

Alliance Website Content

In this document you will write in all the necessary content under each subheading. You can copy and paste content from sources

In order to help visualise where everything will go, in our next meeting we will design the other pages for the website.

Title

Children are not the people of tomorrow, but are people of today. They have a right to be taken seriously, and to be treated with tenderness and respect. They should be allowed to grow into whatever they were meant to be – “the unknown person” inside each of them is our hope for the future.



This title will go underneath your banner image or slideshow. The title communicates something that is important in Alliance. This could be communicated through a quote or a sentence

History

Why alliance?

Ally Brennan, a specialist teacher, worked at Comberton Village College in 2009 and was always a key figure within the extended schools partnership out of which the counselling project grew. Ally was enthusiastic and passionate about this work. She passed away in February 2012 and it is in her honour that the project has been named alliance.

alliance has been in existence since April 2009 following a consultation with headteachers across 27 schools in the CABMAG (Comberton, Bassingbourn, Melbourn and Gamlingay) area. The overwhelming outcome was the lack of provision to support children experiencing difficult life events. These schools decided to pool resources and use Government Funding (Extended Schools) to establish an in-school counselling service. This funding came to an end in December 2011. Having helped many children and their families, as many schools found this to be an invaluable service it was decided that a new working model should be developed. The new model for schools is explained elsewhere in the website. (See schools' info).

During the intervening years alliance has been a constant support for our schools, regardless of the national picture.

The Children's Society stated in 2008 that:

The findings of the Good Childhood Inquiry an independent report indicated a rise over the last 20 years of children suffering from mental illness.

In 2022 the Children's Society stated that:

The findings from the Good Childhood Report which shows the latest trends in children's wellbeing found that school, friendships and appearance continue to cause the greatest dissatisfaction in adolescence. This year's report focuses on schools as vital settings that influence children's wellbeing. The findings show feeling listened to in school was strongly associated with children's overall happiness at school.

Our experience shows us that intervention work at an early stage helps prevent the escalation of some of these young people's difficulties and improves their learning outcomes. We have always strongly believed that providing experienced, fully qualified counsellors used to working within school settings has been our strength.

About Us

allyance is a social enterprise not for profit in-school counselling service.

The aim of the allyance in-school counselling service is to provide counselling support when directed by the headteachers to:

- Improve the emotional wellbeing of children aged 4 to 11 years, in order to improve their learning potential.
- To work with school staff, parents and carers to help everyone understand the child's feelings and behaviour.
- To respond to long and short term needs of children and their families in schools.

We provide counselling to children with a range of mental health issues including:

- Family breakdown.
- Friendship issues.
- Bereavement.
- Victims of domestic violence.
- Physical and mental abuse.
- Low self-esteem.
- Self-harming.
- Social difficulties.

We believe that strong mental health enables young people to:

- Contribute to their community.
- Feel inspired.
- Form good relationships.
- Have a desire for learning.
- Become resilient employees/employers of the future.

Therapy

The allyance Therapeutic Team

Due to the diverse nature of schools working within the community it is impossible to set criteria and thresholds. We need to be able to respond to each schools' specific context.

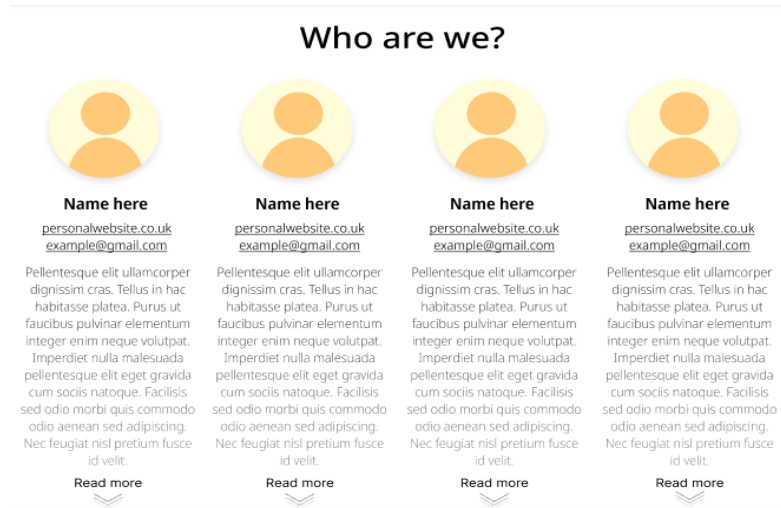
The clinical team consists of representatives from different therapeutic disciplines and includes:

- Person Centred / Psychodynamic Counsellors
- A Music Therapist

- Play Therapists
- A Clinical Supervisor

The therapists are a strong professional team who all share the same vision and commitment to allyance.

Instead of who are we? We would like to put The Team and we would like the children to sketch a picture of their therapists.



Some bios and pics from the counsellors are outstanding.

Abby Wollston

Following a career as a professional cellist, Abby Wollston qualified with a distinction in Music Therapy in 2012. A thoughtful and dedicated therapist, Abby has worked in over 25 schools in 4 counties. Her approach combines Psychodynamic and developmental thinking and techniques. Abby has ten years' experience working with students presenting a range of learning disabilities including Autistic Spectrum Condition. She finds music a powerful medium for supporting children with emotional issues including trauma ,parental separation, bereavement, anxiety ,anger and aggression. Abby is also able to promote the development of social, communication and creative skills using group Music Therapy. In 2022, she qualified as a practitioner in Supportive Music and Imagery and is now able to use this to support young people.

Ellie Thomas



I have over 20 years experience of working as a Counsellor, Supervisor and Trainer. I work with adults, young people and families within an NHS setting and in other external agencies. Before coming to work for Allyance as a clinical supervisor, I worked as a Counsellor and play therapist in primary schools. I am able to support individuals and groups with many issues including bereavement, trauma and loss. I worked at Relate Cambridge for a number of years in their Children and Young People Service.

I trained to Postgraduate level in Psychodynamic Counselling at Cambridge University Board of Continuing Education. I am a trained Group Work facilitator running psycho-educational groups for Low Self Esteem and Anger Management within an NHS setting. I am an Accredited member of British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy.

Helen Dunlop

Following a career as a primary school teacher across a range of settings, I have recently trained as a Play Therapist. I have also completed additional training in developmental trauma. Through both my career and training I have supported children with a wide range of needs including autism, ADHD, anxiety, communication difficulties and trauma. I work with individuals and groups, and communicate with parents, teachers, support staff and senior leaders in schools to support those children.

I focus on providing a warm, caring therapeutic environment, I work in a child-led way, using an integrative holistic model of play therapy. I use a range of different media to enable children to express and explore their needs, emotions and situations. I work hard to develop the therapeutic relationship between myself and the child to enable them to feel comfortable and cared for during the sessions.



Karen Grieves (AdDipCouns MBACP)

Following a career as a Foster Carer, Social Inclusion Assistant and Family Support Worker, Karen qualified as a counsellor in 2009, and later completing a certificate in Therapeutic Play and recently a Diploma in Mental Health First Aid at Work. A caring and attentive therapist, Karen has worked with hundreds of children, young people and adults in schools and private practice using Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and Therapeutic Play Skills. She has a wide range of experience and has undertaken training in Attachment and Trauma.

Karen uses play therapy as a way for children to express themselves and communicate. She draws on her vast experience and skill set to support children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties to increase their confidence and self-esteem. Her many clients over the years have included children and young people with Autism, ADHD, and those suffering from trauma, separation and loss, anger, anxiety and bereavement.

Types of Counselling

Person Centred Therapy

The person-centered approach relies on the therapeutic relationship between the client and the therapist in which personal growth, self-understanding, self-esteem, self-awareness, and self-direction are increased for positive results. This form of talk counseling is also a type of nondirective therapy, meaning the client's thoughts and own feelings lead the counseling session.

Play Therapy

Play therapy is a type of therapy where play and art materials are used as the main way for people to express themselves.

Using play in therapy helps people to express themselves in their own way especially if they are struggling to understand how they are feeling, or are finding it hard to put their experiences into words.

Play Therapy can be a particularly helpful approach for children in need of therapeutic support.

Music Therapy

Music therapy is the clinical use of music to accomplish individualized goals such as reducing stress, improving mood and self-expression. It is an evidence-based therapy well-established in the health community. Music therapy experiences may include listening, singing, playing instruments, or composing music.

Art Therapy

Art Therapy is the use of artistic methods to treat [psychological disorders](#) and enhance mental health. Art therapy is a technique rooted in the idea that creative expression can foster healing and mental well-being.

For each type of Therapy, provide a description (100 words minimum).

You can add as many subheadings as you want (eg. What happens in a play therapy session?, Why are the sessions confidential? What can parents/carers do to help? etc.)

Images for each section are optional but would be great. These images can be pasted into the document under its respective subheading or emailed separately.

These last pages have not been discussed that much during the meeting. You are free to write in these but we can talk more about what content you would like in them in the next meeting.

Info for Parents'

What is a counselling session?

Play is your child's natural medium of self-expression, essential for enabling them to develop physically, emotionally and socially. It helps to develop their imagination and encourages creativity. Used therapeutically and with different disciplines, and mediums such as:

- a musical instrument
- singing
- a sand tray
- paints
- drawing equipment
- clay
- puppets
- pebbles and shells

Play offers the opportunity for children to help themselves by 'playing out' feelings and problems.

During the counselling session, a trusting relationship develops with the therapist, in which children begin to feel safe enough to explore their difficulties and learn new ways of relating.

Many children encounter challenging events and experiences in their early lives, which may lead to feelings of stress and anxiety. Children do not yet have the vocabulary or emotional maturity to express their feelings or to make sense of them. In the session, they can play out some of these anxieties and even find the words for them, or sometimes the process can be non-verbal.

What happens in a counselling session? The therapist depending on their discipline will have a "tool kit" of equipment in the room. Sometimes your child will be guided towards a particular medium, or sometimes they will be able to play with what they choose.

Whatever your child plays with, the therapist creates a safe, non-judgemental and confidential space for them during the session which will enable the child to explore their difficult or confusing feelings.

Why are the sessions confidential?

When a child begins the session, it is key to the effective treatment of the therapy that the child feels able to express their thoughts and feelings without feeling judged. A very important part of the therapy is the building of trust in the therapeutic relationship and the creation of a "safe space" which exists solely for the child and therapist.

Your child must feel safe, comfortable and understood. This type of trusting environment makes it easier for your child to express his/her thoughts and feelings and to use the therapy in a useful way. Experience shows that the creation of this trusting environment, can improve your child's relationships with others, including friends as well as family.

At the start of counselling the therapist explains to the child in an age appropriate way the meaning of confidentiality. From this your child will understand that they are free to talk to their parents/carers and family about what they do in sessions, if they choose to do so. Parents/carers are encouraged to be curious and interested whilst being sensitive to how much the child may want to share from their sessions. The therapist will not disclose specific details of what your child has played. This is important in order to maintain your child's trust and feelings of safety with the therapist.

There are of course, exceptions to maintaining confidentiality. If your child were to disclose something which might put your child or any other child at risk, then the therapist would speak to the headteacher and parents/carers.

What can parents/carers do to help?

You are very important in supporting your child through the counselling process and it is crucial that your child knows that you are supporting this. Be consistent and encouraging to your child about attending the counselling sessions regularly. Try to resist the urge to ask your child what they did in the session as this may make them feel pressurised to comment on something they may not yet understand themselves.

What can parents/carers expect in terms of feedback?

The therapist can talk to you about how well the child is engaging with the therapy and the sorts of activities your child is taking part in. You will have the opportunity to discuss any changes or developments that you have witnessed or experienced at home. The therapist may also be able to talk about some of the themes emerging from the sessions and any changes the therapist may have noticed as the therapy progresses

Info for Schools'

Background

Alliance is a social enterprise not for profit in-school counselling service. It was originally formed in April 2009 by schools in the CABMAG (Comberton, Bassingbourn, Melbourn and Gamlingay) area as a response to the lack of high-level mental health support for children who were experiencing or had experienced difficult life events, particularly those of primary age. The schools agreed to pool funding in order to use economies of scale to provide an enhanced and flexible service. With support from the Local Authority, latterly in the form of the Dedicated Schools Grant, schools within the **alliance** cluster are able to access high quality counselling at a subsidised rate. Through our network of counsellors **alliance** also provides services for schools outside the cluster to buy into.

Our Team

The **alliance** clinical team consists of representatives from different therapeutic disciplines and includes:

- A Clinical Supervisor
- A Music Therapist
- Play Therapists

- Psychodynamic Counsellors

The therapists are a strong and stable professional team who all share the same vision and commitment to **alliance**. They have a lot of experience of working in primary schools and therefore understand the institutional context of working in an education setting, including liaison with relevant staff and parents. They can also attend multi-agency meetings where appropriate.

Accreditation, Safeguarding and Supervision

All members of the **alliance** team are accredited by the relevant professional body according to their qualifications, e.g. PTUK (Play Therapy United Kingdom), UKCP (UK Council for Psychotherapy), BACP (British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy), BAMT (British Association of Music Therapy). As a part of their accreditation and membership they receive professional supervision from these bodies. This complements the half-termly group **alliance**-specific sessions run by our clinical supervisor which allow them to reflect on current cases.

Annual safeguarding / child protection training is delivered by www.safecic.co.uk who also oversee DBS checks. Therapists also receive a set of safeguarding documents to complement this training. **Alliance** schools are also responsible for providing their counsellors relevant specific Child Protection / Safeguarding information about their school each September.

Governance and Oversight

The running of **alliance** is overseen by a steering group which includes cluster headteachers. The steering group meets termly to discuss finances / accounts, training of counsellors, (anonymised) pupils in counselling etc. The steering group also oversee the work of the **alliance** coordinator, who works with the clinical supervisor to deploy the team of counsellors and therapists.

The alliance model in practice.

- Each school pays in a set amount to receive an agreed level of counselling/support. (see section below).
- Schools in consultation with therapists decide how to use their allocated time – referrals typically come through the Headteacher or SENDCO. Sessions are one hour long, this includes face to face client time, report writing and on occasions liaising with school staff.
- **Alliance** counselling is based on need rather than a fixed number of sessions.
- Sometimes it may be appropriate for a counsellor to meet with the parents before the sessions commence.
- Each counsellor will start and end with a strengths and difficulties questionnaire completed by child, parents and school. This is then repeated approximately 6 weeks after therapy sessions have started to inform discussions about the progress.
- Counsellors will liaise with school staff regarding any potential strategies which might support the young person.
- Where appropriate, counsellors will help year 6 students to prepare for transition to secondary school. In some cases they may continue to support the young person for a short time after they have transferred to Year 7.

Counselling Packages

Please email Ann Jones at ajones@melbournvc.org to find out the current rates.

- The costs include travel and supervision.

- Schools within the Bassingbourn and Melbourn clusters may take advantage of a slightly reduced.

In cases where extra counselling hours are required during the year, **allyance** will aim to use its overall size and flexibility to support the relevant child/school. In addition to 1:1 counselling we can offer bespoke packages tailored to the needs of individual schools. (This is not a definitive list if a school has a particular request where possible we would be happy to accommodate).

This may include:

Working with school staff on areas such as:

- Wellbeing Supervision
- Mental Health Awareness

Group Work with Children on areas such as:

- Friendships
- Self Esteem

More Details

For more information, please contact our coordinator, Ann Jones: ajones@melbournvc.org

Case Studies

Events