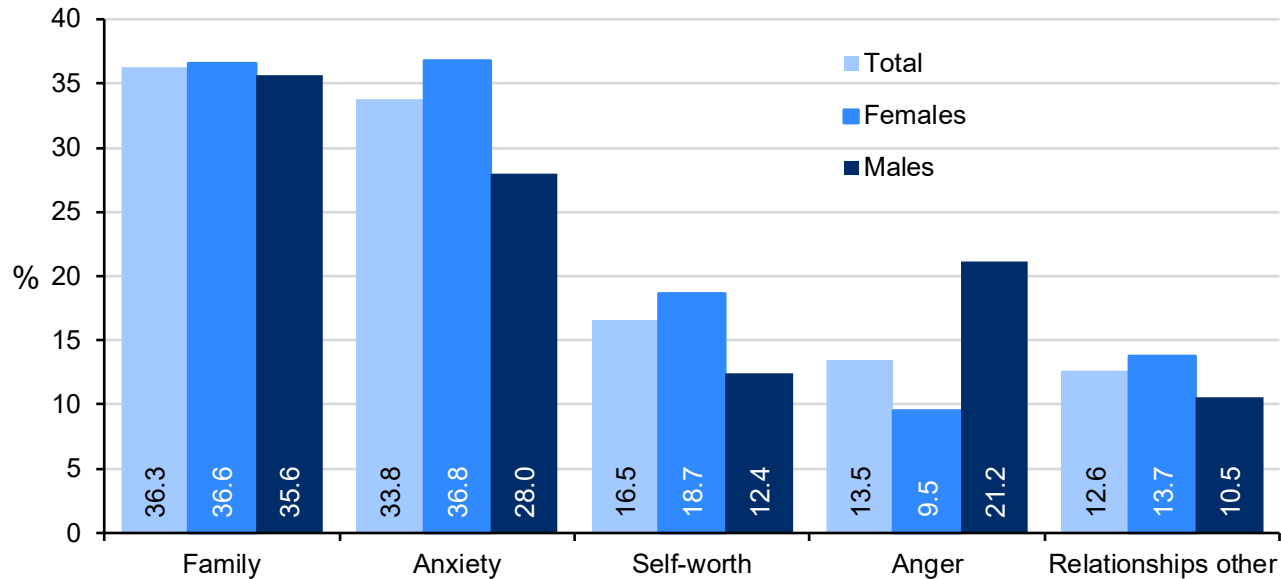
Presenting issues on referral	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Anxiety	970	29.4	2,449	38.4	3,419	35.4
Family	1,022	31.0	2,122	33.3	3,144	32.5
Anger	781	23.7	625	9.8	1,406	14.5
Stress	388	11.8	782	12.3	1,170	12.1
Relationships other	259	7.9	868	13.6	1,127	11.7
Self-worth	302	9.2	814	12.8	1,116	11.5
Depression	341	10.4	727	11.4	1,068	11.0
Bereavement	329	10.0	546	8.6	875	9.1
Behaviour related	488	14.8	367	5.8	855	8.8
Self-harm	147	4.5	623	9.8	770	8.0
Bullying	193	5.9	384	6.0	577	6.0
Academic	185	5.6	313	4.9	498	5.2
Suicide	128	3.9	251	3.9	379	3.9
Abuse (including sexual)	60	1.8	215	3.4	275	2.8
Other	99	3.0	141	2.2	240	2.5
Illness	73	2.2	146	2.3	219	2.3
Relationship with boyfriend/girlfriend	55	1.7	130	2.0	185	1.9
Eating disorders	10	0.3	156	2.4	166	1.7
Not known	48	1.5	95	1.5	143	1.5
Domestic abuse	49	1.5	78	1.2	127	1.3
Sexual (including orientation)	26	0.8	89	1.4	115	1.2
Relationships with teachers	48	1.5	66	1.0	114	1.2
Caring responsibility	31	0.9	72	1.1	103	1.1
Transgender issues	31	0.9	50	0.8	81	0.8
Substance misuse	32	1.0	30	0.5	62	0.6
Cyber safety (including cyber-bullying and sexting)	18	0.5	24	0.4	42	0.4
Financial concerns/poverty	14	0.4	28	0.4	42	0.4
Offending	8	0.2	5	0.1	13	0.1

Source: Counselling for children and young people, Welsh Government

(a) Local authorities can record up to three presenting issues per child or young person. This table shows the number and percentage of children and young people with each issue. Therefore the percentages do not add up to 100.

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.

Chart 9: Main predominant issues for children and young people who received counselling in Wales in 2019/20



Source: Counselling for children and young people, Welsh Government

- The most common form of predominant issue was family issues which was an issue for over a third (36%) of all children and young people who received counselling services in 2019/20. Anxiety (34%) and self-worth (17%) issues were the next most common forms of predominant issue in 2019/20; with the proportion for which anxiety was the predominant issue rising from 28% in 2018/19 to 34% in 2019/20.
- Similarly to presenting issues, the most common form of predominant issue for females was anxiety and for males it was family issues.
- Of the other most common predominant issues recorded, males were more likely than females to be referred due to anger issues, whilst females were more likely than males to be referred for issues relating to self-worth.
- Since 2015/16 there has been an increase in the percentage of pupils with anxiety as a presenting and predominant issue (both 12% in 2015/16).

Table 4: All predominant issues of children and young people who received counselling in Wales in 2019/20 (a)

Predominant issues on referral	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Family	1,174	35.6	2,334	36.6	3,508	36.3
Anxiety	923	28.0	2,345	36.8	3,268	33.8
Self-worth	409	12.4	1,190	18.7	1,599	16.5
Anger	697	21.2	606	9.5	1,303	13.5
Relationships other	347	10.5	875	13.7	1,222	12.6
Stress	407	12.4	752	11.8	1,159	12.0
Bereavement	330	10.0	579	9.1	909	9.4
Depression	282	8.6	592	9.3	874	9.0
Behaviour related	332	10.1	296	4.6	628	6.5
Self-harm	129	3.9	461	7.2	590	6.1
Academic	191	5.8	349	5.5	540	5.6
Bullying	190	5.8	329	5.2	519	5.4
Other	103	3.1	258	4.0	361	3.7
Suicide	121	3.7	231	3.6	352	3.6
Relationship with boyfriend/girlfriend	67	2.0	193	3.0	260	2.7
Illness	91	2.8	164	2.6	255	2.6
Abuse (including sexual)	51	1.5	175	2.7	226	2.3
Not known	75	2.3	111	1.7	186	1.9
Eating disorders	19	0.6	137	2.2	156	1.6
Relationships with teachers	70	2.1	77	1.2	147	1.5
Domestic abuse	46	1.4	93	1.5	139	1.4
Sexual (including orientation)	34	1.0	91	1.4	125	1.3
Caring responsibility	26	0.8	73	1.1	99	1.0
Transgender issues	36	1.1	57	0.9	93	1.0
Substance misuse	23	0.7	25	0.4	48	0.5
Financial concerns/poverty	15	0.5	32	0.5	47	0.5
Cyber safety (including cyber-bullying and sexting)	15	0.5	29	0.5	44	0.5
Offending	5	0.2	9	0.1	14	0.1

Source: Counselling for children and young people, Welsh Government

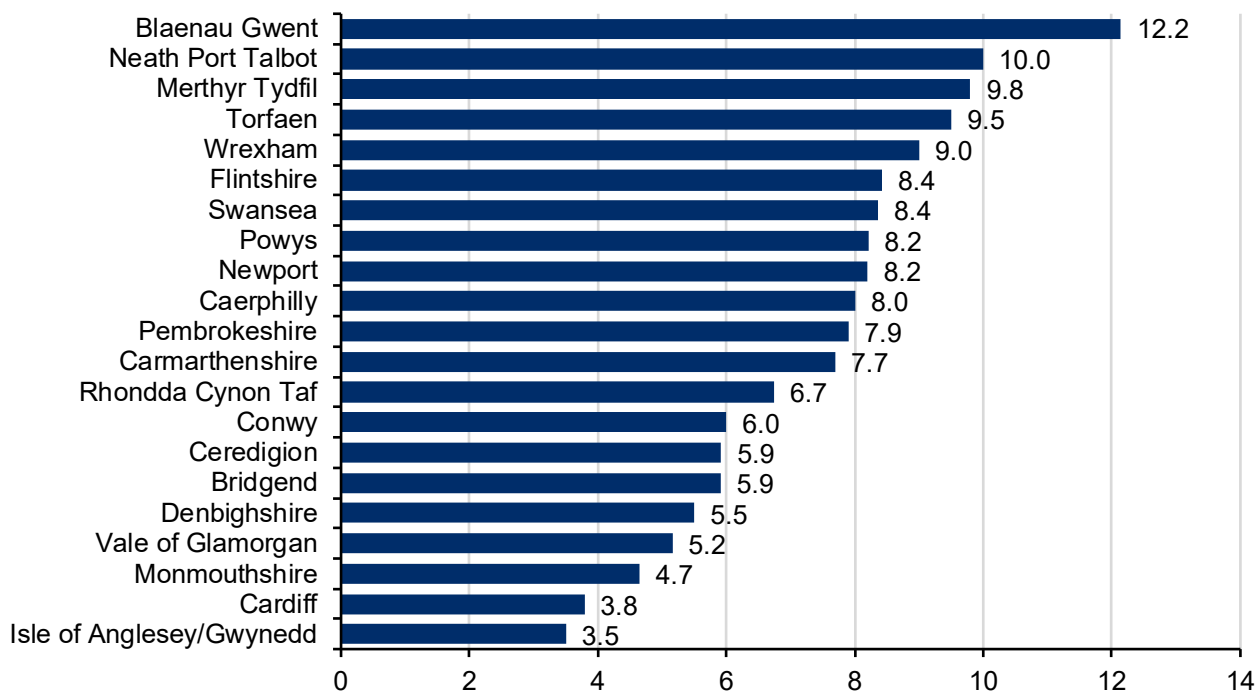
(a) Local authorities can record up to three predominant issues per child or young person. This table shows the number and percentage of children and young people with each issue. Therefore the percentages do not add up to 100.

- Whilst most categories are reduced, the number of females receiving counselling for anxiety is up, and whilst the numbers are relatively small the number receiving counselling for eating disorders is also up.

Section 3: 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: [Form](#)

Chart 10: Average improvement in YP Core score for children and young people who received counselling in Wales by local authority in 2019/20



Source: Counselling for children and young people, Welsh Government

- Blaenau Gwent had the largest average improvement in YP Core score amongst children and young people who received counselling in 2019/20 (an improvement in YP Core score of 12.2, Chart 10).
- Isle of Anglesey/Gwynedd had the smallest average improvement in YP Core score amongst children and young people who received counselling in 2019/20 (an improvement in average YP Core score of 3.5, Chart 10).

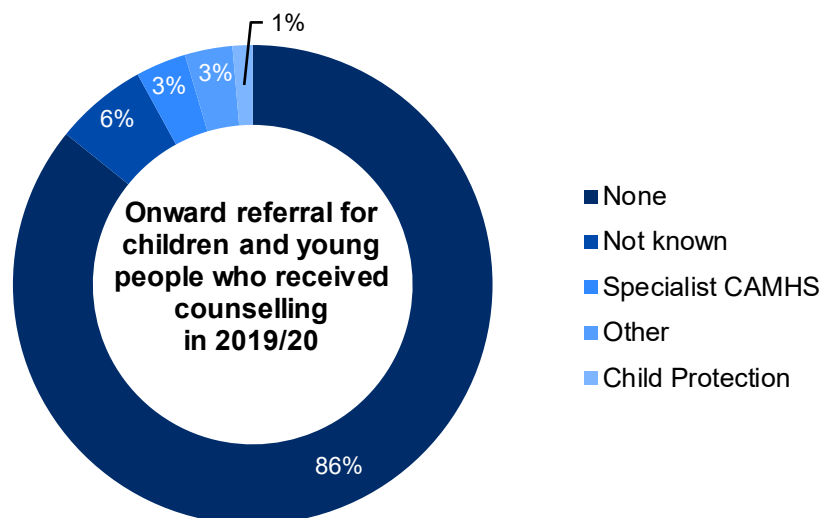
Table 5: Average YP Core score for children and young people who received counselling in Wales by local authority in 2019/20

<u>Local authority</u>	<u>Average score at start</u>	<u>Average score at end</u>	<u>Average improvement in score</u>
Isle of Anglesey/Gwynedd	16.5	13.0	3.5
Conwy	17.0	11.0	6.0
Denbighshire	17.5	12.0	5.5
Flintshire	17.3	8.9	8.4
Wrexham	24.0	15.0	9.0
Powys	19.5	11.3	8.2
Ceredigion	20.8	14.9	5.9
Pembrokeshire	19.4	11.5	7.9
Carmarthenshire	20.1	12.4	7.7
Swansea	21.1	12.7	8.4
Neath Port Talbot	24.0	14.0	10.0
Bridgend	19.4	13.5	5.9
Vale of Glamorgan	17.5	12.3	5.2
Cardiff	18.6	14.8	3.8
Rhondda Cynon Taf	20.2	13.4	6.7
Merthyr Tydfil	20.7	10.9	9.8
Caerphilly	18.2	10.2	8.0
Blaenau Gwent	20.9	8.8	12.2
Torfaen	21.0	11.5	9.5
Monmouthshire	19.6	15.0	4.7
Newport	23.6	15.4	8.2

Source: Counselling for children and young people, Welsh Government

Section 4: Onward referrals

Chart 11: Onward referrals of children and young people who received counselling in Wales in 2019/20



Source: Counselling for children and young people, Welsh Government

- Onward referral information was collected for children and young people who received counselling. The majority of children and young people who received counselling did not require any form of onward referral once counselling sessions had been completed (86% in 2019/20).
- Females were more likely to be referred onwards (8.3% in 2019/20) following the completion of counselling than their male counterparts (7.2% in 2019/20).
- 3.4% of children and young people who received counselling were referred onwards to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) in 2019/20.
- 3.6% of females and 3.0% of males were referred onwards to the CAMHS in 2019/20.

Table 6: Onward referrals of children and young people who received counselling in Wales in 2019/20 (a)

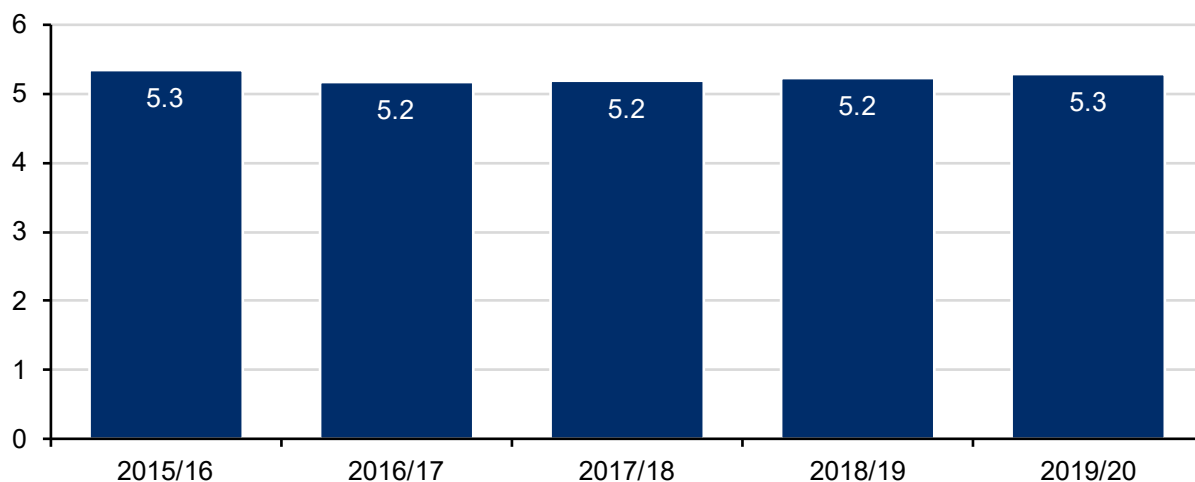
Onward referral	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Specialist CAMHS	99	3.0	230	3.6	329	3.4
Child Protection	44	1.3	87	1.4	131	1.4
Other	96	2.9	215	3.4	311	3.2
None	2,863	86.7	5,443	85.3	8,306	85.8
Not known	199	6.0	403	6.3	602	6.2
Total	3,301	100.0	6,378	100.0	9,679	100.0

Source: Counselling for children and young people, Welsh Government

(a) The total does not match other tables in this release as 13 pupils were referred to Specialist CAMHS and Child Protection.

Section 5: Counselling sessions attended

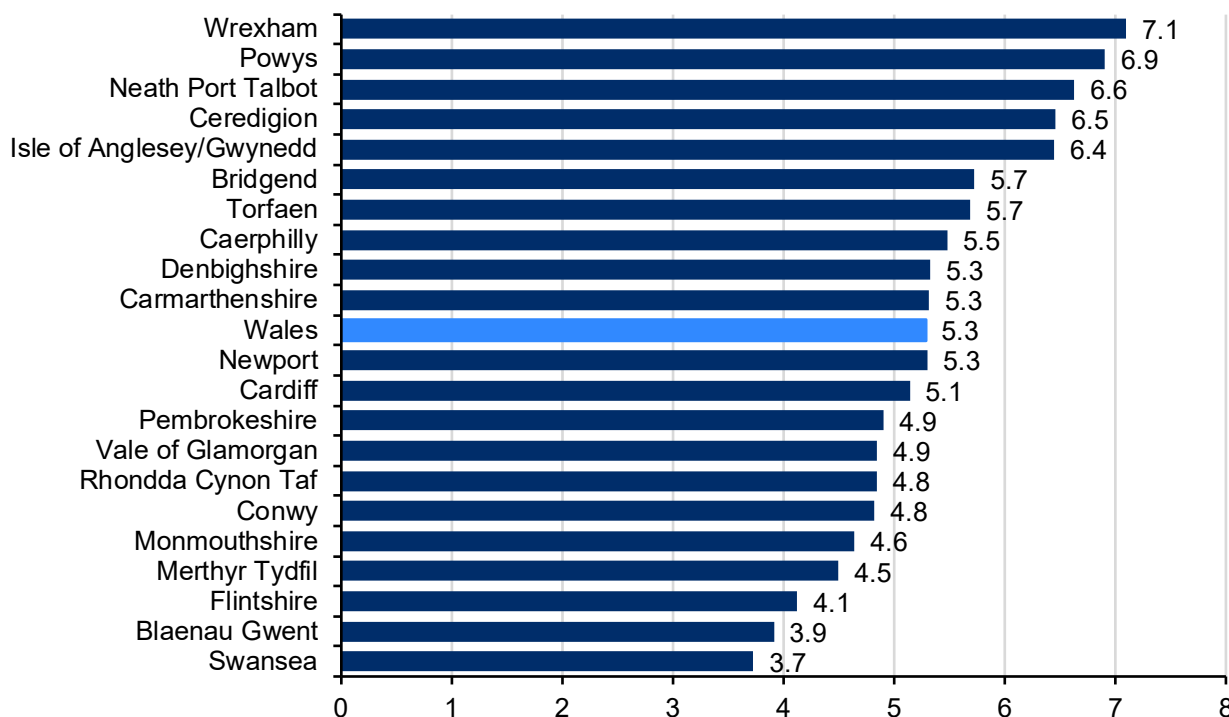
Chart 12: Average number of counselling sessions attended by children and young people in Wales who received counselling



Source: Counselling for children and young people, Welsh Government

- In 2019/20 the average number of counselling sessions attended by children and young people who received counselling in Wales was 5.3. There has been little change in the average number of sessions attended over the last five years.
- Around three quarters of sessions were carried out face to face in 2019/20 and a quarter were carried out remotely due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Chart 13: Average number of counselling sessions attended by children and young people in Wales who received counselling in Wales by local authority in 2019/20



Source: Counselling for children and young people, Welsh Government

- There was considerable variation in the average number of counselling sessions per child or young person, from 3.7 sessions in Swansea to 7.1 in Wrexham.

Key Quality Information

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.

The Welsh Government provided an additional £1.25m for school counselling services to support the delivery of counselling to existing and new clients during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This included expanding access to provision and also establishing new ways of working such as the delivery of counselling online by supporting training in online counselling and the purchase of software licences to facilitate support.

School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013

The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 became law in Wales 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 is available by following the link below:

[School Standards and Organisation \(Wales\) Act 2013](#)

Data source and coverage

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 face to face counselling and have finished their episode(s) of counselling during the period. Counselling carried out via online face to face sessions between March and August 2020 has been included.

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', available via the link below:

[Statutory guidance to Welsh local authorities on the provision of independent counselling services.](#)

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
- 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

Quality

Our statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

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 following the end of the academic school year. Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the deadline for data for the 2019/20 academic school year was extended to 18 December 2020. The returns were then validated by the Welsh Government and published in a statistical release in May, two months later than in previous years.

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 well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being 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. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the wellbeing goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being 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 well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

Further details

The document is available at:

<https://gov.wales/counselling-children-and-young-people>

Next update

March 2022 (provisional)

We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to school.stats@gov.wales. If you have any comments or require further information, please contact us.

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