

School and Community Counselling (SCC)

Our impact and social value
2022 – 2023 Academic Year





An introduction

The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act (2013) was the founding legislation that made it a statutory requirement for Local Authorities (LA) to provide an independent counselling service on secondary school sites - so to support the health, emotional and social needs of children and young people.

Since then, Welsh Government has continued to guide on the expectations of these services. In 2011 and again with a review in 2020 the *School and Community-based Counselling Operational Toolkit* set out the delivery aims and objectives; in 2021 the *Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing* referenced the manner in which counselling should contribute to school systems, and in 2022 there was an optimisation *Review of school and community based counselling services*. From the latter report, recommendations for service improvements and scope include:

- *Adopting a whole education system approach to future service delivery with an identified set of core features.*
- *Having a child-centred ethos.*
- *Being accessible through a range of referral routes.*
- *Being delivered by professionally registered and specialist counsellors with a diverse range of identities.*
- *Being treated as part of a range of wrap-around support for mental health and wellbeing.*
- *Improving monitoring and evaluation.*



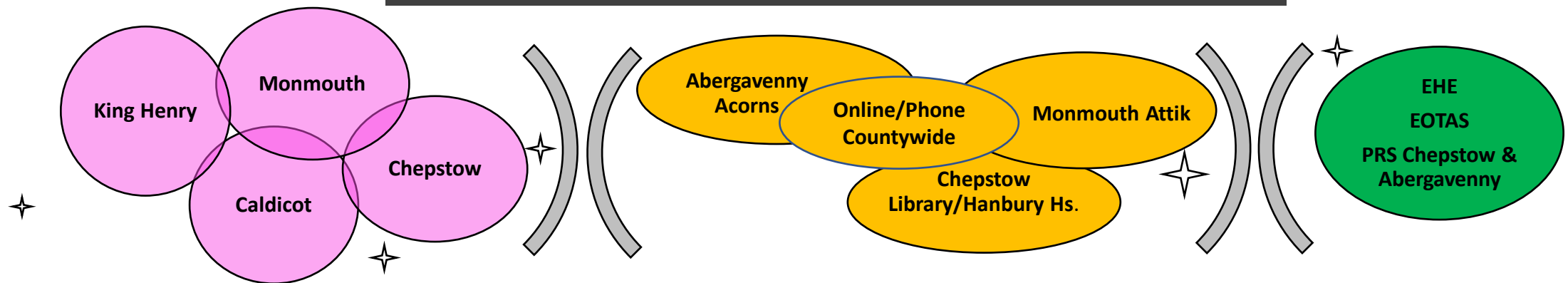
This report will demonstrate our work towards those recommendations and offer transparency on the developments still needed.

SCC sits alongside the range of child, young person, and family services, that make up the Therapeutic and Family Support Team, within Social Care and Health. SCC has a small employed team of counsellors, psychotherapists and wellbeing practitioners, that in normal circumstances is outweighed by the number of settings and days in the week requiring our service. Nevertheless, in the last couple of years we have been able to increase our capacity with additional Welsh Government funding, alongside the creation of a robust trainee counsellor/psychotherapist programme in partnership with the University of South Wales. We are proud that 15 students have placed and graduated through us since 2021, and in doing so have been ethically held by our qualified counselling team who are also trained clinical supervisors – our status as a ‘placement provider’ is held as of the highest standard by the University.

Our need and aim for an enhanced staffing capacity is due to young people’s demand for support of course, but it is also so because of the service model we offer. We believe that as much good work can be done outside of the counselling room as within, so in addition to our 1:1 focused young person support, we consider our links with parents/carers and school staff to be an essential part of our approach, and therefore of needing adequate time allocation. We also continue to contribute to the many Monmouthshire initiatives that are working towards better outcomes for young people, be they be multi-agency forums (*SPACE Panel; MAMS; CASP and other Safeguarding*); models for understanding distress (*Trauma Informed Schools; Emotionally-based School Avoidance*), and cross-directorate subgroups (*Wellbeing in Schools; Critical Incident Policy Review*). Thus, our service is systemic in nature and orientation, and we aim to contribute to all arenas of child, young person and family strategy.

SCC is staffed by counsellors and psychotherapists who are registered and draw on the professional ethics guided by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), the National Counselling and Psychotherapy Society (NCPS), the British Association of Art Therapists, and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

Our school, community and alternate provision service areas.





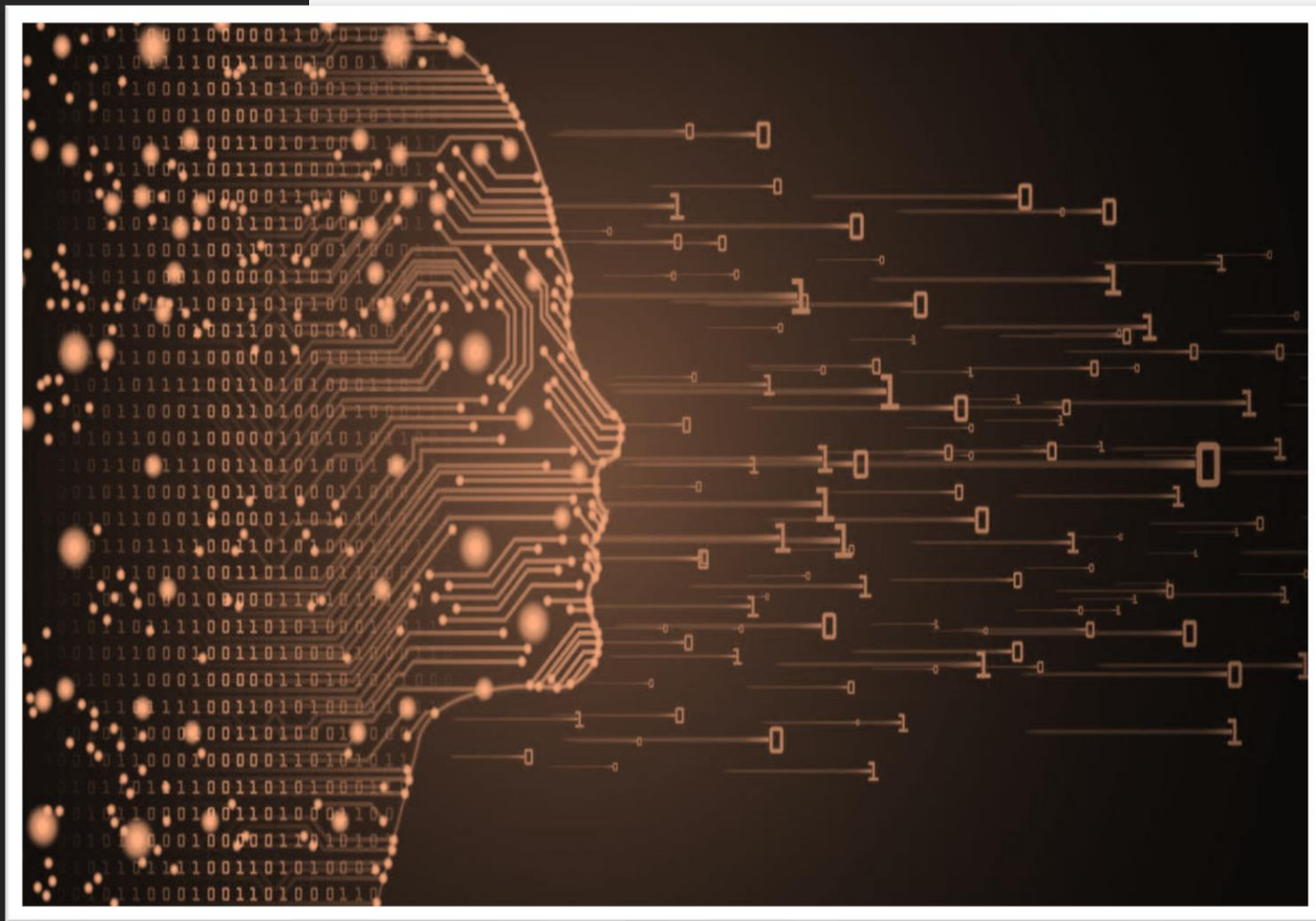
We have recently reviewed the website for our service: [Therapeutic Services for children, young people and families in Monmouthshire - Monmouthshire](#) – and there is a wealth of information here about:

- Our team members.
- The latest research and evaluation on counselling young people from around the UK, and also from within Monmouthshire itself.
- Signposting and self help information.
- Our Privacy and Data Protection protocols.

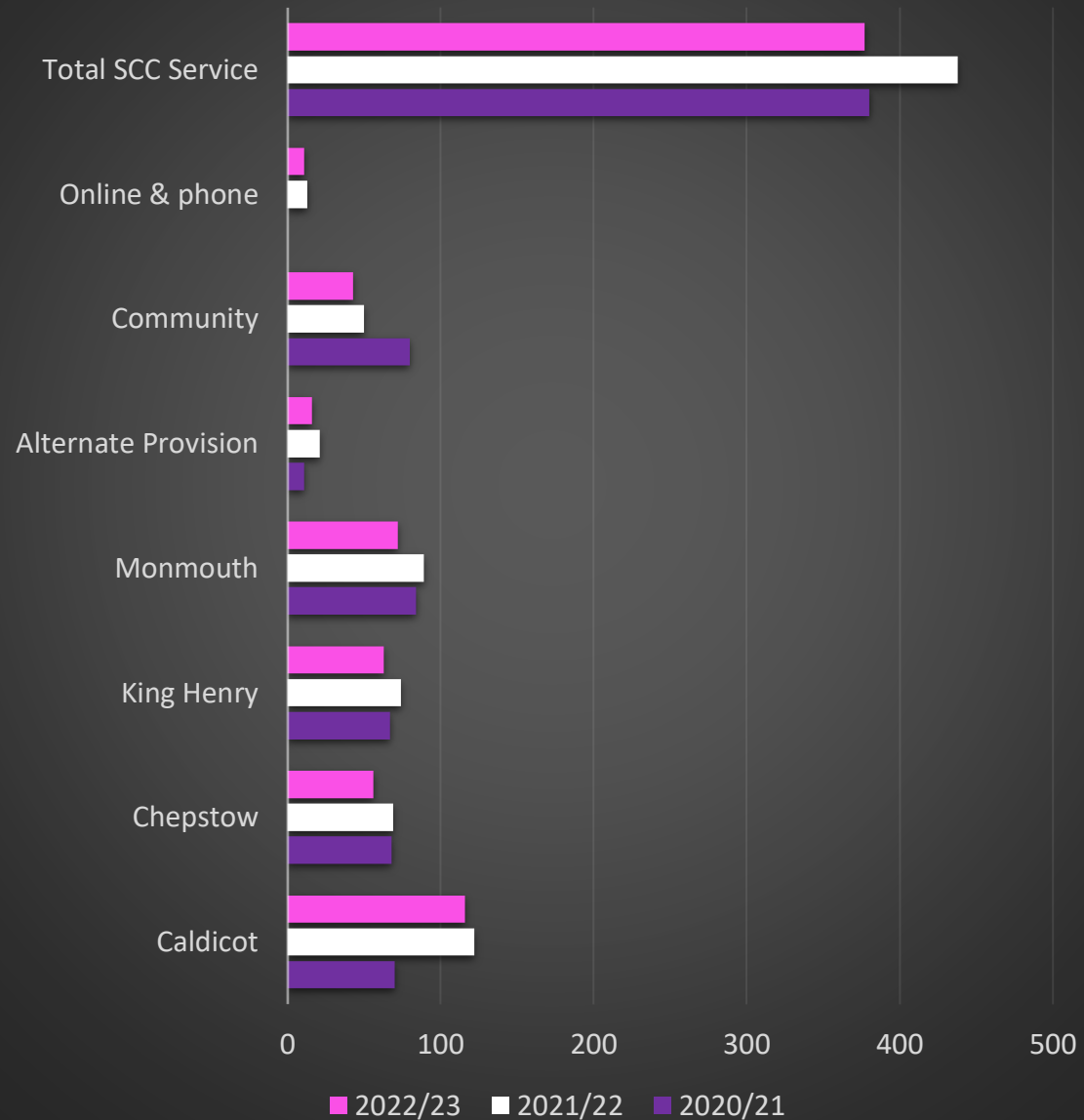
This website also provides an online referral system now so in addition to the usual means of direct text, teacher signpost/referral, and parent referral, this link and associated QR codes on display in schools should increase the accessibility of our service.

OUTPUT

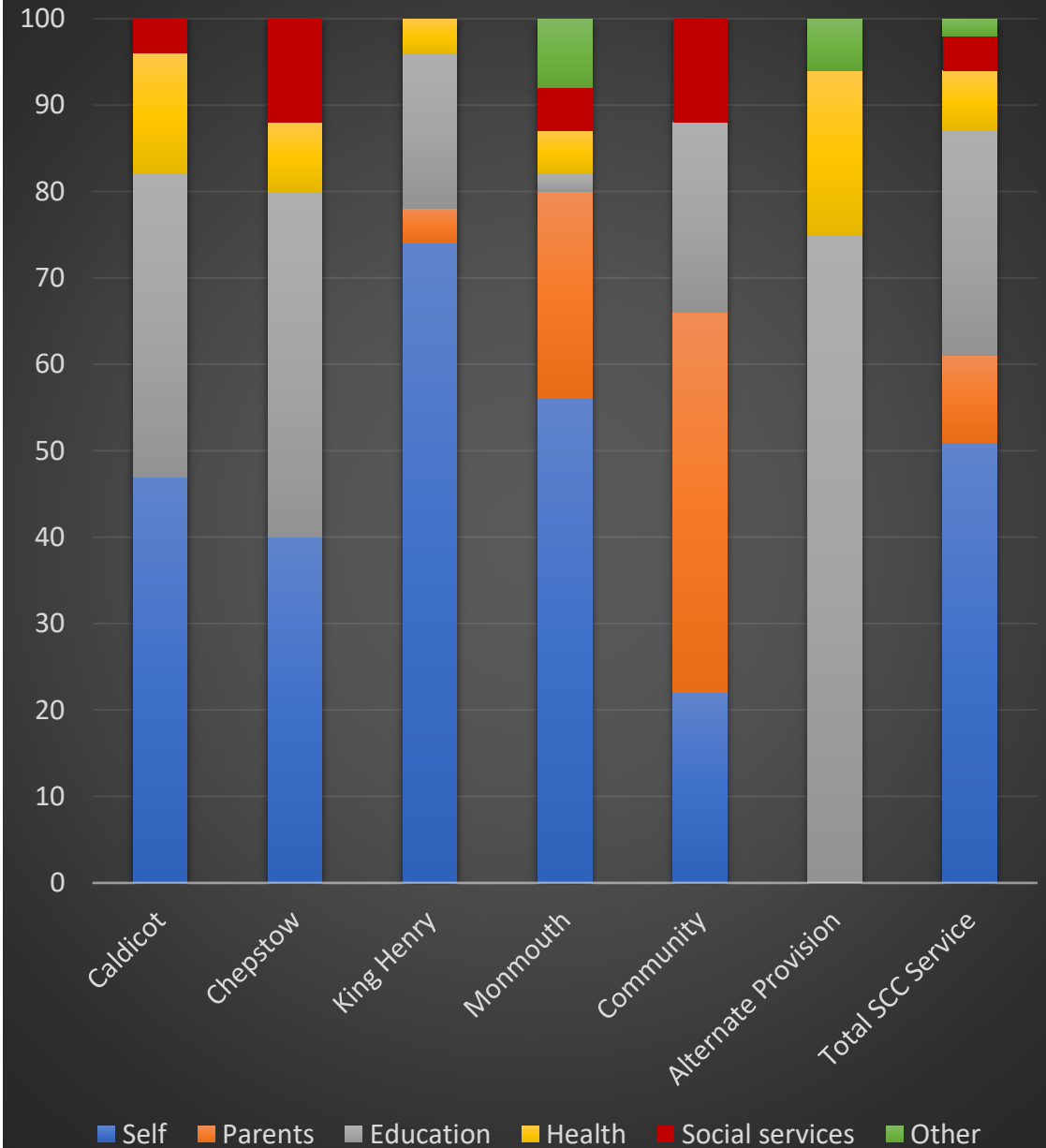
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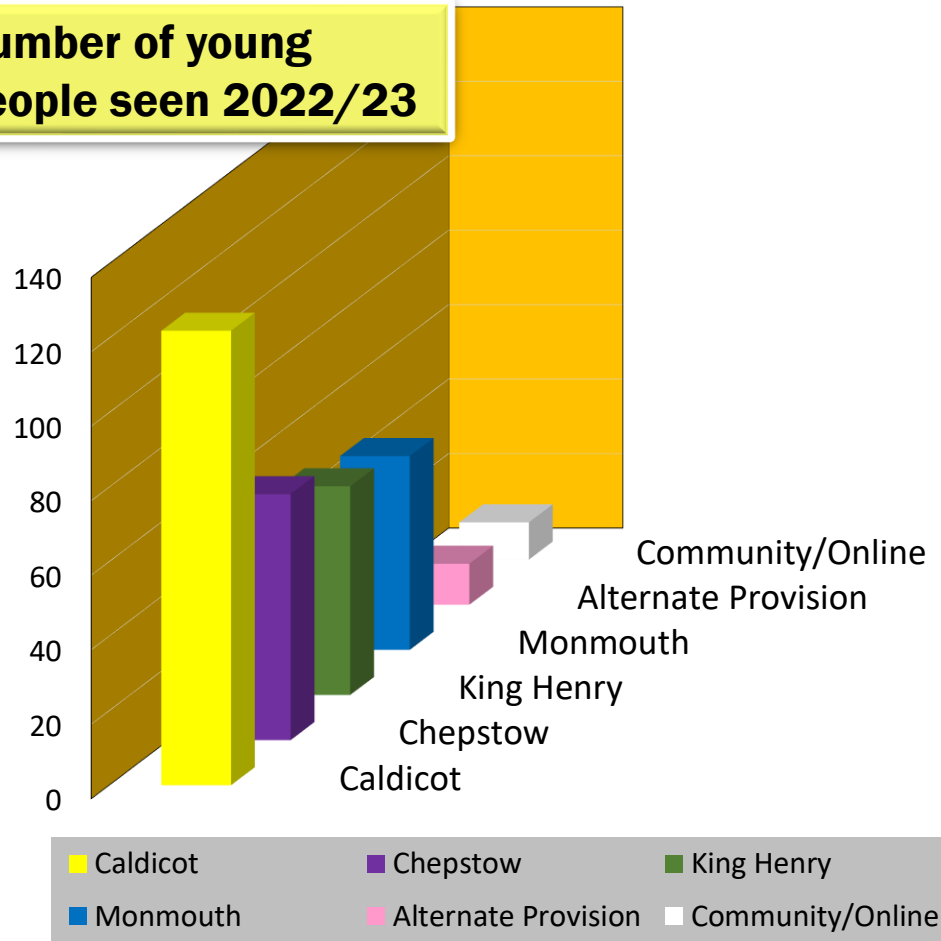
Referrals into the counselling service



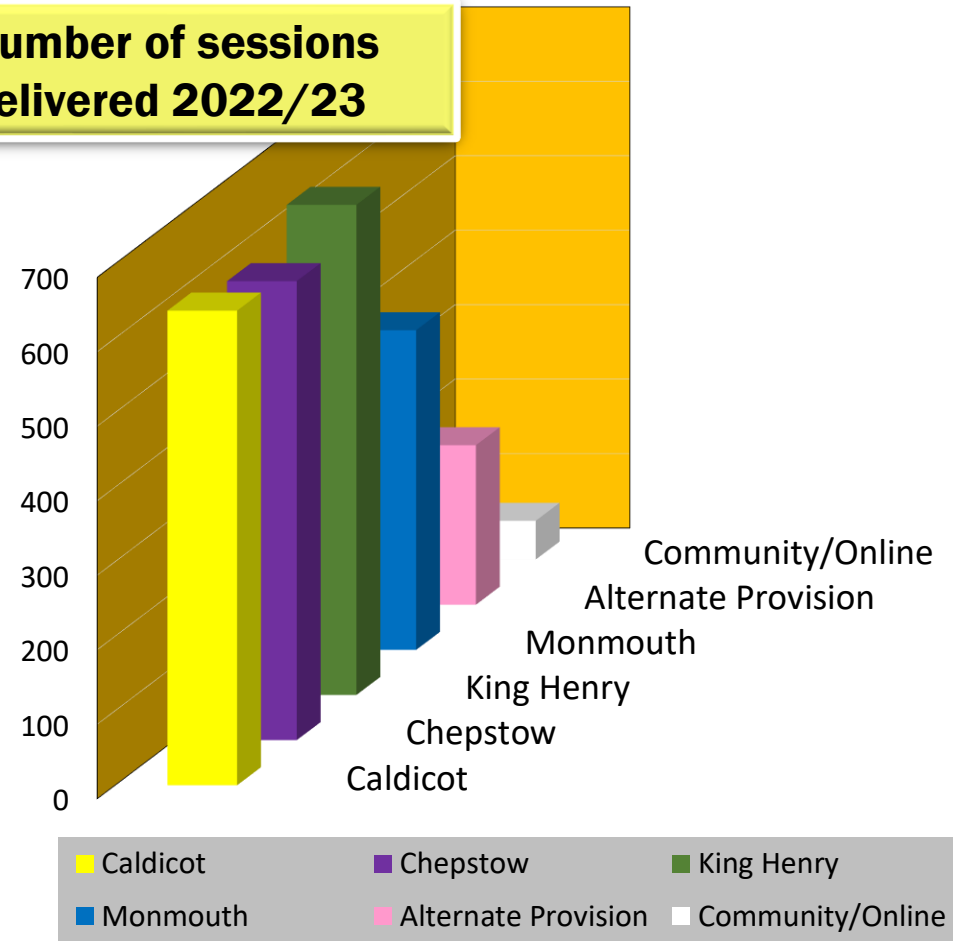
Referral source 2022/23 (%)



Number of young people seen 2022/23




Number of sessions delivered 2022/23



Average 'episode' length (2022/23) for formal counselling across the county i.e. the number of sessions delivered from the start to the end of a complete block of counselling



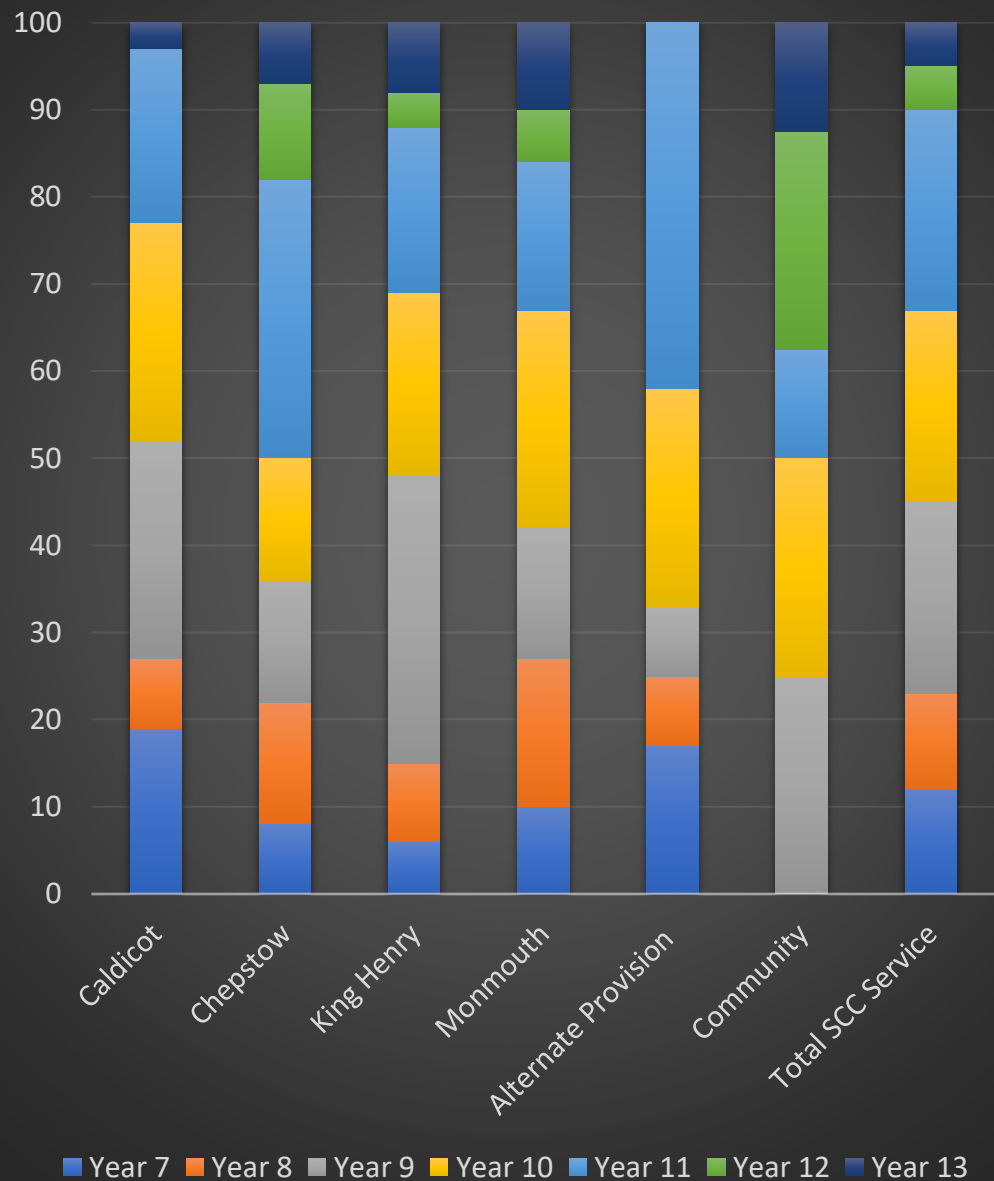
Added Value

The image features a hand in silhouette, reaching down to place a puzzle piece into a larger, partially assembled structure. The background is a gradient of green and yellow, with some abstract shapes and patterns. The text 'Added Value' is prominently displayed in the upper left corner.

Consultation and support-focused conversations undertaken by our team on the needs of young people (2022/23):

- Caldicot – 29 parents and 12 school staff.
- Chepstow – 17 parents and 6 school staff.
- King Henry – 10 parents and 9 school staff.
- Monmouth – 45 parents and 39 school staff.
- Alternate Provision – 2 teaching staff.
- Community – 4 parents.

Year Group Distribution 2022/23 (%)

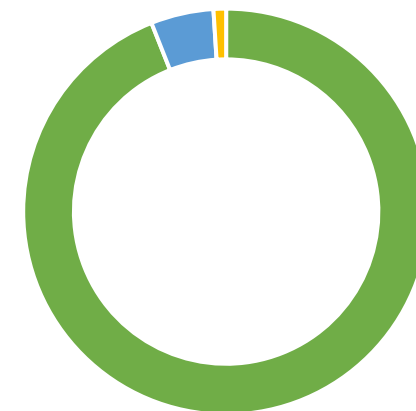


Ethnicity 2022/23 (Total SCC Service %)



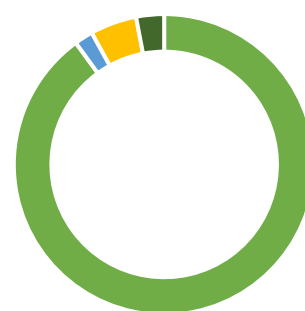
- White
- Mixed Race
- Asian/Asian British
- Any other ethnic background

Religion 2022/23 (Total SCC Service %)



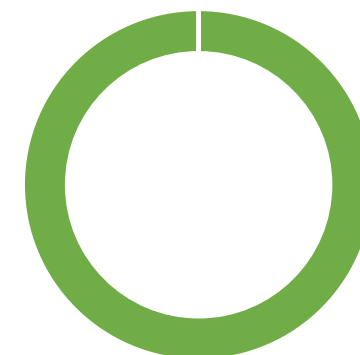
- None identified
- Christian
- Hindu

Sexual orientation for 16+ in 2022/23 (Total SCC Service %)



- Heterosexual
- Gay/Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Other

Preferred first language 2022/23 (Total SCC Service %)



- English
- Welsh
- Other



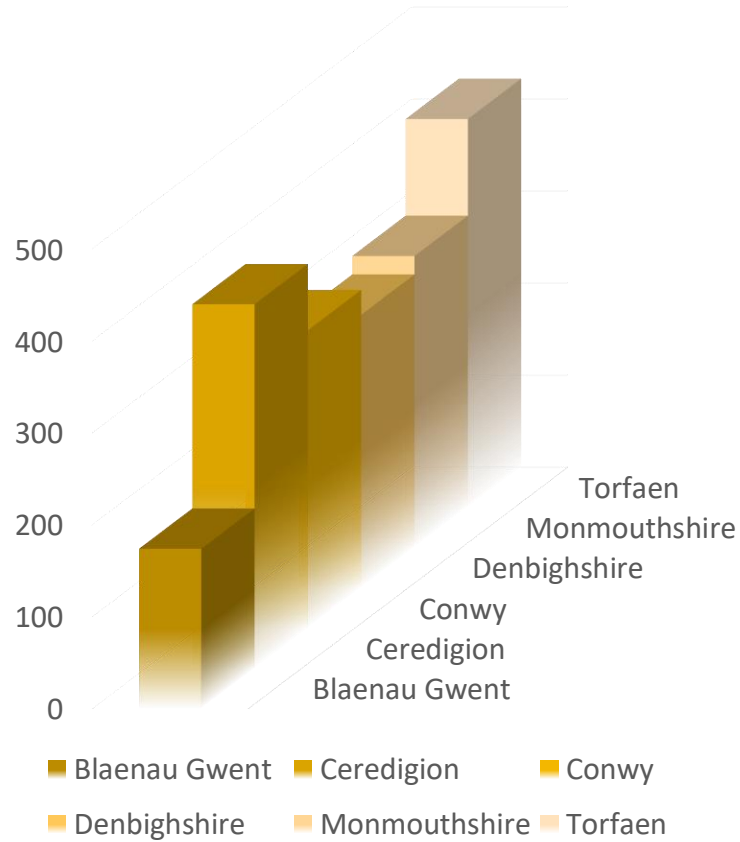
We can review Monmouthshire SCC performance against national counselling service averages; and those local authorities with a similar population density, and/or household makeup of 10-19 year olds.

Benchmarks
and
comparisons
within SCC
data

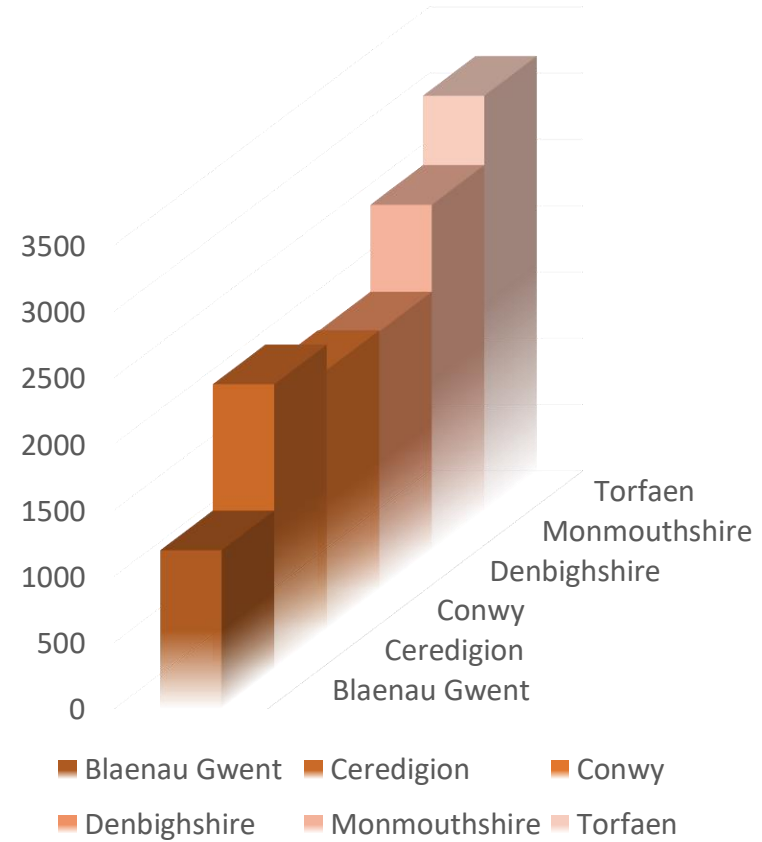


A mindful note however: the capacity of staff teams within LA counselling services is not uniform; and the general delivery methods, recording and reporting practices are also not uniform across LA's in Wales...therefore interpretations are always tentative ones.

NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE SEEN 2022/23



NUMBER OF SESSIONS DELIVERED 2022/23



Monmouthshire and **Wales** average 'episode' length (2022/23) for formal counselling i.e. the number of sessions delivered from the start to the end of a complete block of counselling



Monmouthshire is consistently above the national average for self referrals, year on year.

Monmouthshire has the third highest self referral rate across Welsh LA's.

98% of sessions are delivered face to face, 2% online; which parallels Wales averages.

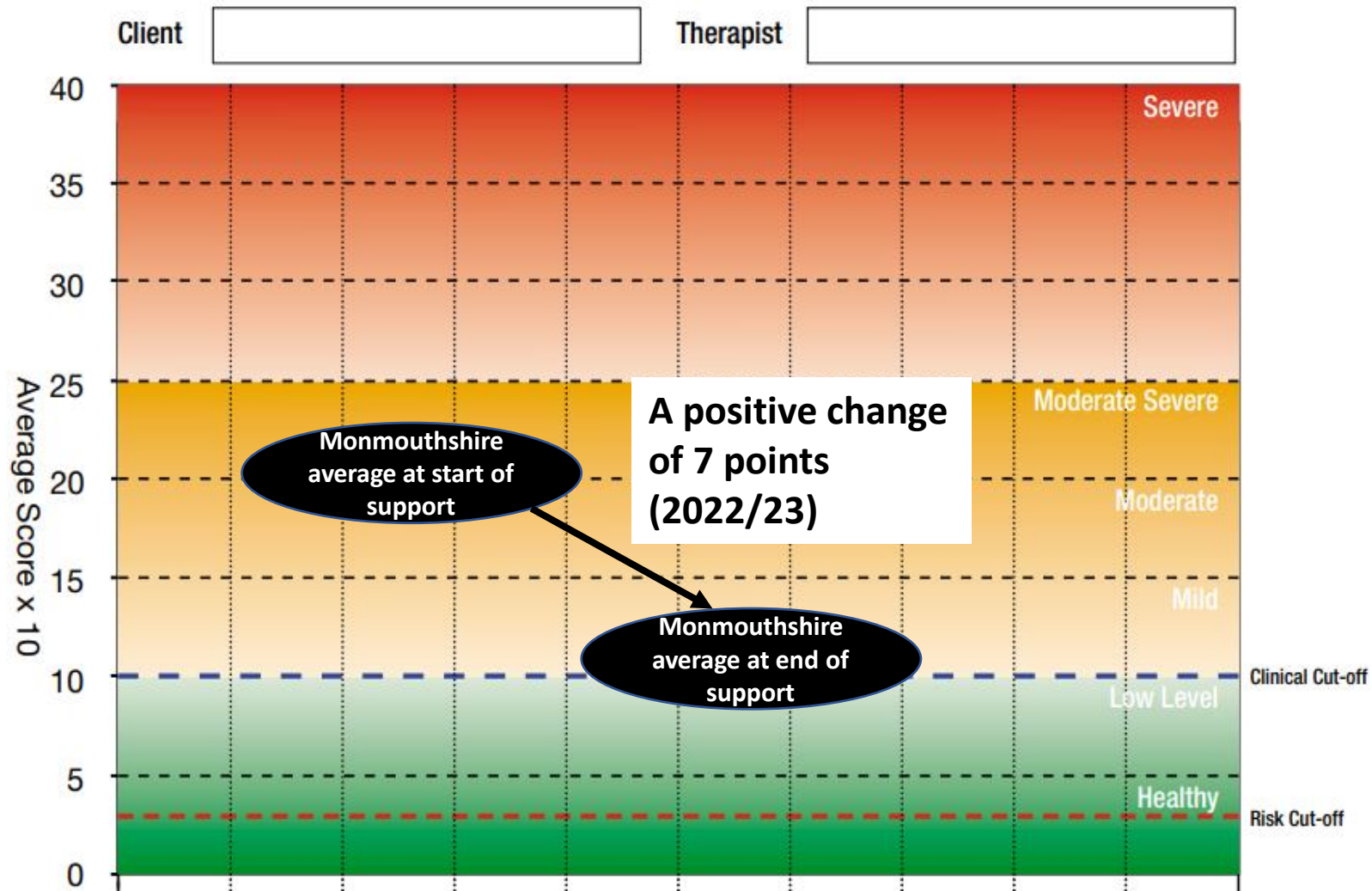


Monmouthshire is in the top third of LA's who experience the least 'did not attend' (DNA) i.e. missed sessions.

Monmouthshire has the lowest figure for young people who requested more support after completing their first episode i.e. where other LA's report 2, 3, 4, or even 5+ episodes of counselling for a single young person in a single year.



YPCORE is used as an assessment measure for young persons wellbeing, problems, functioning and risk; and as an evaluation measure that monitors change and outcomes in counselling, psychotherapy and support. After answering 10 questions, it will give a total score that can indicate a young person's level of distress.



The Wales national average for improvement in YPCORE score is around 6 points in 2022/23.

The Wales largest improvement in YPCORE score is 9.6 points in 2022/23.

The presenting issues for young people i.e. the needs at point of referral (2022/23)



King Henry



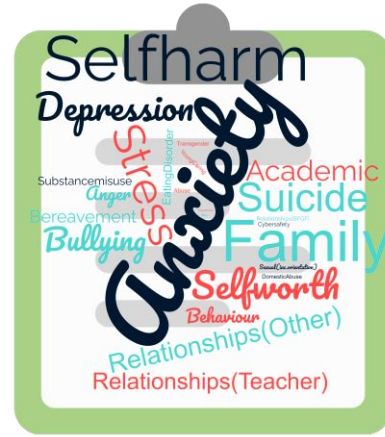
Monmouth



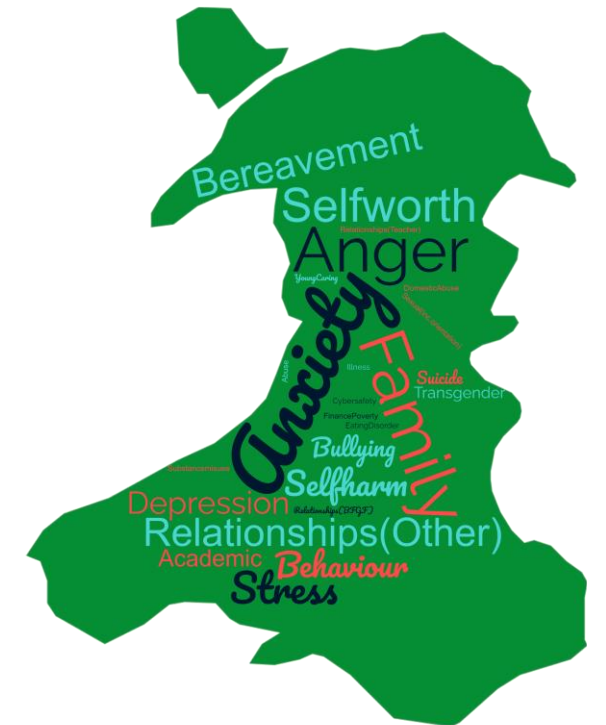
Total SCC Service



Caldicot



Chepstow

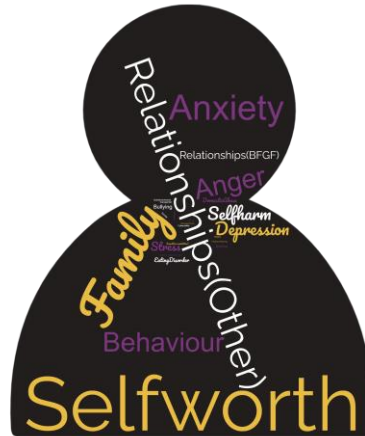


Total Wales LA's

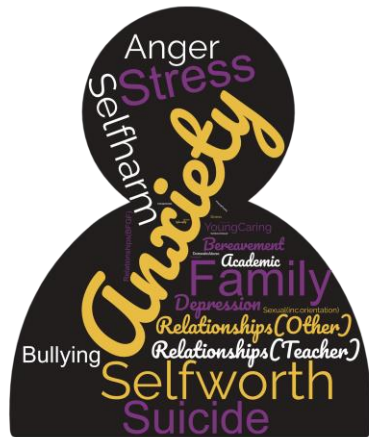
The predominant issues for young people i.e. the needs focused on during the support itself (2022/23)



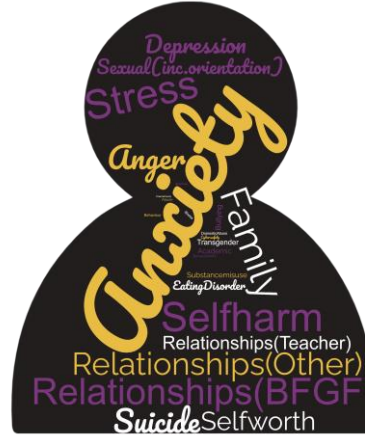
King Henry



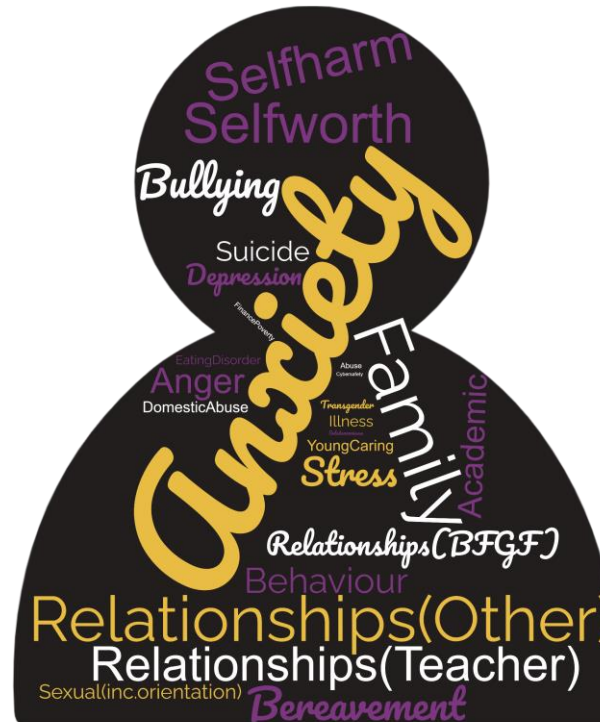
Monmouth



Caldicot



Chepstow



Total SCC Service

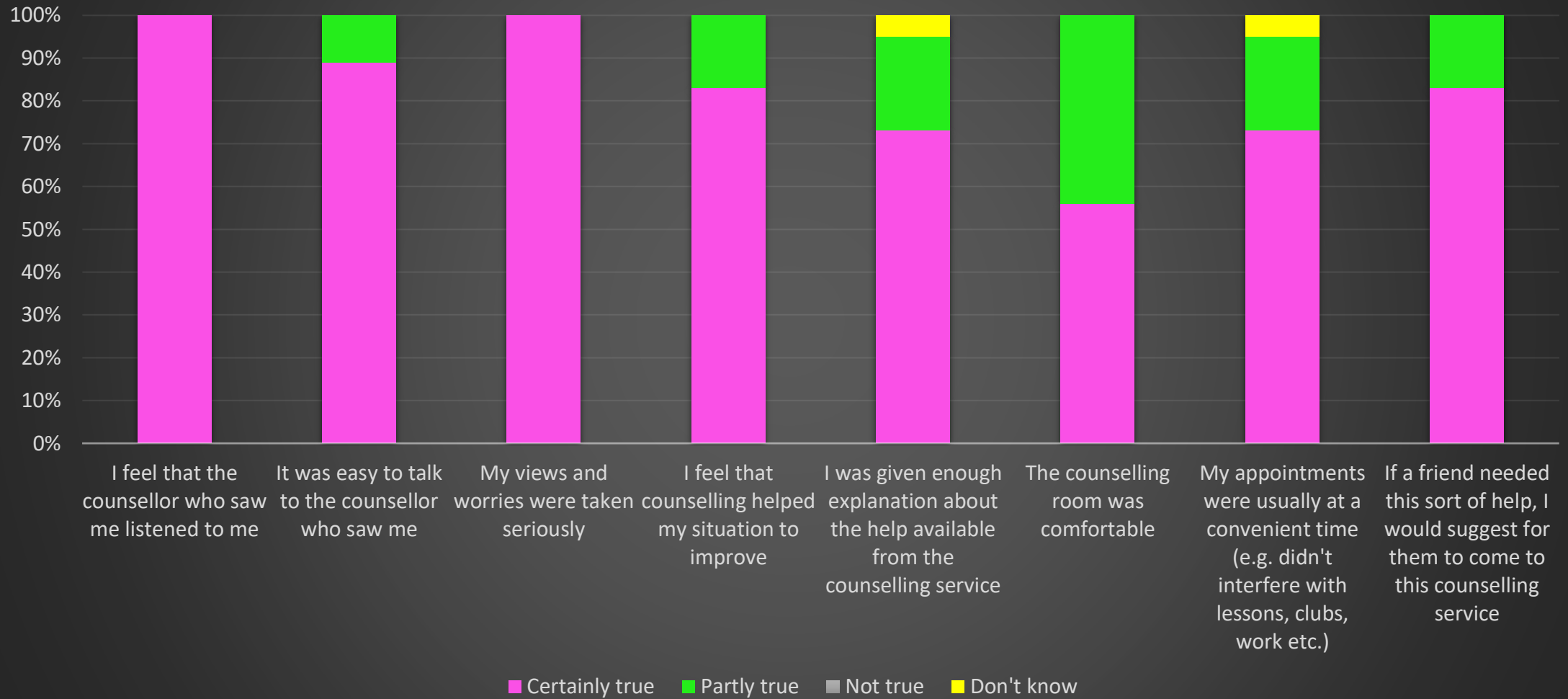


Total Wales LA's



What do young
people and schools
say about our
service?

Young people's end of service feedback



Young people's comments

i think the counsellor was incredible with helping me she helped me grow as a person putting my worries behind me, i felt i could always talk to her about anything with no judgement shown, she always praised me for my achievements that didn't seem big to anyone else but were in fact massive in my growth. I thank the service so much



“We are always grateful of the support that we are offered through the counselling service and we know our students value the support that is given to them by the team. They work closely and supportively of the school and offer not only student support, but helpful advice and guidance for staff”.

Our schools say



DATA



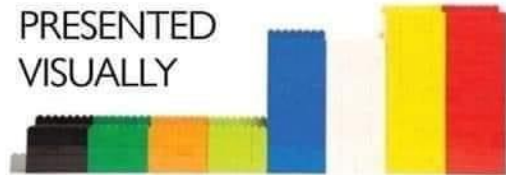
SORTED



ARRANGED



PRESENTED
VISUALLY



EXPLAINED
WITH A STORY



Some conclusions for 2022/23

- ❑ While the SCC service has seen a consistent number of referrals year on year, we have been able to increase our outputs of young people seen and sessions delivered year on year. As we entered the academic year of 2023/24, we had made a 50% improvement on (i.e. we had halved those) young people waiting for support, compared to previous years.
- ❑ The work we do outside of the counselling room e.g. parent and teacher consultations, critical incident support, yearly community bereavement event, does not get reported to Welsh Government, and therefore it is difficult to compare services across Wales purely on the number of young people seen 1:1. This will also relate to comparisons between schools and settings within Monmouthshire; where the work that supplements our 1:1 support is nuanced to the settings, any particular pressures experience by the pupil populace, and any staffing changes within our service. We have also not accounted for year 6 play therapy numbers in this report, though that year group's legislative right to therapy does get reported to Welsh Government and will be seen in other LA figures.
- ❑ A gradual decrease in users of online and phone support continues as we move further away from the height of the pandemic, as it does in Welsh national figures and even though MCC (and other LA's) have now embedded this virtual offer into our service.
- ❑ We are experiencing a wider ratio of male:female young people seen than across Wales nationally, around 1:5 compared to 1:3; and we do not show a wide range of diversity in young people who use our services which does mirror Wales-wide figures. Year 9 and 10 continue to show a higher take up in services across Wales year on year, and this is broadly similar to MCC, though with year 11's showing as highest for us this year. Our data summary here is of course absent of how those diverse cohorts of young people are possibly engaging other services.

- ❑ *Family* and *anxiety* continue to show themselves as the most common themes of the support, within Monmouthshire and across Wales. However, within Monmouthshire, we have seen again in 2022/23, a rise of *self harm* (and to a lesser extent *suicide*) as issues of focus – so much so that their position in the lower third tier of themes a few years ago, has now been replaced by a position in the upper third tier of themes. There are some limits to this analysis. The thematic ‘presenting’ and ‘predominant’ categories are stipulated by Welsh Government and are also counsellor-chosen from the referral content and from the young person’s voice during the work – where each counsellor/psychotherapist will be influenced by their theoretical model (e.g. a person-centred therapist would focus more on ‘self worth’ than ‘behaviour’). Therefore, the data collection here is not without its variables.
- ❑ YPCORE scores are difficult to interpret as a sole measure of outcomes. Each LA uses this differently and every young person is different. What we can say is that MCC is consistent in its change, moving between 4-7 points on the positive each year.
- ❑ We can suggest that a number of themes come together to aid our delivery. For instance, our emphasis and strength in self referrals, may aid the infrequency of DNA’s due to the fact that the young person wishes to be in the counselling chair at the outset of the support. Further, our willingness to offer longer episodes of support where it is needed (and therefore a higher average episode length than other LA’s in Wales), may also mean the young person explores their issues fully and does not need returning visits to the service, for 2, 3, 4 or even 5+ other occasions. This is not to devalue and criticise of course, those young people who request more support when they need it.

Next steps
into 2023/24
and beyond



- We are entering the final financial year of additional Welsh Government funding that has helped us build capacity in our services; and are not aware yet on any continuation beyond 2025. If we are to work solely within our core capacity we will need to consider how best to utilise the team so to maximise the therapeutic value of counselling and therapy, for young people and the family, and the school and community system around them. We will engage our stakeholders when moving forward with any such scenario here.
- While we are aware and can state that trends are similar across all our settings, we have focused only on schools in some areas of this report (e.g. diversity, presenting and predominant issues). We will communicate such themes from our Alternate Provision and Community/Online settings in future reporting.
- We have work to do on exploring the low intake of male-identifying service users, and those of other diverse backgrounds and identities. Our current data here is drawn from young people who actually engage the service, therefore further analysis could clarify whether this is paralleled across all referrals that come into us. Further to this, in 2023/24 we have embedded more routine and systematic diversity collection at the point of referral and this should aid us in collating more accurately those identity positions of young people. We will also continue to work with stakeholders to increase the visibility and accessibility of our service – of which our self referral strength should aid us - since it would suggest to some extent, that requesting counselling is less stigmatising than it was at the outset of the Wales school counselling agenda in 2011, and we can try to capitalise on this perhaps more normalised view some young people take to requesting support.

- We continue to reflect on and improve our practices towards the rise of *self harm* and *suicide* as topics of focus for our support. Our training has been provided by the Storm Skills Training group ([Storm Skills Training: Self-harm & suicide prevention training](#)), who's best practice model, research, evidence, and expertise in self harm mitigation and suicide prevention has also been provided to the NHS, prisons, and community mental health teams. We have embedded this training and the 2022 update in NICE self harm guidelines ([Overview | Self-harm: assessment, management and preventing recurrence | Guidance | NICE](#)), to create a thorough risk assessment and safety planning framework that all our team use in collaboration with our young people. We will also continue to build our links with Safeguarding teams, CAMHS and SPACE, to ensure young people are channelled to the appropriate professionals.
- We continue to develop our participatory, evaluation and research knowledge base. Our survey data (See [Therapeutic Services for children, young people and families in Monmouthshire – Monmouthshire](#)) is the first small step to increasing young people's involvement in how the SCC service is delivered; for example, this feedback already states how important the counselling room is to a positive experience, so there is work for us to do here in improving our spaces. We would like to form a steering group of young people who can routinely input on developing the service (e.g. raising awareness, thinking about topical issues, recruitment) and work towards major goals that they might initiate (e.g. rebranding). We are also sought advice from BACP to have a broader means of showing the value of our service and contributing to the evaluation base on young people's counselling services. For instance, we are trialling an additional Goal-based Outcome (GBO) measure next year, that will give further evidence on how (or how not) young people have achieved the goals personal to them, through the support. We are embedding case vignettes into our end of year data collection and this will further communicate to stakeholders how we work. Finally, we are looking at case studies and other social-value methods to explore *what specific counsellor behaviours are helpful*; and *how counselling services complement other services*, which are needed research areas for the profession.