

Evidence, Efficacy & Equity

Counselling & psychotherapy for the public good

Prioritise the Human Connection in therapy

Promote the importance of **human connection in therapy** vs. digital apps, Artificial Intelligence, and arms-length interventions

Give people support that works for them

Improve outcomes by better **integrating counsellors and psychotherapists into the NHS workforce** to expand direct access to counselling. Support access to a wide range of accredited therapy providers via Accredited Registers

Prevention & support for CYP

Provide access to **a counsellor in every educational establishment**, either through the development of mental health support teams (MHSTs) to include accredited counsellors and psychotherapists (Barnardo's MHST+ model) or through Local Authority funding.

What does the research say?

(Scan the QR Code for links to this research & more)

79% of people agree that counselling & psychotherapy services are essential for mental health support
Source: YouGov

Patients offered choices about psychological treatment have better outcomes, study shows.
Source: BMJ 2016;352:i216

80% of therapists have seen clients that accessed support via the NHS but felt they needed further support from a private therapist
Source: NCPS Member Survey 2024

Providing more choice and opportunities for collaboration within services improves [therapeutic] outcomes. The results also show that collaboration is dependent on the quality of the relationship between the provider and consumer.
Source: J. Pers. Med. 2013, 3(3), 191-202

Why is it important?

The focus on specific therapy types via public services ignores **decades of research** proving that the **therapeutic alliance between practitioner and patient is vital for success**. Those who can afford private therapy for themselves or their children **benefit from choosing the therapist and type of therapy**, which **builds trust and motivation**, and so makes it **more likely to help**. On the other hand, **people who can't afford to pay often receive impersonal, prescribed services with no choice available to them**, leading to **disempowerment and ineffective therapy**. We advocate for choice and autonomy in public mental health services, ensuring **equitable support and empowering those who need it**.

How can you help?

- Advocate for the **relational nature of talking therapy**, and for human-centred interventions
- Support our calls to **give patients more choice and power** in their care through direct access to counselling & psychotherapy
- Support sector-wide calls for **a counsellor in every school**, in addition to other forms of support

We have resources available to support you

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Key Policy Recommendations

Promote the importance of human therapy over digital apps and Artificial Intelligence

The core of therapy lies in the **genuine, empathetic connection** between people; something that cannot be replicated by AI. The nuances of human interaction – both verbal and non-verbal – form the basis for trust and understanding, both essential components of effective therapy. **Every person's experiences and challenges are unique and, therefore, require a personalised approach** that AI simply cannot offer. Counselling and psychotherapy are not a one-size-fits-all solution to a single problem, rather they are creative,

collaborative, and facilitative of a therapeutic environment that promotes healing and growth.

That's why it's critical that **a system that is truly evidence-based is rooted in the centrality of the therapeutic relationship** between the practitioner and the patient. An incoming Labour Government must prioritise mechanisms that recognise this, including through **enabling direct access to a range of therapies** via Accredited Registers.

Better integrate counsellors and psychotherapists into the NHS workforce

Thousands of people are currently left without the urgent support they need as a result of limited workforce capacity, with research indicating that **almost a quarter of adults with mental ill-health are waiting more than 12 weeks to start treatment**, with many people facing a so-called '**hidden wait time**' for access to therapy and a **significant proportion turning to A&E for help**.

Counsellors and psychotherapists will be pivotal to ramping up the mental health workforce capacity, **enabling patients to access support services sooner**. The NCPS-accredited workforce is **highly flexible and in a unique position** to support medical colleagues across the NHS to meet the severity and range of

problems experienced by people across the country. Capable of offering **a more holistic approach** than other professions, this workforce can often provide **longer-term, effective, relational support**, through the provision of direct access to counselling, than the low-intensity roles used in the NHS, and can work with people who may not have received a specific diagnosis or who **may be experiencing issues that are not well-suited to other forms of therapy**, such as guided self-help or Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). Facilitating **direct access to counselling and psychotherapy will free up GP time and reduce waiting times**.

Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) to include accredited counsellors and psychotherapists

We are concerned that blanket commitments to bolstering the mental health workforce and improving access to services, particularly in education settings, risks **overlooking the critical function of counsellors and psychotherapists**. The findings in the NCPS' recent report, 'Investigating Referral Patterns of Mental Health Support Teams in England', propose a number of ways in which an incoming Labour Government could **improve provision in educational establishments**, ranging from **low-cost solutions such as enhancing guidance** to teams to improve referrals and streamlining processes; to bold

strategies to include **mandated integration of counselling into schools**.

Among its most ambitious recommendations includes ensuring that the **provision of mental health support teams (MHSTs) across schools and communities is expanded to include accredited counsellors and psychotherapists**. The MHST+ model – set out in more detail by Barnardo's – will be **critical in meeting the demands of children & young people** for whom current interventions may not be suitable.



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