

"saved my life" - Female, aged 14

Well, my Guidance teacher actually she told me like the beginning of the week and then by the start of the next week I went up and said to her, could I be put into the counselling service, I just, I didn't have to be persuaded, I wasn't like you know, this is my saviour kind of thing, I really just thought, maybe I do need this, maybe I don't need this. It was actually one night when I was sitting there and I was getting really down and really depressed and then it just suddenly came to me that I needed help and this was my help and I just had to take it 'cause I was too scared to go out and like, ask for help, I was too scared to tell my mum that I was feeling this way, and I really didn't want to be here so I kind of took it as, this is what I am supposed to do to help me, really.

When I first started coming here, I was the kid that came in with like her hood up and I wore trousers and covered my face totally. I was just really small and I crouched a lot and it was even like down to you know my whole appearance 'cause I just didn't like being in the world but then through coming here and working at it, week after week after week, the counsellor has just really helped me realise that, I am a human being and actually deserve to smile really, and I've just kind of gained confidence in myself and like, grew the ability to talk to people and just be sociable and don't have to like ... in an art classroom all lunchtime, so it has had a big impact on me and I think coming here is probably one of the best decisions I've ever made 'cause if I didn't come here, I probably, there is a small chance I wouldn't actually be here today so really it's one of those things, it has saved my life I could say, so it's had a big impact on me.

... just her whole attitude towards it, it's just the energy that she puts into it, you know people think all she does is sit in a chair, she sits in a chair and listens which a lot of people don't do. You know that's one of the ... I remember growing up as a kid and I always found it really hard to speak to my Mum, 'cause my parents were going through a divorce and then it just started getting harder as soon as you hit first year, high school, it was just the typical you can't fit in, you're the outcast and I remember getting bullied for being different, and I remember it was even down to things like, my weight and then it got to ridiculous things like I was too small and I remember thinking this was just a mess and it got to me one day. I have been really depressed and suicidal at some points and that's when I realised I needed help but I was beginning to ... afraid to get help, so it was kind of, I didn't really know where I was going, I was just kind of stuck there and then as soon as I got offered, took me a week and I thought I'll try it and if I don't like it, then I'll just leave and say it's not for me but from the first session I was just thinking this is going to be the thing that will save me and to be honest it has because I don't have as many problems as I did when I first came here but I don't have many because the counsellor has helped me and the way that she sits there and listens she asks questions you are too afraid to ask and then you do answer them and she helps you overcome the fear of asking those questions and even down to holding your head up high in the corridor and actually saying

hello to the person sitting next to you and I don't sit with and I applaud it, keep my head down the whole time, I actually sit and talk to people now, really because the counsellor has taught me that I'm not a bad person actually, are a nice and talented person who deserves to be alive. So in some sense and deep down the line the counsellor has saved my life and eternal thanks to her and I would consider her to be one of my heroes because I think you have to be gifted or blessed to put up with me for three years.

She's actually doing it to help someone and the fact that she has so much care and she has so much passion for it and I can tell she has so much passion for it just by the way that she works and she works so hard and I don't even know how to describe it. I'm so thankful to her for helping me. You know there is times when I have come in and I have probably finished off her box of tissues from crying so much and she just shows so emotion towards you and it's incredible how much of a good person she actually is and the thing is she doesn't, you know have conversation with you, she doesn't say "my opinion on this ". She'll ask you questions that you are too afraid to ask to yourself. So when you do answer them and she just sits there and listens to you and that's vital. And it is a good help.

My opinion with confidentiality has been brilliant the whole way through and it is important because that's one of my main worries and concerns, I think it was one of the first questions I asked the counsellor was "Is it private and kept in here" and it is because you come in here and the counsellor doesn't tell anyone, if you don't bring it up next time, she doesn't bring it up, you know, really because what I say in here is in private and it is my real thoughts and real opinion on what's happened and on people, I know they are not going to leave this room and I know I am not going to be judged or anything and you know if I mention something, she's not going to go away and tell my guidance teacher or tell the person that I spoke about, she just keeps it to herself and the whole thing is really private it's also kind of a big support

I don't think a lot of people know about it to be honest which is probably a good thing but actually some of my friends come to this service and I remember, this was like a couple of weeks ago actually, this girl who sits behind me in chemistry class was crying and I asked what's up, and I was talking to her and then she went, "I've got to go and see this school counsellor and I don't know whether you know about her," and I went I've been there since first year and she just looked at me and went "Really" and I went Uh Uh and she went "Why are you still there?" and I went because it's just so helpful and, I spoke to her yesterday and I said How are you getting on at counselling and she went "It's the best thing I have ever done," and each person that I speak to they always go, "The counsellor's brilliant" and everyone, you sometimes feel a little sad after you walk out because it's like brought back your memories, but the next day their like, they just say "I'm so happy I got that off my chest" and it's like kind of building up this anger and it's just a relief in here, to think everyone has the same view and opinion of it, it's just nice to have somewhere to go where you are not judged.

Everyone in the school has a talent or something special but then underneath it all there is like a dark side to every story and there are going to be a few kids that are going under and do have a lot of problems and like me they are probably too scared to go out and get it on their own so they kind of need that stepping stone to help them and you know every Headteacher wants their school to be a success and all their students to do really well, but sometimes you do need that little backup for a student to get help. It's even down to things like, even teenage suicides, they kill themselves because they've just gone under totally. It's probably because they don't have someone to help them, and I think it is a really good thing. Say you only have, whether you have only 2 people visiting the service or 200 people visiting the service, each person that walks into the room is there for the reason that they need help, so they've put out there, it just makes a brilliant connection and I don't even know how to describe it but helpful and it just, it saves kids lives, to be honest. So I think schools should invest in it because it gives people that chance to really open up and be themselves somewhere and then eventually they do grow and learn to be themselves outside this little room.