



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

**PUBLIC PETITION NO.**

**PE01702**

### **Name of petitioner**

Joanne Waddell

### **Petition title**

Counselling provision in all Schools

### **Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure that by 2022, all pupils will have access to trained counsellors in schools.

### **Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition**

Written to the office of the Minister for Mental Health.

### **Petition background information**

The facts speak for themselves...there are more young people than ever seeking help for their mental health.

- One in five people will experience a mental health problem at some time in their lives (Scottish Government). One in five children will experience a mental health difficulty at least once in their first 11 years.
- One in three GP appointments involve mental health (SAMH).
- An estimated one in 10 children and young people in the UK have a mental health condition (Office for National Statistics), and that these, if untreated, can continue into adulthood.
- Half of all adults who are mentally ill experienced the onset of their mental health problems by the age of 14 (Kim-Cohen et al., 2003; Kessler et al., 2005). Without effective intervention, these conditions can have a significant impact on their life chances.
- By the time they're 16, roughly 3 children in every class will have experienced mental health problems. (Green et al 2005, Mental Health of Children and Young People in Great Britain 2004).
- Over the past three years 17,500 children have had their mental health referrals to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) rejected. The current waiting list for children and young people for CAMHS often exceeds the Government's 18 week standard (NHS Statistics). Offering early intervention in schools will also alleviate the pressure on acute services and other helplines and referrals

pressure on acute services and other helpines and referrals.

- On average two teenagers in every secondary school classroom will have hurt themselves in response to the pressure of growing up in an increasingly complex and challenging world. (NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde)
- One in nine young Scots have attempted suicide and at least one in six have self-harmed at some stage in their lives – with 6.5 per cent of those surveyed reporting a history of both behaviours. (University of Glasgow, 2018)

Research confirms that early mental health intervention can have a powerful impact on the lives of children and young people and the benefits will continue into adulthood. It is my view that children and young people should have the opportunity to access counselling services at an early stage and in a location which is both convenient and immediate.

### **School counselling provision in Scotland**

At present there are limited counsellors with specific training in children and young people in Scotland. It is important that additional funding for this national policy comes from Scotland's national budget and that an incrementally staged delivery is agreed building up to a comprehensive service by 2022. In the interim, no school should have to close its current counselling service.

In Scotland, school-based counselling services are provided in a tenth of schools, more than 250,000 children in Scotland have no access to school based counselling services, local authorities provision varies considerably. (BBC 2017)

In Scotland there is still no clear strategy despite campaigning since 2005. Existing services are overwhelmed and schools are struggling to cope with the pressures mental health support places on them. There are undeniable health, economic and societal arguments that support this investment.

Based on costs from England it is estimated that providing counselling in all Scotland's secondary schools would require an initial investment of £9million. (Scottish Association of Mental Health).

A recent analysis estimates that every £1 spent on one-to-one counselling could return society £6.20 in improving future job prospects and cutting crime. (Pro Bono Economics / Place 2 Be, 2018)

### **School counselling provision in the rest of the UK**

England (2017), Wales (2008) and Northern Ireland (2007) all have strategies on counselling services in secondary schools. Children in Wales and Northern Ireland have guaranteed access to schools-based counselling, an evaluation in Wales showed that counselling was associated with significant reductions in psychological distress across each of the areas in which it was introduced (Welsh Government, Evaluation of the Welsh School-Based Counselling Strategy, 2011).

Of the 11,558 children and young people in Wales who received counselling services in 2016 to 2017, 85% did not need an onward referral after completing their sessions. In Scotland this would have a positive impact by reducing the numbers referred to CAMHS thus reducing waiting lists and generating financial savings through lower cost early intervention.

### **Child and Adolescent Health and Wellbeing Action Plan**

The Scottish Government is currently working with partners in the public and third sector to develop a 10-year Child and Adolescent Health and Wellbeing Action Plan which will cover both physical and mental wellbeing.

The action plan is expected to be published during 2018. In this Year of Young People, I would encourage the Scottish Government to include a commitment in the action plan to ensure that by 2022, all school pupils will have access to trained counsellors.

### **Unique web address**

<https://www.parliament.scot/GettingInvolved/Petitions/schoolscounselling>

**Related information for petition**

**Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?**

**YES**

**How many signatures have you collected so far?**

**0**

**Closing date for collecting signatures online**

**03 / 09 / 2018**

**Comments to stimulate online discussion**