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## **INTRODUCTION**

Kildare Youth Services has been working since 1994 at developing a community based, accessible, professional counselling service to meet the needs of young people and their families in County Kildare. To this end, Kildare Youth Services, in partnership with the Health Service Executive Dublin Mid-Leinster and with additional funding from the Family Support Agency and the South West Regional Drugs Task Force have worked to develop a tailor-made service focussing directly on the kinds of supports which are often only accessible to people on a fee paying basis. A key to the popularity of the Kildare Youth Services Counselling Service is the fact that it is a free community based youth service staffed by professional counsellors and offering a youth friendly and safe accessible environment for young people. Strong links exist to referral agents throughout the targeted communities.

In 2007 the service has been able to broaden the range of services provided in response to requests from the community. These include group work with post-primary school students and parenting courses, presentations to groups of young people and referral agents highlighting the work of the service.

Kildare Youth Counselling Service has seen strong trends in crises calls from across the community and calls relate that people seem to be having great difficulty accessing or finding adequate supports. Presenting concerns also show an increase in issues linked to alcohol and substance related problems. Large features of young peoples' difficulties are also showing a strong link to family stress and family break-up.

As part of the on-going evaluation of the Counselling Service annually, feedback is received from the young people who attend the service. Here are a few of the comments contributed by young people during 2007:

***“I found it easier to talk to other people”***

***“Knowing that I could share my problems and in time possibly find a way to feel better”***

***“I had the feeling that I was going to be believed”***

***“It was easy to talk to my counsellor, to get things off my mind”***

***“I was able to talk about things that can’t be talked about with anyone else”***

***“It was helpful, that I guided where the conversations were going and if I didn’t want to talk about something it could be left for a while”***

***“Being listened to and not being patronised was really important for me”***

***“It helped me to get different ways to see my problems”***

***“For me, it was about looking at home I behave and other ways to behave”***

***“It was like coming out of fog”***

## **SECTION 1: OVERVIEW OF THE SERVICE**

### **1.1 Public demand for the service**

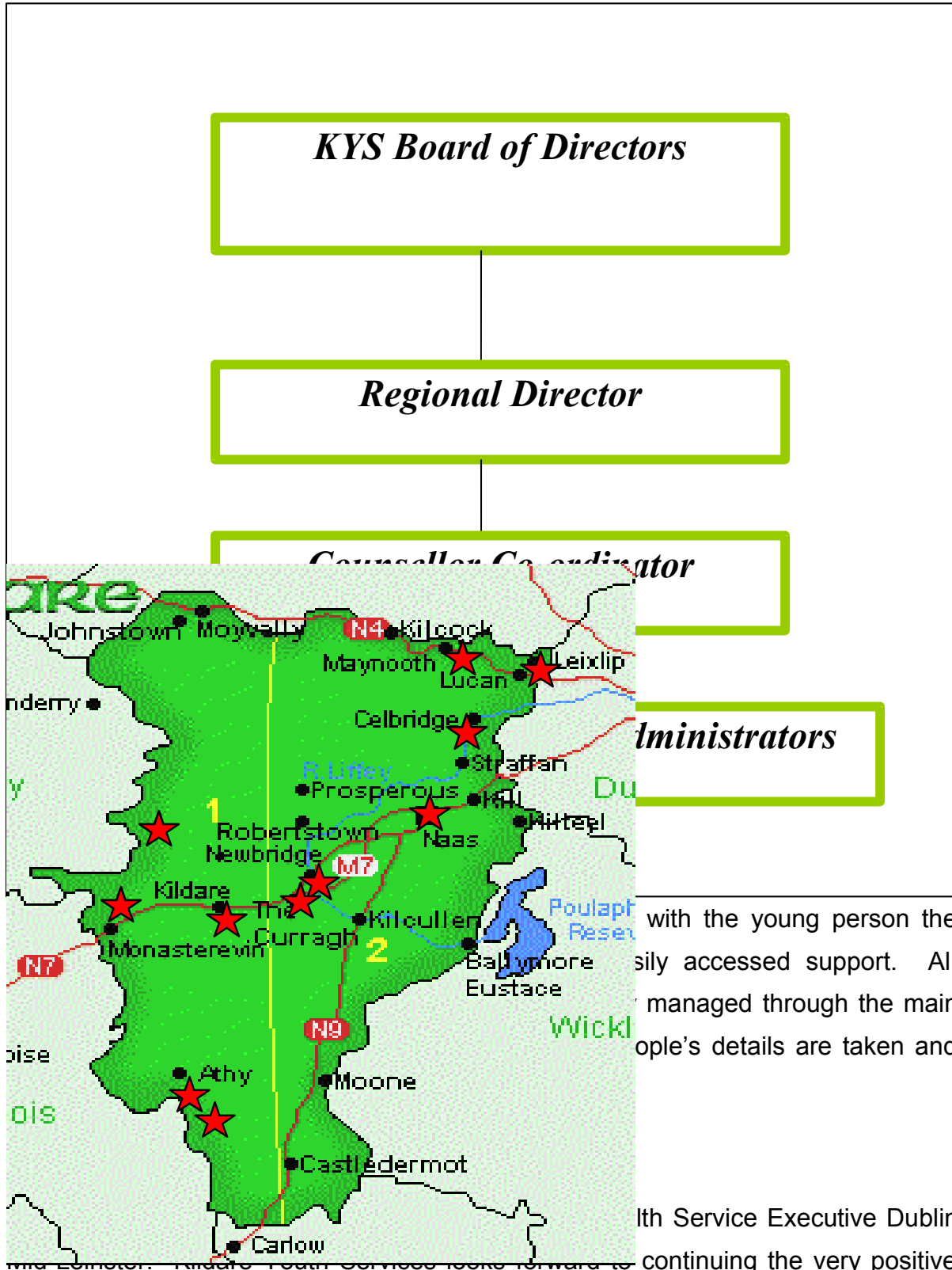
Throughout 2007 referrals and queries into the counselling service have increased. Concerned teachers, social workers, youth workers, general practitioners, guidance counsellors, psychiatrists, parents, friends and representatives from community and voluntary organisations continued to make referrals on a regular basis. Young people, parents and referral agents were written to, to inform them of their place on the waiting lists and to assure them that they would be contacted with an appointment as soon as one became available. Waiting lists exist in all the target areas of the service. If three months elapsed before a young person was offered an appointment then a letter was sent to the young person assuring them that they were still on the list and would be offered an appointment as soon as one became available. For those wishing to contact a private counsellor the numbers of the IACP and the IAHIP and other relevant agencies are offered.

## **1.2 Counselling Service team**

The counselling service team comprised the Counsellor Co-ordinator, the Counselling Administrator, four full time and two part-time Counsellors. The team met on a weekly basis for on-going training, supervision and co-ordination of the target areas. They also attended management, peer and individual supervision on a regular basis. The varied backgrounds of the team provide an interesting and dynamic team environment and the strong focus on creative therapeutic approaches facilitates effective work with young people. All our full-time counsellors saw sixteen young people a week with that number increasing for those involved in group work.

All of the counsellors are accredited with one or more of the following counselling national bodies: Irish Association of Counselling Psychotherapy, Irish Federation Child & Adolescent Psychotherapy, or are registered counselling psychologist with the Psychological Society of Ireland.

**Figure 1: MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE OF THE KYS COUNSELLING SERVICE**



with the young person the  
sily accessed support. All  
managed through the main  
ople's details are taken and

with Service Executive Dublin  
continuing the very positive

working relationship developed between Kildare Youth Services and the Health Service Executive from the outset of this service. During 2007 direct referrals and a number of indirect referrals to the counselling service were received from health board staff. Cross team meetings with the Health Service Executive were a feature of the year. This has resulted in increased referrals, case management and quality counselling with the client load in question.

#### **1.4 Department of Social & Family Affairs/Family Support Agency**

The Family Support Agency continues also to part fund the Kildare Youth Services Counselling Service. Kildare Youth Services looks forward to continuing to liaise with the Family Support Agency and welcomes their support in enabling us to continue to develop this much needed service to the young people of County Kildare.

#### **1.5 South West Regional Drugs Task Force**

Kildare Youth Services Counselling Service welcomed the additional supports that came on stream in 2007 to counsel young people that experience drug and alcohol misuse.

#### **1.6 On-going training of staff**

All the staff in Kildare Youth Services are required to keep up to date with relevant professional development in relation to their work. To this end counsellors are required to attend professional workshops or conferences every year in order to develop their skills, knowledge and attitudinal base.

The counselling team also attend quarterly staff meetings with the whole of the Kildare Youth Services staff. This allows time both for team building and also for relevant training for all team members. Staff with a particular expertise in areas relating to therapeutic work with young people provide workshops for other staff members and share with other members of the team.

Courses/workshops attended by the counselling team in 2007 include:

- Research on working with perpetrators

- EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitising Reprocessing) (Trauma)
- Babette Rothschild (Trauma)
- Gestalt Process training
- Children First
- Strengthening Families
- Healthy Masculinity
- Health & Safety Training
- Irish Council for Psychotherapy Conference
- Microsoft Outlook & Time Management
- Children First and Child Protection Training

## **1.7 Supervision**

Clinical/Peer/Management supervision

Kildare Youth Services Counselling Service ensures that all counselling staff has adequate supervision. To this end a three-tier supervision is in place for all counsellors. This includes:

1. Group peer supervision – minimum 4 hours per month
2. External one-to-one clinical supervision – 1 hour per month
3. Management one-to-one supervision – 2 hours per month

As is standard practice in the Counselling Service, each counsellor attends for clinical supervision with accredited supervisor on a monthly basis. Group peer supervision also takes place on a bi-monthly basis. The purposes of these varied types of supervision are to ensure that the counsellor evaluates his/her work on an on-going basis with the aim of providing the best possible professional service to young people.

Management supervision is ongoing between the counsellors and the Counselling Service co-ordinator and takes place at least once a month. These are supported by monthly reports submitted by each counsellor out-lining the work in their target areas. The co-ordinator in turn reports back to the Regional Director. This allows for review, development, planning and evaluation of each person's role within the

service and is informed by the overall strategic development plan of Kildare Youth Services, thereby ensuring a quality professional service for young people and their families across County Kildare.

### **1.8 Evaluation of the counselling service**

Young person evaluation:

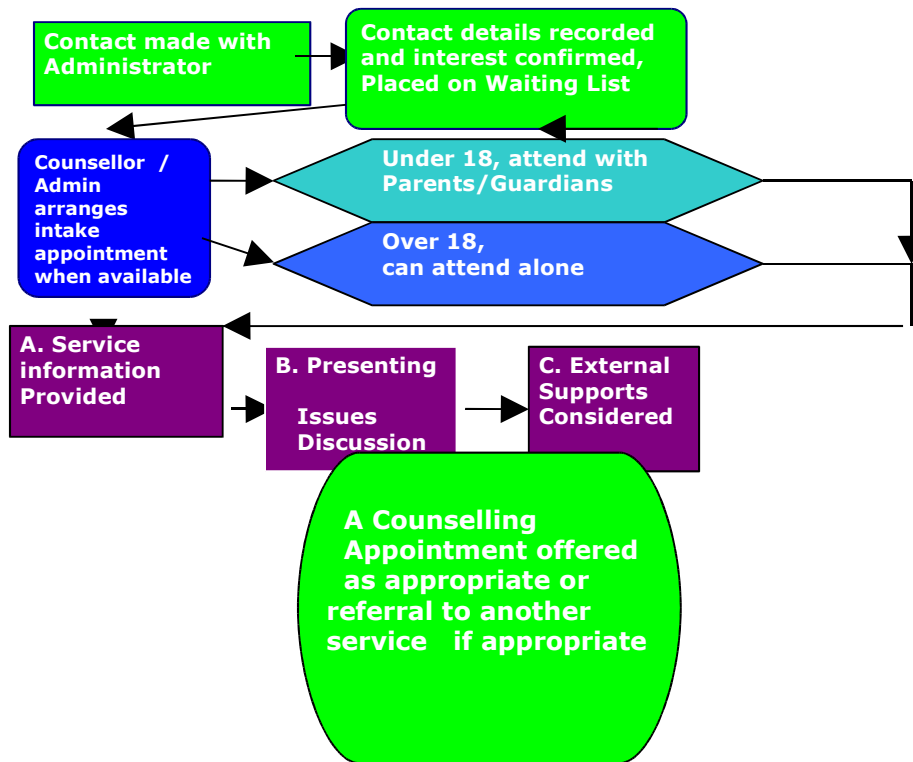
Evaluation is part of our continuing practice as KYS join with young people and parents/guardians as they access the service on an on-going basis, this happens at the end of a counselling session. This allows for issues to be addressed as they arise and for changes to happen where required to suit the requirements of each individual. Formal verbal and written evaluation is also part of the counselling process at the final session where young people are also given the option of completing an evaluation form which gives feed-back on their experience of the counselling service.

### **1.9 Intake process**

A Young person, relation or referral agent makes contact via telephone or calls into the Counselling administration office. The young person wishing to see a counsellor is then put on a waiting list in the required area. A letter of confirmation is sent out with information on service to client, client's parents and or referral agent (if referred by them) acknowledging that they are on the list. When an appointment becomes

available contact is made both by phone and letter offering appointment. A parental consent (if required) and confidentiality form is sent out with confirmation of appointment.

**Figure 3: Current Intake Process**



## SECTION 2: RESULTS SECTION

### 2.1 Statistical Evaluation

Evaluation of the Counselling Service is also done through a review of the statistical information recorded throughout the year. Each counsellor keeps statistical records of each young person presenting to the service, this is done in a non-identifying way because of the confidential nature of the service provided. All telephone calls and

queries to the counselling administration office are also recorded. These go some way towards outlining the progress and demands of the service.

In this section tables and figures presenting the results of these records are shown and discussed.

**Table 1: Analysis of young people seen during 2007**

|  | <b>11 - 17 years</b> |               | <b>18 - 25 years</b> |               |              |
|--|----------------------|---------------|----------------------|---------------|--------------|
|  | <i>Male</i>          | <i>Female</i> | <i>Male</i>          | <i>Female</i> | <i>TOTAL</i> |
| Young people in individual Counselling | 82                   | 76            | 31                   | 40            | 229          |
| Young people in group sessions         | 58                   | 106           | 7                    | 13            | 184          |
| <b>Total</b>                           | <b>140</b>           | <b>182</b>    | <b>38</b>            | <b>53</b>     | <b>413</b>   |

**Table 2: Analysis of parenting support**

|                   |                 | <i>Male</i> | <i>Female</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| Parents/Guardians | Initial Session | 20          | 88            | 108          |

|                                |  |           |            |            |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------|------------|------------|
| Parents/Guardians              | Parenting support<br>Parents Attending<br>During<br>Counselling<br>Process | 46        | 174        | 206        |
| Parenting Your<br>Teen Courses | Parent's Support &<br>Education  | 6         | 30         | 36         |
| <b>Total</b>                   |  | <b>72</b> | <b>292</b> | <b>350</b> |

## 2.2 Key Statistics

A total number of 763 were seen in the service during 2007. Of these:

- 229 young people of which 80 were transfer clients from 2006 to 2007
- 184 in Group sessions and presentations
- 350 Parents/guardians

The service supported a total of 350 parents/guardians during 2007. These are recorded in three categories. Initial session refers to those who came to their young person's first counselling session only. Counselling refers to parents/guardians who attended a number of sessions. Parenting Group refers to the STEP Teen Parenting Group.

## 2.3 Group work/Presentations 2007

In 2007 counsellors worked with other agencies in the delivery of group work and presentations.

- Parenting Course

- Youthreach
- Football Club
- Junior cycle students in St Mary's Secondary School, Naas
- Senior students in Holy Family Secondary School, Newbridge

## 2.4 Parenting Course

**Figure 4: Parents who attended one of the Parenting Your Teen Programmes photo**



### **STEP Teen Parenting Programme: Systematic Training for Effective Parenting**

September 2007 saw the launch of an additional service offered by the KYS counselling team by way of a Parenting course designed specifically at Parents of Teenagers. This was also seen as an opportunity to offer further support to Families of young people who currently engage in the service along with targeting the wider community and highlighting the counselling service. The counselling service recognised the need for such a course due to the fact that we engage with so many young people in the Kildare area along with acknowledging the importance of Parental contribution and involvement in their children's welfare.

For an outline of the course, see appendix 2.

The planning and delivery of the first STEP Teen programmes in Athy and Leixlip (Sep-Nov 2007) has been an exciting departure for the Counselling team.

Having worked with Parents of teenagers in the counselling setting we have recognised the need for parenting support. At the time of writing, a waiting-list has been set up for future STEP teen programmes. This is largely due to former participants recommending the programme to their friends.

We understand that further review and development of the Parenting programme will be of benefit to us and future participants. This represents a cost-effective way of supporting people in their challenging role as Parents of teenagers.

### **2.5 Newsletter: “Take 5” – A psycho-educational newsletter for young people**

Through our work with clients Kildare Youth Counselling Service has witnessed many struggles of young people. While there are many and varied reasons for a young person to seek counselling, Kildare Youth Service has observed some issues that arise frequently in sessions and which we, at Kildare Youth Services believe are amenable to psycho-educational interventions. It was through these shared observations by the counselling team that the idea for a newsletter was born. Kildare Youth Services wanted something that young people could read quickly and easily – ideally just taking 5 minutes of their time.

### **2.6 Waiting Lists**

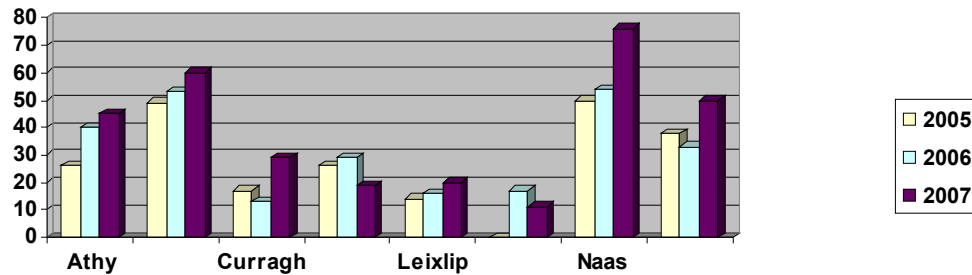
As is evident from the graph below, a total of 316 young people went on the waiting list in 2007, distributed in the target areas listed below.

#### **Table 3: 2007 Waiting List by Area**

|      |           |         |                 |         |      |           |          |              |           |
|------|-----------|---------|-----------------|---------|------|-----------|----------|--------------|-----------|
| Athy | Celbridge | Curragh | Kildare<br>Town | Leixlip | Naas | Newbridge | Maynooth | Monasterevin | Rathangan |
| 45   | 60        | 29      | 19              | 20      | 76   | 50        | 11       | 2            | 4         |

The graph below shows how the waiting lists have been growing in the target areas as the Counselling Service becomes more established. A further two areas, Monasterevin and Rathangan, were added as a target area in 2007.

**Figure 5: Changes in the waiting lists**



**Table 4: Breakdown of waiting list areas by numbers**

|      | Athy | Celbridge | Curragh | Kildare town | Leixlip | Maynooth | Naas | Newbridge |
|------|------|-----------|---------|--------------|---------|----------|------|-----------|
| 2005 | 26   | 49        | 17      | 26           | 14      | n/a      | 50   | 38        |
| 2006 | 40   | 53        | 13      | 29           | 16      | 17       | 54   | 33        |
| 2007 | 45   | 60        | 29      | 19           | 20      | 11       | 76   | 50        |

## 2.7 Young Person Profile

Age range of **new** clients for individual counselling seen in 2007 (does not include transfers from 2006)

**Table 5: Age Profile of clients**

|          | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
|----------|------|------|------|
| 11 years | 4    | 2    | 5    |

|                      |            |            |            |
|----------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>12 years</b>      | 9          | 5          | 5          |
| <b>13 years</b>      | 18         | 13         | 18         |
| <b>14 years</b>      | 25         | 20         | 19         |
| <b>15 years</b>      | 16         | 22         | 28         |
| <b>16 years</b>      | 16         | 24         | 24         |
| <b>17 years</b>      | 15         | 16         | 8          |
| <b>18 years</b>      | 9          | 8          | 9          |
| <b>19 years</b>      | 3          | 2          | 4          |
| <b>20 years</b>      | 7          | 2          | 7          |
| <b>21 years</b>      | 2          | 2          | 10         |
| <b>22 years</b>      | 1          | 2          | 5          |
| <b>23 years</b>      | 3          | 1          | 4          |
| <b>24 years</b>      | 0          | 0          | 0          |
| <b>25 years</b>      | 0          | 2          | 3          |
| <b>Total clients</b> | <b>128</b> | <b>121</b> | <b>149</b> |

As it is evident from the above table that the majority of young people presenting to the service in 2007 were in the 13-16 years age group.

## 2.8 Presenting Problems

**Table 6: Combined Presenting Problems**

|                            | <b>2007</b> | <b>2006</b> | <b>2005</b> |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Alcohol related problems   | 12          | 23          | 4           |
| Adoption                   | 3           | 3           | 1           |
| Attention Deficit Disorder | 2           | 4           | 2           |
| Behavioural problems       | 92          | 52          | 41          |
| Bereavement                | 0           | 31          | 26          |
| Bullying                   | 20          | 10          | 5           |

|  |    |    |    |
|--|----|----|----|
| Obsessive Compulsive Disorder            | 3  | 2  | 21 |
| Depression                               | 35 | 23 | 17 |
| Disability                               | 2  | 0  | 0  |
| Eating Disorders                         | 3  | 6  | 3  |
| Emotional Abuse                          | 13 | 0  | 0  |
| Family member Alcohol Addiction Problems | 9  | 5  | 13 |
| Family member of child sexual abuse      | 0  | 11 | 4  |
| Family relationship problems             | 82 | 54 | 49 |
| Foster care issues                       | 6  | 0  | 4  |
| Parental Separation                      | 42 | 39 | 24 |
| Parenting issues                         | 20 | 14 | 20 |
| Peer/romantic relationship problems      | 23 | 19 | 9  |
| Physical abuse                           | 4  | 2  | 4  |
| Self esteem                              | 42 | 46 | 38 |
| Self mutilation                          | 14 | 17 | 6  |
| Sexual Misuse                            | 5  | 7  | 12 |
| Sexuality issues                         | 2  | 9  | 6  |
| Substance Abuse                          | 14 | 17 | 0  |
| Suicidal thoughts                        | 13 | 12 | 12 |
| Suicide attempt                          | 1  | 4  | 11 |
| Teenage pregnancy                        | 1  | 1  | 1  |

For ease of categorisation, Table 6 shows behavioural problems as challenging behaviour by young people which is causing them or others concern e.g. anger management, attitude problems towards authority figures etc.

Family members with difficulties relating to alcohol and substance misuse refer to those specifically seeking support/counselling around a family members' lifestyle.

Suicidal thoughts refer to those young people who present as being at risk from themselves and require that the counsellor inform their significant other of the possible danger.

As is evident from the table above the highest presenting problems for young people seen in 2007 were behavioural problems, issues around self esteem, family relationship problems. There is also a notable increase in the number of young people presenting with issues around self-mutilation, alcohol related problems and substance abuse.

These figures go a long way towards illustrating the very serious nature of the issues with which young people present to the Service. They also serve to highlight the importance of the Kildare Youth Services Counselling Service in supporting young people through what are very trying and challenging life difficulties.

## 2.9 Referrals to the Counselling Service

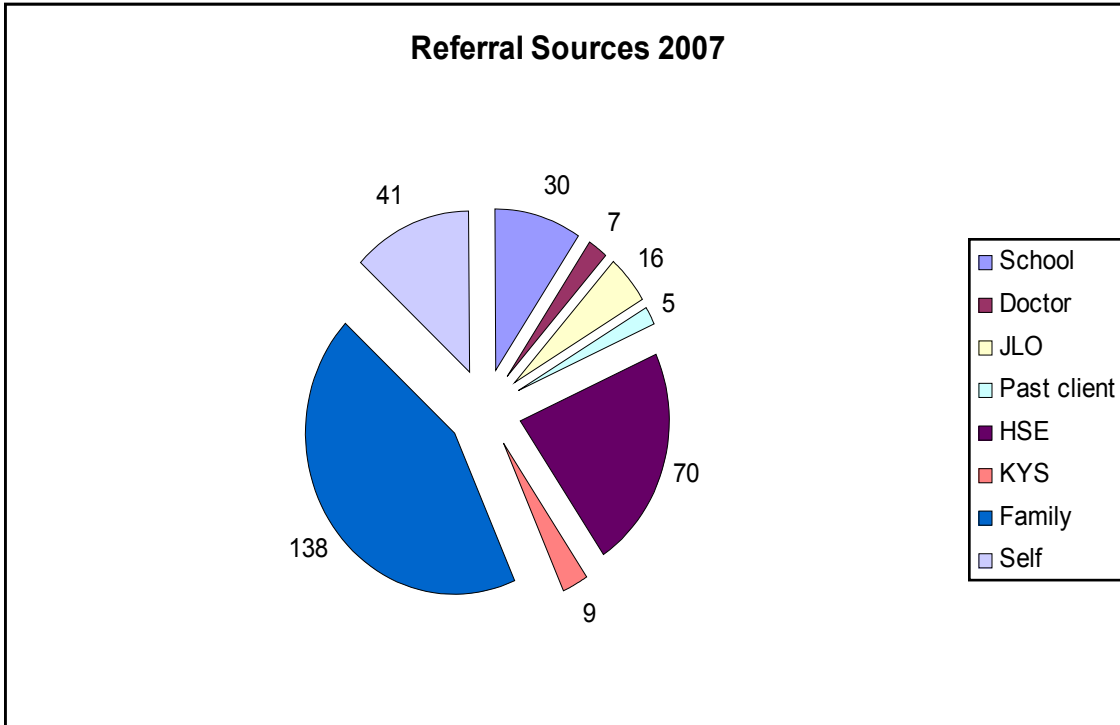
A referral is defined as a request received by Kildare Youth Services Counselling Service for counselling to be provided to a young person. This request can be made by a young person themselves, or by a concerned family member or service provider acting on their behalf and with their consent. Arising out of one referral a number of members of the family may become clients of the Counselling Service.

In 2007 the Counselling Service received 328 referrals from a wide variety of sources. As can be seen from the graph below, approximately 36% of overall referrals came directly from a referral agent acting on behalf of the young person. The other percentage of referrals came directly from young people themselves or from a family member acting on their behalf.

**Table 7: Referral Sources**

|                                 |            |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| Schools                         | 30         |
| Doctor/GP Service               | 7          |
| Junior Liaison Officer          | 16         |
| Past client                     | 5          |
| Health Service Executive        | 70         |
| Kildare Youth Services Projects | 9          |
| Family                          | 138        |
| Self                            | 41         |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>316</b> |

**Figure 6: Breakdown of Referral Sources**



**Table 8: Third-party supports for self referrals**

|                                 |    |
|---------------------------------|----|
| School                          | 19 |
| Health Service Executive        | 25 |
| Local Media/PR                  | 10 |
| Doctor/GP Service               | 10 |
| Kildare Youth Services Projects | 17 |
| Citizen's Information Centre    | 12 |
| Garda                           | 1  |
| Past Client                     | 4  |
| Friend                          | 7  |

**Figure 7: Family and self referrals supported by referral agents**

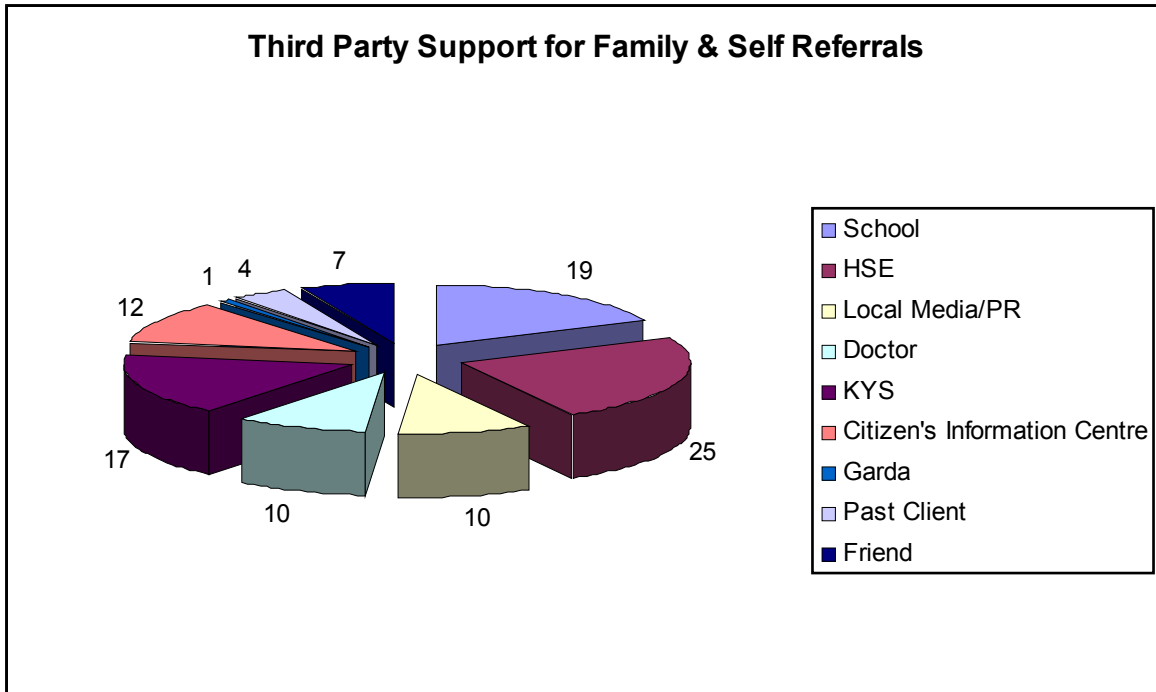


Figure 7 shows that many of the family referrals were supported by third party referral agents who assisted the young person or parent in making direct contact with the Kildare Youth Services Counselling Service. This is a very welcome trend from the point of view of Kildare Youth Services thus proving that it is an accessible service.

### 2.10 Telephone calls to the Counselling Service

There were a total of 1711 calls to the Counselling Service in 2007. There were 222 calls from referral agents including parents and family members and 277 general counselling queries. Many of these callers went on to refer young people to the service. It is important to note that there is a marked increase in crisis calls with families and young people seeking crisis counselling and family support often relating high levels of stress and strong indicators of families under pressure. These totalled over a 100 and, where appropriate, were given the numbers of the IACP, IAHIP, agencies such as Barnardos or were referred to another service e.g. Child Guidance services, Genesis Family Therapy Services, Newbridge Family Resource Centre, or their GP or the local Social Work Department. This highlights the need

for more immediate interventions be made available to young people and their families, particularly crisis counselling and family psycho-therapy services.

### 2.11 **Psycho-educational Groups**

During 2007 a number of Psycho-educational consultations were made to community groups, schools and parents in the target areas. These were creatively presented and included question and answer sessions. In the case of the school Psycho-education group's students had the opportunity to ask questions anonymously about the service. Groups included:

- Kildare Travellers Network and Kildare Traveller Action Women's Group (focussing on positive mental health)
- Youth Reach (suicide awareness and prevention)
- "Birds of a Feather" (Young Women's Personal Development Group, Kildare Town)

**Table 9: Requests for counselling outside the target areas**

|                   |    |
|-------------------|----|
| Ballitore         | 0  |
| Ballymore Eustace | 3  |
| Baltinglass       | 3  |
| Blessington       | 10 |
| Broadford         | 1  |
| Carbury           | 4  |
| Castledermot      | 1  |
| Clane             | 7  |
| Clondalkin        | 0  |
| Donadea           | 4  |
| Dunlavin          | 0  |
| Eadestown         | 2  |
| Enfield           | 3  |
| Kilcock           | 0  |

|              |           |
|--------------|-----------|
| Kilcullen    | 3         |
| Kill         | 0         |
| Kilmeague    | 5         |
| Longwood     | 1         |
| Monasterevin | 3         |
| Nurney       | 0         |
| Portlaoise   | 1         |
| Prosperous   | 1         |
| Rathangan    | 2         |
| Rathcoffey   | 2         |
| Rathmore     | 2         |
| Robertstown  | 1         |
| Stradbally   | 0         |
| Straffan     | 1         |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>53</b> |

Figures for requests for counselling from outside the target areas again reflect that the demand for the Counselling Service continues to increase. This is the case despite the fact that PR has been limited only to agencies and organisations within our target area.

## **CONCLUSION**

2007 has been another busy, exciting and progressive year for the Kildare Youth Services Counselling Service. The service has again widened its target areas to include Monasterevin and Rathangan and is now available to many more young people and their families. As well as continuing to provide one-to-one counselling and family support, the service has broadened its approach to working with young people, through group work, and interactive school based outreach sessions.

The plan for 2008 is to continue to develop the service and promote counselling in a youth friendly and creative way. The Service envisages that in 2008 Kildare Youth Services will continue to visit with more schools and projects throughout the county

to build on and expand existing links and spend time talking with young people about the supports offered by Kildare Youth Services. The Service will also continue to offer further group projects and presentations to young people while continuing to assess the best ways to move forward on this.

The Kildare Youth Services Counselling Service continues to place great emphasis and importance on our relationship with our referral agents. To this end Kildare Youth Services will continue to meet with them at least once a year while maintaining regular phone and written contact with them.

The approaches which our counsellors have found to be most effective in engaging young people in counselling are multi-faceted. Firstly offering a safe, respectful and non-threatening encounter through clear explanations and supportive procedures has proved invaluable in building trusting relationships with our young people. Our emphasis is on parental involvement where possible, has served to give parents and young people a safe space to work on the difficulties and strengths in their relationships.

The counselling team takes in a broad range of skills and professional expertise that in turn allows a creative approach to their work and can offer young people a variety of ways to express themselves and Kildare Youth Services look to an individualised approach in helping address each young persons concerns as they present.

The issue of self-care for each counsellor is recognised as very important in being able to deliver effective counselling to our young people. To this end, the team support, personal therapy and our commitment to ongoing training and supervision are crucial in ensuring of the healthy and on going professional development of this service. The learning gained by everybody involved in this service to date is both exciting and challenging and Kildare Youth Services look forward with great anticipation as the Counselling Service continues to grow and progress. The developments seen during 2007 hopefully represent another step forward in the

wide-scale provision of this much needed free, professional service to young people and their families in County Kildare.

### Appendix 1: Names and locations of the KYS Counselling Service team

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Nora Martin (Acting Co-ordinator)       | Naas, Celbridge                             |
| Linda McGuire (Counsellor)              | Athy, Newbridge                             |
| Kathleen McGlynn (P/T Administrator)    | Naas  |
| Caroline McWilliams (P/T Administrator) | Naas  |
| Tommy Hunt (Counsellor)                 | Athy, Newbridge, Monasterevin,<br>Rathangan |
| Joanne Parker (Counsellor)              | Curragh, Kildare Town, Naas                 |
| Dermot Coonan (Counsellor)              | Celbridge, Leixlip, Newbridge               |
| David Burke (Counsellor)                | Celbridge, Maynooth, Leixlip                |
| Karen Nugent (Counsellor)               | Naas, Celbridge, Athy                       |
| Paul Clancy (Counsellor)                | Naas, Newbridge, Curragh                    |

### Appendix 2: Parenting Your Teen Course

The programme was piloted in Athy and Leixlip and was facilitated by two counsellors for sixteen parents over a seven week period every Wednesday night from 7.30pm to 9.30pm.

In advance of each session, parents were provided with the chapter for discussion. They then had the opportunity to review and discuss the material and have open discussions on their experience, both in large and small groups, of their teens and their relationship with them.

A DVD highlighting the principles of each chapter was shown which addresses common issues that parents experience with their teens.

This also provided parents with an opening to discuss their challenges along with providing the opportunity for self reflective work.

As mentioned, the programme allowed for enhancing awareness of the Kildare Youth Service Counselling Service and education about some of the issues that young people bring to counselling.

The programme, which is skills based, directly addresses the core skills necessary in the task of teenage parenting. The Step Teen ethos aspires to equal respect, equal dignity and equal human worth for both parents and teens. This is in line with preferred working practices with the Kildare Youth Service Counselling Service.

The relevant topics which were covered on the course included:

- Understanding yourself and your Teenager,
- Changing your Response to your Teen,
- Communicating Respect and Encouragement,
- Encouraging Cooperation and Solving Problems,
- Using Consequences to Build Responsibility,
- Practicing Skills of Dealing with the Challenges of your Teenager

Some of the participants' stories brought the programme to life. Here is a sample of those stories:

One Mum used **reflective listening** with her son who had been through a bad day at school. She said she let him know she was proud of him for not acting on his bad

feelings. Sometimes affirming feelings is more important than trying to solve problems.

One Dad by **exploring alternatives** said he finds it useful to stop and remind himself, 'I don't have to answer now, and I can think it through first.' This helped him avoid reactive responses.

Another example of a calm non-reactive response came from a Mum by **using alternatives** to her angry son by calmly inviting him to write all the insults he wanted to say on paper and she offered to read them out loud or have him read them, reassured him that insults would not work on her, this diffused the situation.

One son said, 'get out of the way, fat woman,' to one of the participants. She responded calmly, telling her son, that she didn't like being called names. By **naming the feeling** her son apologised.

A mum received a report of her daughter's misbehaviour at school. Normally this resulted in Mum having a big reaction. She decided to handle it differently. She showed her daughter she wanted to understand through **reflective listening**.

At the final session participants were asked what they had learned. They responded with the following feedback which reflected learning goals (listed in bold).

I learned:

- Not to jump in, (**Reflective Listening**)
- Not to give up (**Exploring Alternatives**)
- To take time out (**Developing Skills for Resolving Conflict**)
- To choose my moment to address difficulties (not too late a night).  
(**Prevention of Discipline Problems**)
- To accept imperfection and not to blame myself (**Self-care**)
- That I am not a bad parent, (**Improving Understanding of Teens Behaviour**).
- That the skills I learned were useful not just with teens but friends too (**Using**

**'I' statements).**

- The importance of security for teens at home (**Understanding Teens Behaviour**)

### **Appendix 3: "Take 5" Newsletter**

The first newsletter, entitled "Take 5", was issued in April 2007 – in the lead up to school exams. It gave advice on studying, dealing with exam stress, and tips for the actual exam day. This newsletter was circulated generally but was delivered specifically to schools throughout Kildare. There was positive feedback from the schools with many seeking extra copies for use in their classes.

The second "Take 5" newsletter was issued in September. It was entitled 'Bounce Back from Setbacks' and provided 11 key strategies for dealing with difficult situations or big changes that may be taking place in a young person's life. The idea is that these 'bouncing back' skills (or resilience skills) can be learned and developed by everyone. Again there was a very positive reaction to this newsletter by the schools. Many schools devoted full classes to reading through and discussing the "Take 5" newsletter.

Kildare Youth Services has some stimulating material in the pipeline for the coming year.