Schools provide guidance to pupils on subjects and courses and future careers. Through their pastoral role, they also provide emotional support and counselling. Other guidance and counselling support that pupils may access includes educational psychology services, which are usually provided by the Education Authority (EA) [1]; Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) provided by the Health and Social Care (HSC) service; and external career guidance and support. The subheadings which follow provide further information.

**Academic guidance**

Guidance on subjects and courses is usually referred to as educational guidance. Schools decide how to provide such guidance for pupils, including those with special educational needs (SEN). Most schools provide additional support for key events in a pupil’s school life, such as moving from one class to the next, generally through familiarisation sessions in the new class or talks by the new teacher.

Post-primary schools [2] may designate a member of staff to have specific responsibility for primary and post-primary school liaison. These staff may visit the primary schools from which pupils will be joining their school, and arrange visits to the post-primary school and activity sessions to help orientate incoming pupils. Pupils in post-primary schools may also be divided into ‘tutor groups’ within their year groups, with a designated teacher who has pastoral care responsibilities. The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) provides guidance [3] for schools on transition from primary to post-primary school.

Post-primary pupils also usually receive additional support and guidance when selecting subject and examination options. A key transition point is the move to post-compulsory sixth form [4] education when they are aged around 16.

**Psychological counselling**

Psychological counselling available to pupils includes that provided in school, through the Education Authority (EA) [1] educational psychology service, and through Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) provided by the Health and Social Care (HSC) service. The subheadings which follow provide further information.

**School-based counselling**

Since 2007, the Department of Education (DE) has funded an independent counselling service for post-primary [2] pupils in grant-aided [5] schools. The Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICCS) [6] works as an integral part of a school’s pastoral care system to help provide this support to pupils. Trained counsellors, experienced in working with young people, provide support to tackle barriers to learning which may result, for example, from personal trauma, difficult home
circumstances, or stress. Pupils can self-refer to this free service or be referred by their school. The ICCS Handbook \[7\] sets out how the ICSS should operate to ensure that the service provided for pupils is safe, accessible and of a high professional standard.

Through the ‘iMatter’ programme, the DE also provides a range of materials to support schools in promoting resilient emotional health for all pupils. Materials on topics of concern to young people such as self-esteem, substance abuse, and coping with stress, worry and anxiety are made available through the programme. As a further development of iMatter, the DE has also issued guidance \[9\] to schools on a new self-assessment audit tool to support school development planning in the area of emotional health and well-being. The tool supports schools in assessing how their processes support the development, implementation and ongoing refinement of a whole-school approach to the promotion of emotional health.

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) \[10\] website provides further information on school-based counselling. This includes a school-based counselling operating toolkit \[11\], which was developed as a resource to support the national strategy for school-based counselling in Wales, but its content can inform practice across the UK and beyond. It also includes a toolkit for collecting routine outcome measures \[12\] (2016).

**Educational psychologists**

Educational psychologists (EPs) are concerned with helping children and young people experiencing problems within an educational setting. The main aim of the EP’s work is to enhance pupil learning and participation in school and other activities.

Educational psychologists employed by the Education Authority (EA) \[11\] have a central role in the statutory assessment process for children who may need a statement of special educational needs (SEN) (see the article on ‘Special Education Needs Provision within Mainstream Education’ \[13\]). Increasingly, they aim to take an early intervention, preventative approach, in collaboration with schools, to reduce the number of children being put forward for individual assessment. They might work with single pupils or groups of pupils and their work may involve those with learning difficulties or social and emotional problems. They also advise teachers, parents, social workers and other professionals concerned with the child, and support schools on issues such as bereavement, suicide, bullying, school refusal and child protection.

Educational psychologists:

- assess the child by means of observation, test materials and interviews
- formulate interventions that bring together knowledge, skills and expertise and also support national and local initiatives
- develop and apply interventions to promote psychological well-being, social and emotional and behavioural development and raise educational standards. Interventions might include learning programmes and collaboration with parents and teachers
- develop and support therapeutic behaviour management programmes
- produce formal, written reports recommending actions to be taken.

They also offer training to teachers and other professionals on topics such as the effective management of stress or behaviour, and work on projects either with teachers on topics such as bullying, or with pupils.

**Training, registration and accreditation**

Responsibility for accreditation for educational psychologists’ training in the UK is held by the British
Psychological Society [14] and, once qualified, all EPs must register with the Health and Care Professions Council, [15] which is the regulatory organisation for educational psychologists in the UK.

For further information on the training and pay and conditions of educational psychologists, see the subheading ‘Educational psychologists’ [16]’ in the article on ‘Education Staff Responsible for Guidance in Early Childhood and School Education’.

**Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)**

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are specialist mental health services for children and young people provided by the Health and Social Care (HSC) service. They aim to promote emotional well-being and deliver care, treatment and preventative mental health services to children and young people aged 0-18/19 who experience significant mental health difficulties. Young people might, for example, be referred to CAMHS to help them deal with disorders or issues such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety, autism, behavioural problems, bullying, depression, eating disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder, psychotic disorders including schizophrenia, and substance abuse.

Teachers, doctors or nurses may refer a young person to CAMHS, whose staff include clinical nurse specialists, psychotherapists, mental health social workers, consultant psychiatrists, clinical psychologists and family therapists. Interventions might involve talking therapies (such as counselling or cognitive behavioural therapy) or prescription medicine, or can depend on what local support is available. The services are usually based in clinics but school or home visits are also possible. Services can be multi-agency and should have links with other relevant services, including schools, social services and counselling services. Ideally, parents and carers are also involved in the interventions. Additional services such as advocacy, interpreters, or services providing assistance for those with communication difficulties and additional learning needs can be involved to make CAMHS more accessible.

**Career guidance**

The provision of high quality careers education, information, advice and guidance is a key priority in Northern Ireland and set out in Preparing for Success [17] - the strategy for careers education and guidance 2015-2020. It is provided by a partnership of those who work in schools and colleges (careers educators / careers teachers) and those who are external to the school or college (careers advisers).

In line with the Northern Ireland Curriculum [18] requirements, all grant-aided schools [5] must provide the statutory area of learning ‘Learning for life and work’ for pupils in Key Stages [19] 3 and 4 (ages 11-16). Learning for life and work incorporates ‘employability’ which includes career planning / career management.

In addition to the taught element of employability, pupils have access to impartial individual careers information, advice and guidance, provided by careers advisers from the Northern Ireland Careers Service [20]. These careers advisers are professionally trained and are based in careers offices throughout Northern Ireland. All post-primary schools [2] have an assigned careers adviser who supports the careers education programme by advising teachers responsible for careers education, and providing advice and guidance to pupils.

Careers advisers in schools can provide:

- individual career guidance interviews to help with subject choices
• class and group talks on careers options / topics
• information about further / higher education and training provision
• information about careers and the skills and qualifications needed
• information about current and future job opportunities
• help with CVs, application forms and mock interviews.

Further information on careers educators and careers advisers is provided in the article on ‘Education Staff Responsible for Guidance in Early Childhood and School Education’ [21].

In addition to face-to-face support in school, the Careers Service also offers email and telephone advice, and a comprehensive website, incorporating careers tools, lists of local careers events, and online advice on writing CVs / applying for jobs etc.

*Preparation for Success 2015-2020* [17] continues the focus on the partnership approach between schools and the Careers Service. Key priorities include:

• providing support and advice to those who have most barriers to continuing in education, employment and training
• a commitment to giving ‘additional focus to Curriculum and Careers delivery in post-primary inspection’ (page 34).

The revised (January 2017) *Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework* [22] for post-primary schools includes among its ‘quality of provision’ indicators that:

‘the provision for careers education is characterised by well-informed, impartial careers education, information, advice and guidance and relevant, well-planned and challenging workplace experiences for pupils which enhance their employability and effectively informs career planning’ (page 6).

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