



Counselling to address barriers to learning

Problem statement

Addressed problem: Barriers to learning

Young people may find it hard to engage in learning because of wider issues they are facing in their lives. These might include health problems, caring responsibilities, housing, financial circumstances, antisocial behaviours or substance misuse. Professional counselling can help young people to tackle these wider issues.

Beneficiaries

Learners with behaviour issues and/or frequently absent
Young people with complex needs (e.g. health issues, in poverty, with caring responsibilities)
Learners with low self-confidence and self-esteem
Vulnerable groups
Young people facing complex personal, social and/or family issues.

Addressing the problem

How should professional counselling be provided to young people?

Professional counselling is delivered by trained counsellors, including psychologists. It helps the young person to come to terms with their personal circumstances.

Professional counselling may be accessed through 'one-stop-shops', which bring together various services for young people, or may be provided within the learning environment. It can also be part of a reintegration measure.

For young people facing particularly complex issues, counselling may be one part of a 'package' of support given by a team of professionals, for instance multi-professional school care teams and student support services.

The following tips are given as advice to policy-makers and practitioners involved in the design and delivery of such measures. The information is based on Cedefop research into successful measures as well as other relevant evidence.

Tip 1: Have clear referral mechanisms and promote awareness of counselling services

Young people may be reluctant to come forward to access counselling services due to motivational, confidence or awareness-related reasons. It is important for teaching staff and other professionals working with young people to be able to spot those facing complex issues and to be aware of the services available to help overcome these.

Where counselling services are not an integral part of the learning environment, clear and effective referral mechanisms need to be in place to ensure that no young person 'falls through the net'. Counselling services need to promote their existence and make professionals, young people and parents aware of the kinds of problems young people face and the support services available to help.

Tip 2: Tailor support to the needs of the young person

All young people are different and the problems they face, as well as the context in which they face them and their capacity to cope with them, also differ. Counselling provision – its intensity and duration – needs to be centred on the needs of the young person and their progress over time.

It should be based on an initial diagnostic or assessment of the young person's needs and what he/she wants to achieve as a result of the counselling. It should continue until the young person has achieved these objectives and has the confidence and coping skills to be able to cope with his/her personal circumstances independently.

Tip 3: Provide long-term support

At the core of counselling support is the development of a relationship between the young person and the counsellor which is based on trust and respect. This relationship takes time and regular contact in order to develop. A one-off intervention is not enough to help a young person to address his/her problems; counselling needs to take place over the longer term. Continuity is also important so ideally, the young person should be supported by the same counsellor throughout his or her education or training programme. It may also be necessary to continue counselling support beyond the length of the education or training programme the young person is taking part in. It is important that this opportunity is possible.

Tip 4: Integrate counselling as part of a case management approach

A [comprehensive support to tackle complex needs](#) involves working with the young person to identify his/her support needs and acting on his/her behalf to ensure that the right services and professionals are engaged in providing this support. Professional counselling should be an integral part of a case management approach and one of a 'menu' of services available to the young person, according to his/her needs.

Tip 5: Envisage group sessions where there is a high number of at-risk young people

In learning environments or communities where young people are at high risk of facing difficult circumstances, group counselling or information sessions may be appropriate. For instance, second chance measures may incorporate group counselling sessions covering health issues for example.

Expected outcomes

Outcomes of professional counselling

Counselling from a qualified counsellor or psychotherapist can be particularly beneficial for young people in difficult circumstances. Emotional and psychological support can be a means of building self-confidence, trust and motivation, enabling young people to think more positively about their future.

This type of measure is usually important for young people who are very much disengaged from education and training and have complex circumstances/needs. It can help them to understand and overcome these and therefore remove a barrier to participation.

The following outcomes can be expected at different levels:

INDIVIDUAL	INSTITUTIONAL	SYSTEM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved well-being • Social / economic / psychological challenges being tackled • Improved work habits / social skills • Improved capacity to deal with one's learning difficulties • Lower absenteeism • Developing a positive attitude to learning and education and training • Improving self-awareness - understanding of own abilities, aptitudes and interests • Improved 'work readiness' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased support to teachers and trainers to work with learners with complex personal, social and / or family issues • Reduced risk of early leaving due to complex personal, social and/or family issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced rates of early leavers

Related protective factors

Health and well-being



Related resources

Good practices



GOOD PRACTICE

Carpo - Assistierte Ausbildung (assisted VET)

In Germany, assisted VET ('Carpo') incorporates intensive individual social-pedagogical coaching and guidance, offered by certified social-pedagogues.



Germany



GOOD PRACTICE

Foundation InnoVe, Pathfinder centres (in Estonian: Sihtasutus InnoVe, Rajaleidja keskused)

In Estonia, Pathfinder centres provide careers information; career counselling; speech therapy; psychological guidance; socio-pedagogical guidance; and special educational guidance.



Estonia



GOOD PRACTICE

Capacity building to students, companies and vocational schools involved in apprenticeship-training (QuABB)

The overarching goal is to reduce the number of contract dissolutions, which lead to a permanent drop-out of education and training.

QuABB also aims to support vocational schools as well as companies in working with "high-maintenance" apprentices.



Germany



GOOD PRACTICE

JBA - youth labour employment agency

Jugendberufsagentur - Hamburg

German youth labour employment agencies (JBA) bring together career guidance and counselling services in one single place.



Germany



GOOD PRACTICE

Orienta4YEL

Supporting educational and social inclusion of young early leavers and those at risk of early leaving through mechanisms of orientation and tutorial action.



Spain Portugal Romania



United Kingdom



Germany

Tools



TOOLS

Online questionnaire 'Risiko Check' and coaching tool 'Counselling profile' in the context of the project Stop Dropout

The EU-funded 'Stop Dropout!' project has developed a 'Counselling Profile' (or personal profile) for use by qualified professionals in fields such as counselling, psychology or human relations. It is a structured interview scheme which can be used to use to guide individuals who are at risk of dropping out.



Austria



Germany



Czechia



Slovenia



TOOLS

DIDO - Dropping-in the dropouts toolkit

The DIDO toolkit contains practical tools aimed at preventing dropout in adult education.



Belgium



Finland



Denmark



Portugal



Netherlands



Switzerland

Publications



PUBLICATIONS

Cross-case analyses of school-based prevention and intervention measures

Different approaches schools adopt when providing individualised support to students. This study analyses the types of measures used by schools to provide one-on-one emotional and behavioural support.

Download the report [here](#).



Belgium



United Kingdom



Portugal



Spain



Austria



Poland

Quick wins



Quick and easy referral to support measures

Formal protocols for the referral of young people to specialist support services saves time for the VET provider, and facilitate a quicker response to the learners' needs.

 Netherlands  Austria

Source URL: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/toolkits/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/intervention-approaches/counselling-address-barriers-learning>